

Herdsmen's Trail, Catalonia, Spain

Highlights of the trail include:

- * Fantastic views
- * Swimming breaks at turquoise natural pools
- * Alta Garrotxa mountains
- * Mountain pastures of the Pyrenees
- * Accommodation in the picturesque mountain village Beget
- * Ride through medieval villages

The Herdsmen's Trail is a challenging and exciting trail ride from the Mediterranean Costa Brava to the alpine mountain peaks of the Pyrenees.

Herdsmen still pass along the so called "Camino Real" through the north eastern part of Catalonia. In winter the herds stay in the mild coastal areas and in summer they make their way up towards the Pyrenees. Round polished, soft, high mountain hills are a contrast to the wild and bizarre rock formations of the Garrotxa Mountains.



You should be an experienced rider fit enough for between around 4 to 7 hours in the saddle each day. The days can be quite long and on some occasions you may not reach your accommodation until c.8pm.

Please 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. It is important that you wear boots which provide support for your ankle and which have a non-slip sole. On the Herdsmen's Trail you will need to get off and lead your horse each day (except normally not the first riding day) for up to 50 minutes

at a time. On days four and five there are three different sections where you get off and lead.

Your first night is normally at Mas Roca, an old mill from the 16th century, which belongs to their friend Bogi, which will enchant you with its unique character. (Please note that the usual accommodation is at Bogi's, but occasionally another guesthouse of a similar standard is used.). What a great place to start your exciting horse riding adventure into the Pyrenees Mountains.

Meet the guide and the rest of the group and learn about the week ahead.

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.

Day 2

After meeting your horses you set off through the foothills of the Pyrenees and follow the river Fluvia in the direction of the mountains - a route taken by old herdsmen like Juan the Shepherd.

The pretty villages of the Alt Empordan are impressive witnesses of an amazing past. In a glade near the river, the friendly "Catalan Buffalo" meets you with a glass of Cava and a beautifully set table. After a siesta you can set a fast pace on the soft loamy paths. When you have finished riding you will be taken to your comfortable accommodation.



Day 3

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

You ride on to the wild hilly countryside of Garrotxa, passing through the medieval town of Besalu and crossing the romantic Llierca bridge. This is a long morning's ride.



You may find some sparkling turquoise rock pools suitable for a refreshing swim.

The agile and fit Andalusian horses will carry you safely over the Santa Barbara pass. From the top you have fantastic views of the rock formations.

Your destination is a small mountain village where you stay overnight.

Day 4

Today you will have a shorter and more relaxed morning's ride. The Llierca valley bordered by limestone escarpments lies in front of you. Only the clattering of the hooves, the splashing of a stream and the calm sounds of the cow bells interrupts the deep quietness of this secluded area.

You may see spectacular birds of prey, reptiles and butterflies and with a bit of luck maybe even a wild pig or a badger.



Depending on the weather, you stop for your picnic under a two thousand year old oak tree or the turquoise water of the streams invites you for a refreshing dip.

Later, reach the picturesque mountain village of Beget, where you stay the night.

Day 5

You ride deeper into the Pyrenees on an ancient medieval merchant's path which takes you further into the mountains. Beech, oak and chestnut forests cover the hills and beyond the forests are the alpine meadows (the endless realm of the herdsmen) where Buffalo prepares a picnic on the river side.



The view of the surrounding 9,000 feet high mountains is tremendous.

You ride through meadows reaching the small town of Camprodon on the Pyrenees river Ter.

Day 6

It's an early start to ascend to the high regions of the Pyrenees. The horses carry you over the immense cattle fields where you meet cows, sheep, goats and the occasional wild Pyrenean horse. These high regions have an alpine character, with narcissi, iris, gentian and alpine roses transforming the meadows into carpets of flowers.



When you reach a high plateau (6,000 feet) you are rewarded with a magnificent view. To the west you can see the highest peak of Catalonia and to the east the Mediterranean glistens a deep blue.

Enjoy a picnic and siesta and maybe observe a vulture family rising into the sky on the thermals. Then later ride on secluded paths through this wonderful mountain paradise down to the small town of the town of St. Joan de les Abadesses. Tonight you stay in a mountain hostel and enjoy a farewell dinner.



Day 7

After breakfast those who must leave will transfer to Barcelona or Girona.

Some fortunate people will stay on to join the Bandolero Serrallonga trail (Bandit Trail) riding through canyons, table mountains and volcanoes and home to the horse base.

Accommodation

The accommodation is clean and comfortable and ranges from hostels to guesthouses. These include rural guesthouses, pensions and small hotels. On most rides the horses are corralled in nearby paddocks and you will then walk a short distance to your accommodation for the night. When on a trail ride you will have to carry your own bags from reception to and from your room, sometimes up staircases.

Twin and double rooms are available and in most cases these have private bathrooms, although the bathroom is not always adjoining. Occasionally two bedrooms may share a bathroom.

It is possible to request a single room in advance and a single supplement is payable.

If you are willing to share then normally a single supplement is payable when booking and refunded only once a sharer has been found for you.

