

FARMLIVING

THE ART AND THE SCIENCE OF ANTIQUE TRACTORS

About 125 pieces of old farm equipment recently arrived in Lacombe, Alta., to commemorate how farming was done in prairie agriculture's early days. | **Page 20**



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Ranch provides out-of-this-world experience

TALES FROM THE ROAD



ARLENE & ROBIN KARPAN

Long, narrow Falcon Lake stretches along the Trans-Canada Highway in south-eastern Manitoba.

It's part of Whiteshell Provincial Park, a popular wilderness playground in the forested Canadian Shield, with lakes and rivers galore.

We spent a few days at Falcon Beach Ranch, five minutes from the resort community of Falcon Beach on the west end of the lake. Owned by Devin and Kendra Imrie, the ranch specializes in horseback trips, and has three fully-equipped log cabins for rent.

Devin's dad bought the place in 1978 when there was little more than a barn and corrals. The story goes that he used his horse, saddle, and a Ford Falcon valued at \$400 as collateral for a loan.

A lot has changed over the years with expansion of the facilities, moving to a year-round operation, and addition of the impressive cabins and a sauna and outdoor hot tub.

They have more than 50 horses, most of which have been raised and trained on the ranch. In winter, they hitch up their team of Belgian horses for popular sleigh rides through forest trails.

Horseback trips run the gamut from short kid-friendly pony rides to longer wilderness excursions. We opted for the ranch's signature trip — the unusual UFO Ride to a nearby spot that was site of one of Canada's most famous unexplained events.

Guided by Devin, we rode along the forest trail for about 40 minutes to an open area on a broad, rocky outcropping. Here he related the curious story of Stephen Michalak, an amateur geologist who enjoyed prospecting.

On this spot in May 1967, he discovered more than he bargained for.

Michalak reported seeing hovering objects, one of which landed nearby. He described a saucer-like craft with no obvious seams or welds. He thought he could hear voices and went to investigate. When he tried touching the object with his gloved hand, the glove immediately melted. Suddenly he felt a burning pain in his chest while his shirt burst into flames. As he madly tore off the shirt, the craft lifted off and disappeared.

In great pain, he staggered to the highway where he flagged down a passing police car. He got medical help but it took a few days to recov-



Devin Imrie takes Arlene Karpan on his Falcon Beach Ranch's UFO Ride. | ROBIN AND ARLENE KARPAN PHOTOS



There's more to Falcon Lake Ranch than just UFOs. Breathtaking views are also part of the visit.

er. Even after that, he suffered ongoing health problems.

After the incident, the area swarmed with police, military, and researchers trying to find out what happened.

They discovered the soil at the site was highly radioactive.

In the end, it was deemed an unexplained mystery. Authorities found no reason to think that it was a hoax. During Michalak's medical treatment, a psychiatrist concluded that this wasn't a guy who would make up stories. The incident was

featured in various UFO documentaries, including TV shows such as *Unsolved Mysteries*.

At the site, Devin went into great detail describing the encounter and its aftermath. He showed us pictures of Michalak's chest covered in a regular pattern of burn marks, and sketches that Michalak later made of the saucer. Back at the ranch, Kendra showed us the special coin the Canadian Mint produced to commemorate the event. When you shine a black light on it, the flying saucer in the



Imrie explains one of Canada's most famous unexplained events, which is now featured in his ranch's signature trip.

image sends down a beam.

After this other-worldly experience, we decided to keep our feet on the ground. Whiteshell is famous for its many hiking trails and nature walks, a couple of which are nearby.

The Falcon Creek Trail, an easy two-kilometre loop, starts right outside the ranch entrance. It winds through the forest, often crossing wide expanses of smooth rock resembling a paved path and passing by an enormous glacial erratic from the last ice age.

To top off our stay, we walked the pleasant Top of the World Trail on the eastern end of Falcon Lake. After climbing through the forest, we ended at a cliff-top viewpoint, one of the highest spots in the park. From the clearing at the summit, it seemed like we could see forever. Just in case, we kept our eyes peeled for passing UFOs.

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