



SPAIN: CASTLES AND VOLCANOES TRAIL YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

Discover the Garrotxa Volcanica one of Europe's largest volcanic regions with its medieval castles steeped in history.

Explore the wild and remote region of the Garrotxa volcanica, a spectacular region of Catalonia, experience the sensation of stepping back in time as mountain villages, medieval castles, abbeys and churches steeped in history, perch on the edges of the sculptured rock with fortified walls and stone cobbled roads, banishing vehicles in favour of horses.

Discover the hidden valleys of la Miana and Santa Pau through dense oak forests providing a fast start to this trail with long trots and canters past gushing waterfalls. Encounter some of the most intriguing villages Catalonia has to offer. Santa Pau, a spectacular walled medieval village, built out of volcanic rock. Rupit, undoubtedly one of the most picturesque villages in all of Spain, where the houses seem to grow out of the hillside itself and Cabrera, a sanctuary at 1300m a 300 m² platform with a church in its centre, quite rightly named home of the Gods by the locals.

Venturing through the Garrotxa volcanica on horseback is the ultimate way to discover this lunar landscape, the terrain is soft volcanic gravel, excellent for long trots and fast gallops to Santa Margarita, the biggest and most spectacular volcanic crater of the area.

Castles are in abundance with the 13th century castle of Sant Salvador and Finestres offering breathtaking views of the volcanoes and from the heights of Santa Juliá del Mont we admire the Pyrenees on one side and the Mediterranean on the other. Here you have the sensation that nobody has trodden this mountainside for years and the view is yours alone making the Volcano and Castle trail a truly unforgettable journey.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL AT THE FARM

Pick up at Barcelona or Gerona airport and transfer to the farm for the dinner and the night.

The camp base is a 11th century Farmhouse perched high up on a ridge overlooking the Pyrenees.

At dinner we will go over the week's program, you will be told about the special characteristics of our Andalucian trail horses. After dinner you will be given an introduction to the weeks programme with an opportunity for a one-to-one conversation designed to find every rider their perfect horse.

Finally you will discover how to play the 'Champagne rules' under which anyone found guilty of holding up the ride at any point is obliged to buy a bottle of local cava for the group that evening, making for lively dinners!

DAY 2 – THE JOURNEY BEGINS

After meeting our horses and tacking up, we begin our journey riding down the hidden valley of La Miana, through dense oak forests. On the crest we have panoramic views of the Pyrenees on one side and the Mediterranean on the other.

From here we descend to the valley of El Torn, El Sallent and Santa Pau, another world of small family farmsteads and little villages with old stone houses and the castle of Santa Pau in the distance. We will have a swim and eat our picnic by a small waterfall.

After lunch we ride to Santa Pau, a walled medieval village, built out of volcanic rock, presided over by the central castle. It is surrounded by volcanic cones, that are now dormant, there we will settle the horses for the night and return to the farm for a welcome supper



and some more excellent wine. We go home to our base, for dinner and more delights of the catalan cuisine.

DAY 3 – CASTLES AND VOLCANOES

Today we will make an early start. We we stop for coffee in Can Mencion, this is the best cake shop in the region.

Then we saddle up and the day begins with a climb up the ridge to the castle of Finestres where we have our picnic lunch. The views of the volcanoes beneath us are breathtaking.

After lunch the horses warm to some long trots and canters down to the village of Sant Feliu de Pallerols, here we settle the horses for the night and before going to the hotel we will have a welcome drink in the square. Fonda Finet is a family run hotel renowned for its excellent cuisine, fantastic hospitality and good wine.

DAY 4 – UP TO THE TABLE MOUNTAINS

The day begins and we saddle up and ride through the village and across the plains through fields of wheat and sunflowers. Then an ascent up to the mountain meadows where cattle and horses are sent to graze in the summer time. Here we are aware of the strength, surefootedness and stamina of the horses as they power their way up the hill.

At the top we can see the beautiful volcanic area spread out around us. We stop for a drink before we continue to the amazing table mountains. Up here it is flat and we can gallop along the cliffs with breathtaking views. Today's picnic lunch is taken by an immense waterfall.

After lunch we ride to Rupit, this is probably the most picturesque village in Spain. The local architecture is a treat.

We settle the horses for a well earned rest and we go to our hotel in the centre of the village. This is another charming hotel full of local character, hospitality and good food.

DAY 5 – LA MARE DE DEU DE CABRERA

This is a sanctuary at 1300m a 300 m² rock platform with a church in its centre. From up here the views are breathtaking, probably the best in all of Catalonia. This is our goal for today. The morning is spent riding through meadows of flowers and herbs keeping out of the way of the large herds of mountain cattle. This is a long morning ride.

Our picnic is in Cabrera next to a medieval monastery, home of the gods. And, wow, what incredible views!

This most spectacular day finishes with the descent to the little hamlet of Joanettes for a welcome drink to finish off a perfect day.

Tonight we spend in the house of Jordi and Carmen, a very special rural Inn. Here you can try the local cheese and sausages, and some great wines.

DAY 6 – THE VOLCANO RUN

The day begins with one of the best breakfasts that you have ever had.... which can make getting back onto the horses difficult! Then we ride onto the village of Les Preses, a village of narrow winding streets and see the local architecture and Romanesque church.

We ride on through La Fageda: an immense beech forest, a sea of green and silence. We stop to visit a local bar for a welcome drink and we picnic next to Santa Margarida, the biggest and most spectacular volcanic crater of the area. The terrain is soft volcanic gravel, which is excellent for fast work, here the riders and the horses enjoy the long trots and fast gallops.

In the afternoon we trustingly leave the horses next to the El Crusat volcano which has been dormant for over 1000 years. Here we will visit the volcano crater. It is fascinating to see all of the different layers of lava. And then again we are transported back to our base, for a well earned rest, a swim in the pool, and perhaps even a massage?



DAY 7 – RETURN TO THE BASE

Today the horses start to sense the proximity to home.

We saddle up and head along the valley of the river Ser, out across the plains up to the mountain of Santa Juliá del Mont.

We ride through woods full of wild thyme and lavender. This is a heavily forested mountain where you will normally disturb a group of hungry wild boars or spot a couple of circling eagles in the sky. Here you have the sensation that nobody has trodden this mountainside for years, alone with nature. Again from up in the heights we can

see the Pyrenees on one side and the Mediterranean on the other.

After lunch we head down to the valley of the river Fluviá where we can speed up to get back to the farm, a welcome sight after our six day Volcano Trail and we celebrate our arrival with a splendid farewell dinner accompanied by lots more cava, a fitting end to a wonderful week.

DAY 8 – A GOODBYE BREAKFAST

After breakfast, transfer for Barcelona/Gerona Airport.