

Hidden Trails

Ph. 1-888-9-TRAILS

*Equestrian Vacations
- on & with Hidden Trails*

About Hidden Trails

Hidden Trails is owned and operated by nature enthusiasts who love horses and adventure activities. We have been involved with riding and other outdoor vacations for over 20 years.

With our partners Voyage du Cheval (France), Pegasus (Germany) as well as Equitour (Switzerland and France) we have collected the best riding destinations all over the world in some hidden places we would like to share with you.

These rides are about galloping on endless beaches, forging rivers, cantering through forests, trotting along age-old trails, gazing at beautiful vistas and encountering foreign cultures. But most of all, these trips are about getting away from the cycle of too much work and never enough free time.

Escape from the rituals, which long ago froze our nights and days into little more than routine and away from the worries of our new tense times. It is so satisfying when we take the plunge of adventure - it's unfortunate that we invent so many reasons to put aside living our dreams of adventure. It is sometimes a tangled web that we weave through life. Some of the threads reveal a work-a-day world of commitments, duties and obligations. Other threads are of a quiet fabric of hope, responsibility and refreshment.

On our adventures you see the real country, its back country and meet the locals. The love for horses has no boundaries but possesses a common language we all speak and understand. The majority of the overseas rides are from inn to inn, some from castle to castle and a few are camping rides.

You will experience new countries and their customs and make new friends. The Hidden Trails trips are the best you can find.

They have been tested by our staff or associates and received our stamp of approval. If you are considering a special riding vacation anywhere in the world, call us first and let our experienced consultants match the perfect trip with your dream.

We will listen to you and give you objective advice to help you choose the best destination and adventure.

Your vacation is the most precious time of the year and we are committed to making it the most memorable time of your life. Wherever you go, have a great time and bring back some peace of mind.

Thank you for your continued support.

Hidden Trails

Phone: 604-323-1141

Fax: 604-323-1148

Toll Free: 1-888-9-TRAILS

from within the USA or Canada or

E-mail: info@hiddentrails.com

Website: www.hiddentrails.com

Address:

659A Moberly Road, Vancouver BC Canada V5Z 4B3 or

4406 Tennyson Road, Wilmington, DE 19802 USA

Toll Free from the U.K.:

Ph: 0- 808 189-0420

Fax: 0-808-280-1860

Toll Free Worldwide:

Skype: hiddentrails



Vjosa River Trail Ride - Albania, Europe

Tour Code: IT-ALBCV03

12 days / 11 nights ~\$1,890.00

Dates: April and October

Trip Rating : ●●●●●

Difficulty : ●●●●●

Lodging : ●● BASIC

Tack: English Trekking

Horses: Albanian Local Breeds

Pace: 4-6 hours riding per day

(approx 270km...

Walk,Trot,Canter,

Airport: Tirana International Airport

Nënë Tereza (TIA)



Introduction

Central, Albania

Riding along Vjosa River – the last wild river of Europe.

This trail combines a challenging riding experience in different landscapes with many possibilities! You will get the privilege of experiencing Albania's true natural landscape with swimming in rivers, river hiking, canyon exploring, and camping some nights. To pair this trip like a fine wine, you will be sharing time and accommodations with local people, visiting rare culture monuments, and meeting monuments of Albania's communist dictatorship past. Local traditional food, famous Permeti Raki and wine tasting, livestock rituals, and city night life will make this trail very diverse in experiences. Being guided on horseback gives you the opportunity to visit tiny villages where the locals rarely see visitors. They are all welcoming and excited to show you about their way of life. Riding along river Vjosa, the last wild river in Europe, and camping in the river bed is the most beautiful experience of this trail. Vjosa "the blue heart" of Europe, along its entire course of over 270 kilometers, is untamed, free flowing, and characterized by beautiful canyons, braided river sections, islands, oxbows and meandering stretches. Vjosa River is one of the most complex habitats for spawning fish and migratory birds. Guaranteed to please any history-lovers, culture-explorers, and nature-seekers, this trip is unlike any you will ever find.

Accommodation



Accommodations

This is a progressive ride so nights will be spent in different accommodations.

Description

You will be staying in a variety of accommodations with some nights in hotels, other nights in families' homes, and 2 nights camping. Bathrooms are shared during the whole trip and while camping, we bathe in nearby rivers (bring your swimsuit). You will need to bring your towel and sleeping bag for the camping nights.

Access to electricity is possible every evening and the whole area has a good phone coverage. Laundry can be done at various locations for a small fee.

Wi-Fi access is only available in Gjirokastra and Permet. Internet access is difficult during this ride so we recommend guests to buy an Albanian sim card (around 13 euros) to get free internet access and about 30 minutes of free calls.





Accommodation Itinerary - subject to changes based on availability

Night 1: Hotel in Gjirokastr
 Night 2: Family house in Karjan
 Night 3: Camping in Cajupe
 Night 4: Family house in Nderan
 Night 5: Family house in Grabova
 Nights 6 & 7: Hotel in Permet
 Night 8: Camping in Hoshteva Zagoria
 Night 9: Family house in Hllomo
 Night 10: Family house in Libohovë
 Night 11: Hotel in Gjirokastr

Room Occupancy

It may be possible to book a single room on the first and last night as well as in Permet, but riders must be prepared to share accommodations and tents on other nights.



Meals

All meals are included in this trip from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 12, except for meals on Day 7.

You will get to enjoy local Albanian food (local meats, fruits, and vegetables) traditionally cooked.

Breakfasts include eggs, butter, cheese, local pancakes, fruit jams, honey, milk and tea.

Lunch is a picnic packed by the riders from the family they stayed with the night before and usually consist of bread, cheese, tomatoes, eggs, olive, pie fruit and a drink.

For dinner, we serve meat (chicken, calf or pork meat, fish by the sea), salads, cheese, local yogurt sauce, olives, pickles, vegetables from the garden and fruits.

Wine or beer is included with lunch and dinner every day.

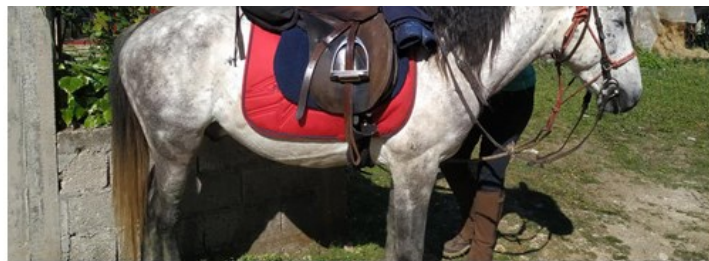
Dietary Restrictions

We can cater to all dietary restrictions with prior notice.



Riding





Riding Experience

This trip has been designed for intermediate riders who are reasonably fit and in a decent state of health. You should also be happy to share facilities with others and live in basic conditions.

Horses

The horses used for this ride are locally bred and ideal for the terrain. They are small but very robust and surefooted Albanian horses (between 13 and 14.2 hands). The Albanian horse, a unique mountain breed that is a local mixture of the archaic Tarpan and medieval Arab horse. They are great climbers, have a clear mind and are surefooted. Our breeding program aims to help saving this declining breed of horses. Our stable include 38 horses and is situated amidst scenic hills, green valleys, surrounded by high mountains. Our horses are trained with natural horsemanship techniques that we are pleased to share with the guests.

Pace

The rides are at a moderate pace overall. Most of the time we are traveling through mountains so that must be taken into account in regards to your expectations of speed, however there are indeed occasions where you can have a good canter. We ride for 9 days, for about 4-6 hours per day. The total distance covered on this trip is about 270 km.

Guides

Kristina, Aurel and Ilir are all native from Albania and always happy to share their love for horses and their knowledge of Albania with guests. There are 2 guides accompanying you on this trip.

Itinerary



Sample Itinerary - subject to changes

Please note that this itinerary is given as guidance only and may be altered.

Day 1 (Wednesday): Arrival

Plan your flight to arrive at Tirana airport ideally in the morning, but no later than 2:30pm - this leaves time for the transfer and to be able to visit the town of Gjirokastra. From the airport, the transfer will be by mini-van or off-road car and will take around 3-4 hours (250km). Settle into your hotel, 10 minutes walking from the centre of historical Gjirokastra. You can have a walk around the historical town of the old Bazaar; visit Enver Hoxha's house, Gjirokastra castle, the church of the Old Bazaar, the mosque of the Bazar, and Skenduli house representing an ideal sample of Gjirokastra traditional life. Dinner will be served at a traditional restaurant. During dinner your guides will be able to speak to you about the trail: possible requests or needs, advice and things which are good to know. We recommend that you buy a map of the area before dinner in order to gain a good understanding of the itinerary.

Meals included: Dinner

Overnight in hotel in Gjirokastra

Day 2 (Thursday): Ride to Karjan

After breakfast at the hotel and allocation of horses, we will start to ride through the countryside towards the medieval village of Karjan. This village is traditional, a rural stop of the passing caravans with its small churches and old roman bridge. The road to reach this destination passes through a rural environment; small houses, gardens, traditional farming, and cultivation of the land. The route combines hilly landscapes, valleys, small water streams, and cliffs. This path also passes along the view of River Drino, "Tree of Life" river. It is the most important water basin in the area and part of ancient pagan beliefs. On your way you will meet the ruins of the castle of Santa Triada reconstructed during 1809-1810 by Ali Pasha, a strategic point to control all the caravan itineraries. The castle ruins were used later during the time of socialism for military issues. We will stop for picnic lunch just near the village of Erind. We will reach Karjan village where a traditional dinner and accommodation will be hosted by a local family.

Riding: ~4.5 hour

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Overnight in family house in Karjan village

Day 3 (Friday): Karjan to Cajupi Valley

After breakfast we will ride down along Drino's valley first to Andon Poci village, and then Hundkuq village. The ride will become challenging when entering a small forest before reaching Labova of Zhapa. This village is well known all over the south for its wonderful Church and the big houses belonging to the merchants which are now mostly in ruins. Labova is the birthplace of Vangjel Zhapa, the organizer of the first Modern Olympic Games. Zhapa was a well-known businessman and philanthropist who lived around 200 years ago. Labova will be our lunch picnic stop. After visiting the church a very unique mediaeval building you will start riding up the mountain. You will be impressed by the mountain's vegetation such as mountain tea, various wild rose, and other





You will be impressed by the mountain's rare vegetation such as mountain tea, oregano, wild rose, and other endemic plants like digitalis or 'Dig-Dag' as it's known locally. We follow the mountain path to the valley of Cajupi where we stop by a cattle of 1000 sheep. This place will be our camping place for the night. You will have the chance to taste the Brati famous spring water, a typical station of the old caravans and visit a small mediaeval tower of protection called "karakoll". Riders can experience the sheep milking process and cooking with the shepherds.

(This day the guides might decide to take a shorter path to Cajupi valley and go again for a ride in the afternoon in the mountains around Cajupi's valley depending on the temperatures of the day)

Riding: ~5 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Overnight camping in Cajupi Valley

Day 4 (Saturday): Cajupi Valley to Nderan

After a nice traditional breakfast, the trail will follow the medieval Caravan pathway 'Hija e Mallkuar' or 'The Cursed Shadow'. This pathway was once used by medieval thieves to ambush caravans traveling through Zagoria. Continuing our ride, we'll traverse the most important horse pathway of the 17th and 18th centuries, which connected the major commercial centers of Southern Albania. Along the way, we'll be treated to the breath-taking view of the natural monument, the Rock of Zhej.

Prepare for a challenging downhill ride that will lead us to the ruins of a medieval stone bridge, where we'll enjoy a lunch break and a refreshing swim in the nearby river.

In the afternoon, we'll make our way to the Church of the Monastery of Nivan, constructed in 1702, and cross a symbolic bridge over the Zagoria River to conclude the day's ride in Nderan, one of the region's significant villages. We'll spend the evening and night with a welcoming local family.

Riding: ~3.5 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Overnight in family house in Nderan village

Day 5 (Sunday): Nderan to Grabova

Today's ride will begin with a return to Hoshteva and a mountain climb to reach the Gjurmëmushka mountain pass. Once we reach the summit, we'll mostly enjoy a downhill ride, passing through Maleshova village to visit its charming church and the ruins of the Limari antic castle. We'll pause for a picnic lunch near a tranquil water stream, where we can rest under the shade of the trees.

During the afternoon ride, we'll be rewarded with stunning views of the Vjosa River from the mountaintop.

Our overnight stay will be in a comfortable village guest house in Grabova village, a remote and isolated area known for its warm hospitality. Here, you can experience the traditional mountain cooking and savour the famous "petanik," a special local pie. Grabova is renowned for its Raki production and delectable "spoon" desserts. In the evening, we'll enjoy dinner on the guest house's terrace, overlooking the magnificent flow of the Vjosa River just 200 meters away.

Riding: ~6-7 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Overnight in family house in Grabova

Day 6 (Monday): Grabova to Permet

After breakfast, you will start the ride downhill to reach river Vjosa. The rest of the ride for the day will take place on the right of the river bank. This leg of the journey will be particularly enjoyable, with ample opportunities for exhilarating gallops. We'll pause for a swimming break near Piskova village, taking advantage of the dry part of the river bed.

For lunch, we'll relish in the delicious food prepared by a small restaurant in Permet, which will be conveniently transported to our riverside stop. If interested, you can also indulge in some fishing. Spend the entire afternoon swimming and relaxing before riding the final 1.5 hours to reach the small town of Permet. After taking care of the horses, we'll spend the night in a nearby hotel, just a short 10-minute walk from the town center. Dinner will be served at a well-known traditional restaurant.

Riding: ~3 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Overnight in hotel in Permet

Day 7 (Tuesday): Sightseeing (no riding)

This is a rest day for the horses. We suggest to drive you to Benja thermal waters in Langerica canyons, 30 minutes away from Permet. There are chances of exploring the canyons, swimming, and the "most brave" can go river hiking to explore the "Pigeons Cave". We have planned having lunch in a restaurant close to the canyons and return back to Permet town late in the afternoon.

Dinner will be served in a small restaurant close to the hotel. During this day is possible that you make your own resting plan if you don't want to join this program.

Meals included: Breakfast

Overnight in hotel in Permet

Day 8 (Wednesday): Permet to Hoshteva Zagoria

This is going to be one of the longest and most difficult days. Long sleeves are needed because of branches on the trail. During most of the ride, we will climb Dhembel Mountain. The view is amazing from the top. Picnic lunch will be carried in the saddle. The car can't reach us before the final destination during this day. You will meet logistic in Hoshteva Zagoria. We will camp next to Hoshteva's church under the trees. The whole group will be involved in cooking dinner and will later eat under the stars. The camping place is really beautiful and a unique experience.

Riding: 6 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Overnight camping in Hoshteva Zagoria

Day 9 (Thursday): Hoshteva Zagoria to Hllomo

This morning will be a really exciting equestrian experience. After a fresh country breakfast we will ride through a mountain valley, perfectly suited for gallops, passing small remote farms, wild cliffs and many historical routes off the tourist trail. Riding through Pogon region is a true travel in time. We will be passing by ancient ruins and mythical natural wonders. Our picnic lunch will be near the stone bridge of Hllomo or Kacarello's, which can only be reached by horse.

In the afternoon, we will reach the centre of the Pogon region. The mountain village of Polican is populated by a Greek minority. You will spend the night with a Greek minority family. In their company you have the chance to explore some very particular cult monuments of the medieval period. Later in the evening you will enjoy local gastronomic delights. This village is one of the most important territories of mountain honey in South Albania and it offers about 10 different varieties of honey.

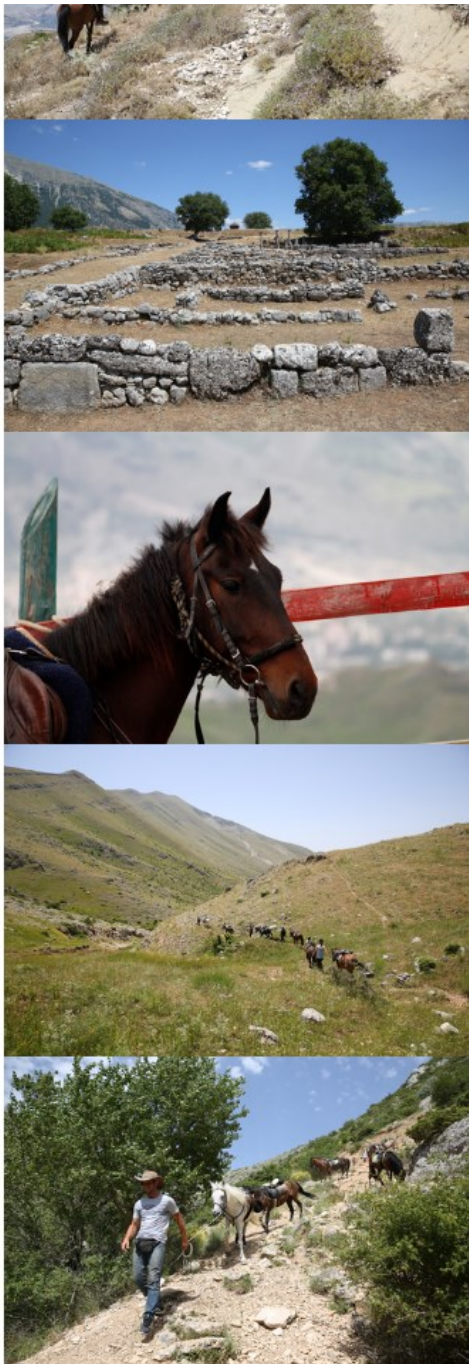
Riding: ~6 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Overnight in family house in Hllomo village

Day 10 (Friday): Hllomo to Libohova

This riding day combines changing landscape and different riding pace. Wide valleys, steep downhill trails, green forests and the beauty of Suha River are part of your itinerary. We can stop to swim in Suha river, explore the bridge as well as the waterfalls and caves along the river. Later we will climb the Swallow Rock. The climb will be a special equestrian experience. We will reach the village of Labova of the Cross for a late lunch in a traditional guest house and restaurant. Before the afternoon ride will visit the church of Labova of the Cross one of the most important in the country. This church was built by Justinian the Great in 554 as a smaller chapel. Justinian married his wife in this church and the villagers inherited her wedding dress for centuries. The monument was



married his wife in this church and the villagers inherited her wedding dress for centuries. The monument was reconstructed during the X-th century and is decorated with old wooden icons full of floral and symbolic animal scenes.

The ride to Libohova, a small town nestled at the foot of the Bureto Mountain will take another 2 hours. The archaeological evidence indicates a very ancient settlement which reached its zenith in the 17th-century when it became an important commercial centre. It is possible to take a long walk and visit Libohova's castle, a Bektashi cult object and the tomb of Ali Pasha's sister, Shanisha.

You will overnight in a local family house and will taste delicious local food.

Riding: ~5 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Overnight in family house in Libohova

Day 11 (Saturday): Libohova to Stables

This will be a short riding day. This morning you will ride through rolling hills, Drino's valley, and few water streams before climbing a steep hill to reach Antigonea National Park where we will stop for a visit. Antigonea was built by King Pyrrhus in 295 BC and named after his first wife Antigona, daughter of King Ptolemy of Egypt. After the break we will ride 1 more hour to the stable where you can enjoy the experience of letting your horses free. A picnic lunch will follow in the village close to the stable. You will be accommodated at the same hotel in Gjirokastra. Your farewell dinner will take place in a small restaurant in the old Bazaar. Later in the evening we can have a drink in a popular bar.

Riding: ~3.5 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Overnight in hotel in Gjirokastra

Day 12 (Monday): Departure

After breakfast at the hotel you will be transferred back to the airport of Tirana.

Meals included: Breakfast,



Other Info

Meeting: Gjirokastra

Airport: Tirana International Airport Nënë Tereza (TIA)

Transfer: Tirana International Airport Nënë Tereza (TIA) or Saranda Port.

Distance: 220 km / 136.7 miles

Pick-up/ drop-off for this trip is from Tirana International Airport Nënë Tereza (TIA) or Saranda Port before 3:00pm on your arrival day. On the last day, we will drop you off at the airport between 9:00am and 12:00pm (noon), so please do not book your departure flights for before 12:00pm!

Tack: English Trekking

Horses: Albanian Local Breeds

Pace: 4-6 hours riding per day (approx 270km total)

Walk | Trot | Canter |

Level: 🐾🐾🐾🐾 (3 to 4 out of 5) Intermediate

Age: Min 14

Weight: 220 lbs / 100 kg

Riders: Min 4 riders Max 10 riders

Riding helmets are mandatory for this ride.

Rates and Dates 2024 - IT-ALBCV03

Rates include: Accommodations, All meals (except on day 7), Water and drinks with meals, English-speaking tour guide, 9 riding days & Luggage transportation

Packages and Options

Season	Description	EUR	~US\$
A 2024	12 day tour	€1720	\$1890

The US Dollar Rate is based on a EUR Exchange Rate of 1.1 and subject to currency fluctuation

Transfer Option

Description

2024	Single room (available only the first and last night, and in Permet - subject to availability) price per night pp	€25	\$30
2024	Small group supplement (3 pax only), pp	€185	\$205
2024	Transfer between Saranda port and Gjirokastra (plan to fly to Corfu and then take the boat to Saranda), pp, round trip	€125	\$140
2024	Transfer from/to Tirana Airport (3+ pax), one way, per person	€55	\$60

Tour Dates

Season	Tour Dates		
A 2024	04/20/2024 - 05/01/2024	12d / 11n	12 day tour
A 2024	10/05/2024 - 10/16/2024	12d / 11n	12 day tour

Min/Max: 4/10

Rates do not include: Entrance tickets for museums or parks, Meals on day 7, Extra drinks, Activities on Day 7, Airport and port transfers & Gratuities
You will need to bring your towel and sleeping bag for the camping nights.



Reservation Form

Tour : _____ Code #: _____ from: _____ to : _____

The Travelers (Last Name, First Name)	Male Female	Single room / or tent	Birth Date MM/DD/YY	Height	Weight	Special diets													
						Special diets	Beginner	NoVICE	Intermediate	Strong Intern.	Advanced	ride English	ride Western	mostly arena	mostly hacking				
1. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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4. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Special Diets: _____

Your fitness level: Excellent ☐ Moderate ☐ Poor ☐ How long have you been riding? _____

How often do you ride? _____ Have you been on other riding tours? No ☐ Yes ☐ last trip when? _____

If Hidden Trails offers a transfer from the local airport/station: I would like the transfer to be included: YES ☐ NO ☐

In an emergency, name and phone number of contact: _____

Attention: Please, if there is more than one participant, all have to sign the reservation form - make copies if needed

With my signature I confirm my reservation of the listed program(s) under the Hidden Trails Booking Conditions. I'm aware, and I made all participants aware of the risk involved with these outdoor adventure activities. All participants have read and agree with the Hidden Trails Booking Conditions and the Hidden Trails Recreational Activity Release and Indemnity Agreement in this brochure or as listed on the Internet.

I (we) will sign and forward the Recreational Activity Release and Indemnity Agreement at least 10 weeks before trip starting date.

Last Name and First Name (The Traveler) _____

Street _____ e-mail _____

City _____ State _____ Postal/Zip Code _____

Phone (wk) _____ (hm) _____ Cell _____ Fax _____

Date _____ Signature (mandatory) 1. _____

Please, charge a 25% deposit (minimum \$ 350 per person) now and full payment 10 weeks before the travel date to my credit card.

For payments by VISA ☐ or Mastercard ☐ (no debit cards)

Cardholder: _____

Card # _____ 3 digit Security # _____

Exp.Date: _____ Signature _____

Billing Address for Credit Card (if different than mailing address):

I have enclosed a check for the deposit ☐

Additional Signatures:

2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Travel Cancellation Insurance Credit Card required

Sign me (us) up ☐ initial _____

No, we will provide our own ☐ initial _____

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