



Zapata Ranch

UNITED STATES

On this 103,000 acre bison and **guest ranch in the heart of Southern Colorado**, you can work cattle and **ride trails** through one of the most scenic and ecologically diverse landscapes in the United States. This **horse riding ranch holiday in Colorado** is a perfect family riding holiday, and is ideal for non-riders too.

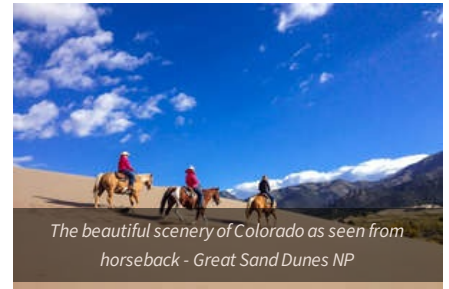
Ranches and Cattle Drives	9 Days/ 6 days Riding	From £3,530		Family holidays from 8 y.o	Open to non-riders
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Trail riding in Colorado, in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountains



A guest ranch with the possibility to try your hand at cattle work as well



The beautiful scenery of Colorado as seen from horseback - Great Sand Dunes NP

ITINERARY

Highlights

- A working ranch with a herd of 2000 bison in the heart of one of the most scenic and ecologically diverse landscapes in the United States
- Ride alongside the wranglers, moving cattle, sorting and monitoring the herds
- Cattle work is always on offer when available
- Explore on foot and on horseback the largest dunes in North America
- Special weeks for branding, horsemanship, photography and more
- Many activities for non riders including walking, fly-fishing in local streams, birding, wildlife watching, geology tours, massages, rafting
- Recommended arrivals is Sunday, though the ranch can be flexible.

Day 1 — 1 : EUROPE - ALAMOSA/DENVER - ZAPATA RANCH

Zapata Ranch

Your best option is to fly into Denver or Colorado Springs airport. You can rent a car and drive to the Ranch (c. 4h drive from Denver Airport). Contact us for directions.

Alternatively you can fly into Alamosa from London, where you will be met at the airport and transferred to Zapata Ranch (about 30min). Please note that flights to Alamosa are widely unreliable and frequently cancelled.

Dinner on the ranch will be served at around 18:30 over which you will have some time to relax and enjoy the evening getting to know your hosts and the other riders.

If your plane arrives later in the evening, we recommend that you arrive the day before your stay and spend the night in Alamosa -we can book flights and hotels on request. Late night transfers may not be possible.

"Check-in" at the ranch is usually between 14:00 and 17:00 so if you plan to arrive after 17:00, please tell us so we can notify the ranch.

Flights or hotel nights are not included.

Day 2 — 2 : ZAPATA RANCH - 4-5 hours riding

 Zapata Ranch

After a hearty breakfast, you will head to the corral to meet your horse. You will receive an orientation on western riding and proper horsemanship. Your wrangler will offer instruction throughout your ride to ensure a great ride and relationship with your horse.

Explore the 50,000 acres of the eastern side of the ranch-- through the ranch pastures, arroyos and vast landscape. After lunch, you could choose to watch a roundpen demonstration at the corrals or enjoy a riding lesson. Riding groups are around 4 - 5 riders and will be split according to their level; levels will be noted on pre-arrival materials prior to arrival and confirmed at orientation.

Enjoy a hike to a local waterfall after your ride, or relax on the lawn. Please note: the ranch team will create an itinerary before your arrival. Any specific activities you'd like to do should be passed on to us in advance so it can be included in your itinerary (see dates and prices)

IMPORTANT: Both the above and the following programme is provided as a guide, it is by no means exhaustive but reflects all of the activities in which you are able to participate. The weeks are centred around the ranch schedule and the riding experience you want to have, each evening, a member of staff will be at your disposal to discuss your week should you need to make adjustments.

Day 3 — 3 : ZAPATA RANCH - 4-5 hours riding

 Zapata Ranch

With your packed lunch in your saddlebag, ride out to see the wild bison herd. Riding up onto the plains to see these powerful animals in their pasture is truly magnificent; the ranch's bison herd is seen as a "conservation species," the herd has free reign of 50,000 acres of pasture and they live as they were for thousands of years before being hunted to the edge extinction in the nineteenth century.

You may also see elk, pronghorn, coyotes and other species that inhabit this preserved ecosystem. You will eat your lunch in the shade of cottonwood trees, then ford rivers and enjoy some good canters when the terrain allows. You could end the day with a tour of the area where the bison are sorted and treated at the annual bison roundup.

After your ride, enjoy a roping lesson on the lawn and then freshen up for a home-cooked meal in the cozy lodge with fellow guests.

Day 4 — 4 : ZAPATA RANCH - 4-5 hours riding

After a hearty breakfast, you may be invited to join the wranglers as they move cattle to fresh pasture (this is dependent on the ranch grazing plan). As Zapata is a sustainable livestock business, it is dependent on healthy land so the land is managed in a way that mimics natural animal grazing patterns. In order to allow the soil time to regenerate, the cattle has to be moved; and for that they need to be gathered and moved by the crew and their guests. If there is not a cattle move during your stay, you will have the option to ride out to mend fences, check grass growth, herd health, doctor cattle if needed and so forth.

After a job well done, and no doubt pleasantly exhausted, you will return to the ranch in the afternoon. Enjoy a leather working class on the lawn and later, a delicious dinner in the main lodge.

Day 5 — 5 : ZAPATA RANCH - 4-5 hours riding

 Zapata Ranch

Today, you might head out towards the Great Sand Dunes National Park, a unique area consisting of the largest sand dunes in North America found, rather surprisingly, at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Carefully following your guide, you will be led along creeks, into massive dunes and up into forest.

Back on the ranch in the afternoon, you may choose to enjoy a massage or perhaps a cooking lesson. In the evening, you can enjoy an authentic meal made from the meat from the ranch and accompanied by fresh local produce.

Day 6 — 6 : ZAPATA RANCH - 4-5 hours riding

 Zapata Ranch

Today may be the day you decide to treat yourself to a ride into the Sangre de Cristo mountain range, located in The Great Sand Dunes National Park. You will ride up into the mountains and forests and be rewarded with magnificent views across the national park. Although this is not a fast ride, the stunning landscape and views are well worth seeing.

You will head back to the ranch in the late afternoon and may opt for a self-guided hot springs tour or a walk into the dunes.

Day 7 — 7 : ZAPATA RANCH - 4-5 hours riding

 Zapata Ranch

This morning, you might head back to the north side of the ranch where the bison herd resides to ride out and visit historic homesteads and let your horse pick up speed along vast stretches of sand and creek bed. View wildlife and enjoy the vastness of the 50,000 acre expanse.

Enjoy a scrumptious last dinner discussing your week's adventures with fellow riders and guests.

Day 8 — 8 : ALAMOSA - EUROPE - No riding

After a final hearty breakfast, you will say your farewells to the ranch staff and check-out at 10:00. If you haven't chosen to extend your stay in the USA, you will be driven to the airport to catch your flight back to Europe.

Day 9 — 9 : EUROPE

You will arrive back home.

DATES & PRICES

DEPARTURE	RETURN	PRICE WITHOUT FLIGHTS	STATUS
22/09/2024	30/09/2024	£3,530	Full
29/09/2024	07/10/2024	£3,530	Full
20/10/2024	28/10/2024	£3,530	Full

Price details

PLEASE NOTE - Availability at Zapata is very changeable. Please contact us with your preferred dates and we will check if those are available.

- Flights to your destination (international/domestic) are not included, but can be booked on request - please contact us for rates.
- Rates are per person, based on two riders sharing a standard room, which may not be available at the time of booking, in which case you may require to pay a supplement for another type of room.
- Single rooms can be arranged at no cost depending on availability (first come, first served). There is no supplement for solo riders.
- There are usually 1-25 guests on the ranch, but each rider (or family/group of friends) will have their own wrangler, so you can ride at whatever pace you like.
- Dates are flexible and you can stay for as long as you like with discounts for longer stays - arrivals are typically on Sundays or Thursdays. We recommend a stay of 7 nights, but it is possible to stay for as little as 3 nights and as many as 10 nights. There is no horseback riding on the day of arrival or on Sundays at the Zapata Ranch and there are no guided activities on Saturday afternoons. Please contact us for a personalised quote over your preferred dates.
- Alamosa airport-Zapata ranch transfers (return) are payable locally. Expect to pay around \$50 per car of a max of 4 passengers. You can also reach the ranch with a rental car if arriving from Denver or Colorado Springs (recommended!).
- Tips are customary in the United States and should be given to the team while out there; usually around 15% to 20% of the price of your trip.
- Rider weight limit: 105 kg / 16st4 / 230 lbs.

- An electronic travel authorisation (ESTA) is required to enter the USA. It is your responsibility to organise this. Please visit <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/> and contact us if you need help.

- Additional activities - Make sure to let us know one month in advance if you wish to participate in these activities :

ON Ranch Activities

Hike or birding tour with Zapata's naturalist - no additional cost.

Self-guiding trip to the local hot springs (for those with a rental car) - no extra cost

Massage/Wellness Services (prices starting at \$90pp)

Spend a day with professional wildlife and landscape photographer, Steve Weaver: stephen-weaver.com (\$175pp)

OFF Ranch Activities

Whitewater rafting in Salida, CO (\$90pp/half day) (May – August)

Fly fishing on the Arkansas River (\$350/half day)

Rock Climbing in Penitente Canyon(\$300/pp).

Please Note

The itinerary may be modified at anytime for security reasons, meteorological or events beyond our control such as blocked roads, rivers in flood, drought, strikes and local holidays. Equus Journeys, our local partners and their local guides will always strive to find the best solution and will alter the itinerary as needed.

The names of the hotels and accommodation are given for information only and depending on availability, they may be modified without notice and replaced by another of a similar standard.

Price includes

SUPPORT TEAM

A team of cowboys/ wranglers

1 English-speaking horse guide for the group composed of 3 to 10 riders depending on the activity

LOGISTICS

Choice of several horses equipped with saddle and bridle

ACCOMMODATION

At the ranch : Private room with bathroom. Free access to jacuzzi and common rooms

MEALS

Full board from dinner on arrival day to breakfast on the last day. A sack lunch can be provided on the departure day.

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT

First aid kit

Price doesn't include

MEALS

Beverages and personal extras. If you wish to drink alcohol, you will need to bring your own as the ranch does not have a liquor licence

TRANSPORTS

International flights bookable on request

Visa fees (ESTA) which must be arranged in advance

Transfer to/ from Alamosa to the ranch - if flying to Denver we recommend you hire a car and drive yourself to the ranch

EXTRA

Tips to local team. See above

INSURANCE

Cancellation and travel insurance are not included in the above listed price. Please note that insurance is mandatory. We recommend taking out an insurance policy as soon as your trip is booked to cover you in case of cancellation

Optional

ACCOMMODATION

Hotel night in Denver before your week that we can book for you on request

EXTRA

Extension and others activities. See above in the price details list

EQUESTRIAN INFO

Horses

Around 50 horses, for all abilities, ranging from beginners to experienced riders. Each horse is carefully trained to work livestock.

During the guest season the herd is split into two groups with one group resting and the other group in a nearby pasture ready for daily work. The groups are then frequently rotated giving the horses plenty of rest and time under saddle so they ultimately remain in peak and healthy condition.

Guide & local team

The ranch is owned by The Nature Conservancy and is managed by Ranchlands, a ranch management organization. Day-to-day, it is a mixed team of the crew who manage the ranch - alongside the guests and riders, of course!

The wranglers are hospitable, life-long riders, usually with biology and ecology backgrounds who are accommodating and will do their utmost to ensure that you have a truly unforgettable trip.

Minimum riding ability

MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

To make the most of the holiday, riders should be able to walk, trot and canter over varied terrain in open countrywide. It is possible to adapt the riding days for novice and intermediate riders for shorter rides out, or riding lessons in the corral. All abilities are welcomed.

Children over 8 years are welcome to ride. Children under 8 years can be led around the corral.

Rider weight limit: 105 kg / 16st4 / 230 lbs.

PACE

You will normally ride from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm with a break for lunch; depending on what you would like to do and your riding experience. You will have our own wrangler (except if you are coming with a large family or friends). Activities take place in very small groups with riders of a similar level so that everyone can enjoy the day depending on their riding ability.

TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

You are welcome to assist with caring for the horses if you wish - tacking up, feeding, watering etc. You might also get involved in the day to day management of the cattle and bison.

TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE

All abilities are welcome, so no previous experience is necessary. To enjoy the scenery that is on offer and make the most of the cattle work it would be best if you were physically fit and able to canter in open spaces.

EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

You will be riding in very comfortable western saddles and you will be shown how to tack up if you wish to. All of the horses neck rein and are very responsive.

We recommend our riders to wear a helmet to the correct standard and you should bring your own to ensure a proper fit. The ranch will not provide helmets.

COMFORT

Accommodation is in one of 17 rooms at the lodge. Each room is spacious and comfortable. Some of the rooms offer beautiful views of either the dunes or the valley.

Each room has a king size bed or two full beds and a private bathroom. The indoor dining area has a fireplace and a cozy seating area. There is a deck adjacent to the dining area, shaded by mature cottonwood trees with a flower beds that allows you to take in the sweeping views of the property.

WiFi available.

A laundry room is available when not in use.

MEALS

Breakfasts are hearty to set you up for a day on the ranch : eggs, pancakes, cereals, fresh fruit.

Picnics, carried in saddlebags, are prepared by the chef in the morning according to your choice of sandwich, wrap or salad.

For dinner you will have a hot and hearty meal and a friendly place to eat it every night at the ranch. You will get to taste local meats, including beef and ranch-bred bison. The on-site chef likes spicy food. Everyone eats at the same table and a staff member will always be present to answer any questions.

Wine will only be served with appetizers. If you would like any other type of alcoholic drink, then you are welcome to bring it to the ranch. The ranch staff are happy to pick up alcohol for guests prior to their arrival and add the cost to their tab. They can make a stop on the airport shuttle to pick this up.

Vegetarian and allergies can be catered for with advance notice.

CLIMATE

South Colorado has a sunny and dry climate. There are very few days with rainfall, with the majority falling between July and August. In March and April, the days are cool, with an average temperature of around 15-20°C, but with beautiful blue skies and sun. In March, frosts at night are a possibility.

From May to June, the days are sunny and pleasant. The temperature rises to around 25°C during the day, and falling back down to 10-15°C at night.

Throughout July and August there is a risk of showers. Temperatures can climb up to 30°C during the day and won't drop lower than 15°C at night.

The fall, September to October, stays mild at around 20°C during the day.

TIPS

In all restaurants (except some self-service places), it is customary to leave a 10-12% tip. Some places already have it included automatically. Similarly, it is right to tip taxi drivers a few dollars too.

You are expected to tip the ranch team and they generally expect anywhere between 15-20% of the price of your stay, but please do be aware that this is totally at your discretion. It is customary to give the envelope to the main cowboy, who will then share it and redistribute it to the whole team, but you can highlight a particular member of the team if you wish.

PACKING LIST

Head

- Equus Journeys strongly recommend that you wear a riding helmet and that you take your own to ensure a correct fit. There are many lightweight options available nowadays
- Sunhat for when not riding
- Western riders used to wear a Stetson (American hat). You have usually the possibility to buy one at locally at the beginning of your stay/expedition. Count about \$50-120 for a Stetson. Pay attention that it has to stay on your head when galloping. Ask for a strap/cord to fix it strongly.
- There are some head protections to put under your hat (Ranch & Rider, Lexington Safety Products) or western helmet (Troxel).
- Sunglasses - with a cord attached so they don't fly off when riding
- Buff or bandana

Upper body

- Long sleeved shirts provide protection from the sun and keep you cooler
- T-shirts

- Lightweight fleece or jumper
- Warm fleece or jumper
- Waterproof jacket - it can rain and there are frequent thunderstorms

Legs

- Lightweight, comfortable riding trousers or jodhpurs - we recommend riding in them at home before taking them on holiday to ensure they don't rub
- Casual trousers for the evenings, such as jeans

Hands and Feet

- Comfortable riding boots. We recommend western boots or short boots with half chaps but you may wish to take long chaps as an extra layer against inclement weather. We don't recommend taking your favourite long leather boots in case they get damaged
- Trainers or equivalent light shoes for moving around the ranch in the evenings
- Several pairs of socks
- Gloves - your hands are particularly exposed to the sun.

Evening wear

- Casual clothes for the evening

Nightwear

- Pyjamas or nightdress

Other useful items

- Camera and high capacity memory card. Spare battery
- Bumbag for carrying your camera and small items whilst riding you can put them in your saddlebag
- Ear plugs (for light sleepers)

Medical kit

- Any medication you regularly take
- Sunscreen and lip balm - should be high factor
- Insect repellent, preferably containing deet
- Blister plasters in case of any rubs
- Antiseptic cream, plasters, aspirin, anti-histamine, insect-bite salve etc...
- Spare prescription glasses/contact lenses
- Rehydration sachets

Our Recommendations

- Backpacks cannot be worn whilst riding. We recommend a small bumbag or a coat with pockets so that you can carry small items with you during the day (passport, camera, sunscreen, lip balm etc)
- We recommend travelling in your riding boots and carrying your hat and some riding clothes in your hand luggage - then if your luggage goes astray you are still able to ride!
- We recommend taking a copy of your passport and insurance documents with you just in case.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

1. **Travel light.** It's a little known fact, but the lighter you pack, the better for the environment as heavy bags will produce higher emissions (when flying a plane or driving a car!).
2. **Reduce plastic waste.** Take your favorite reusable bottle with you. Avoid single-use bags, cups, or straws.
3. **Preserve nature.** Always take your rubbish with you during the ride and recycle them. Leave all the flowers or plants as you found them, and never get too close when observing wildlife. Make sure to use eco-friendly products such as body wash or laundry detergent (if camping) to protect both your skin and the environment.
4. **Choose your experiences carefully.** Respect animal life by not participating in any activities that abuse wild animals (shows, elephant rides, etc.).
5. **Support local populations.** Buy local handicrafts, be respectful of customs, and learn about the culture of local communities.
6. **Share!** Raise awareness among your family and friends about sustainable tourism.

For more information please [see this page](#) .