



Tribes of the Northern USA Trip #4

ON HORSEBACK WITH THE NEZ PERCE, CHEYENNE AND LAKOTA

14 days (13 nights)

This is a great opportunity for travellers who wish to combine their love for riding with a desire to learn more about Native American culture in beautiful locations.

We will be fortunate enough to be in the company of three very experienced, friendly Native American guides from three different cultures, each of whom is happy to share their insights and skills with us, and to help us better appreciate their people's attachment to and interaction with their natural environment - its land, animals, plants and skies.

This adventure encompasses a wide range of activities besides riding, including visits to National Parks, sacred spaces and historic sites, constantly learning more about the ways and beliefs of the people of Native America, with the assistance of anthropologist Francesc Nolla.

Itinerary:

Day 1:

We arrive at the airport in Lewiston, on the border between Idaho and Washington, to be met by our specialist guide for the trip, anthropologist Francesc Nolla, who will oversee our transfer to Winchester, a small town on the edge of the **Nez Perce Reservation**. Here we spend the night in a cosy motel, resting up before a packed fortnight of activities.

Day 2:

After a spot of breakfast, we will briefly explore Lewiston. Then it's back towards Winchester, and the chance to visit the **National Historical Park of the Nez Perce**, as well as the tribe's horse centre. There we will get to know our Indian hosts for our routes through the Reservation, and maybe the chance of a brief ride. This is so that we can get to know the horses, and also so that the Nez Perce can see the level of our riding.

Next we follow on into Winchester, where we visit the Wolf Education & Research Center to learn about the relationship between wolves and the Nez Perce. The Nez Perce have a strong cultural and spiritual connection with

wolves, and established the **Nez Perce Wolf Recovery Project** to help wild wolves. The centre is currently home to eleven wolves born in captivity and so unable to be returned to the wild. We shall hopefully be able to see wolves and hear them howl.

Afterwards it's time for an evening stroll before returning to our lodgings for the night.

Day 3:

Today we have an early breakfast before meeting up with our Nez Perce guides and the horses. The ride will be around six hours in duration, with numerous ascents and slopes, with a break for a picnic along the way.

We shall visit, among other places, **Hells Canyon**, which is North America's deepest river gorge, snaking ten miles along the border between Oregon and Idaho, and sections of the **Nez Perce National Historic Trail**. This Trail commemorates the 1877 flight from the US Cavalry of the Nez Perce under Chief Joseph, who wished to escape being forced into Reservations.

After this stimulating ride, we return to our departure point, and transfer to Winchester to spend the night.

Day 4:

After another early breakfast, our Nez Perce hosts will take us on a five-hour ride, an ascent between the valley and Winchester. We share a farewell meal with our hosts before driving to **Lolo Pass**, significant as the first great pass through the Rockies, passed through during the great Nez Perce flight, and the gateway to the Pacific coast used by the famous Lewis and Clark expedition. In the lush surroundings of this historic place, we shall spend the night in a hotel of wood cabins.

Day 5:

Today we go for a hike after breakfast, and have the option of bathing in **natural thermal springs** in the middle of a forest that is relatively quiet compared to other National Parks. We will be largely free to enjoy our surroundings how we want today, with another hike in the evening if we wish, before we return to our log cabins for the night.

Day 6:

After breakfast we head into Montana across the Rockies, descending towards Missoula, and beginning the route which Lewis and Clark followed on their return journey at the turn of the nineteenth century. After picking up the freeway, we stop off first at **Deer Lodge**, home to the Grant-Kohrs Ranch Historical Site, famous from the frontier cattle-ranching era of the nineteenth century. This ranch once stretched out over a million acres, and longhorn cattle still graze the land around the ranch.

We carry on towards **Butte**, one of the most important mining centres in the American West during the gold rush days and subsequently a copper boomtown, which today is one of only two American cities recognised as a National Historic Landmark, with more than four thousand historic buildings extant. Museums and memorials remember the mining heritage of Butte, and many 'ghost signs' - adverts painted on walls - remain from the city's glory days, scores of years on.

We then continue on until we arrive at **Three Forks**, a small town at the source of the Missouri river, where we stay overnight at the exquisite Sacajawea Hotel (named after the Shoshone woman who accompanied Lewis and Clark), which oozes the feel of the Old West, with antique porch rockers, claw foot bathtubs and delightful period furniture.

Day 7:

This morning we drive east into Montana and the **Crow Indian Reservation**. Here we will visit Little Bighorn, the site of Custer's Last Stand, where the United States 7th Cavalry was defeated by an alliance of Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho, under the leadership of Crazy Horse, or Tasunka Wikto. At the time the Crow were the traditional enemy of these tribes, and served as scouts for the US Cavalry.

We then carry on into **Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation**, where we will meet our Cheyenne hosts and horses at their farm, before retiring for the night in a motel in Hardin.

Day 8:

Following breakfast we meet with our Cheyenne friends and ride for around six hours, breaking for a picnic. The terrain here is rolling wooded hills and **sagebrush prairie**. After a day in the saddle we shall return to Hardin in the evening.

Day 9:

Today our Cheyenne hosts will take us for a four-hour morning ride, and in the afternoon we continue our journey eastwards, spending the night in the town of **Broadus**, Montana.

Day 10:

Our journey today takes us first into Wyoming, where we will visit **Devil's Tower**, a giant monolith sacred to a number of Native American peoples, such as the Arapaho, Crow, Cheyenne, Kiowa, Lakota and Shoshone (to whom it was known as "Bear Lodge"), and made famous by its appearance in *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*.

We then continue on into South Dakota and the **Badlands National Park**, with its sharply eroded buttes, pinnacles and spires; it is also America's largest protected mixed grass prairie.

Now we head to the **Pine Ridge Reservation**, home to the Oglala Lakota Sioux, and check in at our motel in the small town of Interior, before heading off to the nearby town of Kyle, where we meet Native American horse expert White Thunder at his ranch. White Thunder will introduce us to the Paint Horses - bred specially for their speed and manoeuvrability - that we shall be riding with him, before we return to Interior for the night.

Day 11:

After another early breakfast, we meet up with White Thunder at Kyle for a day of riding which will take us out on the prairie as far as **Yellowbear Canyon**, a route of approximately six hours that combines flat zones of wide-open vistas with a final descent. We then return to Interior for the night.

Day 12:

Today White Thunder takes us riding through the **grasslands** that the Lakota reserve for bison, around eight hundred of which live across its 10,000 hectares. The terrain is giddy with numerous slopes and ascents, making for an exciting ride. Whilst there is no guarantee we shall meet any bison, if we do it may be necessary to ride swiftly away. At the end of the day we return to our Interior motel.

Day 13:

After breakfast, we leave the Pine Ridge Reservation and head into the **Black Hills**, or Pahá Sápa, a sacred place for the Lakota, where we will visit both Mount Rushmore, with its four presidential faces carved into the granite stone cliffs, and the Crazy Horse Memorial, which celebrates the Lakota war leader.

The region is a source of longstanding contention between the Lakota people and the United States government, which disenfranchised Native American people from it in violation of the 1886 Fort Laramie Treaty when gold was subsequently discovered there. A 1980 Supreme Court decision ruled that the lands were seized illegally. To the Lakota Pahá Sápa is the centre of their spiritual universe.

Then we make our way to **Rapid City**, South Dakota, where we will have plenty of opportunity to explore the downtown area, visit a museum or two and perhaps do a little shopping - the Prairie's Edge shop is recommended - before turning in for the night in our motel.

Day 14:

Sadly this is our last morning, so after breakfast it's a transfer back to Rapid City airport and onto the homeward journey. But the memories of our time with the people, places and horses of Native America are likely to linger forever.

Includes:

Land transportation and airport transfers; 13 nights in motels (double rooms); 6 days' horse riding (2 each with the Nez Perce, the Cheyenne and the Lakota); 13 breakfasts; 6 picnics (on horse riding days); entrance to Butte mining town, Deer Lodge ranch, Wolf Education & Research Center, Badlands National Park, Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse Memorial and Devil's Tower; specialist guide.

What to expect:

This trip is focused around the relationship between Native American people and their horses, and much of our time will be spent in the saddle, giving us a different perspective on the sights we see. We will follow historic trails and enter traditional areas. We will also visit National Parks, heritage areas and modern communities.

What to wear:

The temperature of the places we will visit tends to reach the mid-80s (Fahrenheit) at this time of the year, with cold nights and the possibility of stormy weather at times. The altitude of some of our destinations will likely mean a cooler climate at times. We will be travelling with a vehicle, so whilst we will be spending a lot of time outside, we will not be out in the wilderness alone should the weather unexpectedly change. Warm clothes for evenings and wet weather gear in case of rain would be a sensible precaution, and good, stout footwear is recommended.

Health:

This trip will involve six days of horse riding. You should be comfortable spending six or more hours in the saddle. But generally physical activities will not be excessive. Obtain health clearance. Disclaimer available for any activities assumed by participants.

Culture:

Some of our time will be spent with Native American people on Reservations. Be prepared for any preconceived notions about Native American culture to be challenged. Come with an open mind and an open heart.