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## Vail to Aspen Interconnect Llama Trek as featured in National Geographic Traveler®

Although the trek starts south of the town of Eagle and ends in the sleepy historic mining town of Lenado, the country between is representative of the historic and geologic connections of Vail and Aspen. The nights spent in huts are warm and comfortable, the rustic nature of these mountain cabins reminds one of how simple good living can be. Of course a night's reprieve from the huts is appreciated by most everyone as the Diamond J Guest Ranch provides comfortable accommodations, a hot shower and dinner and breakfast served by a friendly staff.



Your guides, with the help of 'the boys', our llamas, will guide you through mid-elevation terrain (8200-11300 feet) consisting of spruce, fir and aspen forest, alpine meadows and mountain streams surrounded by the high peaks of the central Rockies. The route utilizes a variety trails and country roads. Some sections are Forest Service maintained trails, others are un-maintained trails and a few sections are dirt roads with minimal vehicle use. You can expect all types of trail conditions; dirt, gravel, rocks, mud, small stream crossings, high vegetation, open meadows and dense forest. The route moves through a variety of terrain and ecosystems covering

nearly 35 miles. Additional hikes from the huts can finish the day with a sunset tour.

### Vail to Aspen Llama Hike – 5 Day Trip Itinerary [Tenth Mountain Division Hut System](#)

#### Day 0: Pretrip Orientation Meeting with Paragon Guides

Meet the guides, llamas and your group to discuss the trip, go over gear and questions and arrange final trip logistics. Meeting time: TBD.

#### Day 1: Yoeman Park (9200') to [Peter Estin Hut](#) (11,200')

One hour drive from Vail area to Yoeman Park. A 4-mile hike on the Ironedge Trail to Peter Estin Hut 2000' vertical gain

From Yoeman Park an established trail winds its way through an old growth Spruce and Fir forest eventually climbing into open





glades and the hut. Perched on a forested ridge at 11,200' the Estin Hut provides stunning views of the northern Sawatch Range, the Frying Pan Valley and distant views of the Elk Range of Aspen. An evening hike to Charles Peak (12,050') accesses above treeline terrain and views of the surrounding mountains.

**Day 2: Peter Estin Hut (11,200') to [Harry Gates Hut \(9,700'\)](#)**

A 5.5 mile hike dropping 2000' to Lime Creek Canyon leaves a 1.5 mile, 500' ascent to the Harry Gates Hut

From the Estin Hut an unmaintained trail descends through Spruce and Fir forest and eventually into Aspen forest, returning to Lodgepole forest before opening up into the Lime Creek Valley. An array of wildflowers is present throughout the hike.

**Day 3: Harry Gates Hut (9,700') to the [Diamond J Guest Ranch \(8,200'\)](#)**

A 6.5 mile hike descends 1,500' to the Fryingpan River valley and the Diamond J Guest Ranch.

The route begins on the Burnt Mountain road and connects with the Silver Creek trail and Montgomery Flats then dropping nearly 1000' to the Fryingpan River. The Diamond J Guest Ranch was established in the 1920's. The lodge combines classic old design with modern amenities. A hot shower, family style dinner and breakfast are welcomed delights as we prepare for the next days hike. Anyone with a fly rod may find the fishing on the Fryingpan River a good option while dinner is prepared.

**Day 4: Diamond J Guest Ranch (8,200') to [Margy's Hut \(11,300'\)](#)**

A 9 mile hike ascends 3,100' to Margy's Hut

Leaving the Diamond J, the route follows the Fryingpan River for one mile before heading up to Twin Meadows on an unmaintained trail. From Twin Meadows the maintained Norrie/Aspen trail climbs steeply to Sawmill Park (11,000'). Three hundred more vertical feet in 1.5 miles brings us to the Margy's Hut. This ridge-top hut has spectacular views of the Hunter-Fryingpan Wilderness Area. An evening or morning hike above the hut and possibly to Mount Yeckel (11,765') offers great views of Aspen's Elk Range and the entire Vail to Aspen route.



**Day 5: Margy's Hut (11,300') to the Lenado trailhead near Aspen (8,640')**

A 7.3 mile descent dropping 3,100' to Lenado

Retracing our route to Sawmill Park and the headwaters of Spruce Creek, the Norrie/Aspen trail winds its way down to the confluence of Woody Creek and finally to the Lenado trailhead. Open meadows and mature Spruce/Fir forest transitions to Aspen forest along Woody Creek. From Lenado, a paved road winds its way down the Woody Creek Valley to its confluence with the Roaring Fork River. A 2-2.5 hour drive from Lenado returns us to the Vail area. A drive into Aspen for lodging drop off or just a celebratory beer at the historic Jerome Hotel is always an option.

### Trip includes:

- professional guides
- hut and ranch fees
- llamas and tack
- all meals while in the backcountry
- trailhead transportation with pickup in the Vail Valley
- sleeping bag with liner and pillowcase
- trekking poles, leg gaiters and backpack if needed
- USFS fees
- pre-trip preparation



### Trip does NOT include:

- travel to the Vail Valley
  - arriving 24-28 hours in advance of your trip is highly advised for high altitude acclimation
  - Our closest airport is the Vail Valley Jet Center (EGE) 20 miles west of our headquarters in Edwards. Most participants fly into Denver (DEN), a 2 1/2 hour drive to Vail. Shuttle available through [Colorado Mountain Express](#)
- pre-trip orientation day lodging or meals
  - We have discounted rate with the [Inn at RiverWalk](#) in Edwards, Colorado
- personal clothing and gear
- lodging on final day of the trip
  - We are happy to drop you off at lodging in Aspen at the end of the trip or our shuttle will bring you back to Edwards.

### Trip Cost:

**\$2125.00 per person for 4-8 people in group**

**\$1820.00 per person for 9-13 people in group**

Contact us for reservation to confirm trip space. All major credit cards and checks accepted. Once confirmed, you will receive our trip information with map, equipment list, travel, preparation info and the forms we will need completed. Our guides are available to answer questions regarding the trip, route, fitness, skills, logistics, etc.



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