

ALL ABOUT LLAMAS

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Where Do Llamas Come From?

The prehistoric ancestors of llamas lived in North and South Carolina. Some went north and ended up in Asia and Africa - they became modern-day camels. Some went south - they became llamas and also became the cousins of modern-day llamas: the alpacas, the vicunas and the guanacos. Now llamas and their cousins live in the high Andes mountains of Peru and Bolivia in South America. Llamas became popular in the United States and Canada over the last twenty years or so. There are now at least 100,000 llamas in the United States.

Who are the Challenge Adventure Llamas?

The Challenge Adventure llamas were born in North Carolina and Georgia. They are from four to 19 years old. They go on the trail with groups of young people.

What are Llamas Like?

Llamas are intelligent, well-mannered, clean and attractive animals. They all have different personalities. They all have a job in the herd. Two of the jobs are especially important. These are the trail leader and the herd leader. The herd leader watches out for danger and organizes everybody in case they are attacked by other animals that might eat them. The trail leader is the llama all the other llamas want to walk in the front on the trail. He knows all the trails and the best ways to get around things that get in the way, like trees and streams.

Llamas live a long time. Many live to be 25 years old. They aren't as big as a horse or a mule. They weigh from 250 to 500 pounds. They are very strong, and can carry more weight for their size than horses or mules. Llamas have very high backbones, so you can't ride them.

Llamas talk to each other with body language. They use their ears and tails to do this. They sometimes spit at each other to make sure they keep about three feet away from each other. They rarely spit on people. They sometimes communicate their feelings with humming sounds. Llamas are very curious animals. They like to watch humans do things. They also like to investigate anything new in their environment.

Why Use Llamas?

Many llamas make their living as packers, carrying camping equipment into the backcountry. They are permitted to go in places where horses and mules are not allowed. This is because they have a soft pad and not a hoof on the bottom of their feet. So they don't harm trails the way

hoofed animals do. Llamas need very little water and food compared to other pack animals. They are very easy to work with and enjoy being useful to humans.

Llamas take care of each other. They also take care of the young people they work with. They are not happy away from other friends.

What Are Other Ways Llamas Make a Living?

Some people train llamas to pull carts or sleighs. They can be in parades, too.

Llamas can be guards for other animals. Llamas are very loyal to their herd. They only eat grass and leaves. Predators like wolves, dogs, coyotes, bears and mountain lions try to eat llamas. Llamas will do their best to chase predators away. So, some farmers and ranchers have llamas as guards to protect sheep and goats from predators.

Llamas also have very nice wool. Some people shear their llamas to get the wool, which people spin into warm yarn for hats and sweaters. Llamas are sheared every other year. You can get about seven pounds of wool from a llama.