



RIDE WORLD WIDE

Colombia

Ride Information Sheet

Monday 12th to Wednesday 21st March 2018

This new ride has been developed by our long term partner in South America, Sally Vergette, who has pioneered rides in Ecuador and Uruguay and also put together many group trips to other parts of South America. Sally's mission is always to find good quality horses and an excellent riding experience - but also important are dedicated local guides, who are passionate about their horses, their area, its history and customs. This ride, although recce'd in part previously, is a new itinerary which combines riding in two distinct areas of this wonderful country. Travelling first to the coffee plantations and dense jungle of Quindio province, the route follows narrow tracks through forest with steep climbs to hidden waterfalls; there will be chances to canter through banana plantations and join local cowboys riding along cobbled village streets. The second part heads to the highlands north of Bogota and the provinces of Cundinamarca and Boyaca, visiting remote colonial haciendas, climbing into the Oriental mountain range and crossing high desert plains. The result should be a wonderfully exciting Colombian adventure!



The Horses The horses used are mostly the local Colombian criollo crosses, bred for farm work and transport in the mountains. They are between 14.2hh and 15.2hh, generally fairly narrow in build but strong, calm, sure-footed and very well suited to the terrain. Saddles are locally made 'trail' saddles, similar to a western in style with high front and back but usually without the pommel. Bridles are simple local style and bits typically South American with a long shank. Most of the horses are trained western style so are used to neck reining and go best when ridden with a loose, relaxed contact with the mouth. Saddle-bags will be provided for personal belongings when riding, with vehicles (or sometimes mules) transporting luggage and other equipment. The rider weight limit is 90kg (14st 2lbs) - please check with us if you are close to this (some slightly heavier experienced riders may be taken but this has to be by prior arrangement only).

Riding On most days there will be around 5 to 7 hours in the saddle, although the first two days are shorter so you can get used to the horses and tack. On the last day there is no riding except for the opportunity to try a 'Paso Fino', one of the magical quick-stepping Colombian horses. Local guides, from the area you are in will lead the way and there will be grooms to ride back up, prepare and help with the horses. There will be a change to new horses at least once during the ride itinerary. A medical kit for both horses and riders will be carried along with a mobile 'phone for emergencies. The ride will be run for a maximum of 10 riding guests.



Pace & Terrain The riding pace is expected to vary from day to day according to the terrain and altitude and will also depend on the ability of the group, but overall expect a slow to moderate pace due to the terrain. There will be some chances for long canters on sandy tracks, but also some steep climbs, riding on narrow tracks through thick forest and cobbled streets into and out of villages. In some places you may need to get off to lead your horse over steep, rough or rocky ground. The route goes through a variety of landscapes, from the verdant coffee plantations and surrounding jungle to the higher altitude mountains and dusty desert plains.

Riding Experience To participate in the ride you must be a reasonably competent rider who is used to riding in open country and over varied terrain. As a minimum to join the ride, you should be comfortable, well balanced and secure in the saddle at a walk, trot and canter and able to control a well-schooled horse at all paces. Hours on some days will be quite long and you are bound to enjoy the ride much more if you are reasonably riding fit. If you are not used to riding for several hours a day, we recommend concentrated practice before you go to get used to the hours in the saddle.

Accommodation Accommodation is at a selection of Colombia's old haciendas and "posadas" (village or country inns). The haciendas are (or once were) farming estates and staying at them gives a wonderful insight into Spanish colonial life. Posadas are small and chosen, as far as possible, for their charm and character. All accommodation varies in size, style and character. It is relatively simple but is also reasonably comfortable and bedrooms have private bathrooms throughout. Single rooms are possible on request (some triple rooms may also be possible if you are travelling with friends and wish to avoid a single supplement - please let us know your requirements when you book and we will do our best).



[3]

Meals Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included each day. Food will include a combination of European and typical Colombian dishes. Lunches may either be picnics carried in saddle-bags or provided by a “posada”. Vegetarians can be catered for with prior notice but please tell us in advance of any dietary restrictions so that special arrangements can be made. Bottled water and some soft drinks are included (you may well be invited to try the locally made hooch!) with wine and beer available for purchase – although most haciendas have a pretty limited range.

Weather and Altitude Colombia is a tropical country and temperatures are pretty similar year round. The first half of the ride takes place in the lower altitude areas where coffee and bananas flourish. Altitudes here are between about 1500m and 1800m and daytime temperatures may be in the mid to high 20’s C, dropping to around 15 C at night. The second part will be in higher mountains, in the Cordillera Oriental where altitudes are between 1500m and 2500m. Daytime temperatures are likely to be in the low 20sC, dropping to around 12 C at night. April and November are usually Colombia’s wettest months on average but rain is possible at anytime.

What to bring We will send you a suggested kit list when your booking is confirmed.



Example Itinerary An example of the itinerary planned is set out below but please note this is only an example and your guide may change the day-by-day route if the weather or other local conditions require. This is also one of the first rides in this area so note that plans are changeable!

[Sunday 11th March - Own arrangements to arrive Bogota and for the night in this fascinating city (we can suggest / book flights & hotels)].

Monday 12th March - You will be met at Bogota Airport by your guide and accompanied on flight [AV9837 departing 09.12 and arriving 10.15] in Armenia, the heart of Colombia’s coffee region. Meet the team and after introductions, a drive of about 30 minutes through the province of Quindio, famous not only for coffee but also banana and avocado farms. Arriving at a coffee plantation, there may be a chance to witness the whole process of coffee making, from picking the beans to roasting and after the plantation tour, lunch, accompanied of course by a great cup of Colombian coffee! After lunch change into riding clothes, meet the horses and set off on a two hour introductory ride to the hacienda where the night is spent. Dinner and night. (L,D)

Tuesday 13th March - Breakfast and after tacking up set off riding through very tropical scenery. Pass through coffee and banana plantations, always with a wonderful mountainous backdrop to arrive at a traditional country house for lunch. Then continue along tracks and paths to another beautiful converted hacienda where the night is spent (about 4 hours riding). (B,L,D)

[4]

Wednesday 14th March - Today's ride is about 7 hours (32km), ending at a charming, traditional hotel. Leaving the coffee plantations behind, begin climbing into the hills passing close to a peak known as 'the pencil' with lots of springs bubbling out of the hillside. Picnic lunch and in the afternoon, continue through tropical montane forest, finally descending to the hotel for dinner and the night. (B,L,D)

Thursday 15th March - Breakfast and set off again, with about 6 hours riding today. Starting first on a short stretch of paved road, the route then heads along country lanes bordered by native vegetation. Passing streams and rivers with opportunities to see a host of different birdlife, ride on to Salento. This is a famous regional town, the oldest established settlement in the beautiful province of Quindio. There will be time to wander the quaint streets, lined with the colourful wood houses and for some shopping - local handicrafts include ponchos, hats and of course the excellent coffee. Dinner and night at an hotel in Salento. (B,L,D)

Friday 16th March - The nearby Cocora Valley is not to be missed - it is here that you can see groves of Wax Palm - the tallest palm in the world sometimes reaching over 60 metres in height and Colombia's national tree. Leaving Salento in jeeps, drive a short way to meet a group of local horses for a two hour ride into the Cocora Valley. After a traditional lunch including 'patacones' you will then be driven back to Armenia in time for flight [AV9844, departing 15.51 and arriving Bogota 16.58]. On arrival at Bogota airport you will be met and driven about 2 hours to an old hacienda for dinner and the night. (B,L,D)



Saturday 17th March - Breakfast at the hacienda and then allocation of new horses. Once settled, set off on a 3 hour ride along lanes and grassy tracks to a lovely cobble stone village. Lunch on arrival and check-in to a gorgeous Posada (small hotel) in the village. In the afternoon an optional afternoon ride (about 2 hours) into the hills above the village - or those who wish can browse the village workshops which produce woollen goods. Dinner and overnight at the posada. (B,L,D)

Sunday 18th March - Today's ride is to an hacienda established centuries ago and still an important working farm, with a large dairy herd and stud farm of draught horses. Traversing the verdant Ubaté Valley along ancient routes long used by local horsemen, stop for lunch at another old hacienda before riding on to Potosi for the night. During the evening, you may be serenaded a group of local musicians playing 'Carranguero' folk music. Dinner and night hacienda Potosi. (B,L,D)

[5]

Monday 19th March - Breakfast followed by a 20 minute drive to re-join the horses. You have about 35km to cover today (approx.. 7 hrs riding); the scenery changing dramatically as you ride, first through oak forests, then into the hills and across the border between the Cundinamarca and Boyaca provinces. Finally descend to an Agustin Monastery established in 1604 for dinner and the night. The evening activity may be an initiation into the Colombian game of 'Tejo' - with sticky clay and fire crackers - a team game cannot be missed! (B,L,D)

Tuesday 20th March - Set off from the Monastery, soon climbing up to arid plains where plants are adapted to the harsh environment of the desert-like conditions. Ride past an important spiritual site known as the 'witches patio' - an ancient astronomical observatory steeped in legends and myths. Five hours riding brings you to the outskirts of Villa de Leyva, founded in 1572 and a national monument. A short transfer to the magnificent main square and a nearby hotel. The afternoon free to relax at this small characterful hotel, walk through the cobbled streets and browse the shops selling Colombian textiles, jewellery and simple local delicacies. A special farewell dinner and final night in Villa de Leyva. (B,L,D)



Wednesday 21st March - After breakfast and a leisurely start, you will be driven to a Colombian Stud where you can see several of the famous Colombian Paso Fino show horses in action. There are a couple of distinct breeds and the differences in their paces will be explained. There is usually time to watch the horses being worked on the boards (a technique to enable the judges to hear their gait) and there may be a chance to ride one of the horses if you wish. Lunch at the stud and then an hour's drive to a fascinating tack shop in Bogota where you can buy head collars with beautiful leatherwork or simply admire the various types of saddle from all over Colombia. Transfer to Bogota airport in time for evening flights home [*own flight arrangements eg Avianca flight AV120, departing 23.04 and arriving London Heathrow 14.30 the next day*] (B,L)

Rates 2018

Please note that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are quoted in USD. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the USD/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay.

Price - USD 3850 (assumes a group of 6-10 riders)

Single supplement - USD 350

Rate INCLUDES 9 nights twin / double accommodation (single if paying supplement), all riding, services of an English speaking bilingual guide, back up and riding equipment, meals (lunch 12th to lunch 21st March), mineral water, coffee & tea and all land transfers with the group at set times as indicated.

Rate EXCLUDES International flights / travel to Bogota and taxes, internal flights Bogota to Armenia and taxes, any visa fees, all drinks / bar bills (except coffee, tea & mineral water), personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have with cover to ride), any gratuities you wish to leave and personal items / extras at hotels such as shopping, telephone calls etc.

Single supplements - The rates quoted above assume twin accommodation. If you are travelling alone, the single supplement indicated will be payable to book a single room at hotels and haciendas. This is compulsory when you book if you are travelling alone but if you are prepared to share a twin or triple room with other guests please let us know and we will see if we can find another person to share with you. If we find a sharer(s) the supplement will not be charged, however sharers cannot be guaranteed and if there is no-one to share with, the supplement will be payable.

Flight and Travel information: The meeting point is Bogota airport on the morning of Monday 12th March. There are direct overnight flights from London to Bogota with Avianca, Colombian Airlines, departing London Heathrow around 22.00 and arriving Bogota early the following morning. On the return the Avianca direct flight is again overnight, leaving Bogota at about 23.00 and arriving Heathrow about 14.00 the next day.

You also need to book an internal flight from Bogota to Armenia and back - there are several flights each day BUT you need to book **the same flights as those listed on the itinerary. Please liaise with us BEFORE booking** to double check timings. Internal flights are normally cheaper if booked in conjunction with an International connection although we can book locally if necessary.

Other options for flights to Bogota are via Madrid with Iberia, via Mexico City with Aero Mexico, or via Paris with Air France.

Rates vary with the season and airline but expect to pay from around £850-£950 per person for an economy return. **Please call us if you would like further information on flights, for a quote or to book. We would be happy to book flights for you (our ATOL number for flight bookings is 6213).**

General visa and health information (NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking and you should always consult a health professional for more detailed & personalised advice).

Visas If you hold a full British Passport and are visiting Colombia for a holiday only and staying less than 90 days you do not need to arrange a visa in advance.

Health Most travellers are recommended to ensure they have up to date vaccinations against Hepatitis A & Tetanus. For some travellers, vaccination against Typhoid & Yellow Fever may also be recommended, with a Yellow Fever vaccination certificate required if travelling from an area of Yellow Fever transmission. There is a low risk of Malaria on the first part of the ride; no risk on the second part in the highlands - but you will be advised to take a course of anti-malarials. **You should always consult a health professional for further and more detailed advice.**

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