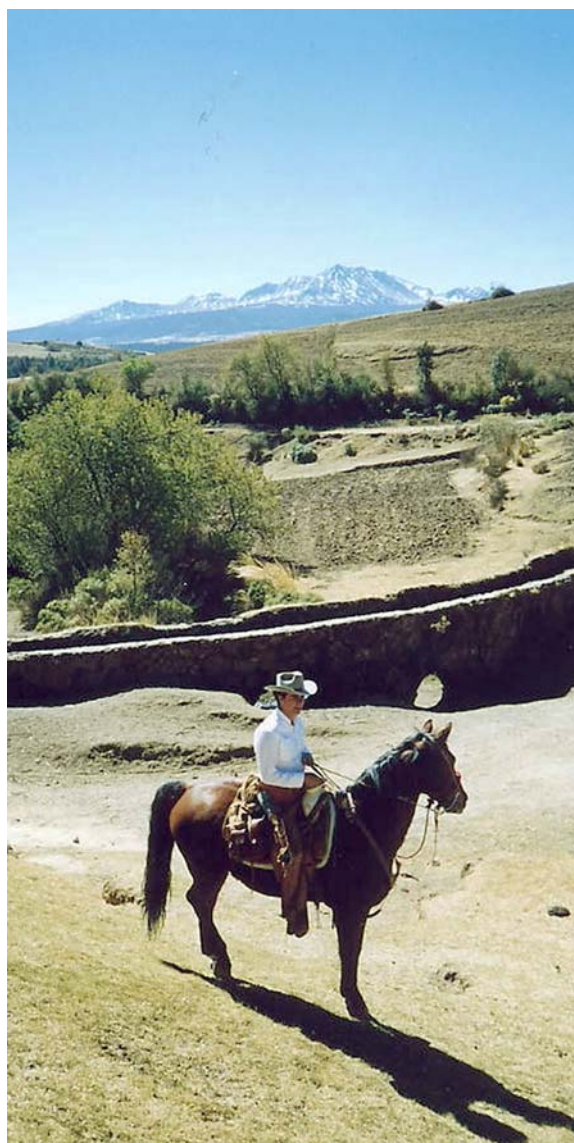


DESTINATION: MEXICAN HORSE VACATION

*By Jo Stanford (editor of
www.findaridingholiday.com)*





DESTINATION: MEXICAN HORSE VACATION

*By Jo Stanford (editor of
www.findaridingholiday.com)*



The jacuzzi bubbles hot water, a glass of Margarita is in my hand, humming birds flit from flower to flower by the turquoise pool and the sun sets over the white stucco town of Valle de Bravo far below us. Soon, I'll be called in for my **three-course gourmet dinner** while the barman Louise lights the chimney in my private room with its double beds, hand-painted wardrobe, quarry-tiled floor and colourful tiled bathroom.

No, I'm not on a spa break at some exclusive resort. I'm on a riding holiday, and a full-on rider's riding holiday at that. Riding for six hours a day and taking in some **brehtaking scenery atop ultra fit trail horses**, this holiday will satisfy the most dedicated horse rider and the most adventurous traveller. It's just that on this holiday, the riders get to come back to **five-star equivalent accommodation** each night. It's the real-deal, 150 miles of circular trail... but without the camping. At the end of each day's ride, our horses are stabled overnight on the trail while we are transported by minibus, or boat, back to the beautiful Finca Enyhe, a ranch that has been lovingly restored to colonial-style glory by its owners Pepe and Lucia who run Mexican Horse Vacation. Sounds good? Believe me, it is.

After overnighting in Mexico City at a four-star hotel arranged by Lucia and Pepe, we are picked up by minibus and two-and-a-half hours later, we get our first sight of Finca Enyhe, our home for the week. After a delicious picnic by the pool, we meet our horses and set off for a two hour ride to see whether we are happy with horse and tack (a choice of English or Western). **I immediately gel with my horse**, a 15hh, five-year-old blue roan called Moro.



Over the week it transpires that Moro is **the perfect trail horse**. He is happy at the front, middle and the back allowing me to get to know the riders and two wranglers, Melaton and Marcus. He is forward-going, surefooted and has a lovely smooth canter. Sometimes I ride at the back with Melaton who whistles a happy tune and teaches me a little Spanish. The wranglers take it in turns each day to ride at the rear and lead the mule, Macharella, who carries our lunch, drinks cooler, emergency shoeing equipment and other supplies.

There are eight riders and over the week, friendships are forged. I ride a lot with Geoffrey, who learnt to ride when he was in his forties and Jan and Dewey, a Canadian couple who run their own riding outfit in the Rockies. Pepe leads the ride at the front and this week we are lucky to have Lucia along with her beautiful Lippizaner.

Pepe is a constant source of information about rural Mexican life and it is clear that the route has been very carefully planned. About 12.30pm each day we arrive at some stunning spot, usually with a panoramic view, and a delicious lunch is set out. The ride varies in altitude from the ranch at 4,000ft up to 9,000ft in the mountains. We pass through beautiful forests of oak, pine and fir, with Pepe pointing out changes in the vegetation, and tree orchids high up in the pine trees. Occasionally the scenery opens up into wide, springy meadows and we enjoy long canters. I'm impressed again by the organisation of the ride and the quality of training the horse's exhibit. They are all keen and happy to run but they don't pull or race and they all stop at the slightest touch of the rein.

When we're not up in the mountain-tops with magnificent views, our senses are satisfied by the sights and sounds of rural Mexican life. We pass smallholdings and witness the agricultural life; donkeys are led through the forests laden with wood, men plough the fields with oxen or horses, shepherds sit with their goat herds and near to the villages, men stand in fields of Gladioli, Lilies and Acapanthus, picking flowers for the market.

Children rush out to see the ride pass by and grin when their photo is taken. Upbeat music emanates from many of the smallholdings and permeates the countryside. I feel we are very privileged, passing through these scenes,

CABALGATAS LA SIERRA

MÉXICO HORSE VACATION

REVIEWS – DESTINATION: MEXICAN HORSE VACATION



becoming a part of the landscape. As the week comes to an end, I'm sad to say goodbye to the group of riders, staff and owners who have become my family, the ranch that has become home, the little blue horse that has carried me with ears forward and a spring in his step for 150 miles and the land that has captured my heart.