**Some things to know about the job at Sombrero**

**Pets**

Unfortunately, we cannot allow personal pets of any kind at Sombrero. The reasons for this are many. This includes horses. Apologies for any inconvenience!

**Pay/Living**

If you are hired, you will pick a payment plan depending on what your dates are and what your preferences are. One of the plans gives you a steady amount of money each month (it is around $500), and then a smaller bonus for completing the contract, around $500. The other plan gives you a smaller amount per month (around $100), but then the bonus you receive for finishing the summer contract is very substantial, around $3000 for a 90 day contract or $2500 for a shorter contract. Therefore this second plan averages out to much more per month. We hope that people will stay until the end of their contract, and that is why this plan works out this way. You get a check once a month whichever plan you pick. However, much of the money you will make will come from tips. These seem to depend on the year, I would say it is reasonable to expect at least $50 in tips per day over the summer, although it is usually more. My first year working there (summer of 2009) we averaged $75 or more. Tips will depend on how well you take care of your riders! Generally as long as you are paying attention and can give them some general information about horses, the ranch, etc. you will do well on tips. If you are hired, I am more than happy to give you info and history about the ranch and Estes Park.

Also - you do not pay to live there. Your housing, internet, supplies, and food are taken care of. Generally wranglers will buy themselves dinner if they are not on a steak ride, but probably about half of the days you will be on a steak ride and get to enjoy a steak dinner on the trail with your guests. The days that you are not on a steak dinner ride, you are welcome to the leftovers that are always around the ranch, but many people will just order a pizza or something for something different. Wranglers live on site in bunk-house style housing. There are separate rooms for guys and for ladies, and there are common rooms for everyone to hang out in. There is a laundry room on site, and a kitchen with access to fridge and freezer space. You definitely do not need to have a vehicle up here, but are welcome to have one if you would like to.

I would say it is reasonable to expect around $3,500 just in tips for the summer (although it is usually a bit higher, I just tend to guess on the lower side). If you pick the higher paying plan, if you can stay for 90 days, your wages should come out to around $3300 total for the summer. Please note though that these are all approximations, and are higher pay rates than we have had in years past, so we are still working on details.

**Duties**

I will outline a typical day at Sombrero so you have a good idea of both the hours and what they involve exactly. It is important that you understand the amount of work involved in this job. We meet in the barn at about 5 am. We gather horses up and they will move through the barn in the alleyway, about 10 horses at a time. We groom everyone, check for injuries or health issues, halter and tack up everyone, and give everyone a grain bag. All horses have their own specific tack fitted to them. After saddling about 130 horses, we go eat breakfast, about 7 am. Breakfast is catered in for us. After breakfast we begin to get out the first ride of the day, the breakfast ride. There is usually a little downtime between the breakfast ride and the rest of the rides for the day. We usually clean the barn, finish getting horses ready, fill grain bags, fill water troughs, etc. At this point we will have spread out enough hay to feed the horses for the day. Rides start coming in, and most of the day consists of getting rides ready and taking them out and showing guests around the Rocky Mountains! We get a short break for lunch starting around noon, which is also catered in. The last ride of the day is the steak dinner ride, there are usually 7-10 wranglers on these rides (we split groups up so there are no more than 8 people in a group usually. 1 wrangler can take out 8 people usually.) If you are on a steak dinner ride, you also get to enjoy a steak dinner on the trail. Around 6 pm we will start breaking down the horses - unsaddling and feeding them more grain if need be. We usually finish with everything around 7 pm, although there are busy days where it could be closer to 8pm, but we try to avoid that. We work those hours (about 5 am to 7 pm) 6 days a week, and your day may consist of 6-7 hours a day in the saddle.

**Personal Skills Required**

Perhaps obviously a solid base of horse knowledge and experience is required. You do not have to be the best rider ever to work at Sombrero! But, you do need to be able to understand how to handle a wide variety of horses and how to tell other people to work with them. You should be able to tell when a horse is distressed or nervous, and how to fix the situation. You should be able to understand how to use a horse’s herding instincts to keep guests in the appropriate place in line without having upset horses.

You should be able to quickly and proficiently saddle and unsaddle a horse western style. You should be able to recognize ill-fitting tack and tack in need of repair. Each horse at Sombrero has his/her own saddle, cinch, and headstall, so each horse should have well-fitting tack, but as the summer progresses, most horses will need new saddles at some point. Many come off of winter feeding grounds having gained a few pounds (who doesn’t?!) and as the summer goes on they will lose weight as appropriate and so will need new saddles. It is important to recognize that a horse may be acting up simply because its saddle is pinching it, and this is an easy fix!

A good work ethic is extremely important in this job! The hours are long, and it is physically demanding work. This is not usually an issue; I believe most people who apply for this job are aware of the work demands that come along with working on a ranch with 150 horses.

We are all a team, and it is important to remember this. You must be able to get along with others and work well with your fellow wranglers! Please, feel free to ask any others any questions you might have. We all come from different backgrounds, and we can all learn a lot from each other! On that same note, just because a fellow wrangler does something differently does NOT make it incorrect. Again, we do not usually have any issues, but it is worth mentioning.

I cannot stress how much of this job is being able to deal with people and children! Horse experience and a strong work ethic are important, but I guarantee the part of the job that will start getting to you by the end of the summer is the people. You MUST be a people person to enjoy this job! Patience is required, and empathy. Communication skills are important, as many guests to the ranch have never ridden before. You need to be able to keep guests calm in some situations. And you really must be able to get along with children!

It is certainly not an easy job, but it is a ton of fun and I learned a lot, even though I have been around horses consistently since I was 8. If you like working outside with horses and interesting people from all over the world, this is the job for you!

Kristyn Smith, Assistant Manager/Wrangler

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