



RIDE WORLD WIDE

MEXICO

SILVER TRAIL & HIGHLANDS 2024

RIDE INFORMATION

These rides take place in the central highlands “Free and Sovereign State” of *Guanajuato*, considered to be the cradle of Mexico’s Independence. *The rides follow part of the “Camino Real de Tierra Adentro”, the Inlands Royal Path, also known as the “Ruta de la Plata”, the Silver Road.* This trade route started in the time of Hernan Cortes, during the 16th century, and its importance increased as the new of mining cities of Zacatecas, San Luis Potosi, Guanajuato, Real del Monte and Sombreret developed. Enduring nearly 4 centuries and extending 2560km, it connected Mexico City with Santa Fe USA, and was a lifeline for rural and mining communities. The adventure takes you along forest tracks, across farmland and along little used roads, to the cities of Guanajuato & Dolores Hidalgo - on the Silver Trail you also visit the beautiful city of San Miguel de Allende. Passing through authentic rural communities, you will ride to the heart of Mexico’s highlands, climbing to altitudes of up to 2900m, to discover the “Mexico Profundo & Desconocido” - the “deep and unknown” which few tourists witness.



DATES

7 and 8 night itineraries, usually with 6 days riding, are run from set dates. Other rides for groups of 4 to 8 can be run by arrangement (usually avoiding the months of November & April to June). Please see set dates overleaf and contact us to discuss dates, your plans and availability.

HORSES

The horses are authentically Mexican and breeds include Aztecas, Mexican Criollos and some American Quarterhorse crosses, bred for farm and cattle work. 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. 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.

TACK

Saddles are Western style, there are some locally made ‘charro’ saddles (Mexican cowboy), and also a couple of English saddles which can be requested. The western saddles are designed for long hours but if you want extra comfort you can take a seat saver (this needs to be a western fit version). Bridles are simple and local style - bits are typically South American with a long shank. Saddle-bags will be provided for personal belongings when riding, with vehicles transporting luggage and other equipment.

RIDING

On most days there will be around 6 to 8 hours in the saddle - on the Silver Trail there is one shorter day of 3 to 4 hours. On the last day of the Central Highlands and Cristo Rey Pilgrimage there is no riding and you have a chance to explore the town of Dolores Hidalgo and Leon city (respectively). The Catrina Ride includes just 4 full riding days with other days spent at the festival. As well as your English speaking guide (Angel Gutierrez) there will be back up team, with a groom / back up rider and driver to prepare and help with the horses. A medical kit for both horses and riders will be carried along with a mobile 'phone for emergencies. There is a maximum of 12 riding guests on most trails (max 14 on Cristo del Rey Pilgrimage & Catrina Ride).

WEIGHT LIMIT

100kg (16 stone) - please check with us if you are close to this.



PACE & TERRAIN

The riding pace varies 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. There will be some chances for canters on dirt tracks, but also some quite steep climbs, riding through scrubland with cactus and thorn bushes typical of the western films, and on cobbled or tarmac 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.

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.

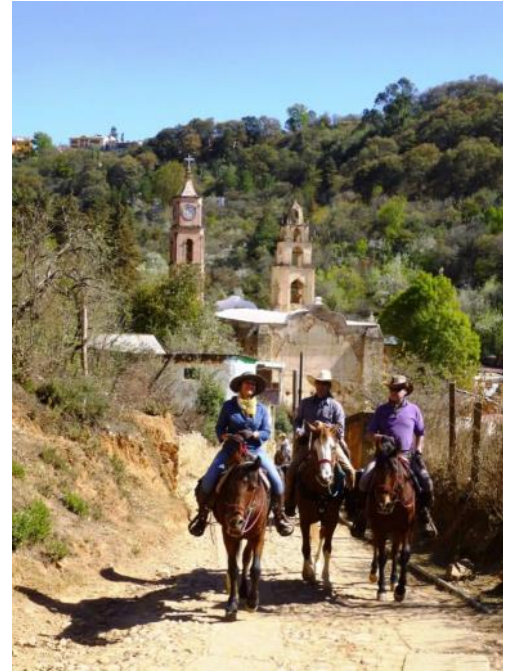


ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation is quite varied in style and is chosen, as far as possible, for its position and character. The first nights of the Silver Trail and Central Highland rides are spent at a working ranch where accommodation is charming but simple and bathrooms are shared. Other nights on the Silver Trail are all in comfortable hotels, except for one night in a mountain refuge. The hotel rooms all have their own bathrooms (usually a shower rather than bathtub) and are 2* to 3*. The mountain refuge has shared bathrooms (2 between the group), one room has 5 beds, dormitory style, and there are 3 other rooms with double or twin beds. On the Central Highlands ride 4 nights are spent camping, using small 2 man “dome” tents with camp beds (you need to take your own sleeping bag). There is a simple shower tent and also long drop loo tent. 2 nights are spent at hotels (these are a little more simple than on the Silver Trail). On the Catarina Ride & Cristo Rey Pilgrimage nights are spent in mixture of hotels and haciendas (with one night camping on Cristo Rey). Single rooms / tents are usually possible on request - but there are limited rooms (and tents) so cannot be guaranteed - please let us know your preferences when you book.

MEALS

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included each day. Mexico is well known for its wonderful and varied cuisine, with unique flavours and textures. An emphasis is made to try the regional cooking and you will have a chance to taste typical dishes, often pre-hispanic ancestral recipes. Vegetarians can be catered for with prior notice but please tell us in advance of any dietary restrictions so that any special arrangements can be made. Drinks during the ride are not included - except for bottled water and the occasional cocktail. You will be given the option to pay in advance for the “Cowboy bar” carried by the back up which include local beers, wine and spirits (including tequila and the less known charanda). You will need to pay for all drinks at restaurants and hotels (whether you pay the Cowboy bar or not).



WEATHER & ALTITUDE

Guanajuato is at an altitude of 2000 meters and on the riding route altitudes vary between 1900m and 2900m. The climate is sub-tropical and average temperatures do not vary hugely. During winter months (December to February) daytime temperatures around 23 C and nights down to as low as 5 C; during the summer they are around 30C in the day, down to 14C at night. Rain can occur at anytime, though, based on averages, June to October are the wetter months. As you are in the mountains weather can be changeable.

WHAT TO BRING

We will send you a list when you book.

ITINERARY

An example itinerary for the Silver Trail 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! Please enquire for the day by day itineraries of the other programs.

Day 1 - Own arrangements to make your way to Guanajuato City (we can quote for flights / travel if required). You will be met at 17.00 and transferred about 30 minutes to Rancho Colomitos, a traditional Mexican ranch.

ITINERARY cont.

Meet the team and after introductions there will be a trip briefing and welcome cocktail. A barbecue dinner and night at Rancho Colomitos. (D)

Day 2 - After a delicious breakfast at the ranch, meet the horses, and after allocation you set off riding from Colomitos to Peñafiel, a ride through rural communities of the area. Reaching the foothills of the Montecillo mountains you begin to climb towards the old Cardones Hacienda at around 2,230 meters. The landscape changes as you progress, from the semi-desert to the majesty of the central mountain range - stunning natural scenery that will remind you of the westerns films of Clint Eastwood & John Wayne. You will see several ancient ruins of mines and haciendas from Spanish colonial times, some of them several hundred years old. Cross the "Cardo River" - where there may be a chance to swim in a small natural pool. Continuing to the top of the ridge you reach, the ancient remains of the Cardones Hacienda and its Lienzo Charro (Mexican horse Arena) at Peñafiel. The horses remain here for the night, and riders will be transferred by car to a hotel located in the heart of Guanajuato's historic center. Guanajuato is said to be the most beautiful city in Mexico, containing elements from the two main cultures, the indigenous and Hispanic. Dinner will be in the garden of the Union where every night regional musicians serenade the walkers with "Rancheras" (traditional songs). A magical atmosphere. Night at the Hotel Posada Santa Fe or similar. (B,L,D)

Day 3 - Breakfast and transfer back to meet the horses. Set off riding from the old silver mine towards the Village of Santa Rosa, located in the heart of the central highlands. This will be a beautiful day as you follow the old royal road to heights of up to 2,900 meters. You will pass abandoned gold and silver mines, as well as the beautiful rural communities of Peñafiel, Monte San Nicolas, Peregrina and Santa Rosa, and will also see the "Christ of Cubilete" a mountain considered to be the geographic centre of Mexico. In the late afternoon you arrive at the mountain retreat where the night is spent. Cocktails and tequila tasting on the terrace, accompanied by soft Mexican music, followed by a typical Mexican dinner. Night at the mountain retreat. (B,L,D)

Day 4 - After breakfast prepare for a long day through the central highlands. The ride is about 37 km, though some of the most bio-diversified areas of the state - high mountains, with oak, pine and arbutus forests. The sound of birds will follow you on your journey, and there are amazing views across mountains and semi-desert. You may well see footprints of coyote, puma and raccoon on the trail - actual sightings of these shy beasts are unlikely but possible! In the late afternoon you reach the stables of an old hacienda where the horses will remain for the night. Riders will be driven to a simple hotel in the historical city of Dolores Hidalgo. Dinner and night at Hotel Hidalgo (or similar). (B,L,D)



Day 5 - Today you ride through one of the most important historical cities of Mexico, known as the "Cradle of Mexican Independence". The famous cry for freedom (Grito de Libertad), was the call to take up arms against the colonial regime and the Spanish crown. It was initiated at dawn on 16th September 1810 by the priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla. A brief tour of the town by horse, passing some of the most emblematic buildings of Mexico's war for independence. Lunch will be at a local restaurant and in the evening you may visit the "Wine Museum" and the "Real Mexican Cantina" or you can explore the various shops with their great variety of local handicrafts. Dinner will be in a typical and unique Mexican restaurant situated in the central park, famous for its delicious traditional dishes. The fireflies and scent of flowers create a wonderful ambience. Night at Hotel Hidalgo (or similar). (B,L,D)

ITINERARY cont.

Day 6 - In the morning, after breakfast accompanied by a typical Mexican coffee “café de la olla”, you set off riding again, heading towards to the town of Atotonilco. Ride through the Cactus Valley and past the historic hacienda “La Erre”, an interesting property which played an important role during the war for independence. Stop a picnic for lunch, in a picturesque town, close to an old chapel of the Barron community. In the afternoon you reach Atotonilco, where you will see the imposing walls of the XVIII century church. This invaluable architectural treasure is known as the Sistine Chapel of Mexico due to its beautiful murals and other decorations. Dinner and night at the Nirvana Hotel & Spa (or similar) (B,L,D)



Day 7 - In the morning, after breakfast served by the pool, you mount up again, heading for your final destination, **San Miguel de Allende**. The route follows old roads that were used during the War of Independence and the Mexican Revolution. As you ride along the shores of the river Laja you will pass shrines left by the indigenous population, pre-Colombian tribes who worshipped this land. Stop for a picnic lunch and in the afternoon the ride takes you through a unique landscape, a combination of semi-desert and wetlands, makes today's ride all the more interesting. There is a marvelous tranquility as you pass rural scenes and each step of your horse is an enjoyment. In the late afternoon you arrive at San Miguel de Allende (UNESCO World Heritage Site). Your hotel is just a few steps away from the main tourist attractions, museums, restaurants and bars. San Miguel is a town full of magic and mysticism - a place full of culture and art and there is almost always a festival or event taking place. Dinner will be at a local restaurant. Night at Hotel Acuarela (or similar). (B,L,D)

Day 8 - Breakfast and own arrangements for onward travel (extra nights can be booked if you would like to spend longer in San Miguel). (B)



DATES & RATES 2024

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

Silver Trail (7 nights) - USD 2995 per person

Single supplement - USD 495

17th to 24th January

20th to 27th March

2nd to 9th October

7th to 14th February

21st to 28th August

4th to 11th December

6th to 13th March

4th to 11th September

Central Highlands Ride (8 nights) - USD 2315 per person

Single supplement - USD 275

19th to 27th February

5th to 13th August

16th to 24th September

Cristo Rey Pilgrimage (8 nights) - USD 3955 per person

Single supplement - not usually possible

3rd to 11th January

Catrina - Day of the Dead Ride (8 nights) - USD 3955

Single supplement - not usually possible

31st October to 8th November



Rate INCLUDES 7 or 8 nights shared accommodation, all riding, services of an English speaking bilingual guide, back up and riding equipment, meals (from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 8 / 9 except lunch & dinner on day 8), mineral water, coffee & tea.

Rate EXCLUDES International flights / travel to Guanajuato and taxes, any visa fees, lunch & dinner on day 8, drinks / your bar bill, 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.

Rides are priced for a minimum of 4 riders (or 6 in the case of the pilgrimage/festival rides). However they can be run for less than this with a supplement payable.

Single supplements - The rates quoted above assume shared (usually twin / double) accommodation. If you are travelling alone you will need a single room and the supplement will be payable. If you are happy to share a twin (or triple room) with other guests then please let us know - if we can find a sharer then the supplement will not be payable. There are limited rooms on some nights so, depending on the group mix, it is possible that even if you have requested a single, you may be asked to share with another guest of the same gender.

FLIGHTS & TRAVEL INFORMATION

The meeting point is Guanajuato city at 17.00 on Day 1 (or Leon city in the case of the Cristo Rey Pilgrimage at 15.00; and San Miguel de Allende at 16.00 for the Catarina Ride).

There are regular direct flights from Mexico City to Guanajuato Airport (Del Bajío International Airport - code BJX). There are also direct flights from Houston, Atlanta and Dallas in the USA.

From the UK British Airways currently fly from London via Madrid to Mexico City, departing London Heathrow around 08.30 and arriving Mexico City 18.30.

On the return the flight is overnight direct to London, leaving Mexico City at about 21.00 and arriving Heathrow about 13.00 the next day.

You can connect with internal flights between Mexico City and Guanajuato operated by Aero Mexico. If possible internal flights should be booked in conjunction with an International connection.

We can also arrange overland transfer from Mexico City to Guanajuato which is about a 4 hour drive (so would usually mean at least one night in Mexico City on the way out).

Another option, often with more favourable fares, is to fly direct from the UK / Europe to Cancun and connect with an onward flight to Guanajuato from there.

Other flights to Mexico City are with Aero Mexico (direct) or via Amsterdam with KLM. (You can also fly from London / Europe to Dallas and then connect with a flight direct to Guanajuato with American Airlines - however there is the added immigration procedure for the USA)

Rates vary with the season and airline but expect to pay from around £650-£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 British Airways flights for you (our ATOL number for flight bookings is 6213).**

GENERAL VISA & 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 or European Passport and are visiting Mexico for a holiday only and staying less than 90 days you do not need to arrange a visa in advance.

Health The TravelHealthPro website (NaTHNaC) recommends most travellers to be up to date with recommended UK vaccinations as well as vaccinations against Hepatitis A & Tetanus. For some travellers, vaccination against Typhoid, Cholera & Rabies may also be recommended. There is a very low risk of Malaria - risk awareness and bite avoidance are recommended. **You should always consult a health professional for further and more detailed advice.**

(DRAFT 21/10/23)

