

Imagine...

By Sandra Reynolds

Play along for just a moment. If you can, find a place peaceful and quiet. Clear your mind. Take a deep breath and completely relax. Close your eyes and try to remember a day that you would say was absolutely the best day of your life. Do you remember if it was a warm, summer day with a cool breeze blowing against your skin? Was it a cool, spring day with birds quietly singing high in a treetop and you remember thinking, "This is a good day."? Was it a day made quiet by white, fallen snow? Do you remember the smell or the hum from sounds of life off in a distance? Do you remember where you were standing or what you were doing? Was it a day when you felt completely calm and quiet deep

down inside and you had a sense everything was right in your world? A day when you felt completely comfortable & thought to yourself, "I love my life and I wouldn't trade places with anyone for any reason!"? That's the best way to describe what life is like EVERY DAY when you share your life with llamas.

Just as it took a moment for you to stop everything and revisit that special day in your life, it can be difficult for llama owners and breeders to quickly put all the thoughts and feelings into words that will adequately answer the question, "Why llamas?".

It's an excellent question that llama owners and breeders have no problem answering. Most will tell

you they fell in love with llamas before having the opportunity to get close to one. Most will remember the first time they saw a llama and how they were intrigued by their peacefulness or drawn in by their majestic appeal

Upon closer examination, you have the opportunity to realize that llamas are equally fascinated with our human behaviors. An up close visit provides the opportunity to experience first hand the tranquilizing effects of the humming sounds llamas make while relaxed or while they communicate with their young, similar to relaxation techniques humans practice in meditation today. If you're fortunate enough to spend time with llamas, you will notice they are proud and possess self-discipline and self-respect at all times. As a result, these amazing creatures constantly demand respect from one another and consistently demonstrate respect towards their humans

"Llamas are very intelligent and they teach me things," says Kyndsey, who likes to visit Lone Star Llama Ranch in Oklahoma each year during the summer. Kyndsey, age 10 and part of Duke University's gifted children's program, likes to spend time with llamas because she plans to be a large animal veterinarian when she graduates from college. "Llamas make me a better person and I think more about my personal behaviors and my behavior towards others when I'm around them. Llamas seem to set examples for humans to live by. They seem to already know things that we humans have to learn, like how to relax and how to control our emotions, taking life more calmly and more easily," says Kyndsey.

"Mother llamas are such good mothers too. They really care about their babies and protect them, like





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all mothers should,” says an admiring Kyndsey.

Ryan, age 9, another visitor at Lone Star Llama Ranch, says, “It’s nice to get out of the city and away from day to day stresses. Being with the llamas is fun and exciting. We all have dogs and cats that we love, but being with llamas is different because they challenge you to be your best and there is so much you can do with them. It’s different, so it’s stimulating and never boring. The male llamas will play King of the Hill the way children like to do. The males are kept in separate pastures from the females, so it’s fun to hang out in their field and watch them interact with each other,” says Ryan. It’s like having horses, only better because you can do so much more with llamas. They are just as interested in you as you are in them and they let you know in their own way that they like to go places with you. When you halt them, they are always ready to go. They are very intelligent and easy to train, which makes it fun.”

“It’s interesting how much llamas teach us and then we help them too. Llamas in the wild only live 15-20 yrs, but in captivity and on llama ranches they can live up to 30 years, if they are well cared for as they should be,” replies Kyndsey. “Llamas and their humans make a great partnership. They’re just fun and a great way to meet great people. Every time we take the llamas somewhere, we meet people. People want to see them and ask questions and you get invited other places. It’s just fun.”

Kyndsey & Ryan like to go into the fields and close their eyes and see if they can guess how many llamas are around them. “You can be on a ranch with 200 llamas and never hear one of them. It’s always peaceful and quiet out here. When you open your eyes, there may be 20 around you, just looking at you and wondering what in the world you are doing. They always come running to greet you when they see you, just in case you have some grain or something

fun planned for them to do,” say Kyndsey and Ryan. “They really like cats too. They are curious like cats; that’s probably why,” adds Ryan.

“I always hear friends and kids at school talking about being bored and constantly trying to find things to do or buy. It always makes me think about living with the llamas and how others don’t know what they’re missing. When you have llamas outside waiting on you to come out to play, you don’t want to stay in bed and sleep in. You can’t wait to get outside and play with them,” says Kyndsey. “Yeah,” added Ryan. “You know they’re waiting for you like your best friends and when you open the door, they surround you and





you get lost in them. It makes you forget about anything you have on your mind at that time and you can't help but enjoy them. You forget about TV and video games and you can't be bored or depressed. It makes you more active and you naturally get more exercise just caring for them and spending time with them. We keep hearing we all need a healthier lifestyle. Llamas just naturally give that to us." says Ryan. "Yeah!" added Kyndsey. "Sometimes kids get hyper, but we have to be calm around the llamas because they are calm and jerky movements scare them. We learn more self-control...they cause us to live a healthier life, meet nice people and they may even be helping us live longer too, so it's good for both of us"

Ryan & Kyndsey also agree, "We both like to watch the babies playing together and running through their pens. They make us laugh a lot and that is supposed to be healthy for us too. We think they are just good for us to have around. Our friends love to hear the stories about our trip and enjoy looking at our cool pictures when we get home too! We wish everyone would get to experience llamas like we do."

"One of my favorite things to do is take one of the llamas on a walk and be alone with him. Llamas like to explore new places, so it's fun to watch their faces when you allow

them time to discover. They learn really fast! Of course, we like that! It's fun to teach them new tricks too! I haven't done it yet, but some kids take llamas to shows where they have obstacles for the llamas to do with them. That would be fun," Kyndsey says. "Llamas are easy to take care of too. It's something the whole family can enjoy together. My parents taught me that everything worth something requires hard work, but this work is fun. I know I have hard work ahead of me to become a veterinarian, but it will be worth it. The experience I am getting now with the llamas will hopefully give me a head start down the road"

"I love dogs," adds Ryan. "But working with llamas is even better. They are big, but I never feel afraid of them. They are so gentle and so calm when they've been trained and when they know they're loved. I love to look up at them with those long necks. Kyndsey and Ryan look forward to being together at the ranch each year and spending time

with the llamas...."They're just COOL," says Kyndsey.

"Most adults and children like to collect things, so the different types of llamas make it even more interesting. I really like the Argentine, Suri and Silky llamas. As with most collections, with llamas there seems to be something for everyone," says Kyndsey. "When I graduate from college and I am a veterinarian, I plan to live with llamas so I will always have my favorite day around me, the day where I say, "This is the best day of my life. I wouldn't trade places with anyone for any reason. I love my life!".

