

COLOMBIA - MOUNTAIN ADVENTURES - BARICHARA RIDE

ITINERARY

Day 1

The meeting point is Bogota International airport.

The first and last nights are spent in Bogota and so your flights can arrive and depart at any time.

Overnight Scala 68. Meals are to your own account today.

The first and last nights of the trail are spent in hotel accommodation in Bogota. For the nights in between, you stay at small inns and guesthouses. Occasionally if the group size is small and you all arrive early, you may travel to Oiba today and stay two nights there instead.

On most nights of the ride there are private bathrooms for each room, but on occasion a bathroom is shared between two guest rooms.

Cold showers are the norm in Colombia, so you cannot expect to have hot water at the end of a long day in the saddle. The exception is the hotel accommodation in Bogota, which does have hot showers.

It is worth bearing in mind that during the trail itself, you will be visiting rural Colombia, so the standard and comfort of accommodation may not be as high as perhaps in other parts of South America.

For your time in Bogota, we would recommend that if you wish to tour the city, do so with a guide. It is best that you ask your hotel to book taxis for you, rather than to hail one in the street. If you go walking by yourself do so only during daylight hours and stay within around a five-block radius of the hotel, which is located in the business district of the city.

Scala 68 is four star centrally located property is within easy reach of Bogota's restaurants and shopping centres. Depending on availability an alternative hotel of similar quality may be used.



Double room at Scala 68

Day 2

Local conditions and weather can sometimes cause the itinerary to change. Below is a sample itinerary to give you an idea of what to expect. The accommodation used and the route can sometimes change, but always with your best interests in mind.

After breakfast, transfer from Bogotá through the departments of Cundinamarca and Boyacá to the start of the ride in Oiba, Santander.

The long journey of around 9 hours (including stops), is broken with a visit to Puente de Boyacá - a memorial of Colombia's final battle for independence. Later on, lunch will be in Villa de Leyva, before the journey continues to Oiba.

This evening, there will be a ride briefing over dinner.

Overnight El Rincon. El Rincon is a modern 3 star hotel, with en-suite rooms. There is also a swimming pool.





Room at Rincon Obiano

Day 3

Meet the horses and set off on your first day of riding.

From Oiba, journey through woodlands, along mountain paths and pass by lush vegetation. Lunch will be a saddlebag picnic, or perhaps stop at a local house along the way.

By late afternoon arrive in the town of Charalá, birthplace of Colombia's independence. There may be time to explore a little of the town; wander along the cobblestone streets and see the Cathedral. Perhaps visit a cotton workshop, run by women who still use traditional methods.

A precious Arabian Saman tree was planted in the main square in 1910, in honour of the martyrs of independence. On 4th August 1819 more than 300 men and women were executed in Charalá's main square just days before the final battle of independence. No doubt this contributed to Bolivar's victory at the Battle of the Bridge of Boyacá on 7th August 1819, since it prevented the troops of the Spanish General Gonzalez, which had destroyed Charalá, from joining those of General Barreiro in Tunja.

Riding time: Approximately 6-8 hours.



Overnight Campestre Capilla Del Pienta. A small country hotel on the outskirts of Charalá. The natural water pool overlooks the river.



Campestre Capilla Del Pienta

Day 4

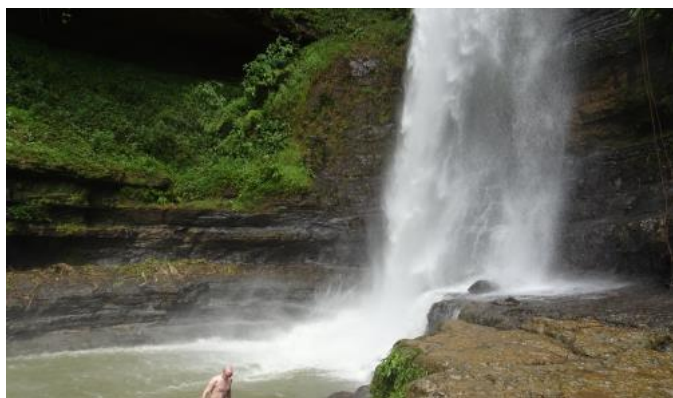
After breakfast, ride along a path following the Fonce River, where you can see on the left-hand side how the river is formed by the confluence of the Pienta and Táquiza Rivers, under a natural arch of trees and bushes.

You will see hillsides planted with sugarcane and rolling grass pastures. Cross the Fonce River by the bridge that goes to Ocamonte, in the place called Palenque. Then continue to Juan Curi Falls, where you stop for lunch at a local restaurant.

Before or after lunch, there will be time to take a short hike to the 80m waterfall. Stand under the powerful falls or take a dip in the natural pool to refresh yourself in the midday heat.

In the afternoon, there is a tough climb for the horses up the mountain, so your ascent will be taken in stages. Pass along the top of the falls and continue on to the village of Páramo, where you see one of the most beautiful churches in the region, made of stone and wood.

Riding time: Approximately 5-7 hours.



Overnight Rancho San Luis. This rural hacienda has eight guest rooms spread between two cottages. There are two rooms which share a bathroom, but all the other rooms have en-suite facilities. The swimming pool is set amongst pretty gardens.



Day 5

Today's ride takes you past coffee plantations and spectacular mountain scenery. Cross a paved road leading to Bucaramanga and at El Socorro head in the direction of the Suárez River.

Ride over the river on a suspension bridge and begin the descent towards the town of El Palmar. From up here you can appreciate the magnificent river basin of the Suarez, a geological formation carved over thousands of years by the river whose source is Lake Fúquene.

Lunch will be a saddlebag picnic along the way, perhaps with the chance for a swim.

Continue riding and in the afternoon, arrive in the pretty town of El Palmar. In the town's main square is an impressive Ceiba tree with a huge 10 metre diameter.

Riding time: Approximately 7-9 hours.



Overnight Hacienda El Palmar. A charming hacienda set in lovely gardens.

Each guest room has its own bathroom, but there are only four rooms and so you should be prepared to share twins, triples or quads depending on the group size.



Day 6

Breakfast will be served on the terrace with views out onto the garden.

Set off on horseback. Cross the Suárez River and follow a path to the small village of Cabrera, where the colonial architecture has been exceptionally well preserved.

Lunch will be a picnic along the way. Later, the route takes you along an old royal road and onto a plateau. From here you start riding in the direction of Barichara. Enter Barichara via a royal bridge and clatter along the beautiful cobblestone streets.

Dinner and overnight in a small guesthouse on the outskirts of Barichara.

Riding time: Approximately 4-6 hours.



Overnight La Loma. This guesthouse sits on a hill overlooking colonial Barichara. There is a small pool and hammocks outside the rooms.



Day 7

Ride through coffee, pineapple, citrus and tobacco plantations and along pretty rural tracks. Stop for a refreshing drink at a local shop and then continue riding towards the canyon. The scenery gets more dramatic as you get closer to the lunch stop.

Lunch will be a picnic, or perhaps a special lunch of local fare overlooking Chicamocha Canyon. There is plenty of time to admire the view and take pictures before continuing your ride.

In the late afternoon, arrive back at your guesthouse just outside Barichara.

Dinner and overnight in Barichara.

Riding time: Approximately 6-8 hours.



Overnight La Loma.

Day 8

Today is set aside to relax and explore Barichara and its pristine colonial architecture. Many visitors come here just to wander the cobblestone streets and to see the white-washed, red-tiled buildings.

In the morning you will have a guided walking tour of Barichara.

In the afternoon exploring Barichara under your own steam or relax by the pool at your guesthouse.

Key points of interest are the Templo de la Inmaculada Concepción in the main square, the Capilla de San Antonio church and the Capilla Santa Bárbara.



Overnight La Loma.

Day 9

After breakfast it is time to return to Bogotá, a journey of around 8 hours (including a lunch stop in Tunja).

Dinner is to your own account this evening.

Overnight Scala 68.