



Tribes of the Northern USA Trip #6

HORSE RIDING WITH WHITE THUNDER

8 days (7 nights)

The ultimate Lakota Sioux experience: ride Lakota horses over Lakota lands under the guidance of a Lakota horse expert.

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 a beautiful location. The small size of the group will help make this a very personal experience that you will take with you for the rest of your life.

For eight days you will live in the shadow of the Black Hills, learning about Lakota culture and respect for the natural world; you will have the honour of riding Paint Horses from the ranch of Vernell White Thunder, who will teach you of the importance of the horse to his people and lead you out into the prairie, canyons and grasslands of the Lakota Nation.

Itinerary

Day 1:

We arrive at the airport in **Rapid City**, South Dakota where our guide, anthropologist Francesc Nolla meets us before transferring us to a comfortable motel. Rapid City is considered to be the gateway to the Black Hills, and the city affords many wonderful views of the wooded mountains of this most sacred of Lakota places.

Day 2:

After breakfast we will have a chance to explore a little of Rapid City, before leaving for the **Pine Ridge Reservation**. Pine Ridge, home to the Oglala Lakota Sioux people, is one of the largest Native American Reservations, yet also one of the poorest areas in the United States. Despite this, there is much to see and do here, and the Lakota people are very friendly to people respectful of their culture.

We will check in to our motel (with small swimming pool) in the tiny town of Interior and then head to **White Thunder Ranch** near Kyle, where Vernell White Thunder will greet us warmly. White Thunder has a herd of beautiful

Lakota Paint Horses, a type of horse conforming to strict bloodline requirements and colouring, bred for speed and manoeuvrability. White Thunder will guide us through the various areas of the Reservation, and share with us some of his Lakota insight to help make our stay as enjoyable and instructive as possible.

White Thunder will teach us about the situation of the Lakota, the importance to them of horses, and the relationship between man and horse in Lakota tradition. Then it will be time to see the horses for the first time and prepare the saddles. After this induction, we will return to Interior for the night.

Days 3-6:

For the next four days we will have breakfast at our motel in Interior before then leaving to meet White Thunder and the horses. Each day we will take **rides** of between four and six hours in duration, with White Thunder guiding us on horseback, and Francesc remaining with our support vehicle.

White Thunder will take us riding out through different zones of the Reservation: prairie, steep canyons, the grasslands of the tribe's large bison herd - which comprises around eight hundred 'buffalo' - and the **Badlands National Park**, for thousands of years a rich hunting ground for Native American people.

We will benefit from White Thunder's local knowledge, enjoy **astounding vistas** around Pine Ridge from our saddles, and share picnic lunches each day.

In the afternoons we will return to Interior to freshen up, and then have time to visit different places on the Reservation in the evening. Notable places include **Wounded Knee**, site of the massacre of 1890, and the White River Visitor Center.

Day 7:

After the challenges and thrills of our riding experience with White Thunder, we now have the opportunity to do some sightseeing. After breakfast we will drive to the Black Hills. Here we will visit **Mount Rushmore**, where four United States presidents are carved into the cliff face, and the **Crazy Horse Monument**, which commemorates the famous Lakota warrior.

We then head back into Rapid City, where we will have time for shopping and exploring the many sights, such as the **Lakota Journey Museum** and Prairie's Edge shop, before turning in for the night in Rapid City one last time.

Day 8:

Almost too quickly, it is time to leave, and we are dropped off at the airport for our flight home. But our memory of our time with the Lakota and their horses will remain with us for a long, long time.

Includes:

Land transportation and airport transfers; 7 nights in motels (double rooms); 4 days' horse riding; Lakota guide accompanying us on horseback; specialist guide (also providing vehicular back-up during rides); 4 picnic lunches on riding days.

What to expect:

This is a special horse-riding excursion, which will see us travelling through all kinds of terrain, and possibly encountering wild bison. For this reason, the rider must be sufficiently experienced and be able to ride fast if necessary and stay in good control of their horse.

What to wear:

Summers are reasonably hot, typically reaching into the mid-80s (Fahrenheit) or above; however, evenings can be cool. During the summer months, thunderstorms in the afternoon or evening surprise us from time to time.

Be prepared with proper clothing befitting seasonal weather changes. You are advised to bring good hiking shoes, comfortable clothes and footwear for riding, hat, sunblock and rain gear.

Health:

This trip will involve four days of horse riding. You should be comfortable spending six or more hours in the saddle. Obtain health clearance. Disclaimer available for any activities assumed by participants.

Culture:

Be prepared for any preconceived notions about Native American culture to be challenged. Come with an open mind and an open heart.