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. Prior to your holiday, the ride operator (Julio Pardo) will contact everyone joining the ride to create a WhatsApp group. This will make it easier for you to keep in touch and find each other at Bogota airport if you are arriving on similar flights. It is also a way for you to keep in contact and share photos of your trip afterwards.

Julio may share some more information about the trip you are about to do. He does also sometimes ask for riding or flight details but please be assured that we will already have sent him this information. In The Saddle will continue to be your main point of contact in the lead up to your holiday and please do ask me if you have any questions.

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 little hotels 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 usual in Colombia, so you may not always have hot water for a shower at the end of a long day in the saddle.

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

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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 a centrally located property 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.

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The long journey of around 9 hours (including stops), is broken with lunch and a visit to Puente de Boyacá - a memorial of Colombia's final battle for independence.

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

Overnight El Rincon. El Rincon is a modern three-star hotel, with en-suite rooms.

Room at El Rincon

There is also a swimming pool.

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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 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.

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Overnight Campestre Capilla Del Pienta. Capilla Del Pienta is a colourful country hotel on the outskirts of Charalá.

Typical guest room in Charalá

There is a natural water pool, which overlooks the river.

Please note that occasionally, an alternative hotel called Hacienda del Pienta is used instead.

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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.

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Overnight Rancho San Luis. This rural hacienda has eight guest rooms spread between two cottages. There is a large swimming pool, set amongst pretty gardens.

There are two rooms which share a bathroom, but all the other rooms have en-suite facilities. Some rooms have more than two beds.

Day 5

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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.

Stop for lunch 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 6-8 hours.

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

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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.

Typical guest room at El Palmar

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.

Stop for lunch out on the trail. 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.

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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.

The guesthouse is a small property, so you may need to share twins, triples or quads depending on the size of the group. The rooms all have en-suite bathrooms.

A guest room at La Loma

Day 7

Ride 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.

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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.

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In the afternoon explore 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).

Overnight Scala 68.

Day 10

You will likely need to check-out after breakfast. If your flight is later in the day, you can go for a coffee or explore a little of Bogota until it is time to leave for the airport.

You will be transferred to Bogota Airport.

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