



## High Pyrenees Ride 2nd to 8th July

*“Only if you have been in the deepest valley, can you ever know how magnificent it is to be on the highest mountain.”  
(Richard M. Nixon)*

**Sunday 2nd July** - A long queue at check-in... much easier to travel with hand luggage only (yes it is possible to pack 1 weeks' worth of clothes, a riding hat and boots in hand luggage!). On arrival at Mas Batllo in L'Abella a cold beer got us into the holiday spirit before meeting Xavi and our horses. Xavi speaks very little English but his wife Montse as well as Sergi (the back-up guide) were good translators, telling us about the horses. Happy Horses = Happy Clients - I could relax a little. There was so much to eat at dinner - if every meal was like that we'd soon be 2 stone heavier!



**Monday 3rd July** - A prompt start at 9.30am with the horses and Tom the collie (aptly named after the Sat Nav) ready for us, seeing a machete on Xavi's saddle was rather alarming but apparently it comes in very handy! Soon we'd ridden up 1400m - the views were incredible but nothing compared to those we'd come across the higher we rode. My hunting eye caught glimpses of wild deer running down the mountain and a herd of Percheron horses running wild with cattle.... a sight which became quite normal as the week progressed. One horse showing signs of colic soon recovered after Xavi poured a bottle of Olive Oil down its throat - olive oil is now in my feed store for future bouts of colic! Lunch was delicious roast chicken and salad before we set off on our descent, leading the horses down a mountain track for about 2km. Amber (my horse) loved scratching on trees and bushes - she was like Baloo in the jungle book! The afternoon sun was very hot so we de-toured to avoid the tarmac road, travelling you might say, “off-piste” with river crossings, a swarm of bees and overgrown woodland to negotiate.





**Tuesday 4th July** - After leaving the village of Setcases, up and up we rode... the peak, we needed to reach still seemed so far away. Lakes along the way were a welcome refreshment for Tom. Eventually we reached Nou Creus, at the height of 2600m... incredible views surrounded us. Photos before dismounting to lead the clever little horses along a very narrow path - unnerving at times but they were so nimble. In the afternoon, the machete came out several times and we soon realised that when it did, it meant we were going “off-piste”. A long 8 hour day covering 29km and 3000m up and down the mountain.



**Wednesday 5th July** - Today was “D” day - the longest ride of the trip and probably the most enduring I’ve had on a horse, though I’ve had some very tardy days hunting! Not long after setting off, the track got steeper and steeper so we lead our horses holding the tail of the one in front to help us climb - a first for me! You really do need to be fit for this ride - the track wasn’t quite vertical but it wasn’t far off! Approaching the border with France at 2600m we were on top of the world. Zig zagging our way along the border, we crossed into France, for a late lunch in a magical spot. Back on again at 4pm, Xavi said (with a twinkle in his eyes); “a minimum 2 hours”. “Branch, Branch, Branch” was mostly heard as we continued picking our way down. I had huge faith in Xavi but at 7.30pm when we were still high amongst the trees I thought we must be lost in the forest... Xavi promised we wouldn’t miss dinner - but I knew the Spanish ate very late so this did not console me! Finally at 8.30pm we reached the stables where the horses were staying before we were driven to our hotel in Pugador. Today had been 11 hours, we’d covered 41km, reached a max height of 2600m and climbed 1750m - no wonder I was shattered!





**Thursday 6th July** - I winced at the thought of getting on Amber again - she was a lovely horse but I was so tired! Xavi and Sergi promised a short day - a joke all day long as Xavi always said “just 2 hours” - yesterday that 2 hours was 4 ½ hours! Adria met us and cooked a scrumptious bbq lunch before bidding us farewell and taking Tom back to Mas Batllo - we were going to miss our satnav. The horses enjoyed left over water melon before we set off to the popular ski resort of La Molina.



**Friday 7th August** - Riding through ski slopes (without snow) is a different experience.... I'd stick to blue and green rather than red and blacks! Xavi pointed to the restaurant, a dot on the horizon... Lunch wouldn't be anytime soon. Down we went knowing we had to climb all the way up to the other side... we found ourselves on a good dirt track, however it soon became apparent this was for mountain bikes as several bikers came flying down the mountain towards us. Higher and higher we climbed, the wind picking up as we reached Las Barracas de Rus - thank goodness lunch was in a restaurant and not out in the wind. Following a mountain track we weaved our way back into La Molina for our final night.



Although the pace of this ride is slow, it is not for the faint hearted! You need to be physically fit and a confident rider to tackle the tricky terrain both whilst riding and walking! The mountain scenery is truly stunning and this 6 night ride really is a bargain from as little as 1250 Euros per person.

*“Memories made in the Mountains stay in our hearts forever.”*