

HORSEMANSHIP TIPS

Aside from our wonderful crew, the most important piece of equipment on our operation is our riding and pack stock. Without them, you and I wouldn't get very far. They're not just essential transportation, they are creatures we care deeply about and their welfare is one of our highest priorities. Making sure that you have a safe experience with your horse is important to us. We give a short seminar prior to departure from the trailhead, but here are some things to ponder in the meantime. Many of you have at least some riding experience, some may even have their own mounts, and some may have never been on a horse before. If this is your first time riding, or it has been years since you were on a horse, getting some riding in before the trip is great if you can do it. It should sharpen your skills and raise your confidence level.

We do our best to match each rider to an appropriate horse. We do this through the questions on the Service Agreement and after meeting you in person.

Keep these thoughts in mind when riding.....

- Your horse is a thinking, feeling creature. Be kind and don't ask him to do the impossible. He is your partner, not your slave. Treat them with respect and they will take care of you. They know the drill.
- When riding the trail, one of the crew will usually be in the lead. We will always stop and start together. Don't hesitate to call out anytime you need to stop for any reason. The entire group will wait, otherwise your horse will probably not stand still for you to remount as he will want to catch up to the other horses. This may be the number one opportunity for an accident. Make sure the person in front of you waits for you to get back on. Before remounting it is also a good time to check your cinch, especially if it has been awhile.
- Try not to become dead weight on your horse's back. This is really hard on them. It may not seem like it, but you can make a dramatic difference with your posture. Stay up on your stirrups and help the horse out when going up or down hills and crossing bogs and logs. Riding a horse should be an interactive endeavor. Put some life in your seat and try to move with the horse and not against him. They will appreciate it and so will we.
- We will get off and walk periodically. This is really important to avoid sore knees. Your butt may be tired at the end of the day, but that will recover quickly. Knees that are tweaked and sore from riding too long can give you trouble the whole trip. So, when you feel your knees getting stiff, get off and walk for 15-20 minutes. We will let everyone know when we are on a good stretch of trail to walk.
- The crew will do the saddling, but it doesn't hurt for you to keep an eye on your equipment. Make sure your cinch is snug before mounting and watch the position of your saddle and pad, especially going downhill. If you think there is a problem with any of your equipment be sure and let your guide know. It will probably only take a second to fix and could prevent a wreck.
- The best way to avoid any problems is to use good sense when riding. If it doesn't look or feel right it probably isn't, don't get yourself into a jam by ignoring your gut feeling.
- **Horse training by guests.** From time to time we get some who feel compelled to try and put some "corrective training" on their horse. Please don't. Although usually well intended, it is important to keep in mind that these horses have to deal with all kinds of people, most of whom have little experience. For their own sanity these horses have learned to tune out confusing and non-relevant requests from their riders and yet still do an amazing job of safely transporting them safely over some very challenging trails. They know their job and they do it remarkably well. They are not champion reining horses, their ground manners may not always be perfect, and they will eat along the trail any chance they get. So be as tolerant and forgiving of their imperfections as they have to be of yours and you should both get along great.