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Late Rancher Kemper Marley's Swath of Sonoran Desert Asks \$43 Million, Arizona's Most Expensive Ranch

The same family has held the enormous property between Tucson and Nogales for nearly eight decades

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Marley Ranch has been in the same family for nearly 80 years.

HALL AND HALL VIA MANSION GLOBAL LISTINGS

An enormous cattle ranch in Arizona's Sonoran Desert that has been held by the same family for nearly eight decades has just come on the market for \$43 million.

Marley Ranch, co-listed by John Wildin of Hall and Hall and Jim Webb of Hebbard & Webb Inc., is one of the most expensive listings in the state, second only to an unbuilt spec mansion in Scottsdale asking \$48 million.

Webb, who is also the general manager of the property, said Marley Ranch is distinguished by its size and location at more than 114,000 acres between Tucson and Nogales.

"It's historical and unbelievably pretty. It has a lot of romance," Wildin said.

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[The ranch](#) can accommodate up to 1,600 cattle, which, like the equipment, aren't included in the price.

The home is being sold by the family of Kemper and Ethel Marley, who established the ranch in the 1940s and made their primary home in Phoenix. They expanded the property and lived the ranch life to the fullest, even riding with the crews on cattle roundups, according to Webb. Today, a helicopter is used to help corral the cattle.



The fenced-in property is rimmed by high mountains.

Hall and Hall via Mansion Global Listings

The fenced property, rimmed by high mountains, comprises rolling grassland and has 28 pastures, 19 wells—10 of which are solar-equipped—over 52 miles of pipeline, 60 dirt-stock ponds for watering the herds, several large working and branding corrals, and traps.

Although the owner's residence and a separate bunkhouse aren't habitable, there is a manager's double-wide mobile home, three small houses for ranch hands and another mobile home. There also is a shop, a hay shed, a tack room, covered horse pens and a feed yard.

On another part of the property there is a dirt airstrip designed for a twin-engine aircraft. Webb, whose family has been friendly with the Marleys for decades, said "Kemper knew the cattle business inside and out and was very astute about investments. He knew everybody in the state who was a rancher. He was a good horseman, and he knew all the things he needed to do to be a cowboy, and he did them right up to the end of his life."



The ranch includes territory traveled by the Spanish Conquistadors.

Hall and Hall via Mansion Global Listings

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Kemper Marley was a powerful businessman, who built an empire of 50 companies that included cattle farms, a bank, a drugstore chain and a large liquor wholesaler. He died in 1990 at age 83. Ethel Marley died 1997 at age 90

The Marleys used the family's enormous fortune to fund one of Arizona's biggest philanthropic entities. The Kemper & Ethel Marley Foundation has some \$326 million in assets and disbursed more than \$13.8 million in charitable giving in 2024, according to information provided to Mansion Global.

The philanthropy focuses on serving rural communities. Its gifts funded the Marley building at the University of Arizona in Tucson and an astronomical educational facility at the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff as well as donations for education, cancer research and programs for domestic violence survivors.

Kemper Marley's wealth and influence wasn't without controversy. In the 1970s, his name was raised in connection with the murder of Arizona Republic investigative journalist Don Bolles. Authorities investigated whether Bolles had been killed in retaliation for his articles about the rancher but found no evidence linking Kemper Marley to the crime.

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Kyle Best, who has managed the ranch for the Marley family for 25 years, said that working the property has been a source of pride.

"It's been my life," he said, adding that he'll be moving on to manage the four ranches his family owns in Arizona and New Mexico. "My two boys grew up here. It's an opportunity for someone to buy something that has a fine legacy. There aren't many like it. It has a lot of history, and when you learn it, it makes you love it more."

Webb said that Kemper Marley liked things at the ranch to reflect "the wild, woolly West," but that after his death, Ethel made several modern modifications, including fencing in the pastures.

Webb, who owns three Arizona ranches that have a total of 900 cattle, visits the Marley place at least once a month and talks with Best every couple of days.

When the Marleys died the ranch was turned over to their three nephews, but the new generation doesn't have any interest in the ranch, Webb said.

"It's always sad to see these premier ranches go to new owners," he said. "I'm going to miss it."
