



Performing horses are a part of the annual Wild West Fest event at Tahoe Donner, which takes place on Aug. 31 this year.
COURTESY/TAHOE DONNER

Horse play

Wild West Fest

Last year, the Tahoe Donner homeowners association started what they hoped was a new tradition: the annual Wild West Fest. It's a close to the summer, taking place on Labor Day weekend, and also a chance for people to partake in the living history of the West, especially horse culture.

"The event was inspired by our love of horses, the equestrian lifestyle and the fun we have with our guests at Donner every summer," said Krystal-Rae Mecham, equestrian manager for Tahoe Donner and one of the organizers of the event.

For this year, the Wild West Fest continues, and although there aren't new events as part of it, there are some changes that organizers believe will help it appeal to everyone in the community.

Wild West Fest, which takes place on Aug. 31, features horses and their owners who will show off riding styles during the event.

"We really wanted to incorporate everybody that uses the equestrian center," Mecham said. "People who board horses with us help with the show and are able to showcase their horses, and we can also showcase our Tahoe Donner horses and provide pony rides. There's also a roping station that anyone can try out."

Letting the public see the different breeds of horses is one of the missions of the event. "We talk about the history of the different breeds of horses," Mecham said. "It's quite the range we have here."

There's also the Truckee Donner Junior Horseman Drill Team, which this year will perform twice as part of the event. The team includes horse riders who are age 18 or younger. The group practices every week during the summer and performs at events

other than Wild West Fest, including the annual Truckee Rodeo.

Among the other events at Wild West Fest are a children's craft corral and roping station, arena games like balloon tosses and a photo booth where patrons can dress up in Old West gear.

As for music, there's the band Everyday Outlaw, a country group that hails from North Lake Tahoe. The band includes Jake Zender on guitar and vocals, Morgan Hargrave on guitar, Mark Henasey on bass, and Rory Koff on drums. They've also been featured on radio shows with a tune of their own called, "This Ain't No Love Song."

One of the changes for this year is in price, as Mecham said that tickets for Tahoe Donner members are now \$10 for adults and \$5 for children ages 4-12. For the public, the price is \$15 for adults and \$10 for children. Children age 3 and under have no admission charge. There's also an optional Western barbecue for a separate price—\$20 for adults, \$12 for children—as well as beer and wine that adults can buy at the Trailside Bar near the center. The dinner includes tri-tip, fried chicken or a veggie burger.

The event is also a showcase for the Equestrian Center itself. Located in the Euer Valley, it includes horseback opportunities through high mountain forests as well as meadowlands. Among the other events at the center are riding lessons, trail rides, guided tours and horsemanship camps.

The Equestrian Center is part of the Alder Creek Adventure Center, which also includes a 60-plus mile trail system along with a variety of other amenities.

"We just really want to provide something for everybody," Mecham said about the event. "It's an all-age-range event, and the whole family can come and enjoy it." □

Wild West Fest is on Aug. 31 at the Adler Creek Adventure Center, 15275 Adler Creek Drive, Truckee, California. Get more details at tahoedonner.com

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