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Golden Hills Trail

Weight limit: 85 kilos

Nearest airport: San José

8 days / 7 nights / 6 days riding



This ride takes you through the tropical rainforests, cloud forests and mountainous landscapes of Costa Rica. Close to the Pacific coast, you'll be staying in a comfortable hacienda high in the Montes de Oro (Golden Hills.) The hacienda itself boasts three waterfalls with natural pools perfect for swimming and each day you'll head out on horseback into the surrounding rainforest. This destination offers intermediate riders onwards an idyllic combination of exotic jungle, fabulous riding on highly trained horses and outstanding wildlife.

The Riding

This hacienda specialises in varied and beautiful riding that really takes you under the skin of the tropical landscapes of Costa Rica. Trails are focused on the unmatched wildlife and nature of this country, you could spot parrots, monkeys, ocelots, caimans and an abundance of flora such as orchids. The riding is on varied terrain so you should be comfortable in walk, trot and canter, some sections of the ride allow for lovely long canters through long grasses and open meadows. If interested, you can also assist the hacienda with cattle work as they have a 100-strong herd of cattle which they manage on horseback.



Level of riding and fitness

You should be a competent rider who is confident in walk, trot and canter across varied terrain. A reasonable level of fitness is helpful, you'll be riding between 3-5 hours a day, but this isn't a tough trail so you don't need to be at peak athleticism!

Guides & Groups sizes

Guides for this trail are all experienced adults who speak English, Spanish and German fluently. This destination specialises in small groups, the usual group size is between 2 and 5.

Horses & Tack

There are 12 horses to choose from at this destination. Breeds are mostly Quarter Horses, Paint Horses, Arabians and Criollos. All horses are Western trained by your hosts; Heiko and Jazmin. Heiko has trained all the horses himself, he was an active tournament rider and trainer in Germany for 20 years boasting multiple national champion and German champion titles. Horses are calm, responsive and a real pleasure to ride.



Accommodation and Dining

You will stay in one of the comfortable rooms at the hacienda, known for its social and relaxed atmosphere. All rooms have private bathrooms, showers, TV, fridge and coffee making facilities. There is also a tropical garden with butterflies, hummingbirds and monkeys and a swimming pool to enjoy and spectacular views all the way to the Pacific ocean.

The hacienda is embedded in the wild and romantic landscape of Costa Rica with a view of the Gulf of Nicoya and offers its visitors many activities, but also peace and relaxation in harmony with nature. This trip offers full board with three meals a day, lunch is often a lighter meal or picnic eaten out on the trail. Local cuisine, beer, wine and refreshments are included. Vegetarians can be accommodated with advance notice.

Itinerary

Day 1

Arrive in Costa Rica and transfer to the hacienda. Spend the rest of the day settling in, relaxing by the pool and in the evening enjoy a barbecue and campfire.

Day 2

After a leisurely breakfast together, it's time to meet the horses. There will be a short briefing and riding assessment before each rider is assigned their horse. Once everyone is happy in the riding arena, set out on a panoramic ride with beautiful views of the Pacific Ocean and the mountains. The hacienda is located 750 meters above sea level, with the Pacific Ocean in front ahead and the cloud forest behind. After the ride, you'll take the horses to the river where they can cool off.

Day 3

After breakfast, head to the stables and ride out to the hacienda's own waterfall. After a relaxing trail ride through grazing herds of cattle you'll reach the mountain river Zamora. A further 20 minutes climbing upstream and you'll reach the waterfall complete with an inviting pool. Here you can swim undisturbed and enjoy a packed lunch and rest before heading back to the hacienda for dinner.

Day 4

Today you'll take part in an early morning ride at 5am (or earlier) to experience the sunrise and the deafening Costa Rican dawn chorus. Return to the hacienda to relax by the pool in the afternoon.

Day 5

Today you'll be riding into the cloud forest where pumas, jaguars and ocelots live in the wild, although they are very shy and rarely seen. You'll ride to one of the most beautiful fincas in the cloud forest. With a short gallop over lush meadows you'll reach the jungle, populated with many epiphytes and orchids, the area looks like a fairy tale forest. Stop at a local restaurant, this is the real Costa Rica; there is little tourism, the people here live very simply and are very hospitable. After eating, ride on to a cloud forest café where you will spend the night.



Day 6

After getting up, you'll help with taking care of the horses, before sampling a typical Costa Rican Gallo Pinto breakfast. After breakfast, it's time to head back to the hacienda, again riding through the lush cloud forest. Dinner and overnight back at the hacienda.

Day 7

Today you'll visit a local gold mine deep in the surrounding mountains, the Montes de Oro "Golden Hills". You may meet old miners who will happily talk about their time in the mines. Gold digging is exhausting and if you are lucky you may find a small piece.

Day 8

A final breakfast at the hacienda before transferring back to the airport.

Flights & Airport transfers

Do not book flights until you have received the Booking confirmation email from saddletravel.com.

Please plan your flights to/from as follows:

Arrive at San Jose airport between 9am-7pm on the first day.

Departing flights should be booked for after 11am on the final day.

What to bring

We recommend wearing your riding boots when travelling and carrying one set of riding clothing and your helmet in your hand luggage, so should your luggage not make it to the destination you'll still be able to ride.

Please use the packing list as a guideline, bearing in mind the time of year you are riding.

- Riding hat
- Long riding trousers/jodhpurs
- Riding shoes/boots with a heel
- Casual wear for evenings
- Swimwear
- Flipflops/sandals
- Sunglasses
- Suncream
- Reusable water bottle
- Waterproof jacket
- Camera
- Insect repellent

Climate

The hacienda is located on Costa Rica's Central Pacific Coast. Weather is tropical, humid, very and very warm. The dry season is from December to April. June to the end of October have more rain, with the heaviest rainfall usually occurring in October. May and November are transition months when it can rain, but the rain is not heavy.



Health

For health and vaccine recommendations, please consult your healthcare provider at least 8 weeks before your trip.

Country specific information can also be found at the National Travel Health Network and Centre website: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>.

Travel documents

For entry requirements to Ireland for UK citizens, please visit the Foreign Travel Advice website: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/costa-rica/entry-requirements>

For any other nationalities, please contact your local embassy to check entry requirements.

Having the correct travel documents is entirely your responsibility.

Currency & Tipping

The local currency in Costa Rica is the colón, but dollars are widely accepted in tourist areas and other places around the country. You should bring enough spending money to cover any extra snacks or drinks you want to buy from the local village. Tipping is appreciated but not expected.

Riding Declaration

"I am confident and in control at trot and canter out in the open and over uneven ground. I'm able to mount and dismount unaided and have a good level of current riding fitness. I do not suffer from any illness or disability that could prejudice my safety or that of others."

Cancellation policy

Payment & Cancellation Terms saddletravel.com

Holidays are confirmed with a 20% non-refundable deposit. The full balance is due 56 days before the start date.

If you cancel your booking less than 56 days before the start date of your trail we are entitled to receive full payment, less refunds as follows:

42 days or more before booking date - 50%

30 days or more - 30%

less than 30 days - nil

Book with confidence – Covid Guarantee:

If the ride operator is closed or you are unable to travel due to lockdown:

1/ The deposit is reissued as a rebooking voucher to rebook anytime.

2/ Any balance payment will be refunded to you in full within 1 week of departure date.

Insurance

All saddletravel.com customers are required to take out appropriate travel insurance that covers horse riding and holiday cancellation. Proof of insurance details will be required during the booking process.

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