

Outlaw Trail, Catalonia, Spain

Day 1

The Outlaw Trail is a challenging trail following a circular route into France and back through the Pyrenees mountains.

You should be an experienced rider fit enough for between 5 to 8 hours in the saddle each day.

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 you will be required to hike both up and downhill whilst leading your horse. It is important that you wear boots which provide support for your ankle and which have a non-slip sole.

The area you ride within used to be frequented by legendary bands of outlaws, the so called Trabucaires. The Trabuc is a firearm with a trumpet shaped muzzle and fired tiny pieces of iron at its target. The bandits who used the Trabuc were nicknamed the Trabucaires.

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.

You are met and transferred to the horses' base at Mas Alba (on some rides you stay at Bordils, or other accommodation of equal standard). Mas Alba is a typical Catalan natural stone house dating from the 16th century. Since that time, this wonderful farm has been run by the same family. From here you overlook green meadows, forests and the horse pastures. The unique light transforms the surroundings into a picturesque painting. What a beautiful place to begin your holiday.



Day 2

After meeting your horses in the morning you set off and the path you follow soon turns into thick forest. Your trail will move in loops through the hills and around the edges of fields, occasionally clattering through villages built of natural stone.

Later you cross the river taking you nearer the mountains of the Pyrenees.

Tonight you stay at a little schoolhouse where Clara and Jordi's family welcome you (or similar).



Day 3

The journey from your accommodation takes you through varying landscape that changes from rocky and steep to downhill and soft.

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Picnic lunch beside a freshwater pool provides the opportunity for a cooling dip.

After lunch you ride onto the beginnings of the mountain landscape, ending your day's ride with a steep descent into a medieval village. This evening you stay at a little hostel by the river and a 'gourmet chef de cuisine' will cook you some delicious Catalan cuisine for supper.



Day 4

This morning you ride towards the lake climbing past the durmast oak and cork oak trees. Once at the lake you should be able to enjoy some faster canters before your picnic lunch stop.

After lunch you will really start to feel like you are getting closer to France and following a rustic path you eventually cross the border. This pass was often used as an escape route by both the outlaws and the Catalan Republicans during the Spanish Civil War of the 19th century. The thick forest of beech and chestnut trees creates a feeling of mystery and intrigue along the way.

Tonight you stay at a simple but cosy guesthouse (Hostal de Trabucaires) which in years gone by was the preferred meeting point for the outlaw.



Day 5

You look onto the Canigou mountain, which at 2,700 m is the highest point in the north and the peak is considered to be sacred in Catalan folktales. Your ride will then pass through the Albera mountains and take you back into Spain.

Magically somewhere between the mountains and valleys, a stunning castle rises from the forests. Even today nobody knows who occupied this castle and so over lunch you may ponder this question, and dream of a time where knights lived and rode the same paths as yourself with their trusty steeds.

This afternoon takes you to the foot of the Albera mountains and into the lowlands of the Emporda. Eventually after a long days ride you are rewarded with a glimpse of the Mediterranean coast and the sea.



Day 6

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Today's ride takes you through the grasslands containing large estates and rich medieval stone villages. The Trabucaires often raided these markets stealing goods on their way to France back in the 19th century. As you venture further south you start to ride through the wetlands. Maybe now is the time for a canter alongside the rice paddy fields before reaching the coast.



Day 7

An early start rewards you with a beach gallop, miles of sandy beach ahead to enjoy in the morning sea air.

Eventually you leave the sea air behind and the back country awaits with its hills and fields. This ride takes you through beautiful villages built from cobbled and natural stone.

Eventually you reach your final destination of Mas Alba, having ridden a full circle into France and back.



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