

H O M E O N T H E R A N G E

Pierre and Marie Maupas welcome visitors to their western theme dude ranch with a French twist.

BY KELLIE TORNEY





Pueche Maynade is a Western-themed working dude ranch.



Welcome to the Wild West. You'll find plenty of open space, endless blue sky and an Appaloosa to help you enjoy the ride. Just don't mind the medieval villages and legendary French cuisine you'll encounter along the trail. After all, this is Aveyron, France, home of Appaloosa enthusiasts Pierre and Marie Maupas.

Their farm, Pueche Maynade, is an idyllic destination for those seeking to rediscover the beauty and peace of a bygone era. Set amidst rolling hills and

green pastures, it's located in the historic region of Aveyron in southwestern France. Here, Pierre and Marie, along with their children Elodie, Remi and François, have created their own version of the American West, complete with Appaloosa dude string, cattle drives and roping and reining events.

Bonjour, Appaloosas

Each year, from April to November, the Maupases welcome visitors who share their passion for horses and the great outdoors. Most come to savor the western flavor of Pueche Maynade, but they won't find a bunkhouse or a cookshack when they arrive. Pueche Maynade is a three-star establishment offering a variety of amenities to suit its guests. Foremost among them is the family home, constructed by monks between the 11th and 15th centuries. It's a local landmark, built on a stone foundation with walls up to three feet thick, and interiors have been carefully restored and updated.

After a day of activity, guests can relax on the terrace or take a leisurely stroll around the grounds. Even the barns are architecturally interesting, built with stone or solid oak framing, one in the shape of the hull of an upturned boat.

Pueche Maynade is also a working farm, located in an area known for its cattle and horses. Situated on a vast limestone plateau, the grass is plentiful and agriculture is a primary source of income for local residents. Traditional French breeds include Anglo-Arabs and warmblooded Selle-Françaises. Recently, however, Appaloosas are becoming more popular,

thanks in large part to the educational and promotional efforts of breeders like the Maupas.

The Maupas purchased their first Appaloosa just three years ago. Impressed by the breed's calm and willing nature, and range of extravagant color, Pierre decided to seek the counsel of an expert before becoming involved in breeding.

"I give thanks to Mr. Didier Constants, former president of the APHC in France, for his good advice and assistance in helping me find the Appaloosas of which I'm so proud today," says Pierre.

A purposeful plan

Pierre carefully built a breeding program that now includes 32 registered Appaloosas, most of which are home-bred. Four of his mares were imported from the United States, with bloodlines tracing to Roman's Strawman, Colida, Goer and Skip's Shannon. Two recent additions include the young stallions Steam Roller Ghost, a 3-year-old by Ghost Of Boss, and Impish Shannon, the all-around grand champion at Toulouse in 1999.

Pierre is a dedicated breeder, constantly working to improve the quality of his stock. Future plans call for a trip to Denver, Colorado, where he'll attend the National Western Stock Show and Appaloosa show. There, he'll meet and talk with American breeders, compiling a list of contacts he can work with to add more imported horses to his program in the years ahead. Also in the works are plans to enter more competitions back home to showcase the Maupas' horses.

Appaloosas are now an integral part of the farm's business. All of the riding horses are well-schooled by professional western trainer Cyrille Farnier, who also works with the farm's guests. Elodie, 15, and Remi, 11, both ride and are active in youth Appaloosa

events. The farm offers excellent facilities for beginning and advanced riders alike, including a large reining arena, a fenced schooling arena and a permanent trail course.

A working vacation

The family prides itself on tailoring equestrian activities to suit the interests of its guests, and there's plenty to do. Adventurous types can take part in the farm's cattle drives, working the herds on the 280 acres surrounding the farm. If the open road beckons, Pierre, who's also a certified guide, can arrange treks lasting one to seven days in the Aveyron countryside for which he believes Appaloosas are especially well-suited.

The scenery is among the finest in France. A local guide book describes Aveyron as "... a land of stone, water, gorges, valleys, lakes and rivers, all bathed in sunlight under a radiant sky." Pierre adds that the area is ideal for exploring. "... with ancient villages and rich architectural heritage." Riders can visit the historic towns of Belcastel, Espalion and Conques, each with their own unique attractions and picturesque vistas. Trekking is also a perfect way to mingle with the locals. At day's end, trekkers are welcomed at a local farmhouse where they meet the family, share a delicious home-cooked meal and enjoy a good night's rest.

Upon their return to Pueche Maynade, guests may choose to explore the nearby town of Rodez on foot. Built in the 15th century and known for its outstanding examples of gothic architecture, Rodez is a true gem. It boasts its own Notre Dame cathedral with an impressive belfry offering commanding views of the countryside.

If guests are back home in time for dinner, chances are it'll be prepared by Marie. A doctor by profession, Marie is also an avid chef who specializes in traditional French cooking. She utilizes only fresh ingredients, most of



Appaloosas are a family affair for the Maupas.



Trekkers exploring the Aveyron countryside aboard their Appaloosas encounter ancient villages and a rich architectural heritage.



Even the barns at Pueche Maynade are architecturally interesting.



These 1999 foals carry the bloodlines of Roman's Strawman, Colida, Goer and Skip's Shannon.



Pueche Maynade's family home was built by monks between the 11th and 15th centuries.



which are grown on the farm or provided by local suppliers. A typical meal might include cheese made from the milk of the farm's herd of Brown Swiss cows. Also available are a variety of wines from nearby Marcillae, an area renowned for its vineyards.

For the French and European clientele who visit, Pueche Maynade is something from another world, the world of the American West. People who come from large cities enjoy breathing the fresh air and taking in the expansive vistas.

"The French have long been fascinated by the western cowboy culture," says Arnaud Menesson, a retired French businessman who now lives on a ranch in Bend, Oregon. "It's every executive's dream to put on a cowboy hat and ride the open range."

At Pueche Maynade, the Maupas have made their own dream a reality. Best of all, Pierre says they're willing to share it with anyone who has the same visions.

"If you're looking for simplicity, conviviality and authenticity, and wish to share your love of Appaloosas and the pleasures of western riding, then the Pueche Maynade team is willing to share our home, our family and our friends," concludes Pierre.

Welcome to the Wild West. 🐾



The interior of the Maupas family's home has been carefully restored and updated.

