MOUNTAIN HORSES OUTFITTERS

Day Rides
1.5-Hour Scenic Ride

Safety information, hazards and what to expect · St James Conservation Area and Hawarden

Please read this document before you book, and again before you ride. It is not written to frighten you. It is written so that you arrive understanding what this ride actually involves, because the country we ride into is remote, the weather makes its own decisions, and horses are large animals with minds of their own. **You will be asked to confirm that you have read and understood it before we ride out.**

What this ride is

You ride out from the road end for about an hour and a half and come back to where you started. There is no camping, there are no pack horses, and there are no river or creek crossings.

It is our shortest ride, but it is still a ride on a large animal in high country, and the hazards that matter most — falls, horse behaviour and the weather — are the same as on our longest trips.

> **Do not count on phone reception**
>
> Much of the country we ride in has no cell coverage. Your guide carries a personal locator beacon and a satellite communication device, and a member of our team knows your route and when you are due back.

Weather and cancellation

We check the forecast the evening before and again on the morning of the ride.

- **We cancel** if the day temperature is forecast below −5 °C together with wind stronger than 20–25 m/s or heavy rain or snow.
- **If heavy rain or a day temperature below +5 °C is forecast**, we tell you as early as we can and you may cancel or reschedule with a full refund, based on your own preparedness and fitness.
- **On the day**, your guide may shorten, change or end the ride at any time if the weather turns.

How we manage your safety

Everything below happens whether or not you ever notice it.

Your guide. Experienced, assessed as competent against our written procedures, and holding a current outdoor first aid qualification appropriate to remote country. One guide takes no more than six riders.

The horses. Every horse is checked for soundness before it leaves the yard, and any horse that is lame, unwell or not right simply does not come. Horses are matched to your declared and demonstrated riding ability, and we treat every rider as a beginner until they show us otherwise in the yard.

Turn-back points are set in the yard, not invented on the hill. Your guide may change the route, turn back or end the ride at any time on safety grounds — that decision is final, and it is made for you and for the horses.

Communications and ground support. Your guide carries a locator beacon and a satellite device on their person. Your route and expected return time are lodged with a member of our team before we leave, and if we do not check in when we said we would, a written procedure starts without anyone waiting to see.

Before you ride you will be briefed in person on the hazards for this ride, and asked to confirm you have understood them.

If something goes wrong

Please read this part properly. It is the honest version.

Even on a day ride, **medical help is not immediate**. Your guide gives first aid on the spot and calls for help by satellite where there is no reception. Depending on where we are, the way out is by vehicle, by riding out, or by rescue helicopter, which is based at Hanmer Springs but cannot fly in every condition. The nearest medical care for the St James is Hanmer Springs Health Centre, which runs a 24/7 emergency response; the nearest hospital is Christchurch.

Three things we ask of you before you ride

Tell us about your health. Any injury, back or joint problem, heart condition, pregnancy, allergy, dietary requirement or medication. Nothing you disclose gets you cancelled without a conversation first. A surprise on the trail is a different matter entirely. If you carry an adrenaline auto-injector or an inhaler, your guide needs to know where it is.

Wear proper boots — this is not negotiable. Sturdy hiking boots or riding boots only. Fabric sneakers, trainers, gym shoes and open footwear are not accepted in any weather, and a rider who arrives without suitable boots does not ride.

Take out travel and medical insurance. We strongly recommend it. In New Zealand, ACC covers emergency rescue and treatment for accidental injuries, including for overseas visitors. It does not cover illness, cancelled or disrupted travel, getting you home, or treatment once you are back home, and visitors who are not eligible for public health care may be charged for an ambulance or treatment.

Natural hazards

These hazards are inherent to the ride. We manage them; we cannot remove them.

Hazard	How we manage it	What you must do
Rapidly changing weather	Forecast checked the evening before and the morning of the ride; route shortened or changed as conditions require.	Wear or carry your warm and waterproof layers every time, even on a clear morning. Tell your guide early if you are cold or wet.
Cold, wet and wind — hypothermia	Regular checks on every rider. Wind chill does more harm here than temperature, and riding chills you faster than walking does. In winter, ride length is reduced in sustained sub-zero conditions.	Speak up at the first sign of shivering, clumsiness or feeling muddled — in yourself or in the rider next to you. In winter wear thermal layers, warm gloves, warm socks and a hat under your helmet.
Sun, heat and dehydration	Rest stops in shade where shade exists — often it does not.	Sunhat, sunglasses and high-factor sunscreen. Long sleeves are easier than burning. Bring a full water bottle and drink from it, not from streams.
Frost, ice and snow	Later start on frost mornings. Frozen ground walked or led at the guide's direction; no ride where snow hides the line of the track. Pace held at walk on snow and frozen ground.	Take extra care on frozen ground in the morning shade. Dismount and lead when asked, without debate.
Steep and unstable ground, slips and rockfall	Routes kept to formed tracks and known lines. Riders dismount and lead on ground the guide judges unsuitable to ride. Steep ground below bluffs is avoided, or crossed one rider at a time.	Dismount when asked. Keep the spacing your guide sets. Do not ride ahead or take your own line. Do not stop under a face.

Hazard	How we manage it	What you must do
Holes, bogs, matagouri, speargrass and old fencing	Known bog and rabbit-warren country avoided; pace dropped where the ground is broken. Broken fencing wire and old waratahs, left from the St James's farming days, lie hidden in the tussock in places; known spots are avoided and your guide points them out.	Watch the ground ahead of your horse, including for wire and waratahs in the grass. If your horse catches a leg in wire, stop, keep still and let your guide free it. Long trousers and long sleeves.
Fire	Fire danger rating and restrictions checked before every ride. A total fire ban can come into force at short notice.	No cigarettes lit at any point on the ride; vaping is fine.
Sandflies, wasps, wildlife and other people	Your guide reads the country ahead for deer, pigs, hares and stray stock that may startle horses. We ride single file and give way to trampers and cyclists.	Stay in formation. Do not shout or point suddenly. Use repellent, and tell us before the ride if you carry an adrenaline auto-injector for stings.
Earthquake	If one occurs, horses are calmed and secured, the party regrouped clear of bluffs and slips, and the route reassessed before we move.	Drop, cover and hold if you can. Then stay where you are and wait for your guide's instruction.
Remoteness	Locator beacon and satellite device carried; route and expected return lodged with ground support, with agreed check-ins.	Accept that help may be hours away, not minutes. Follow instructions without delay in an emergency.

Horses and equipment

Hazard	How we manage it	What you must do
Falling from a horse	Horses matched to declared and demonstrated ability. Certified helmets required and inspected. Pace set to the least confident rider. We start at walk and change pace only on the guide's instruction.	Wear your helmet, correctly fitted, whenever you are mounted. Ride within your ability and say so if the pace is too much. Keep at least one horse-length between horses and never pass the guide without permission.
Bolting, spooking, bucking or rearing	Known-quiet stock used; no green or untested horse carries a guest. Hazards called ahead and passed down the line; riders spaced.	No sudden movements, no umbrellas, no flapping gear. Secure everything you carry. Dismount to put on or take off a jacket.
Being kicked, bitten or trodden on	Horses handled, tied and led by the guide. Safe-distance briefing before you go near a horse. Guests kept clear of the tacking area and the horse float.	Never walk directly behind a horse. Keep clear of other horses' hindquarters. Do not hand-feed, and do not approach a horse that is not yours.
Mounting and dismounting	Assistance and a mounting block or bank offered every time. Horses never mounted on hard ground.	Ask for help. Never mount or dismount without telling your guide.
Tack failure or poor fit	All tack inspected before departure, fitted to the individual horse, and girths re-checked at every stop and after any climb.	Tell your guide immediately if anything feels loose, slipping or uncomfortable. Do not adjust tack yourself while mounted.
Riding ability and horse matching	Experience collected at booking and confirmed in person. Every rider demonstrates in the yard before we leave, and we may re-horse you or change the route on the day.	Be honest about your riding. Overstating it puts you on the wrong horse in the wrong country, and we would far rather know in the yard than find out on the hill.
A horse that is unwell or unsettled	Every horse checked before departure. A horse showing distress or overwork is rested immediately.	Tell your guide straight away if your horse feels tired, sore, reluctant or unsettled.
Gates, wire and fencing	Gates handled by the guide and left as found.	Leave gates to your guide and do not ride through until told. Keep clear of wire and electric fencing.

Hazard	How we manage it	What you must do
Alcohol, drugs and medication	No one rides who is believed to be affected.	Do not drink before your ride. Tell us about any medication that affects your alertness.
Gravel road access	Vehicles and floats driven at speeds appropriate to unsealed road.	Seatbelts on. If you are driving yourself to the meeting point, allow extra time and drive to the surface.

Your acknowledgement

I have read and understood this document. I understand that this ride takes place in remote high country, that medical help may be hours away rather than minutes, and that the hazards described above are inherent to the ride and cannot be removed. I have disclosed any injury, medical condition, pregnancy, allergy or medication that could affect my safety or that of the party, and I agree to follow my guide's instructions at all times.

Each rider signs on a separate line.

1. Name _____ Signed _____ Date ____ / ____ / ____
2. Name _____ Signed _____ Date ____ / ____ / ____
3. Name _____ Signed _____ Date ____ / ____ / ____
4. Name _____ Signed _____ Date ____ / ____ / ____

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