

Bandit Trail, Catalonia, Spain

Highlights of the trail include:

- * Accommodation at Jordi's remote horse farm
- * Gallops on ancient bandit trails
- * Picnic at the foot of the Table Mountain
- * Stay in the village of Tavertet at the edge of the Table Mountain
- * Ride through a diverse, fascinating landscape
- * Experience sunrise & sunset at the monastery "El Far", at the highest point of the Table Mountain
- * Picnic with a view on extinct volcanoes

This trail is different depending on when you go;

- In Spring: the soft green of the deciduous forests
- In Summer: a comfortable climate on the high plateau
- In Autumn: see the changing spectacular colour of the leaves and enjoy an "Indian Summer"
- In Winter: perhaps ride in the snow

Day 1

Deep in the Spanish Pyrenees, at the foot of the mountain range of Cavallera, there is the small mountain village called St. Joan de Abadeses. This is the starting point of the Bandit Trail. Over dinner you get to know your guide and chat about the week ahead.

The Bandit Trail is based on the biography of the famous "bandolero" Joan Sala Serrallonga, the Catalonian Robin Hood. In north-east Spain, the bandit Serrallonga wandered around the mountains of Guilleries and Garrotxa during the 17th Century. This vast pathless area of woodland offered good hiding places to outlaws. Canyons, table mountains and volcanoes rise up in this wild landscape. Rivers, lakes and waterfalls provide pleasant refreshment. In the picturesque villages there are still stories told about the gangs of thieves and the Catalan rebels. Today you find an incredible riding paradise where outlaws once hid. The Bandit Trail is an extremely diverse horse riding trail through massive canyons, table mountains and volcanoes.

You should be an experienced rider fit enough for between 5 to 7 hours in the saddle each day. Please note that this ride may not be suitable if you have a strong fear of heights.

Please also note that it is necessary to lead your horse on foot on some sections of the trail. Sometimes the ground can be rocky and uneven and most of the time it will be downhill. On the Bandit Trail you normally need to get off and lead on three days. Each stretch is for about 30 minutes, although on day three you get off and lead twice. It is important that you wear boots which provide support for your ankle and which have a non-slip sole.

The following is the proposed itinerary but please note that changes are possible due to weather and local conditions. On occasions the itinerary may run in reverse.

Transfer from Girona or Barcelona directly to the mountains. Deep in the Spanish Pyrenees, at the foot of the mountain range of Cavallera, there is the small mountain village called St. Joan de Abadeses. This is the starting point of the Bandit Trail. Over dinner you get to know your guide and chat about the week ahead.



Day 2

Meet your horses, saddle up and set off for a long day's riding. The trail weaves through the mountain landscape.

For more information contact in the saddle. Tel: 01299 272 997 Fax: 01299 272 935, Email: rides@inthesaddle.com, Internet: www.inthesaddle.com

High above on a mountain range a small Roman church enjoys an incomparably beautiful position and invites you to stop for a picnic. Stay overnight in a little mountain village in a cosy guesthouse.



Day 3

Ride to the high plateau of Collsacabra, where the merging of the north and south Mediterranean Sea and high mountains is a very special sight.

Lush meadows and dense beech forests cover the land. Ferns spread, the forest thickens and seems to be impassable.

After a long morning's ride you will stop for lunch in a little restaurant (payable locally) and then continue on your way for a shorter afternoon's ride.

In the heart of the valley you find the remote but comfortable guesthouse accommodation of Jordis horse farm. Here you can only hear the wind in the trees, the singing of the cicadas and the splashing of the brook. In the evening perhaps have a "bandit's menu" and a glass of wine with your hosts, who may be persuaded to tell old Catalonian stories of the desperados.



Please note that bathrooms will be shared at this unique guesthouse.

Day 4

Brilliantly the agile Andalucian horses cross the challenging terrain. In spring and summer the deep green beech forests blink through grey rock mountains and in the 'Indian Summer' days of Autumn the forests shimmer like gold.

Vast cattle meadows provide views over the valleys and the mountains and you stop for a picnic in the open air.

At a fast trot and canter you approach the abundant table mountains.



The small village of Tavertet is located majestically, like an eagle's nest, on the edge of a table mountain. From here enjoy the view looking down at a canyon lake that shines in a deep green hue below you.

Day 5

Today you will ride along the edge of the table mountain with its views to the mountains of Guillerries, home of the bandit Serrallonga, the Catalan Robin Hood.

The view from the 'roof top of Catalonia' over the green mountains is unique. Marvel at the evergreen landscape as it contrasts to the red, brown and silver grey rocks of the table mountains.

At a clearing you rest and feel like the 'Outlaws' from long ago, then continue your trek through a hidden mountain village. You will enjoy a picnic lunch somewhere near here.

At the highest point of the table mountain the monastery 'El Far' rises up majestically. It is one of the most beautiful viewpoints of Catalonia. You stay in the area overnight and wake the next morning to the sun rising up over the sea.



Day 6

Today is a long morning ride, leaving the Guillerries behind you and you emerge into the land of extinct volcanoes. The landscape is well cultivated but also has a wilderness about it. The last eruption was some thousand years ago and only the black lava and some craters remind you of the explosions. Stay overnight in the medieval village of Santa Pau.



Day 7

Today you have your final long morning's ride. Trot and canter along the brook "Ser" and leave the area of Garrotxa. The brook leads into the river "Fluvia" which leads in turn to the Costa Brava. Oaks and pines are the dominant trees here and under their pleasant shade you enjoy a bandit's picnic.



After a siesta, you and your horses will be transferred back to Besalú. Which is a beautiful medieval village and you have the chance to explore this enchanting town. The hotel is situated beside the Romanesque bridge with incredible views of the bridge, the Fluvia river and the village of Besalú. Later, enjoy your last farewell dinner.

Day 8

After breakfast, transfer to Barcelona or Girona or stay for another riding trail.