

TRAVEL | COLORADO

# A gem upholds tradition

Ranch at Emerald Valley restored with modern amenities

By ANNE Z. COOKE  
Tribune News Service

**M**ANITOU SPRINGS, Colo. — I was returning from a hike up Mount Vigil, the peak you can see from the Ranch at Emerald Valley, near Colorado Springs, when I happened upon a cowboy giving a driver directions to the ranch, which just happened to be where I was staying.

“Do you know why they call it Emerald Valley?” the driver asked.

“Well now, I couldn’t say,” replied the cowboy. “I’ve wondered on it myself. Might be for them green trees.”

“They used to call it Camp Vigil, after that mountain there. Real special for old Mr. Penrose, Spencer Penrose he was, the man who built the first lodge up there on Cheyenne Mountain. Back in the 1920s. That’s a purty fine log cabin he had, the one they still got. It’s renovated now, with a real bar.”

“All kind of trees shades them log cabins, and your creek has a waterfall and lakes stocked regular with trout. The cabin on the hill is a palace, big enough for weddings and such.”

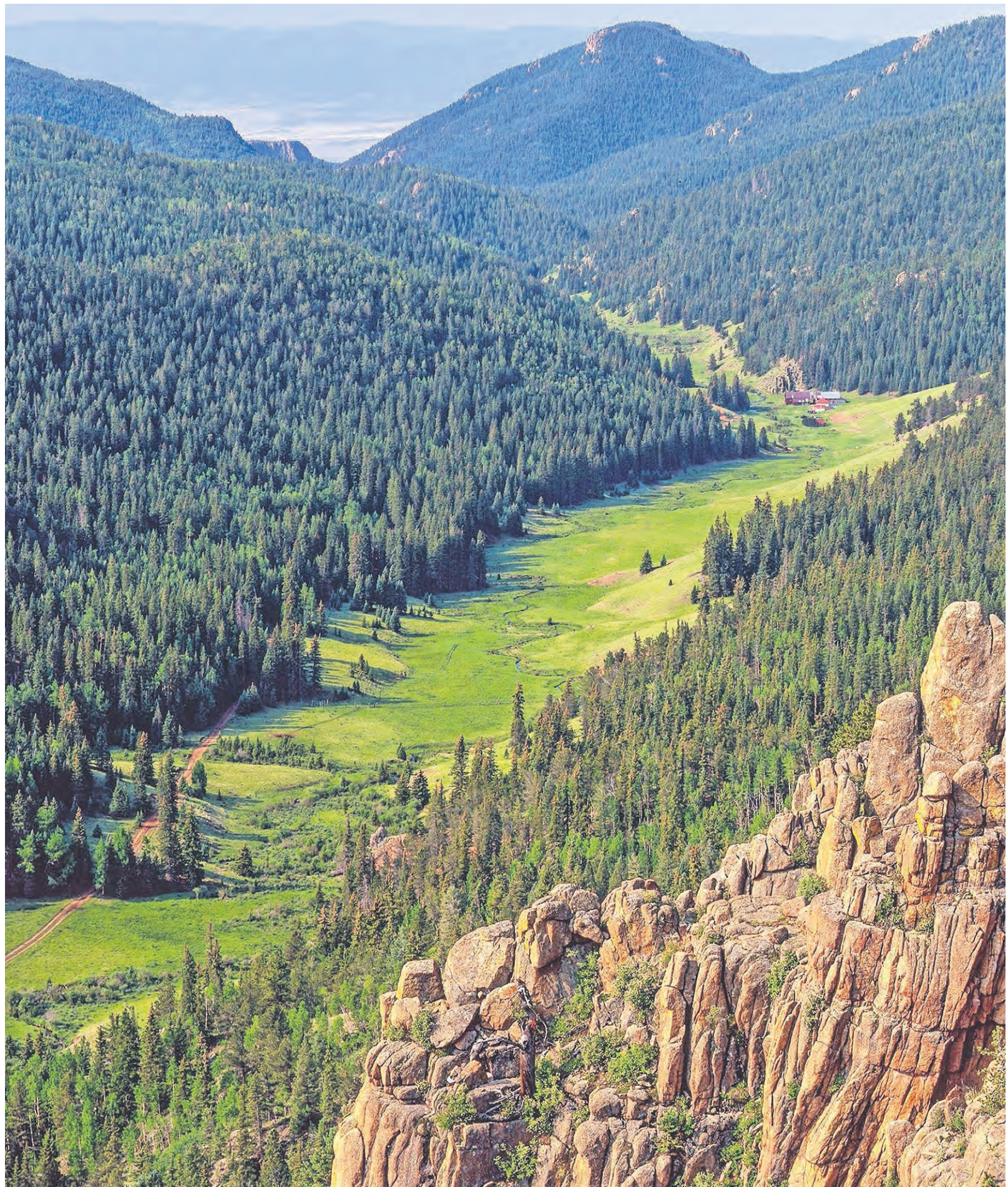
After that colorful history lesson, I ambled down the dirt track that was known in the late 1890s as Gold Road.

After the last gold strike petered out, arrivals included a settler, a Girl Scout camp and finally Spencer Penrose, who leased the 16-acre parcel from Pike National Forest for his newly created social club, the Pikes Peak Camping and Mountain Trails Association. The club didn’t last, but the cabin survived the years, including an interval as a dude ranch in the 1970s.

After the Broadmoor Hotel changed hands, in 2011, the new owner, Philip Anschutz, bought the property, eventually restoring and enlarging the lodge and building guest cabins, hoping to re-create the ranch and its era.

When the work was finished, it was so accurate that I couldn’t tell the old walls from the new ones, or the antiques from the reproductions. The interior furnishings, custom made, not only echoed the era but added a touch of luxury. The 10 guest cabins are all outfitted with modern amenities.

As for the so-called “palace,” that’s where I stayed. By the time I tried to make a reservation, every cabin was booked. Climbing uphill on a



The Ranch at Emerald Valley near Colorado Springs is surrounded by mountain wilderness.

The Broadmoor

## Details

Rates start at \$485 per person, per night. No charge for age 6 and under with no additional bedding needs. Daily rates cover transportation between the Ranch at Emerald Valley and the Broadmoor Hotel, a 9-mile drive; on-site activities and equipment; trail hikes; nature walks; fishing gear; horseback rides; all meals, snacks, beverages, wine, beer and bar drinks. Long horseback rides, such as the popular cattle drives, are priced separately. For details, visit [broadmoor.com](http://broadmoor.com).

winding stone path, I thought I’d been banished to the barn. Then I saw the flagstone patio — large enough for a 50-guest reception, and opened the front door. The living room, furnished with hand-tooled leather chairs, luxurious sofas and a man-sized fireplace, begged me to sit down; the walls, hung with Western and American Indian art, insisted that I take a closer look.

The kitchen, large-party sized, included a long center island, surrounded by walls covered with cupboards, and

counters with three sinks and the latest appliances. With bedrooms upstairs and down (and bathrooms for each) there was room for eight.

After that, no day was like another. You could sleep late, or eat breakfast early before climbing the ridge to see the views. Five or six other trails climbed peaks or crossed through the forest, or you could ride horseback.

Come 4 p.m., I fetched the fly rod and headed for the lake where the rainbow and brown trout were breaking the surface. Cocktail hour followed, improved by the chef’s hors d’oeuvres. Dinner lasted as long as you could eat or talk, in the dining room or stargazing around the campfire.

Wednesday and Saturday evening campfires, when recording artist and cowboy singer Jeff Houlton entertained, were the biggest surprise of all.

I was watching the fire toss up sparks when Houlton tuned the strings and tore into “Orange Blossom Special,” astonishing everyone with his lightning-fast picking and perfect rhythm.

As the guests called out requests, he called on the vast repertoire he hides under that cowboy hat and performed as asked. C&W, pop, bluegrass, Pete Seeger, Elton John, the Grateful Dead — he knew them all.

Here at the Ranch at Emerald Valley, at the end of the track they once called the Gold Road, I think they’ve hit pay dirt after all.



The Broadmoor

Cocktail hour follows an afternoon of fishing, and dinner lasts as long as you wish to eat or talk in the dining room or around the campfire.



Kevin Syms

After the Broadmoor Hotel changed hands, in 2011, the new owner restored and enlarged the lodge and built guest cabins at the Ranch at Emerald Valley. Rates start at \$485 per person, including meals, drinks and more.