

# down on the FARM



Lucasia Ranch, Canada

*Immerse yourself in rural life on a working farm or ranch. From tea plantations in Africa to the fertile floodplains of Brazil's greatest wetlands, friendly family-run properties introduce frontier life as it interacts with nature. Our specialists reveal their favourites.*



Lujeri Tea Estate, Malawi



Knapdale Eco Lodge, New Zealand

## Lujeri Tea Estate, Malawi

High in the hills of the picturesque Thyolo Region of Southern Malawi, the Lujeri Tea Estate has been producing the UK's favourite brew for more than 100 years. Tea is one of Malawi's prime exports, so the estate is still fully operational. The crop makes a massive contribution to the stunning scenery of the area, creating rolling, luminous green fields against a backdrop of imposing mountains that include Mulanje, Malawi's highest peak. It really is a magical but little visited area.

Guests can take sole use of a large, colonial-era house on the estate, with four bedrooms, a private pool and manicured gardens with awe-inspiring views. Guided tours of the tea factory are included as part of your stay, and the sprawling estate itself provides some areas of breathtaking beauty. There are small waterfalls, lagoons perfect for swimming and tracts of indigenous forest, all of which can be explored on walks, bike rides or guided drives. You can also arrange to hike up Mount Mulanje, staying in simple mountain chalets along the way.

**James Down:** 01993 838 526



### Knapdale Eco Lodge, New Zealand

Knapdale Eco Lodge provides the perfect combination of great accommodation and superb hosting in a real working farm environment. Completed in 2004, the main lodge is just part of the owners' dream to create an outstanding, safe and ecologically sustainable tourism venture. Winners of the 2006 North Island Farm Forester of the Year Award, Kay and Kees Weytman have already invested huge efforts into planting native trees to encourage the birdlife. They have also ensured that the natural springs around the property entice the deer to engage in their favourite pastime – wallowing! Guests can wander the grounds to meet the chickens, sheep, cattle, emus and deer, assist with feeding or planting, or gather fruit for a freshly squeezed juice. Kay and Kees met when travelling in Nepal and love to share tales of their travels with their guests. With just two guest rooms in the lodge, which is located just outside Gisborne on the North Island's East Cape, you are guaranteed a wonderfully peaceful stay which can be as active or relaxed as you choose.

**Sian Thomas:** 01993 838 822

### Lucasia Ranch, Canada

Lucasia, set in the depths of southern Alberta, is a family-owned working ranch. Wayne and Judy Lucas and their family take pride in their historic ranch and you become very much part of the family, with home cooked meals and comfortable accommodation. Surround yourself with the 4,000 acres of vast open country and join the cowboys as they ride through the picturesque Porcupine Hills of south western Alberta. The emphasis at Lucasia is on scenic rides around the ranch, feeding, fencing and checking the cattle and the breeding horses. The gentle pace of the riding is set by the terrain and respect for the horses. You would normally expect to ride out in the morning and afternoon, returning to the ranch house for lunch. Lessons in Western riding are available at no additional cost and at certain times of the year you can join in with cattle drives. I particularly enjoyed a morning spent moving cattle as I felt fully part of a working ranch. The Lucas family encourage you to immerse yourself in their daily lives, allowing you to live another existence, if only for a few days or weeks.

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Cowboys and cattle at Fazenda Barranco Alto, Brazil

### Fazenda Barranco Alto, Brazil

From Campo Grande an hour's flight crosses rivers and saline lagoons, busy with capybaras, to reach the heart of Brazil's Pantanal wetlands and the Fazenda Barranco Alto. Owned and run by the charming and wonderfully hospitable Leuzinger family, this fazenda has a capacity for just nine guests in simple but comfortable accommodation and offers the ultimate Pantanal experience. In this working organic beef cattle ranch, Barranco Alto's cowboys still use traditional methods to muster the nelore cattle and guests can take part in the cowboys' daily tasks. Other activities include birdwatching excursions, fishing, open-top jeep rides, canoeing, night time riverside barbeques, riding on the fazenda's loved and well looked after horses or simply relaxing in a hammock listening to the chorus of local birds. Barranco Alto's land is a haven for wildlife enthusiasts with opportunities to spot hyacinth macaws, jabiru storks, howler monkeys, caiman, giant otters, tapirs, and, of course, jaguar. Several of these magnificent predators live in the vicinity and some are named after the guests who first sighted them. Excursions are fully flexible and complemented by the guides' excellent knowledge and obvious passion for the area and its wildlife. The farm owners and your hosts, Lucas and Marina, both have natural science degrees that are clearly reflected in their environmental concerns and the way their fazenda is run. They have recently constructed a house to accommodate scientists who come to the ranch to study local ecology, entomology and ethology. With its stunning remote location, abundant wildlife and opportunities to experience daily life on a working ranch, Barranco Alto should be a mandatory stop for any visitor to Brazil.

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