



RIDE WORLD WIDE

Argentina

Los Potreros, Cordoba 2012

Riding Information Sheet

Estancia Los Potreros is a 6,500 acre working organic cattle farm in the heart of the beautiful region of Cordoba some 500 miles to the north west of Buenos Aires. Situated in the "Sierras Chicas" at an altitude of 3,000 feet, Los Potreros has remained in the same Anglo-Argentine family for four generations and the main house is steeped in family history. It also boasts many references to the days of the Jesuits who first organised farming in the area before they were forced to leave, quite suddenly, in 1769. Los Potreros is owned by the Begg family and is run, along with their wives, by brothers Kevin and Robin who were brought up in Argentina before living in England for some years. Kevin and his wife Louisa now live on the estancia and are ideal hosts to introduce you to the way of life on an Argentine estancia. Kevin and Robin's father still runs the cattle side of things, (Los Potreros has an excellent reputation for breeding Aberdeen Angus cattle), and Kevin & Louisa are also keen breeders of Peruvian Paso horses. The estancia is well located to visit some of the Jesuit churches for which the province is known and as well as providing a fantastic base for keen riders, there is also much for the non-rider in the area including some lovely walking, three excellent golf courses, bird watching, fishing and Cordoba city only 30 miles away.



Dates Visits to the estancia can be arranged year round (except for 4 weeks in May / June, exact dates TBC) for anything from 3 nights to 2 or 3 weeks but generally a minimum of 7 nights is recommended to give you time to enjoy both the estancia and also the different scenery slightly further afield. (Over Christmas & New Year the minimum stay is 5 nights). Sunday afternoon is set aside as a rest time so there is only riding on Sunday mornings. There are set dates for 7 night progressive rides and also for informal polo weeks. These can also be arranged outside the set dates for groups on request. The new 'Polo Taster', three consecutive half day sessions of 'stick and ball' and practice chukkas, is available throughout the year, with the 'Learn to Play Polo' weeks on set dates, and the more intensive dedicated 'Polo Holidays' from October to March.

The Horses There are about 150 horses in all at Los Potreros including breeding mares and foals, with about 90 riding horses. The horses are Criollo (the local Argentine breed) and Criollo crosses (some with the estancia's own Thoroughbred stallion) of between about 15hh and 16hh and there are also a number of Peruvian Paso horses many of which are home bred using the estancia's own Paso stallion. Paso horses were bred for covering the huge distances on large Peruvian estancias at the most comfortable gait possible. They have a natural 4 beat lateral gait, a unique characteristic that was developed and has been preserved through selective breeding and which makes a pure bred Paso horse the smoothest and most comfortable riding horse in the world. Criollo horses arrived in Argentina with the Spanish and still are widely used for working cattle. They are strong and sensible but also extremely responsive, athletic and forward going making them a real pleasure to ride. All the horses at Los Potreros are ridden in the traditional South American (western) style so are used to neck reining and go best when ridden with a loose contact with the mouth. Saddles are British military saddles, usually with an extremely comfortable sheepskin on top and some polo saddles are also available. Saddle-bags are provided for longer rides. There is a weight limit for riders of about 95kgs / 15 stone for estancia-based rides and 90kgs / 14 stone for progressive rides and polo, but please contact us to check suitable horses are available if your weight is close to this.

Riding The riding at Los Potreros is very flexible, with hours tailored to suit and several different riding options offered. If you wish you can ride for 4 or 6 hours a day, with long picnic rides to explore the surrounding area, perhaps riding to the Canada de Condores to swim in the waterfall. You might choose to ride out on morning and / or afternoon rides of 2 to 4 hours, or take a 2 day expedition with a night spent camping. There are also opportunities to try your hand informally at polo, 'stick and balling' with the gauchos (this is usually once a week) and more intensive 'polo-centric' stays are now also available. Another option is to join one of the set date progressive rides, following a circular route from the Estancia, staying at smallholdings and working farms and exploring more of the Sierras Chicas. For guests staying longer than 5 nights, one or two night expeditions, camping out or staying at rustic farmhouses, can be arranged at most times of the year with notice. Riding groups are small, and divided according to ability, generally a maximum of 8 guests and usually less, and all rides are lead by an experienced English speaking guide with helpers / grooms on hand to look after the horses at all times. There is no riding on Sunday afternoons.



Pace The pace of the riding at Los Potreros can be varied to suit, with plenty of opportunities for fast canters and also for more relaxed riding for those who prefer. Some routes are rugged and quite steep in places where narrow paths cut through the acacia scrub and where the pace has to be slow, but there also lots of good open plains, grassy valleys and soft dirt tracks that are ideal for exhilarating canters. The pace is well varied overall.

Riding Experience Los Potreros is ideally suited to reasonably experienced riders who wish to explore the surrounding country on a responsive, well schooled horse and who are comfortable, relaxed and secure in the saddle at a walk, trot and fast canter. To get the most from the riding and horses you should be used to riding in open country and over varied terrain as there is a variety of going - grassy plains, narrow tracks through the scrub forest, rugged hills to climb and small streams to cross. You will also enjoy your riding much more if you are fairly riding fit and if you don't ride regularly at home, we recommend you accustom yourself to the hours you will spend in the saddle with **cont over**

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Riding Experience cont some regular training before you go. The estancia is also a good choice for less experienced riders and there is a good selection of horses to suit riders of different abilities. As the riding hours and pace can be adapted to suit, novice, less experienced and beginner riders are also well catered for.



Polo While not a dedicated polo estancia (the hills don't help), Los Potreros has strong connections with the game. Part of the estancia was once owned by polo legend Lewis Lacey, one of the world's first 10 goal players and one of the few to have played polo for both Great Britain and Argentina - and the man credited with 'inventing' the polo shirt as we now know it. The aim of the polo at los Potreros is to encourage you to start playing this fast invigorating game, to build on what skills you may already have and for you to leave bursting to play more. The atmosphere is refreshingly relaxed, the horses keen and clever, and the coaching perfect to nurture the gamesman (or woman) within. In addition to the two afternoons a week given over to all guests to play polo (weather permitting), the estancia offers 3 increasingly intensive alternatives - 'Polo Taster' (3 consecutive ½ day sessions), the 'Learn to Play Polo Week' (6 half day sessions) aimed at the beginner, novice or occasional player, and the more intensive and totally polo focused 5 or 7 night 'Polo Holiday' with 2 sessions per day for the duration of your stay. Please contact us for further details.



Terrain The Sierras Chicas rise to a height of 7,500 ft, running parallel to the main Andes. They are an older range of mountains than the high Andes with some varied terrain and wonderful views onto the 'pampas' below. The lower slopes are forested, mostly with acacia, cocos and molles, then as you climb higher, the trees become smaller and the forest more patchy, with clearings of tussock and pampa grass. Higher still, the hills are barren but for the 'paja brava', a hardy tussock grass which grows at high altitude and which provides cattle with grazing in winter when there is nothing else left to eat. There are hidden rocky valleys, open meadows carpeted with wild flowers and dramatic gorges with waterfalls. There is an interesting variety of bird life including vultures, eagles, partridges, doves, several different kinds of parrot and brightly coloured humming birds and the mighty Andean Condor is returning to the area. Foxes and hares are often seen whilst riding and puma, wild boar and small deer are present although more elusive and difficult to spot!



Accommodation Accommodation at the estancia is simple but comfortable, providing you with all creature comforts. The estancia consists of several buildings, all whitewashed and single storey in the traditional style, and some bedrooms are separate from the main house. They are all preserved as much as possible in the original colonial style and are furnished in keeping, with tiled floors, rugs and original furniture and fittings. Bedrooms have wood burning stoves or fireplaces to take the chill off the mountain air and most have en-suite bathrooms (with either bath or shower) - again fittings are from another era but it all works and there is plenty of hot water! Electricity is supplied by wind turbine with a diesel generator for back up. The Begg family and staff make you feel extremely welcome and the atmosphere at the estancia is always relaxed and informal. Guests have free use of the drawing room - ideal for relaxing by the fire or meeting for drinks before dinner - and the swimming pool (not heated so generally only used in summer months) is also a lovely place to relax after riding with views across open fields. Meals are either eaten 'al fresco' on the veranda or at a long table in the dining room. On longer mobile rides the first 2 nights and the last night are at Los Potrerros. On other nights accommodation is simple and is spent in neighbouring estancias, simple country inns or at fairly basic farms - although depending on the itinerary chosen, there may be some nights camping out using small two man tents and sleeping bags. The maximum number of guests staying at anyone time is 12, though generally it is 6-8.



Meals Food at the estancia is excellent with bread baked daily and plenty of delicious Argentine beef. Days start with a cooked breakfast for those who wish or you might have muesli with yoghurt, fruit, bread, toast and homemade jam. Lunch and dinner are often a traditional Argentine 'asado' (barbeque) with beef, chorizo or lamb, accompanied by fresh salads, home-made bread and cheese, washed down with Argentinean wine. Los Potrerros have their own label of locally made wine and the various grape varieties make for interesting wine tasting. Vegetarians will be catered for as far as possible but please give us prior notice of any special dietary requirements.

Weather Cordoba is known for its good weather and healthy climate - 'siempre de temporada' (always in season) is the old slogan and the estancia is open to guests all year round (except in May when repairs / improvements are carried out). The climate can vary but it is generally sunny and dry, particularly from April to October which are the winter months. The Argentine summer, November to March, is the rainy season although rain is generally not intrusive and it is still often sunny. In June, July and August, it can be cold at night but is usually warm and sunny in the middle of the day - average temperatures for January, the hottest month are between 17 and 30 degrees C, and during July, the coldest month, between 5 and 17 degrees C. The sun can be very strong so hats and good sun protection are recommended year round.

Other activities and family holidays Los Potreros is a great choice for the non-rider as well as rider and there are plenty of non-riding activities to choose from. For a break from riding there are some lovely walks through the hills to explore the streams and rocky canyons, to watch the exotic bird life, swim and picnic by waterfalls. The estancia's pool is a wonderful spot to relax and there is also wine tasting, good walking and bird watching on the estancia, and nearby there is an international paragliding site, mountain biking, world-class dove shooting, three excellent golf courses in the vicinity, and fishing of sorts. The farm is remote but a taxi ride or a lift can take you shopping to Rio Ceballos (13 km), to La Falda (17 km) or La Cumbre (35 km) or to Cordoba city, an interesting University city that was a principal staging post between Lima (Peru) and Buenos Aires. The area around Los Potreros is rich in Jesuit churches showing their intense activity in the region and popular local sites to explore include the national Jesuit Museum in Jesus Maria (1618), Estancia Sta Catalina (which was founded in 1662) and Embalse San Roque. There are also annual attractions such as the folkloric festival at Cosquin and the Rodeo at Jesus Maria as well as annual cattle sales and cattle branding. Children are welcome at Los Potreros and it is an ideal spot for a family holiday. As well as riding, walking, swimming, picnics and barbecues, children might enjoy activities such as helping milk the cows, collecting eggs from the estancia's chickens, and building dams in the streams. There is no minimum age at the estancia but to ride children are expected to be able to sit and control a horse independently and to join a longer distance ride, staying away from the Estancia on some nights, the minimum age is usually 12 years old (exceptions may be made for private groups). Nannies and babysitters (experienced but unqualified!) can usually be organised if requested in advance - otherwise children must be accompanied by a responsible adult at all times on the estancia. As they traditionally eat dinner quite late in Argentina, an earlier supper is prepared for children and they are requested to eat before the adults.



What to bring We will send you a list of things we suggest you bring when you make your booking.

Itineraries Itineraries for a stay at Los Potreros are flexible and customised. Below are samples of a 7 night estancia-based itinerary and also the 7 night progressive ride.

Day 1 You will be collected from Cordoba Pajas Blancas Airport and driven to Los Potreros (approx. an hour's drive). Settle in and, if time allows, an afternoon ride to the outpost of Estancia Chiviquin, a very old and simple traditional dwelling that offers an insight into cattle farming in these remote areas. Enjoy a candle-lit dinner - a tradition every evening at Los Potreros - and an opportunity to discuss plans for the rest of your stay. Overnight Los Potreros. (D)

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Day 2 A morning ride to get to know your horse and the gauchos. Climb to some of the high points of the cattle ranch to get your bearings before returning to base for a typical Argentine 'asado' (barbecue) lunch with several different cuts of meat to try. The afternoon to relax, perhaps swimming or walking then watch the sun go down with an evening drink on the 'Patio Verde'. Dinner and, if the moonlight allows, a night drive or ride to a high point of the ranch to see the lights of the city of Cordoba in the distance. On the way you may hear the sound of the 'church bell stone' that inspired the bell-shaped cattle brand mark used on the farm. Night at Estancia Los Potreros. (B,L,D)

Day 3 Breakfast and then mount up and set off riding across country passing the 'Canada de los Condores' (Canyon of the Condors) where condors are sometimes seen. A picnic lunch at the waterfall and a chance to swim if the water is warm enough. Ride back to Los Potreros for dinner and the night. (B,L,D)

Day 4 Today's ride may take you to 'La Estancita', perhaps stopping for a picnic lunch at the Dominican church. Ride back to Los Potreros by a different route. Dinner and night at Los Potreros. (B,L,D)

Day 5 to 7 3 full days at Los Potreros with rides out each day, and a choice of various activities. You may want to try your hand at polo, a little low key 'stick and ball' polo is the perfect introduction to this addictive, fun and fast moving game, or perhaps help the gauchos round up the yearling horses each evening to protect them from the puma, or may prefer to explore further reaches of the Sierras. Day visits to local towns can also be arranged and there are often 'rodeos' or other colourful events which are worth a visit. (B,L,D)

Day 8 Breakfast and transfer to Cordoba airport. (B)



The following is an example itinerary of the 7 night progressive 'distance' ride. This ride takes you over the constantly changing geography of the region, through areas impossible to reach by car. You stay at a variety of locations from cattle estancias to very simple dwellings exposing you to local life.

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Day 2 A morning ride to get to know your horse and the gauchos. Climb to some of the high points of the cattle ranch to get your bearings before returning to base for a typical Argentine 'asado' (barbecue) lunch (by the pool) with several different cuts of meat to try. The afternoon to relax, perhaps swimming or walking then watch the sun go down with an evening drink on the 'Patio Verde'. Dinner and if the moonlight allows, a night drive or ride to a high point of the ranch to see the lights of the city of Cordoba in the distance. On the way you may hear the sound of the 'church bell stone' that inspired the bell-shaped cattle brand mark used on the farm. Night at Estancia Los Potreros. (B,L,D)



Day 3 Breakfast and then mount up and set off riding across country passing the 'Canada de los Condores' (Canyon of the Condors) where condors are sometimes seen. Ride on to 'La Estancita' for a picnic lunch at the local school. A short visit to the Dominican church then ride on past local dwellings and small farms to Estancia Potrero de Niz where the night is spent in the Estancia or camping. (B,L,D)

Day 4 Set off riding towards Candonga going north along the top of the Sierras Chicas and following dirt tracks towards 'Menta's farm' (cabin). Menta is a wonderful host and an excellent cook. Together with her brother she ekes out a meagre existence from her smallholding and staying here is well worth the experience! There may be a chance to swim in the cool, fast flowing stream or to visit Candoga church (C1650) before dinner and the night in the simple cabin or camping out. (B,L,D)

Day 5 Breakfast and a long ride, climbing high above the town of La Cumbre and on to the 'Loma Grande'. Dinner and night at a charming and secluded stone lodge with no access by road. Don't miss the night stars - you really feel you could reach out and touch them. The night in simple bunks at the lodge or camping out. (B,L,D)

Day 6 Descend to explore the town of La Cumbre (a town of British origin) set at the top of the Punilla valley. Lunch in a typical Cruz Chica home before riding on, winding your way towards the town of La Falda along the 'Camino de Los Artesanos'. Dinner and the night at a local inn or estancia. (B,L,D)

Day 7 Breakfast and an early morning start, riding towards 'El Cuadrado'. Passing through the outskirts of La Falda, a town with German origin, via the remains of the famous Eden Hotel (funded by Hitler during the war and now a museum of sorts). Ride on, climbing up along the top of a ridge with views across the Valle de Punilla. Pass the Jesuit ruin at 'El Vergel' (C1700) and head back to Los Potreros for a welcoming hot bath, dinner and your final night at the estancia. (B,L,D)

Day 8 Breakfast and a farewell ride on the estancia before your transfer to the airport. (B)



Dates & Prices 2012

Please note that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are now quoted in USD. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the USD/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay.

Stays at Los Potrerros can be arranged on request year round (except in May when the Estancia is closed) for 3 nights or more (5 nights or more over Christmas & New Year).

Rates are seasonal, per person per night:

1st January to 30th April

3 to 6 nights: USD415; 7 or more nights - USD 390

1st May to 30th September

3 to 6 nights: USD370; 7 or more nights - USD 350

1st October to 31st December

3 to 6 nights: USD430; 7 or more nights - USD 405

There is a 20% discount for children 16 and under and for non-riding children of 6 and under a 50% discount.

7 night Bellstone progressive rides:

18th to 25th February - USD 2905 per person

3rd to 10th November - USD 3010 per person

10th to 17th November - USD 3010 per person

'Learn to Play Polo' weeks:

19th to 26th March - USD 2905 per person

29th October to 5th November - USD 3010 per person

19th to 26th November - USD 3010 per person

Polo Holidays (dates by arrangement)

1st January to 30th April - USD430 per person per night

1st October to 31st December - USD450 per person per night



Trail rides and polo weeks can be arranged outside the above dates for groups on request.

A 3 day 'Polo Taster' can be arranged when booking an estancia stay, this costs and additional USD 150, payable locally.

Rates **INCLUDES** all riding, guiding and equipment, twin accommodation, meals, drinks and transfers from / to Cordoba airport

The rate **EXCLUDES** international flights to Cordoba, airport taxes, personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have), any visa fees and any tips you wish to leave.

Single rooms - 3 bedrooms have been specifically allocated for single occupancy, so providing one of these rooms is available, there is no single supplement payable. If you would like a single room please ask but do also note that single rooms cannot always be guaranteed! At busy times, or if you want to guarantee a double room for single occupancy, a supplement of 30% of the nightly rate is charged. Single rooms are not usually available on progressive rides.

La Casita de Carpintero - This self contained cottage (Little Woodpecker House) can be booked for a minimum of 2 guests at a fixed daily supplement of USD 50 per night. The cottage has 2 bedroom (one double and one twin or triple), 2 bathrooms, sitting room, verandah and front garden.

Flights and travel information The closest airport to Estancia Los Potreros, and meeting point for these rides, is Cordoba Pajas Blancas Airport (COR). Most flights are via Buenos Aires (but flights via Santiago in Chile or Montevideo in Uruguay are also possible). British Airways currently have daily flight departures to Buenos Aires, usually leaving London Heathrow at about 21.00 arriving Buenos Aires at about 10.30 the next day. Iberia and the Argentinean airline, Aerolineas Argentinas also have daily flights from London via Madrid to Buenos Aires. Iberia also fly to Montevideo and Lan Chile to Santiago (both via Madrid)

Other options are via the continent (eg Air France or Lufthansa) or via the USA. Internal flights Buenos Aires to Cordoba are with Aerolineas Argentinas (there are several every day). Fares start at about £900 per person economy return London to Cordoba although this will vary depending on the date required, availability and how long in advance you book. Please call us for more flight information and / or if you would like a fare quote - we would be happy to book flights for you (our ATOL number for flight sales is 6213).

Transfers to and from Cordoba airport are included, and you will be met at the airport with a sign with your name and / or Los Potreros. The trip from the airport is about an hour to the estancia on both tarmac and unmade roads.

General visa and health information (NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking)

Visas If you hold a full British Passport and are visiting Argentina for less than 3 months, you do not need to arrange a visa in advance.

Health No jabs are required as a condition of entry from the UK and Europe. The Hospital for Tropical Diseases in London recommends that you ensure you are up to date Tetanus and Hepatitis A. Hepatitis B, Rabies and Typhoid may also be recommended in some circumstances. If you are not up to date with these you should visit your GP or a travel clinic about 4 weeks before departure.

(Updated 05/12/11)

