

## Rancho de la Osa

After sitting vacant for a few years, this historic guest ranch is once again open for business. And like before, towering eucalyptus trees shade the hacienda porch, and meals are served family style inside.

**KATHY MONTGOMERY**

NOT MANY PEOPLE HAVE heard of Presumido Canyon or the little outpost that once stood there. Those who have stumbled across what's left of the adobe and stone structures in Southern Arizona's Pozo Verde Mountains have

only guessed at their purpose, which has largely been lost to history — until now.

I had heard of it indirectly, while reading about the history of Rancho de la Osa, a storied guest ranch on the border with Mexico. William Sturgis, who

built the hacienda when the ranch was a thriving cattle operation in the late 19th century, married a woman named Doña Leonora, who operated a trading post that catered to the Tohono O'odham people. Ranch owners believe these structures, located just outside tribal land, are the remains of her trading post and a stage stop.

Nearby, petroglyphs record centuries of human habitation, and it's easy to see why people have been drawn to this place. Even after a dry summer, it remains remarkably verdant, with a spongy carpet of grass, plump saguaros and stands of ocotillos so dense and green that, from a distance, they look like tall, waving grass.

Closed in 2014, Rancho de la Osa sat vacant until 2016, when a coalition of investors, including White Stallion Ranch owner Russell True, bought it at auction. Target shooting, fat-tire electric bike rides and guided all-terrain vehicle excursions to the ruins are among the activities now available to guests.

But horseback riding is still the reason most folks come, and riders are well served by managers Ross and Lynne Knox. A celebrated cowboy poet, Ross says he “never drew wages for anything that wasn't on horseback.” He's also charged with reviving ranching on a small scale, using livestock believed to belong to the same genetic stock as cattle that grazed here historically. At the same time, the ranch is working to restore grasslands and wetlands to historical conditions.

For all that's new, past guests will find the place reassuringly familiar. Towering eucalyptus trees still shade the hacienda porch. Meals are still served family style inside, at long tables surrounded by pictures of famous guests: Lyndon B. Johnson atop his horse, John Wayne dancing in the cantina — said to be the oldest continuously occupied building in Arizona — and William Clayton at work on the Marshall Plan.

And now, the place where so much history has been written is beginning a new chapter of its own.



**SASABE** Rancho de la Osa, 1 La Osa Ranch Road, 520-339-1086, ranchodelaosa.com