

Pirate Trail, Spain

Highlights of the trail include:

- * Lonely coves and fine sandy beaches
- * Four coastal national parks in one trail: Cap de Creus, marshland Aiguamolls, the cliffs of Montgri and Medes Islands
- * Visiting Cadaques, the “pearl” of the Costa Brava

Day 1

The Pirate Trail is a challenging 6 night trail ride along the coast of Catalonia with 5 days riding. You should be a competent rider, fit enough for between 3 to 7 hours in the saddle each day.

You ride along the Costa Brava coastline which combines steep cliffs, hidden coves and lovely beaches. This coastline was home to one of Spain’s most notorious Turkish pirates - Barbarossa Khair ad Din known as “red beard”. Along this coastline he attacked small seaside villages, stole spices, wine and ceramics and ran an oppressive slave trade. To forewarn against pirate attacks, many forts and Moorish towers were built along the coast.

Please note that between June and September (inclusive) we do not ride close to the ocean’s edge due to the number of people on the beach. Instead we may ride in the sand dunes and paths beside the beach in sight of the water.

Please also note that on every day it is necessary to lead your horse on foot on some sections of the trail. Sometimes the ground can be rocky and the walking can be both uphill and downhill, sometimes on uneven terrain. This could be for 30 minutes at a time. It is essential that you wear riding boots that are suitable for walking over rough terrain and which provide good support at the ankles and have rugged non-slip soles.

The first night is at a little fishing village near to the French border.

Supper will be around 9pm and you will have a chance to meet your fellow travellers and learn more about the week to come.

Day 2

After breakfast you will get to meet your horses for the week. Your morning’s ride climbs across stony rock paths towards the Benedictine monastery Sant Pere de Rhodes. This monastery is located well above the sea level making it safe from possible pirate raids and lies between the Rhodes mountains.



After a picnic lunch your journey continues downhill towards the village of Selva de Mar. The village is hidden in a valley and the village tower offered the residents some protection from the pirates in years gone by. There are two sections where you will need to get off your horses – the second one for 30 minutes over some difficult terrain.

This evening you stay in a small romantic fishing village called Port de la Selva with its pretty tiny white houses. Please note that at this guest house you may need to share a bathroom.

Day 3



Today’s ride will take you to the coves along the coastline called the Cap de Creus. The rocky bays of this craggy peninsula were often used as hideouts for the pirates planning their raids.

In the middle of the day after the picnic lunch you should get the chance to go swimming in the bay.

This afternoon’s ride takes you high above the sea along the cliff tops. You will be amazed at how sure-footed your Andalusian and Spanish horses are,

covering the terrain like mountain goats. Remember to look out for the bizarre and unusual rock formations that decorate the Cap de Creus coastline. There is one difficult steep section where you will need to lead your horse for about 15 minutes.

It is about a 20 minutes' walk from where you leave the horses to your accommodation in Cadaques, known locally as the jewel of the Costa Brava. This whitewashed fishing village holds a host of crooked alleyways and is considered by some to be the most beautiful place on this wild coast.

Maybe take an evening stroll to see the church. Back in the 16th century, the church Santa Maria was ransacked by the pirate Barbarossa and completely burned down.

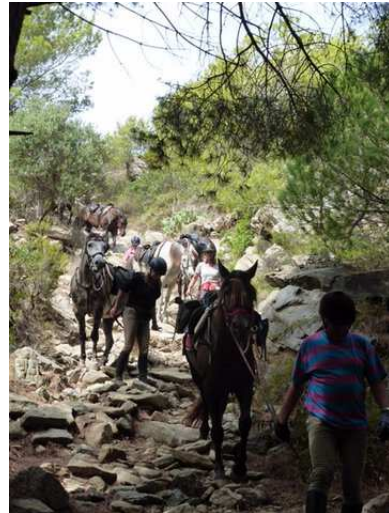


Day 4

Today's ride opens out onto a wild and wonderful mountain landscape covered with bushes and flowers. Ancient stone walls define the path.

Lunchtime is spent by a lovely sandy beach where you can have a swim should you choose to do so.

This afternoon's ride twists and turns over the mountain pass that at times is covered with wild flowers and ultimately you are rewarded with a stunning view of the bay of Roses. There is a steep section where you will need to lead your horse for about 15 minutes.



Day 5

The landscape starts to change today, and you will notice the growing abundance of olive groves along the terraced slopes. You head towards Roses and along the way visit the mighty citadel, La Cuitadella. This big fort was built to protect the region from pirate attacks. Inside the impressive walls you will find the remains of the old monastery church and other archaeological artefacts. This area is also known for sighting flamingos, storks and little egrets, which are native to the wetlands you are riding through.



Tonight you stay on the border of the national park, Aiguamolls.

Day 6

Today starts with an exhilarating beach ride along the sand at Playa Grande. After the excitement of the sea, you then ride up and into the sand dunes and into the pine forest beyond. Emerging from these woods you have sight of the impressive cliff tops of the Costa Brava and here in a hidden cove you have your picnic lunch followed by a well-deserved siesta.



This afternoon you follow the stony and narrow paths high up above the sea and along the wild coastal landscape. Occasionally dolphins can be seen jumping out of the waters below. There is one section where you need to walk on foot steeply downhill for about 20 minutes.

You are transferred back to Mas Alba or similar for a final dinner.

Day 7

After breakfast, transfer to Barcelona or Girona.