



# EQUITOUR

*The world through horses' ears*

Riding holidays through

**BOTSWANA**

**PORTUGAL**

**CAPPADOCIA**

**MONGOLIA**

**ICELAND**

THE NEW  
RIDING  
MAGAZINE

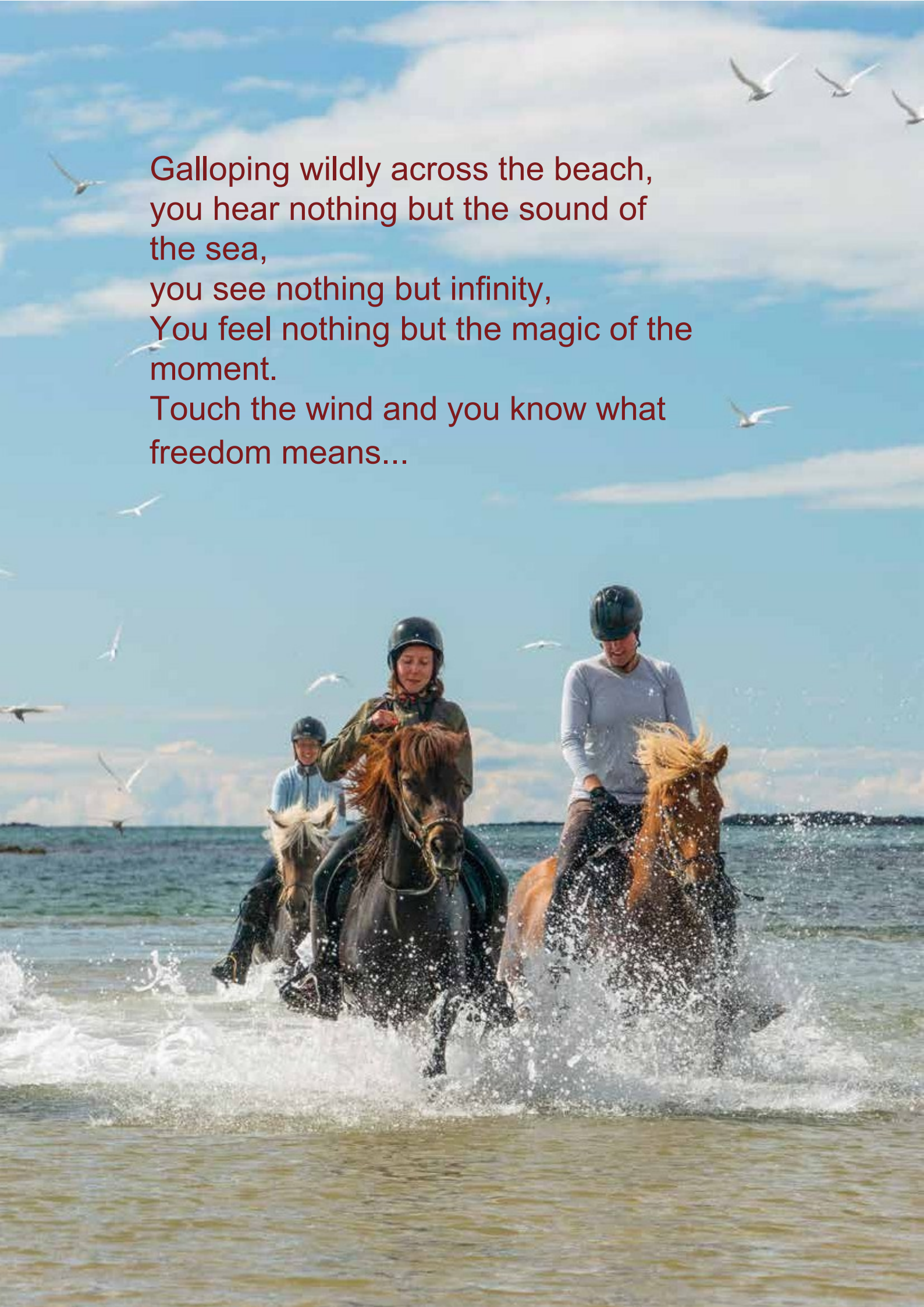








Galloping wildly across the beach,  
you hear nothing but the sound of  
the sea,  
you see nothing but infinity,  
You feel nothing but the magic of the  
moment.  
Touch the wind and you know what  
freedom means...







10



18



# CONTENTS



16



30

4

## Pegasus riding holidays

We are the pioneers

6

## Southern Africa

On the trail of the wilderness

8

## South Africa, Botswana, Namibia

Country information, riding programme

10

## Riding safari Botswana

Dam time on the Okavango

14

## The perfect touring horse

16

## Portugal

Racing with the wind



18

## The many faces of Portugal

Country information, riding programme

22

## Travelogue dolphin coast ride



26

## Have a good ride!

Properly equipped for the tour

28

## Iceland

Island of fire and ice

30

## Travelogue Kjölur Tour



32

## Travelogue Iceland's winter magic

34

## Wonderland Iceland

Country information, riding programme





36

## Essay Environment

How sustainable are horse riding holidays?

38

## Equitour History

Pioneers in Egypt

42

## Hoş geldin in the doçur

Country information, riding programme

44

## Cappadocia

Like in another world

46

## Turkey: Travelogue Cappadocia Trailride

Once in a lifetime

50

## In the valley of the wild horses

Interview with Beate Deniz

52

## FOLLOW the HORSES

Encounters of the horse world traveller Gabriele Kärcher

54

## Mongolia

Fence-less, timeless, boundless

56

## Mongolia - Endless expanses

Country information, riding programme

60

## Travelogue Gobi Steppe Ride

62

## Info horse riding holidays

64

## Imprint







# EQUITOUR

## Riding Holidays

## *The whole world on horseback*

Dear travellers with a passion for riding,

We would like to introduce you to our new magazine "EQUITOUR - The world through horse ears". Since EQUITOUR was founded almost 50 years ago, the range of tours on offer has grown enormously and today you are spoilt for choice for your riding holiday. The idea behind the magazine was to provide a deeper insight into the (equestrian) traditions, riding styles, landscapes and culture of the individual countries.

In each issue, we will select a few countries and introduce you to their special features. Let the photos and travel reports take you to the African savannah, the unique volcanic landscape of Iceland, the bizarre rocky world of Cappadocia or the endless Mongolian steppe. The magazine is supplemented by lots of practical tips and background information about travelling on horseback. Enjoy reading and dreaming!

wish

Gabriele Kärcher & the team from EQUITOUR





Diethard Franz, owner and longest-standing employee of EQUITOUR talks about his dream job:

*Who founded EQUITOUR? When and where?*

EQUITOUR was founded in 1973 by three riding enthusiasts. At that time there was no "riding tourism" in the modern sense of the word, at most a trip to Hungary or a wilderness riding adventure in Canada. So we invented riding holidays, in the first few years with five or six offers (Andalusia, Canada, Hungary, France), then in 1978 there was the first "proper" catalogue with 22 pages.

*How did you come to EQUITOUR?*

My studies, I it openly, were not my vocation. After a few semesters of maths (a defiant reaction, I was always the worst at school), computer science and business studies, I joined TUI as a tour guide. Over the next few years, I travelled more than a dozen countries around the world.

And what was the first thing I always did: look for a riding stable. In this way, I not only got to know the country, the riding styles and traditions, which you also find here in this magazine. Languages came almost automatically, but especially understanding and contact with the locals.

Riding in Togo, on horses that had found their way to this country at some point (old German colony, Trakehner) or on the racecourse at the "Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club" (English thoroughbred), or at the Romanian thoroughbred Arabian stud in Mangalia. There under the strictest security conditions of the Securitate, because horses were only intended for export. I was allowed to ride these precious animals, not even the riding instructors were allowed to do that.

This knowledge undoubtedly helped me when I applied to EQUITOUR as a test rider. From then on, things went "upwards" quite quickly. After three years I became co-managing director, and 1992 I was able to buy the company by way of an MBO (management buyout). And then it grew every year, so there was little time left for my own riding holidays.

*Is this your dream job?*

Undoubtedly, after forty years!

*How long have you been a rider?*

I don't exactly come from a "horsey" family, or to be more precise, nobody in our family had anything do with horses. One day, a couple of fellow students came by while I was studying and asked: "Franz, are you going horse riding?" Of course, at the age of 22 you still go along with all sorts of nonsense. We went to a hire stable, which was still quite common in Germany back then. At most, you were asked whether you wanted a saddle with or without a handle (the strap at the front of the saddle tree) and you went, without a guide(!), regardless of (rider) losses. And after a quarter of an hour we were already cantering, because nobody could trot. That was the beginning of my personal happiness on horseback! Sure, the first year was nice in the riding arena, from the

I learnt it from scratch and then refined it over decades in dressage lessons, then show jumping and even eventing in Ireland, military as it was called back then.

*Do you have horses yourself?*

I had only one, a dressage-trained Lusitano - no stallion straight from Portugal, but he only came to me in my forties and accompanied me well into my sixties. He then died in my arms at the age of 28, because I was lucky enough to be able to keep my horse at home from the very beginning.

*Which is your favourite country?*

None and all! I'm not saying that to please all customers, because the equestrian world is so colourful, the horses so diverse and the landscapes all over the world so varied.

*How many of your tours have you been on yourself?* Countless, thousands of kilometres on horseback, because that was originally my job: testing horseback tours.

After a few years, when I put in a position to buy EQUITOUR in 1992, I increasingly left this "work" to my colleagues, because they were supposed to get to know each of our riding ranges and also bring in their own aspect of their desired journeys, develop them and make them accessible to the customer.

*How are the tours tested?*

The top requirement: don't just test it once, visit it regularly. You can find some of these riding experiences in our more than 110 test reports [www.equitour.com/reports.htm](http://www.equitour.com/reports.htm)

*What do you pay particular attention to?*

Originality! Unadulterated riding experience according to the conditions of the respective country. We adapt the rest: Mongolia as a typical "meat-eating country"? Then you have to learn how to prepare vegan food there. The typical Altai saddle is a frame made of metal tubes with a leather hide hanging over it - unrideable for us! So: import saddles from Europe. And last but not least, a certain adaptation of the tour guide to our way of dealing with guests. We don't just want to ride, we also want to about the culture, the country and its people and, of course, the horses.

*Approximately how many riding offers does EQUITOUR have?*

Around 400, from beginners' lessons to adventure trips. Tours are cancelled every year, whether due to inadequate performance, the age of the stable owners, financial reasons or political reasons. But new trips are also added every year. They are either suggested to us by existing riding stables or we look for them ourselves, e.g. on the web. It usually takes one to two years before a programme is ready to go ahead.

*Diethard Franz reports on his most adventurous ride from page 38 onwards*





# Southern Africa

## Trail of



A thousand wildlife films are nothing compared to experiencing them for yourself. Eye to eye with African wild animals, in the rhythm of southern Africa, you feel small and great at the same time.





# the Wilderness





# Welcome to the bush

# Southern Africa

South Africa, Namibia and Botswana form the southern tip of the African continent. Private wilderness reserves, the large national parks such as Kruger Park and genuine, unspoilt wilderness are habitats for the most fascinating African wildlife.

South Africa offers different regions, the inland highlands, the mountains and the coast with sandy beaches and rocky coves. The oldest desert in the world, the Namib, gave Namibia its name. The spectacular desert is just one of the sights to see.

of the country. The Etosha National Park, for example, offers first-class wildlife encounters.

The wildest country in southern Africa is probably Botswana with its endless bushland, savannahs and the legendary Okavango Delta.

EQUITOUR Horse Riding Tours offers unforgettable horse riding holidays in all three countries. Watching elephants, giraffes, lions and gazelle from horseback is a pure experience.

Comfortable accommodation in lodges or tented camps are the icing on the cake of Africa travel.

## Horses of southern Africa



### Boerperd, South Africa

The Boerperd or Boer horse is a medium-sized, strong all-round horse that goes back to Andalusian, Arabian and Java ponies. Various British breeds were later crossed in. The Boerperd is one of the gaited horse breeds, as it has a pronounced tölt.



### Basotho horse, Lesotho

Lesotho is home to the Basotho people. The farmers bred their own, extremely undemanding and sure-footed cattle in the barren mountainous region.

Basotho horse, also known as the Basuto pony. They use them to herd their cattle to this day. Basotho horses are used in South Africa.



### Namib Wild Horse, Namibia

The desert horses of the Namib are presumably descended from runaway horses of the German colonial masters and local working horses. They have adapted to the extreme heat and drought and are well equipped with water by the Namibian authorities.





## EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMMES

### South Africa

Riding safaris, gourmet trips, beach rides along the South African coast, but also equestrian games and show jumping are offered by the various programmes in South Africa. The country is known for its perfect combination of luxury and adventure. First-class food and wine included.  
[www.equitour.com/southafrica.htm](http://www.equitour.com/southafrica.htm)

### Namibia

A safari lodge not far from the capital Windhoek offers wildlife sightings and fast rides on noble thoroughbred Arabians. Another lodge is situated on the edge of the Kalahari, Namibia's second desert after the Namib. Salt pans, tree and bush savannahs offer varied riding experiences.

[www.equitour.com/namibia.htm](http://www.equitour.com/namibia.htm)

### Botswana

The Okavango is the third largest river in Africa and offers a paradise for wildlife and riding safaris after the rainy season. EQUITOUR takes adventurers into the wilderness of the Okavango and to the Mashatu Game Reserve in the east of the country.

[www.equitour.com/botswana.htm](http://www.equitour.com/botswana.htm)

Country info	South Africa 	Botswana 	Namibia 
Size	1,221,037 km <sup>2</sup>	581,730 km <sup>2</sup>	824,116 km <sup>2</sup>
Population	60.000.000	2.300.000	2.324.400
Capital city	Pretoria	Gaborone	Windhoek
Language	Afrikaans, English, tribal languages	Setswana, English	English, German, tribal languages
Religion	All religions, predominantly Christian	Christians, traditional religions	Christians, traditional religions
Currency	South African Rand	Pula	Namibia Dollar
Climate	Different climate zones	Semi-arid savannah and semi-desert climate	Hot, dry desert climate
Best time to travel	March to May August to October	All year round	All year round



# Showtime on <sup>10</sup> horse

How small you are as a rider when you ride next to a giraffe! Lara von Breidenbach experiences goosebumps, feel-good moments and elation on her riding safari in the wild Okavango Delta.

Even the journey is an adventure. A small propeller plane takes me from Botswana's capital Maun right into the bush of the legendary Okavango Delta. From a bird's eye view, I see the first herds of buffalo and elephants. Finally, the small aircraft descends and lands bumpily on the airstrip of Camp Macatoo.

Bongwe welcomes me brightly with a cool drink before me to camp, first in a jeep and then in a boat. Bongwe steers quickly and safely through the bush and river, and I at how he finds his way through this wilderness.

A lone giraffe crosses our path as it tries to cross the river. We eye each other, but finally she turns away and continues on her way with striding steps.

## Luxury in the bush

A whole reception committee welcomes me to the camp with a song - a touching moment. All the camp staff are overwhelmingly friendly and always in a good mood. John, the camp owner, helps me in the cosy "living room".

He then leads me through the camp and finally to my tent.

The comfortable tents are more like hotel rooms. A comfortable bed, a wardrobe, a desk, carpets and a spacious bathroom. You can upright everywhere. There are sun loungers on the front terrace of each tent. The windows with fly screens allow you to look out.

Even more pleasures are offered by a bar, a sun deck with a pool and a view of the water and passing wildlife of the delta. The evening meeting point for my group is a fire pit next to the jetty. I am already completely enthralled before I even mounted a horse.

The horses make my happiness complete. Over the course of the week, I will ride three of the 40 or so horses: Simba, Mufasa and Loxley. Simba is just the right companion for the first ride. He radiates a lot of calm and is full of energy. Mufasa is simply adorable! Reliable, alert and very responsive to the slightest help. Loxley is a handsome Arabian with a strong character and my love at first sight!



# Okavango



On each ride, we are accompanied by John at the front and Bongwe as a backup rider, who secures the group at the rear. Both have guns with them, which makes us feel both scary and safe. According to John, the Okavango Delta is particularly full of water this year. We prepare ourselves for wet rides and look forward to galloping through the splashing floods. Riding and the daily wildlife sightings get our adrenaline pumping

and dopamine. We see large herds of buffalo stampeding through the water, mighty elephants commanding respect and goose bumps. Families of giraffes scrutinise us curiously. Zebras and antelopes shyer and prefer to their distance. Only the powerful Tsessebe antelope is unafraid: We come across two mother animals with calves cowering on a small hill and refuse to be disturbed. They probably know that these strange visitors pose no danger.



Countless large and small birds such as mighty eagles and colourful songbirds accompany our ride. Our breath catches when two ostriches sprint past at full speed in the distance. Impressive!

All the horses prove to be reliable and keep calm even in situations. Once we dare to get a little too close to a herd of elephants, which the matriarch doesn't like at all. She sways her head and forth, spreads her ears, emits a deafening trumpet sound and comes us. Loxley's nervousness is obvious at this moment, but he promptly follows my commands as I steer him behind Bongwe's horse. At a gallop, he leads us away from the elephants while John distracts the pachyderms.

The next scary moment is not long in. Simba and I are swimming through a wide ford when Bongwe urges me to the water. When I ask him what's going on, he replies that there are animals in the water too. I have quite a queasy feeling before the next water crossings.

All that is wiped away when we gallop through the floods with four giraffes and two herds of zebras and Mufasa comes within arm's length of the giraffes with me - an unforgettable moment!

Feel good in the camp

And even in the camp we have contact with wild animals.

Alongside bushbucks and monkeys, we are visited by hornbills with mighty scimitars. They make us laugh when they squabble over crumbs on the ground or attack the lunch buffet. Tame squirrels crawl up to us when they something edible in our hands.

The table at Camp Macatoo is always sumptuous and imaginative.

covered. The lunch menu consists of hot and cold delicacies and a cheese or fruit platter. The three-course dinner is more than excellent - and all in the middle of the wilderness! The sundowner, a drink to accompany the sunset, is often served on the sun deck, together with tasty snacks. Sometimes dinner is served on an island to which we travel by boat.

We also give the horses a rest and take a trip by boat or mokoro, a hollowed-out dugout canoe. We look at the hippos and elephants with great respect and cast out our fishing rods. As a complete novice angler, I catch a fish with my second cast, which remains my only success. Real beginner's luck!

A few minutes by boat from our camp is a marvellous tree house where we the night. Paraffin lamps illuminate the deck with our mosquito net-covered mattresses. We look forward like little children to

The night in the treetops and listen to the sounds of the African night even more intensely than usual. A unique bush experience. In the morning, we are gently tickled out of our sleep by the first rays of the rising sun. Our marvelling eyes are treated to a breathtaking view of the delta bathed in soft light.

This peace and solidarity in the Okavango Delta is unforgettable. Macatoo Camp is like an oasis in untouched wilderness. For a few days, the world is in harmony and we bid a wistful farewell to the cheerful camp staff, to John and Bongwe and to our beloved horses.

Lara von Breidenbach

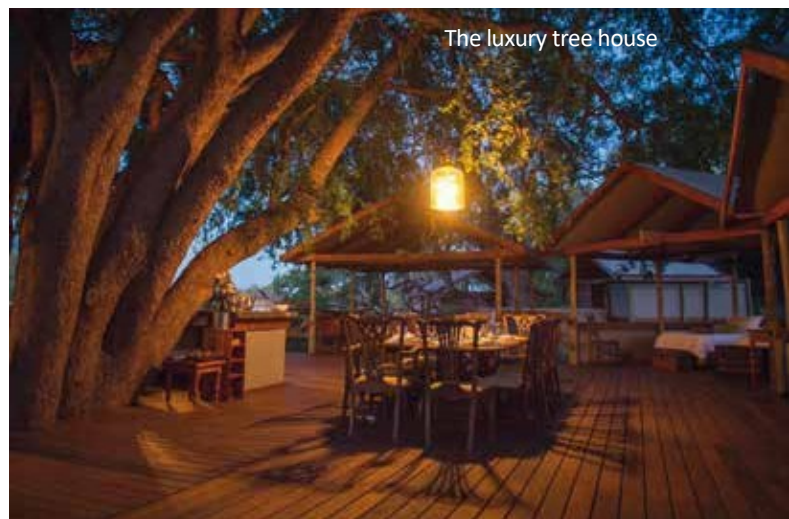
The journey: [www.equitour.com/oko008.htm](http://www.equitour.com/oko008.htm)







Encounters with young and old



The luxury tree house



Three chefs spoil us



Feel-good time with a  
sundowner



# The perfect touring

As safe as if they were your own legs, only much nicer. This is how you move on your partner's four legs, the perfect horse for adventure.

Let's call him Buddy. The gelding is fearless, sure-footed and enduring. He walks ten, fifteen, twenty kilometres or more through nature for you day after day, allowing you to relax and marvel.

Buddy gives you security without you having to ask him for every step. He remains chilled, even if you are startled by a fleeing wild animal or a fluttering bird. You can feel the wind and feel like you're flying when he takes off at a powerful gallop.

Buddy epitomises the perfect touring horse. Without him, every riding tour is only half as enjoyable. You want a four-legged partner who is healthy and well cared for. This is the only way he will happily cope with long riding stages. He should be sociable and on well with other horses. Biting, hitting, begging and jostling do not to him. He is friendly, content and decent.

In rough terrain, it instinctively finds its footing and carries you stumble-free over rocks, scree, through watercourses and other imponderables. Even if the guide sets the pace

it never escapes your control.

During the rest, he goes into a completely relaxed resting position. No fidgeting, no pulling, no pawing. Standing still is part of the touring horse's training. By the way, stroking, treats during this resting period and may cause the horse to become unwell, patience and begging.

The young horse is kept in good condition by being ridden a lot, especially at a diligent pace. It should have good basic characteristics such as a friendly character and a lively temperament.

bring along. Everything else is acquired through the tours themselves: Stamina, sure-footedness, strong nerves and routine come naturally. Experienced touring horses give the younger ones confidence.

At EQUITOUR Equestrian Tours, we make sure that our partners' horses fulfil these criteria and do not disappoint our adventurers. Of course, horse and rider must also fit together. Experienced riders can ride a younger horse, less experienced or insecure riders get experienced, reliable horses.

## The dream partner:

### Race

It's good when there are different temperaments and calibres - because riders are different too. The most beautiful ride is probably on the horse breed typical of the country. An Arabian for riding in the desert, a Haflinger in the mountains, an Icelandic in the far north, a quarter horse for driving cattle.

### Size

The best size is around 1.50 metres with a strong constitution. Very tall horses find it more difficult to cope with difficult terrain. And make it more difficult for the rider to mount and dismount frequently.

### Gait

Hard-working stride, sure-footed, ground-covering, comfortable.

### Gender

Geldings and mares are the best touring horses. Stallions are also used, but only if they are very sociable and there are no mares.

### Character

Balanced, not nervous and not phlegmatic. The perfect touring horse is willing and persistent, yet can be controlled at all times. It is attentive and yet fearless.

### Training / Education

It is free from naughtiness such as biting, hitting and begging. It is easy to catch and lead. When tied up, it should stand still calmly and patiently. It is willing to be saddled and bridled and gives a good hoof. It stands when mounted. It should be ridden by good and less experienced riders in all gaits. Unauthorised grazing and lying down under the rider are taboo.

### Health

The entire bone structure must be flawless. Tendons and joints should be strong and healthy. The hooves should be hard and correctly placed. Heart, respiration and digestion are crucial for good condition.

### Feed condition

Not too fat and not too thin, depending on type and breed. Being overweight puts a strain on bones, joints, tendons and heart. Malnutrition reduces performance.



# Horses



Photo: Gabriele Kärcher / [www.sorrel.de](http://www.sorrel.de)



# PORTUGAL

*Race with* <sup>6</sup>







# *the Wind*

Experience the country and the beach on the back of the Lusitano. Their horse breed is the pride of the Portuguese and the best partner for immersing yourself in the magic of this multifaceted country.



# The many faces of Portugal



Like a face looking west, Portugal lies between the Atlantic Ocean and its large neighbour Spain. The narrow, elongated country itself has many faces.

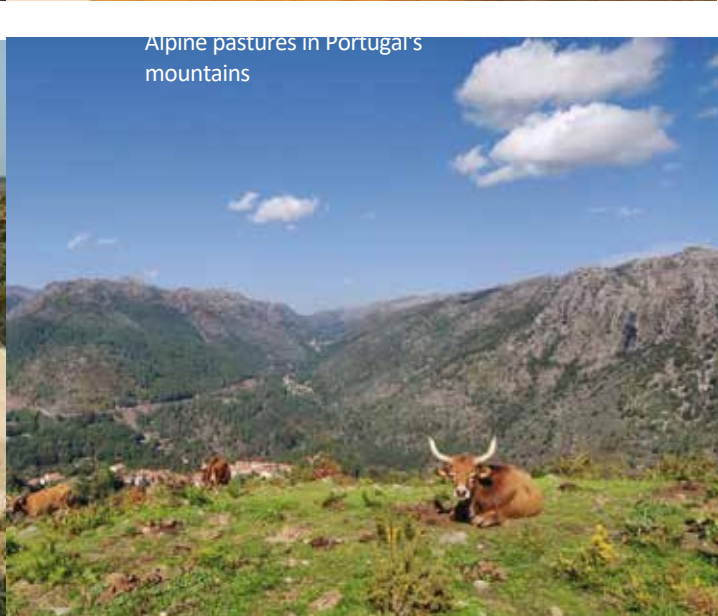
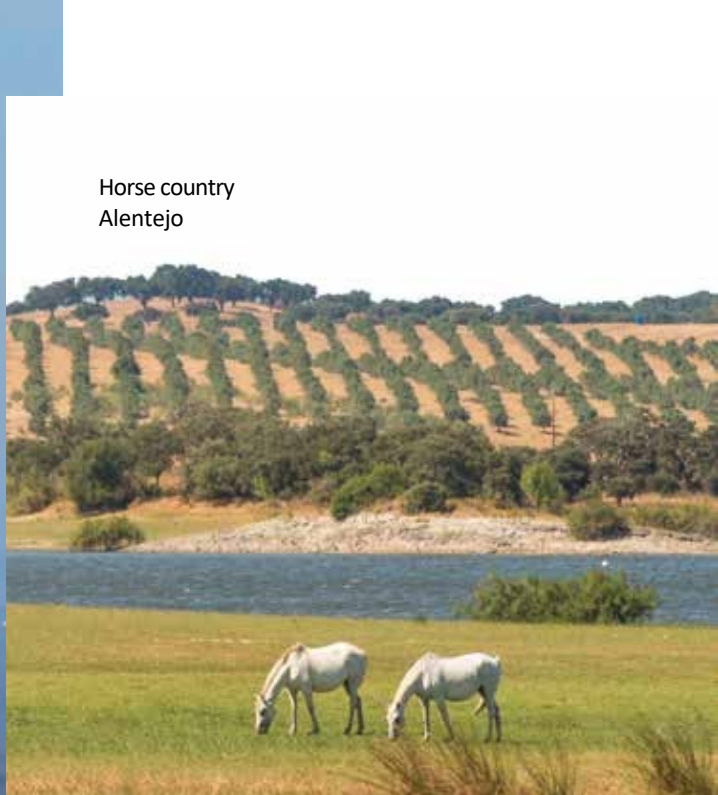
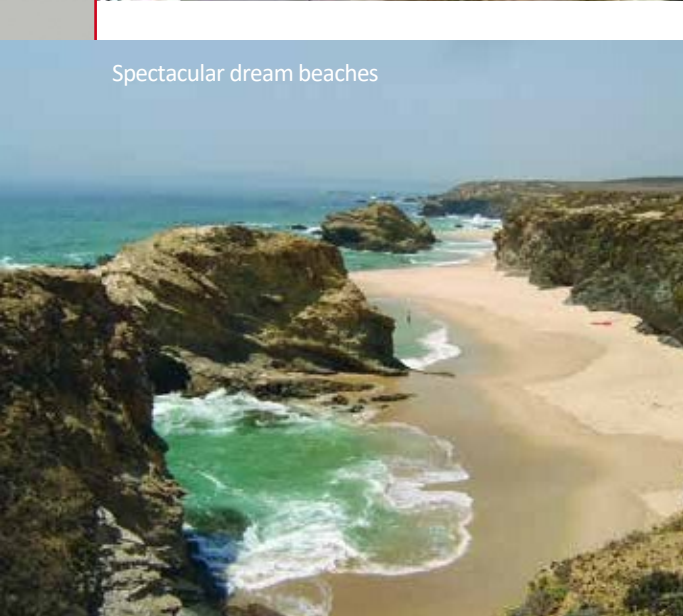
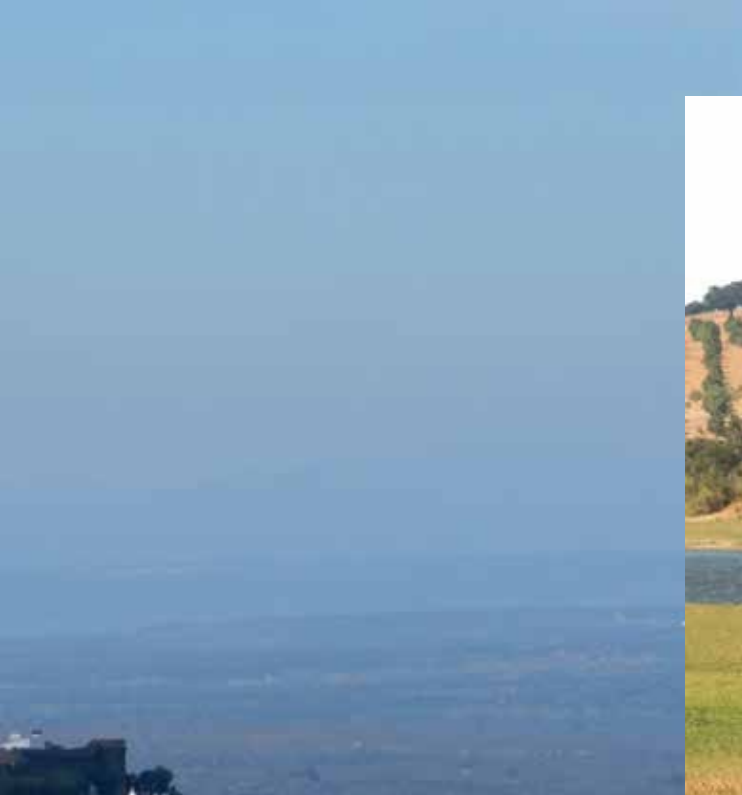
In the south, the enchanting Algarve, the most famous beach with its characteristic rock formations and crystal-clear water. Other spectacular beaches, cliffs and dreamy fishing villages can be found along the Atlantic coast. Away from the coast, cork oak forests, olive groves and lush green grasslands offer relaxing nature recreation. The white villages, the villages brancos, punctuate Portugal's hinterland like shining dots.

Historical monuments, castles, palaces and churches are reminders of the country's great history. In stark contrast, futuristic buildings and technologies symbolise Portugal's modernity. The vibrant cities of Porto and Lisbon invite you to enjoy art, culture and entertainment. Portugal is exemplary when it comes to climate protection. Almost two thirds of the country's energy requirements are already covered by renewable energies. In 2020, Lisbon was awarded the title of European Capital of the World.

The country has been closely linked to horses for thousands of years. The perfect combination of tradition and modernity is epitomised by the Lusitano, Portugal's number one horse breed. The mysterious Sorraia horse and the royal Altér Real also represent the Portuguese horse world. In the north, wild horses, the garranos, roam the mountains. The provinces of Ribatejo and Alentejo are the most important horse breeding areas in Portugal.







Photos: Alentejo Promotion Office, Via Gale Hotels, AT Alagrove, Turaventur oliven-Tursimo Alentejo, Paulo Palhota



## EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMMS

Wild and free: Garranos, the mountain horses in the Peneda-Gerês National Park in the north Portugal

Discover Portugal in the saddle of a noble Lusitano. Visit the royal stud farm or enjoy the highest level of horsemanship at the Portuguese riding school. Refine your own dressage riding or observe real wild horses in rugged mountainous terrain. EQUITOUR equestrian holidays take you to all regions of the country and introduce you to the Portuguese way of life and equestrian tradition.

Info: <https://www.equitour.com/portugal.htm>



### Country info Portugal

Size 92,212 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 10,356,000 Capital:

Lisbon Language: Portuguese

Religion: Predominantly Roman Catholic

Currency: Euro

Climate: Temperate maritime. Mild winters, warm summers

Best time to visit: March - June, September - November





## PORTUGAL'S DREAM SOIL

### LUSITANO

At the state and main stud farm Fonte Boa, care is taken to preserve the old Iberian type. Courageous, persistent and extremely agile, the Lusitano as a reliable workhorse for cattle breeders and for mounted bullfighting. Thanks to his lively movements, he is a first-class dressage horse up to high school level. The combination of power and grace make him the dream horse for demanding .



### SORRAIA

The Sorraia horse, whose images were found in pre-Christian cave paintings in Escoural, is considered to be the ancestor of the Portuguese Lusitano. The hippologist Dr Ruy d'Andrade discovered a free-living herd near the Sorraia river in 1920. Whether these horses were the original Iberian wild horses or descendants of feral horses has not been clarified. Due to the small number of only 200 animals worldwide, the breed is considered to be on the verge of extinction and is bred in private Portuguese stud farms.



### ALTER REAL

The second important national stud farm is the former royal court stud farm Real de Alentejo near Alentejo in the north-east of the Alentejo. It was founded in 1748 by King João V and was intended to the court with school, riding and driving horses. Due to the breeding selection at the time, the dominant colour is brown. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Alentejo horse was almost extinct in the turmoil of the revolution. Dr Ruy d'Andrade saved a stock of two stallions and twelve mares, the basis of today's breeding.



### ESCOLA PORTUGUESA DE ARTE EQUESTRE

The best horses that have mastered the lessons of the high school can be found at the Portuguese Riding School in Queluz, west of Lisbon. It is a national cultural heritage site and training centre for Portuguese horsemanship. The royal Alentejo horses in particular are trained here to become true dancers in hand and under saddle, similar to the Lipizzaners in Vienna. The masters give public demonstrations in and under the saddle at the Picadeiro Henrique Calado in Lisbon.



### FEIRA NACIONAL DO CAVALO

In November, the Portuguese equestrian world meets in Golegã for the Feira Nacional do Cavalo, the Feast of Horses or Feira de São Martinho, the Feast of St Martin. For a whole week, the best Lusitanos show off their skills in show jumping, dressage and working equitation (equitação de trabalho). The festival of the stallions has a history of more than three hundred years, and taking part in it is a real pleasure. A "must" for every Portuguese rider.





## Travelogue

# *Dolphin Coast Ride*

Horses, dolphins and new friends. Denise Neufeld  
her dream journey through Portugal in her mind's  
eye.



Bem vinda! Welcome to Portugal!







Shady forests



Riding rest with delicacies

"Ready for a canter?". Before we can answer, we gallop off through the fragrant eucalyptus forest. My horse "Principe" snorts contentedly and I almost do the same, as the swirling dust tickles my nose.

I'm on the dolphin coast ride in Portugal. To be precise - in the Alentejo, the region in the southern part of the country between Lisbon and the Algarve. Here you can experience the many facets of the country: huge cork oak forests, vast green meadows, quaint little villages, endless sandy beaches and bright colours. Orange groves. Tourists and winter refugees flock to the Algarve, leaving the Alentejo to adventurers like us. Our group consists of French, Austrians and Germans. In the cosy fireplace room of the pousada, as it is called

The typical Portuguese inns are the perfect place to get to know each other over a bottle of wine. The delicious dinner is a taster of the country's typical culinary specialities.

On the first day of riding, each of us is assigned a four-hoofed partner. We ride Lusitanos, one of the oldest horse breeds in Europe. Dishevelled from the change of coat, they lack the elegance of the breed. Nevertheless, we quickly take our uncomplicated horses to our hearts. We ride through a hilly forest. All around us are countless dark trunks, some of whose bark have been peeled off. They are cork oaks. Portugal is the country that produces the most cork in the world. It's amazing when you consider that the country is much smaller than its neighbour.

and also cork-producing Spain. Cork can be used in many different ways. However, the most important market is the processing into bottle corks.

As cork grows slowly, the layers of cork should only be removed from the tree every nine years to keep it healthy. The numbers on the trunks represent the year in which the tree was last worked. A cork oak must be at least 50 years old before it is mature enough to produce high-quality cork. This emphasises the lengthy process of cork production and the value of each individual tree. I was amazed as we ride past a large pile of freshly removed cork bark which, according to our guide, is worth 500,000 euros.

The first riding stage ends in a picturesque clearing, where the motorised companions await us with a laid table.

But before we indulge in lunch and a siesta, we look after the horses. During lunchtime, they are all unsaddled, watered and treated to a little concentrated feed. The horses dance in joyful anticipation as we approach with the feed. Then it's our turn. Our guide Miguel and our driver Balasz have conjured up a veritable feast. There is grilled meat, salad, cheese, olives and bread, with fruit and coffee or tea for dessert. We take off our jackets and enjoy the warming sun. Miguel eyes us a little sceptically.

For him as a Portuguese, the temperatures are not yet T-shirt weather. I, on the other hand, feel like I'm in paradise! It's February and the temperatures in Germany are still below zero.





Strengthened, we saddle our horses and continue our ride past lush orange trees. It makes you want to reach out and snatch a fruit or two.

Over the next few days we experience an exciting and varied riding tour.

We observe semi-wild black pigs wallowing in the dirt and a good life, pink flamingos travelling through Portugal and countless storks returning from the south and their nests. We often stop at small shops to refresh ourselves with cold drinks, ride through small villages where time seems to stand still, wave to schoolchildren who run after us laughing, pass old ruins and marvel at the typical Portuguese white houses with their blue and white colouring.

Painting. We are catered for like kings: extensive barbecues in the great outdoors at lunchtime and delicious three-course meals with typical local dishes in the evening.

The many canters are particularly enjoyable, sometimes at a stretched pace, sometimes for kilometres at a calm three-quarter time. Trotting, on the other hand - as is customary on the Iberian peninsula - is less frequent.

The horses have a rest day, which we use for a boat tour. A special boat trip, because we want to watch dolphins. We set for Setúbal early in the morning. The estuary is home to 28 Bottlenose dolphins. We set sail on a catamaran to find the animals. Thick fog hangs over the water, restricting visibility. Doubts begin to spread. After three hours, we finally want to turn back - when the typical dorsal fins appear in the distance.





Photos:  
private

The sight of the playful dolphins with their young blows away the frustration. Even the sun comes out, and port wine helps against the fresh breeze on deck. Our boat guides know every single animal and can name each one its dorsal fin. The friendly porpoises are not disturbed by us and accompany our boat as it dives up and down. We are in luck.

The final highlight of our tour is the beach ride along the Atlantic. Our hearts beat : a 60 km long sandy beach - deserted!

According to Miguel, there aren't many people here, even in the height of summer. He gives the signal to gallop and we fly over the sand, powerful, foaming Atlantic waves break and send their foothills almost to the hooves of our horses.

The gallop in the deep sand the horses, which is why we

ride inland again. If it were up to us, we could ride on the beach for hours and listen to the sound of the waves. You want to hold on to all the sensory impressions forever.

We bid a happy and somewhat wistful farewell to our four-legged friends, who are taken from here to the stables by lorry.

Portugal on horseback is addictive, and I'm already fantasising about another riding tour in the land of dream horses. Until then, I'll just take a piece of Portugal home with me. My suitcase is full of wine, olive oil, oranges, avocados and other goodies that will remind me of my wonderful week in the Alentejo for a long time to come.

Denise Neufeld

Further information at: <https://www.equitour.com/del008.htm>



# Have a good ride!

## Properly equipped for the tour

After 13 years at EQUITOUR and 26 trail rides worldwide in all weathers, Jessica Kiefer can give numerous tips for the perfect equipment.

Normal riding equipment is sufficient for riding holidays with lessons and shorter rides. It is important to note whether there is an indoor riding arena or whether you will be riding outside in all weathers. If so, you will of course need suitable weather protection.

Packing for a trail ride, on the other hand, is more time-consuming, especially for a longer adventure ride. If you are travelling for a fortnight, possibly even with pack horses, you should think carefully about what you need to take with you. Especially if you are travelling by plane and your luggage limited.

### *Footwear:*

Choose sturdy shoes that you can ride and hike in. Lightweight trekking shoes have proven their worth, for example from Lowa. Put them on straight away on the flight so they don't have to in your suitcase.

You can wear leather or plastic minichaps with your trekking boots. If it rains for a long time, the saddle blade rubs or you have to go through undergrowth, minichaps protect your calves. If you are going into or through water, such as in Iceland, wellies are the only right footwear. Hunting outfitters very good and robust quality such as the boots from Parforce or Aigle. For reasons of sustainability, it is worth investing a little here. Although the super-cheap rubber riding boots for 20 euros will do for a single riding holiday, experience has shown that these leak after a few weeks.

Too bad about money and material! If it gets wet and cold on a winter trip, I recommend Muck Boots, which protect your feet even in frosty conditions.

keep you warm and dry. It gets even cosier with heated insoles.

### *Trousers:*

Normal riding breeches are well suited, preferably with full leather trimmings, because the trimmings do not have to be made of real leather. A spare pair of breeches and light rain trousers to wear over them should not be missing.

For cool and damp areas, water-repellent riding breeches with a light lining are worth their weight in gold. Decathlon offers the "Kipwarm" riding breeches with a laminated stretch membrane repels water. Highly recommended, even at home!

Attention western riders: in riding jeans and cowboy boots or ankle boots, you will sit comfortably and in style in a western saddle on a ranch holiday. I recommend leather chaps for wilderness riding in the Rockies. They protect you from the rain and scratchy undergrowth, but are of course a little expensive.

### *Jackets:*

An all-weather softshell jacket that you can use anywhere is practical. For southern Europe and Africa, it is perfectly adequate for keeping out brief showers or wind.

In wetter countries such as Ireland, a mackintosh, for example from Loesdau, is essential despite its heavy weight.

In Iceland, sets of waterproof rain jacket and trousers are usually provided. You can check this in advance. Regardless of your destination, a warm fleece jacket is recommended for chilly days or evenings.





Minichaps and hiking boots: light, comfortable and pleasant



True to style:  
Cowgirls wear leather chaps



Defy every downpour: rain capes and coats

#### Headgear:

In some riding stables and in some countries, wearing a riding cap is compulsory. We always recommend it, because even the best horse can get spooked or stumble. Most riding stables in Europe have riding caps for hire, but in other countries such as North Africa, Asia or South America you should pack your own helmet, as riding with a helmet is unusual here, so you can't expect to find helmets for hire.

A model with a hard shell is recommended for western or travelling riding hats. The traditional western hat looks cool and protects you against wind and weather. There are practical ear warmers to protect against cold ears, which you can simply attach to the straps of your riding helmet. Alternatively, a lightweight tubular scarf that fits under the helmet is a good option against wind or sun. The Buff brand offers a huge selection.

#### For sleeping:

Camping rides usually provide everything except sleeping bags. While the huts in Iceland are heated and normal sleeping bags are sufficient here, you should bear in mind that the temperatures on a desert ride or in the steppe plummet, especially in winter, and take sleeping bags in the comfort range below 0 degrees. A set of thermal underwear will also keep you warm, and if you are very sensitive, you can take a good drinking bottle (e.g. from Sigg) and fill it with warm water for the night.

Pillows are not usually provided, so if you are not on the



Well protected with Iceland equipment



Safe with a riding helmet



Fluffy fur for seating comfort

If you want to rest in a jumper, you should take precautions. Most camping trips provide firm fabric mats. In the mountains, a sleeping mat can help against moisture from below at night.

#### Against injuries:

Anyone who is not regularly in the saddle will wonder how you can suddenly last four, five or even seven hours at a time on a horse. In addition to wound and heat ointments, you can prevent this a little by wearing cycling shorts or at least nylon stockings under your riding breeches. This relieves the muscles and helps to prevent chafing. Be sure to use chaps! Gel pads or fur covers for the saddle are a blessing for the rider's bum. It is best to clarify in advance which saddles will be used so that the items you bring will fit.

#### Useful items for the first-aid kit:

Sun cream is very important on most rides. You should also protect your skin on winter rides.

Blister plasters can be useful if there is something presses or rubs.

If you don't ride much at home, you can equip yourself with warming ointments, cooling gels and wound ointment to minimise the damage. Should also take painkillers and cold remedies with you on your journey, especially in cool and rainy regions.

This way you are prepared for nasty surprises and can enjoy a carefree riding holiday.



# Iceland

## Island of







Photo: Gabriele Kärcher

# Fire and ice

Fire stands for volcanoes, thermal springs and the temperament of Icelandic horses. Ice stands for glaciers, snow and the strong nerves of the horses. A good mix for the ultimate adventure.





# Travelogue Iceland

## On the Kjölur Trail

Where vehicles have trouble, an Icelander can trot merrily along. Jessica Kiefer experiences this on her riding tour along the Kjölur, one of Iceland's highland tracks.

It was news to me that horses eat salt herrings. I find out during the lecture on Icelandic horses in Iceland, which precedes my riding adventure, a six-day tour. Even on riding tours lasting several days, these extremely frugal and efficient horses only eat grass and hay. Only in winter, which they spend in the herd on the pasture, do the animals need additional vitamins, which they get in the form salted herrings, the only supplementary feed. Iceland's farmers live from and with horses. Everyone who owns land here also has a few horses, whether they are riders or not. They let tourists ride their horses all summer. This way the guests have fun and the farmers get well-conditioned horses back in September for the sheep round-up. Win-win! One or two riders fall in love with their horse along the way and take it home with them. This is also welcome business for Icelandic horse breeders.

My group consists of ten riders from Germany, Denmark, Sweden and England. Very few of them also ride Icelanders at home, so our two guides first give us a course in tölt. Our horses are waiting for us at a farm in Vatnsdalur, which is in the north. During the week he day before, another group with a herd of around 50 horses rode northwards over the Kjölur, a highland track through Iceland. We take this herd south again. This is how the riding groups change throughout the summer.

Our hearts beat faster as the horses stand in front of us with windswept manes. There are many more of them than us riders, but in Iceland it is customary to take spare horses with you to change. So riding will be one adventure, the other is to lead the free-roaming herd between the riders.

The adventure begins

As soon as we sit in the saddle, the horses, which had just standing there calmly, become lively. We are divided into two riding groups that ride in front of and behind the free-ranging herd keep the animals together. The free-ranging herd will determine our pace this week. If you ride too slowly at the front, some horses will always try to sneak past the riders. If you ride too slowly at the back, the whole group will disperse and the horses will turn off to the river bank or to graze.

The pace is brisk, with most of the time spent tölt riding. In the saddle of this

tireless horses, I am completely in my element. I'm riding in the front group, but as my horse Blakkur is going a bit too slowly, we get caught between the free-running horses on the way. That's exactly what we were supposed to avoid! So we wait for the riders behind and them.

We ride along soft paths that lead through wide grasslands and old lava fields covered in hummocky moss, past Lake Blöndulón. In the evening, we are spoilt with hearty meals in simple huts and often have the opportunity to take a relaxing bath in the hot tub after the long rides.

It's the end of June, the time when it never really gets dark in Iceland. But despite the brightness, I sleep like a log after the long days of riding. Energised by a delicious breakfast, we set off on our daily stages. We pass crystal-clear lakes and streams until the landscape increasingly barren. The herd stirs up dust and we fall into a gallop, which is almost as comfortable to sit in as the tölt. The grass forms only a few green patches in the volcanic landscape, which otherwise dominated by colourless moss. We soon catch sight of the first glacier in the distance, Hofsjökull. A sublime sight!

In addition to the glacier panorama, the hot, steaming springs of Hveravellir await us at a particularly beautiful accommodation. The hot pots are surrounded by the delicate purple flowers of the glue plant and sulphur colours the earth. After a marvellous bath, our guide takes us into the Icelandic underworld. We climb through a narrow opening into a pitch-black cave, the extent of which is barely recognisable. The guide also tells us Icelandic horror stories.

Iceland's treasures

Over the next few days, we approach the Hofsjökull and Langjökull glaciers. A narrow, steep path takes us to Thjófadalur, the "Valley of the Thieves", one of the most beautiful places on the route. The circular river valley is surrounded by colourful, gentle mountains, the two glaciers and a black wall of lava rock. The sun makes the valley . Along the river Hvítà we reach the Kjalhraun lava field. Large piles of stones, which have been gathered into cones about 20 metres apart, point the way.

We take a break at an idyllic lake and let the horses





Relaxation in the hot tub



Tölt through the highlands



Spectacular: the Gullfoss waterfall

graze. Such places are very practical, because lush grass only grows on the shore. Grass that keeps the herd in place. Our path then leads into a dry stony desert. The loose stones are a bit of a for horses and riders alike. I leave the choice of gait to the riders in this difficult terrain.

terrain to my horse. Finally, we reach the river Svartá with its green banks. We cross the water and gallop with the whole herd up the other side to our next hut - great fun for everyone involved.

After a delicious dinner, which our cook prepares for us as she does every evening, the programme plans to us to the Icelandic language through singing. The fun is clearly more important than learning the difficult language. How easy it is for us to ride the Icelanders! The landscape alternates between stony deserts and green river valleys.

Tender little plants and the first lupins indicate that we have reached the highlands.

leave.

After a fast tölt over stony paths, we reach the famous Gullfoss waterfall. The place is teeming with tourists, which understandable when you see the thundering waters. Another natural spectacle is the Stokkur geyser, which emits a huge fountain every 15 minutes.

Whilst we are spoilt with consistently sunny weather throughout the week, continuous rain awaits us on the last day. This is when our orange-coloured rain gear comes into play. Fortunately, the narrow meadow paths are not muddy despite the rain, but nice and loose. And once you' in the saddle, it doesn't that it's cool and wet. That's just Iceland. We're not annoyed about the weather, but are fulfilled and grateful for the unforgettable riding days in Iceland.

Jessica Kiefer



The free-roaming herd of horses

Photos: Jessica Kiefer / Eldhestar





Travelogue

# Iceland's winter magic



True Iceland fans don't out on experiencing the special magic of the Nordic country in winter. Yvonne Koall spends a week there in January.





The icy Gulfoss



Ride through the winter wonderland



Dancing auroras



Whale watching off Iceland

Wintry Iceland is a dream for riders and photographers. Bright blue skies, glistening snow and the low sun providing soft, intense light offer moments to pause for a moment. "Iceland does something to you," says photographer, video producer and blogger Yvonne Koall. "In my case, it was the feeling of inner peace, contentment and a lot of inspiration."

And then the hope of auroras. The chances are good in Iceland. Together with a group of riders, Yvonne sets off on horseback across the snow-covered island.

#### *Monday:*

The first day is entirely to riding: the morning ride takes you from the farm to the Ingólfssjall mountain, in the afternoon you ride along the Ölfusá river, with views as far as the Hekla volcano. And Yvonne's hopes are fulfilled on the very first evening: Dancing northern lights illuminate the black night sky. And the enthusiastic faces of the group of riders.

#### *Tuesday:*

The next day we ride over snow-covered lava fields along the Reykjafjall mountain. The way home leads a steaming spring. In the afternoon, the horses are swapped for a boat and everyone hopes to see whales sightings. From Reykjavík, we head out to sea. It takes a while, but your patience is rewarded when the dorsal fin and fluke of the giants from the waves.

#### *Wednesday:*

A snow ride in the morning is followed in the afternoon by a hike into the colourful valley of Reykjadalur, which full of hot springs. In the middle of the winter landscape there is a

Soothing bath in a warm river. Wrapped in water and mist, the cold outside is quickly forgotten! The area is characterised by volcanism: smoking, bubbling pools and red rocks dominate the landscape. The banks of the warm rivers are green even in winter.

#### *Thursday:*

Once again, we trot along the snow-covered bridleways around the farm and along the glacial rivers Ölfusá and Gljúfurá towards the south coast. The volcanoes Hekla and Eyjafjallajökull can be in the distance. As soon as the group sits in the warming hot tub in the evening with the pictures of the day, breathtaking auroras appear in the sky once again.

#### *Friday:*

The last ride leads to Hveragerði, where the riders can warm up in the hot tub and steam sauna. Then comes what must come: saying goodbye to the beloved horses. A bus tour to Iceland's natural treasures eases the pain of separation. The last highlights are the partially frozen Gulfoss waterfall and the geyser that gave its name to all the world's fountains, which is derived from the Icelandic word geysa, meaning "to gush forth". Thingvellir National Park takes you into the geological and cultural history of the island. We return home with fantastic images in our hearts and on our memory cards.

Yvonne Koall

Website: [www.yvonnekoall.de/](http://www.yvonnekoall.de/) Instagram:

yvisway

[www.equitour.com/win006.htm](http://www.equitour.com/win006.htm)



# Wonderland

# ICELAND

Iceland appears cool and rigid, but beneath the earth's crust it constantly. Volcanic eruptions, bubbling geysers and hot Originally, Icelanders were riding and pack animals. Since the 1950s, they have been a sign of geological activity and have been exported to Germany and all over the world. For years, they have been exported to Germany and all over the world. the island's special character. Their charm and comfortable special gaits made them Iceland is located in the Arctic Ocean, but due to the Gulf of popular leisure horses for the whole family. In Iceland itself, they are the only breed of horse. In order to prevent illness, temperatures only fall slightly below zero degrees in winter and horses are not allowed to be brought to Iceland in summer. Even Icelanders who have left the island once are not allowed to return Icelandic horses are well adapted to the harsh, windy and damp climate . Icelanders are banned worldwide from cross-breeding with other breeds, and their luxuriant long coat protects them from the cold in winter and the cold in winter. Breeds. Icelanders are robust horses and thrive in the summer before mosquitoes. According to their nature, they are best kept in open stables or robust stables in the herd.

Fiery and chilled: Icelandic horses



Icelandic horses come in all colours





## Country info Iceland



Size: 103,000 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 366,500

Capital: Reykjavík

Language: Icelandic

Religion: Predominantly Evangelical-Lutheran

Currency: Icelandic krona

Climate: Cool summers, mild winters, high rainfall

Best time to visit: June to August, January, February



### *Profile Icelanders*

Country of origin: Iceland

Size: 135 to 146 cm stick size

Conformation: Strong small horse with dense long and short body

Top coat, all colours except tiger pinto

Interior: Spirited, strong nerves, versatile, sure-footed, robust

Speciality: Natural predisposition to the special gaits tölt and pass

Info: Islandpferde-Reiter und -Züchterverbände.V.  
[www.ipzv.de](http://www.ipzv.de)

Indismót - the most important equestrian festival in Iceland



## EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMMES

Choose between riding tours through volcanic areas with rocks, gorges, waterfalls, the mountain and glacier world of the highlands or mudflat and beach rides. You can relax in hotpots on every ride. Some programmes take you to natural spectacles such as waterfalls, geysers and the Blue Lagoon.

Between mist and steam, travellers can immerse themselves in Iceland's legends and themselves with trolls and elves.

Iceland is a country for nature lovers who the simple life. But there are also hotel offers for comfort lovers. A special adventure is the annual sheep drive, where good riders are welcome help out.

[www.equitour.com/iceland.htm](http://www.equitour.com/iceland.htm)

## BOOK TIP

Gabriele Boisselle

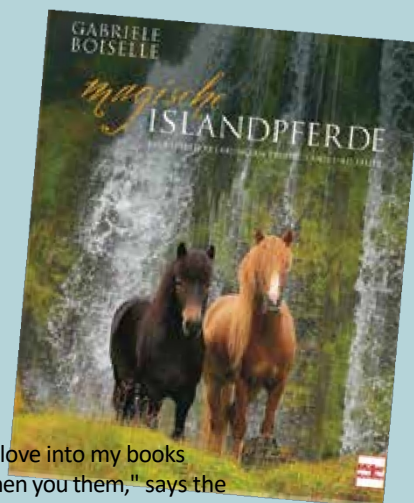
Islandpferde (in German)

Publisher: Müller Rüschlikon

Pages: 256

Dimensions: 24 x 29 cm

Price: EUR 34,90



"I put so much heart and soul and all my love into my books for the horses. I hope you can feel that when you them," says the well-known horse photographer Gabriele Boisselle.

Her latest work "Magical Icelandic Horses" is a declaration of love to horses, the country and the people of the legendary volcanic island. The reader is introduced to a unique world of wonders with spectacular nature, lovable horses, extraordinary people and an ancient culture.

### Master of the Tölt



Photos: Gabriele Kärcher



# How sustainable are

## Essay by Jessica Kiefer

Of course, at first glance, horseback riding holidays are an environmentally friendly affair: apart from a few hoof prints and horse droppings, the usually very small riding groups generally leave no traces behind. Or do? We would like to find out more: How sustainable is a horse riding holiday really? After all, even if I am on horseback in the Okavango Delta, for example, it is still very and get around the camp without electricity. me, I have to ask myself how catering, equipment etc. will be. "travelling to" when I myself am also using a charter flight to the camp. Or what actually happens to my luggage while I'm travelling from A to B on horseback?

### Flight or train?

The first big problem travelling: It's clear that it's not exactly sensible to get on a plane to Canada just for a week's riding tour. So if you are planning a long-distance trip, you should plan at least two weeks travelling time for the sake of yourself and the environment. Local destinations have a big advantage here, provided they can be reached by car or, even better, by train. EQUITOUR has an equestrian hotel in South Tyrol that is even within walking distance of the railway station. This destination therefore offers the most environmentally friendly travel option of all equestrian holidays. What's more, the country hotel also promises organic cuisine through and through, and the landlord is a pioneer in this field. in organic fruit growing and a committed member of

Demeter. The renovated rooms are also all furnished with untreated wood.

### Eat sustainably

This us to other points that we would like to take a critical look at. The food: On my riding holiday in Sicily, the very good fresh and regional food was particularly emphasised and it really wasn't promised too much! The enjoyment was only spoilt when I the mountains of rubbish that our plastic crockery caused every day. Fortunately, the owner was immediately convinced that reusable crockery is much cheaper and more environmentally friendly and quickly made the switch. It is the tour operator's duty to make businesses aware of such things. But of course guests are also invited to make a change. Some operators abroad may simply not thought about it yet.

Packaged ready meals are just as unattractive. But who doesn't enjoy a pudding after a picnic instead of an apple, which is admittedly 100 per cent more environmentally friendly? The perfect dessert were the homemade cakes that I when I was travelling on horseback in Italy.

I would like to mention one riding holiday in particular when it comes to food: On the Råtebjörk Trail in Swedish Lapland, riding guide Kerstin served us specialities cooked over the fire every day: for example, meat from our own reindeer. Even an apple pie was prepared directly over the fire and





# Horse riding holidays ?



We collected berries along the way. However, I have to admit that as a vegetarian - as in Mongolia - I personally the least sustainable participant: tofu products were brought in especially for me as a substitute.

who, like me, are probably just as familiar with the planes came to Lapland.

The ride in Lapland is certainly one of the most environmentally friendly riding holidays several respects: addition to cooking regional products over the fire and accommodation that partly manages without electricity, there are also several days of I only took one packhorse with me, no support vehicle. If only it weren't for the flight journey with the obligatory change in Stockholm. But: I took the night train from Stockholm - the 16-hour train journey probably made up for the tofu and saved my personal eco-balance.

## Energy-saving living

Huts without electricity, for example in Canada, Romania or Iceland - sustainable is that? Or you can simply spend the night in a tent, like in Morocco or Jordan. If that's too uncomfortable, you can travel to southern Africa, which boasts luxury camps in the middle of the bush, some with tree houses made entirely of wood. Camping deluxe, so to speak, with a four-poster bed and lion-proof under the stars. In Mongolia, are not only tents but also yurt camps, some of which are equipped with solar panels and provide guests with hot water and light. Heating is provided by the stove in the centre of the yurt, which easily be heated to room temperature.

## Mini footprint

However, it is often also up to me as a guest to organise the riding trip in an environmentally friendly way. In Mongolia, for example, I simply take my rubbish back home with me after I see how it disposed of in holes in the ground in the steppe. At best, the plastic bottle is burnt on the campfire. Furthermore, when swimming in the river, it is of course essential that I as a guest only completely degradable toiletries. In many countries, you should even think about what sense when it comes to gifts. Balloons, re-wrapped sweets or felt-tip pens for the children are not a good idea in countries where there no proper waste disposal system is not a good idea. Unpackaged sweets in practical tin cans, coloured pencils or clothing are better alternatives here. If you have any well-preserved halters, grooming equipment or similar items left over, you can also the riding centres happy. In any case, it is advisable to think about your destination in advance so that minimise your own ecological footprint.

All in all, it can be said that a horse riding trip in a small group in the countryside is an environmentally friendly way of travelling. The equestrian world is closely connected to nature anyway. Let's hope that the untouched wilderness areas that still exist on this earth will be preserved for a long time to come and can be discovered with two pricked horse ears.

Jessica Kiefer

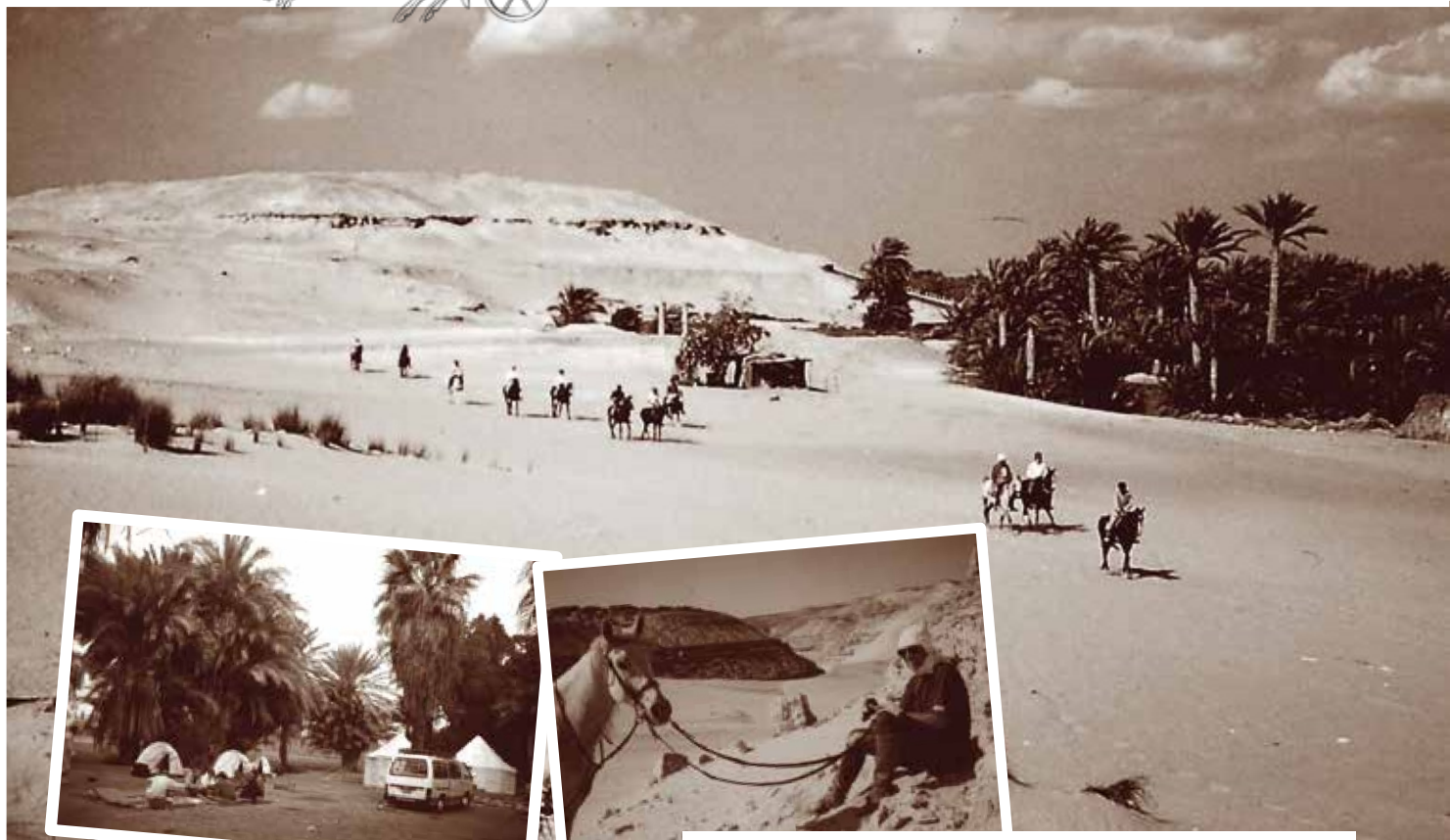




# EQUITOUR HISTORY



## Pioneers



For transport reasons, we always set up camp on the edge of the Nile oases



Lunch break. You can see from the clothes that it's not at all cold in the desert.

doesn't get so hot. But headgear is always a must!

### EQUITOUR owner Diethard Franz reports on an adventurous desert ride

30 years ago

EQUITOUR trips are perfectly organised. Really? A look back shows that we were sometimes forced to improvise. For example, on a desert ride in Egypt in 1992 - a daring adventure.

We were planning a trip across the Sinai Peninsula, which is still little known to tourists. Everything had been agreed and well prepared when, a week before departure, we received the news from the Egyptian Foreign Ministry that the trip could unfortunately not be authorised.

However, eight guests, mostly experienced regular customers, had already booked the trip. Flights had been reserved and cancellation was virtually impossible. So what to do? The participants had already booked another tour from our programme, a ride to the Fayum Oasis.

made. That wasn't an option because they wanted to experience something new. So we had to come with an alternative. We devised a tight riding programme through the desert: from Cairo to Luxor in a fortnight, 500 kilometres through the Sahara, more or less parallel to the course of the Nile.

Fortunately, we had a good partner on site. But communication was difficult because there were no mobile phones, let alone smartphones. Nevertheless, after a few attempts, we finally managed to make contact via the normal telephone network.

"Saman, please set off and find suitable places for our camp a day's ride along the Nile!" After two days, Saman heard back: "Locations for the camps have been found." So the customers were of the change. Everyone was immediately ready to on the adventure.

After our first overnight stay in a hotel in Cairo, we drove to the starting point where the team and horses were waiting for us. Two lorries were ready to transport food, tents, camp equipment and luggage to each overnight stop.



# In Egypt



The step pyramid of Sakkara



Breakfast in the morning sun



Irrigation channels extend far into the desert



Varied desert: sand, stones, rocks

Two off-road vehicles accompanied the convoy. Saman greeted us in a good mood. This was followed by a short briefing on the upcoming stages: We familiarised ourselves with the beautiful Arabian horses and shortly afterwards we sat in the saddle and rode off into the desert. Without GPS and internet of course, just a compass.

First 45 degrees south-southeast, then three hours straight ahead, then a 90-degree turn back towards the Nile valley and the camp where the team and vehicles should be waiting for us. But the Nile doesn't always flow in a straight line from south to north: it has bends and is always clearly visible from the desert, but it's easy to misjudge the distance. The journey dragged and on. We rode for hour after hour, but the Nile Valley just wasn't getting any closer. The riding group became increasingly silent - probably a sign of tiredness, perhaps also of burgeoning fears. Dusk fell and everyone was only lightly clad, as we had only planned a short day's stage. When we shivered and reached a village after a five-hour ride, it was already dark. And there was no camp for miles around!

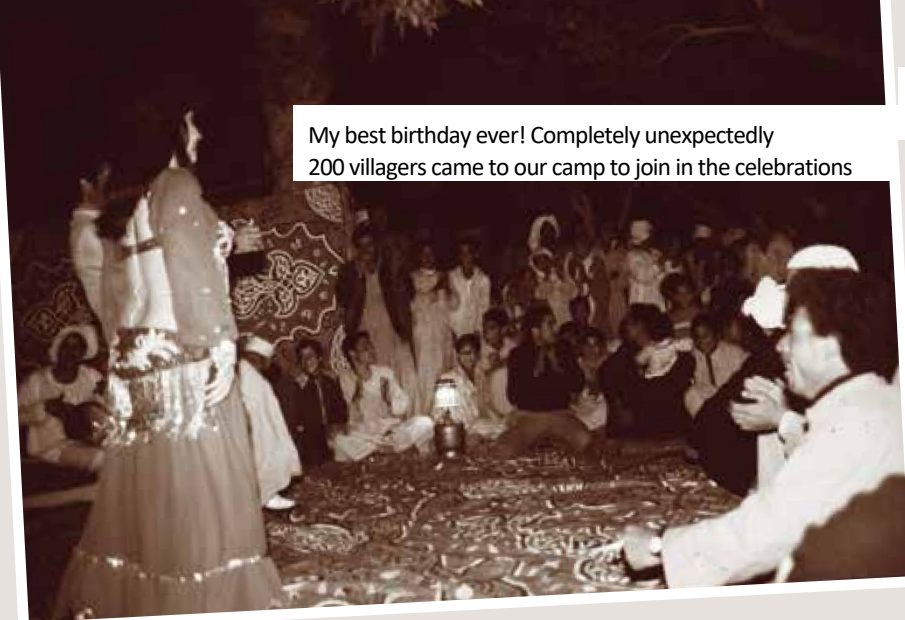
How were we supposed to find our camp? Without a smartphone and GPS? We had done without a DM 5,000 satellite phone, which wouldn't have crossed the border with the government at the time. We had Saman. He knew the location of the camp, but only from the road. But we came into the desert with the horses, so everything looked

different. It was a different story, even for our guide. We unsuccessfully asked a local farmer, but his local knowledge only extended as far as the edge of the village. So we got back on our horses and continued through the now pitch-black night.

To check the ground, I rode some distance in front of the group and had them follow when called. A hole in the desert floor was not visible even at two metres and we had to rely entirely on our horses' intuition and eyesight.

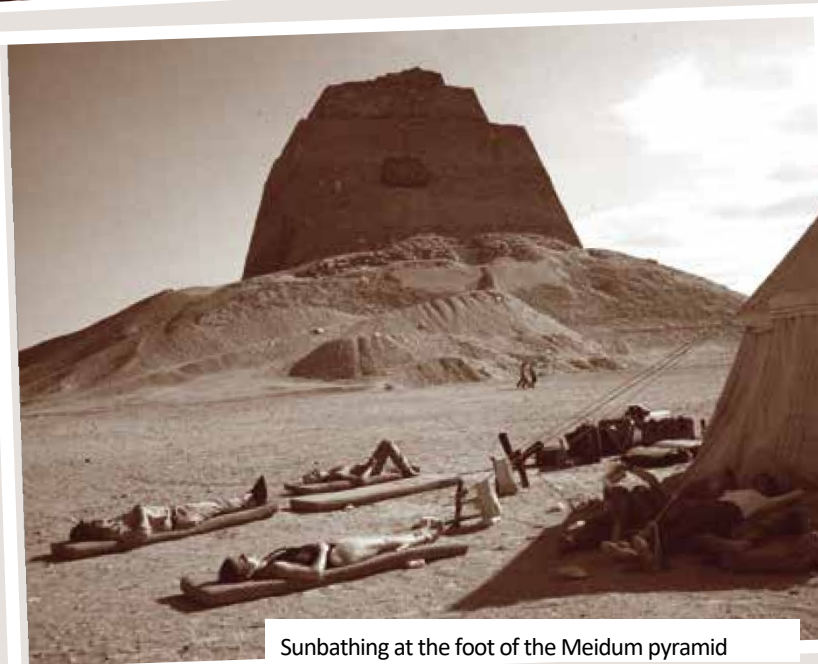
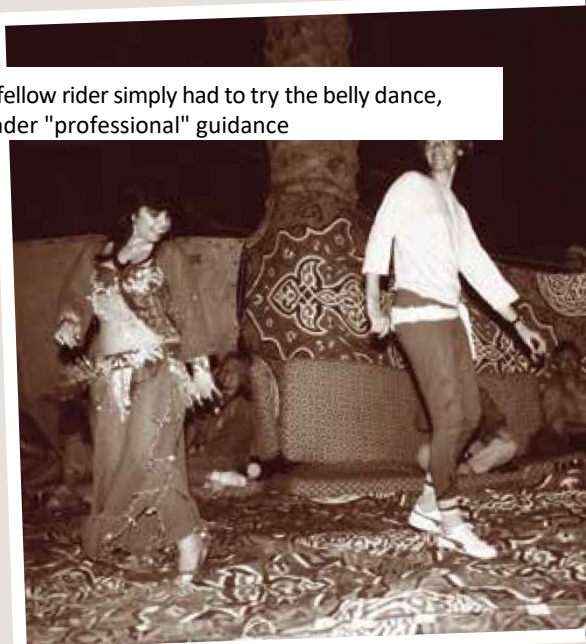
After another hour, we came across a small farm. Saman explained our situation to the farmer couple. The couple welcomed the whole group of ten people to spend the night in their hut. This is typical Egyptian hospitality.



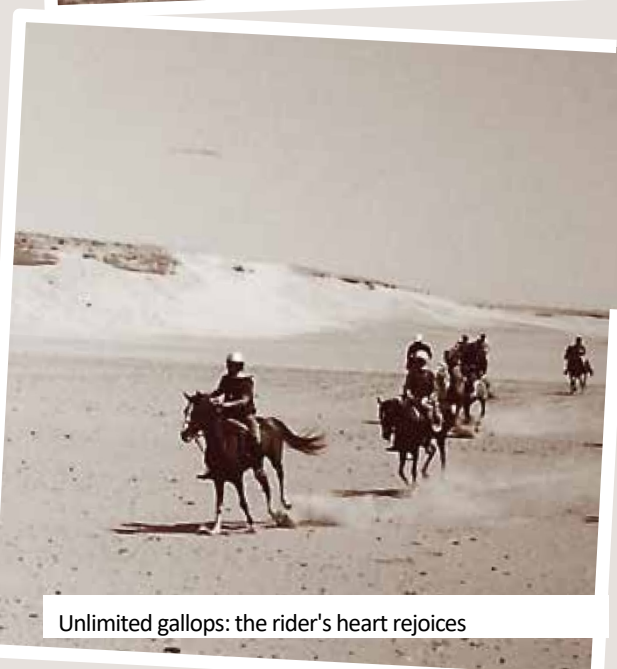


My best birthday ever! Completely unexpectedly 200 villagers came to our camp to join in the celebrations

A fellow rider simply had to try the belly dance, under "professional" guidance



Sunbathing at the foot of the Meidum pyramid



Unlimited gallops: the rider's heart rejoices

We were thrilled by the hospitality. It was good to feel so welcome in this country. Nevertheless, we didn't the offer, so Saman went to the nearest village and visited the police station. And indeed, they were informed where the camp was, barely two kilometres away. Half an hour later, the two pick-ups came from our camp and picked us up from the farm. But by now we were all so frozen that no one felt like riding at night. We all jumped into the back of the lorries, each holding his horse by the bridle behind the car, and off we went at hellish speed towards camp. The cook had kept the dinner warm for hours. We gratefully tucked into it. The day had been pretty exciting for everyone. We were exhilarated and nobody wanted to go to bed. Fortunately, Saman had taken precautions and packed several bottles of wine, which we emptied completely after the excitement.

But after this day, we felt stronger. We had mastered this adventure and were now certified desert riders. From now on, every day got better. We learnt to assess how

We travelled as far as we could from the Nile Valley, even though it often no longer visible. We passed through villages of waving children and astonished adults, as there had no horses here for a long time. The police chased us into the desert in a pick-up but had no chance against our fast horses.

My personal highlight was the day that was to become the best birthday of my life, when the whole village, near where we had set up camp, unexpectedly turned up to celebrate.

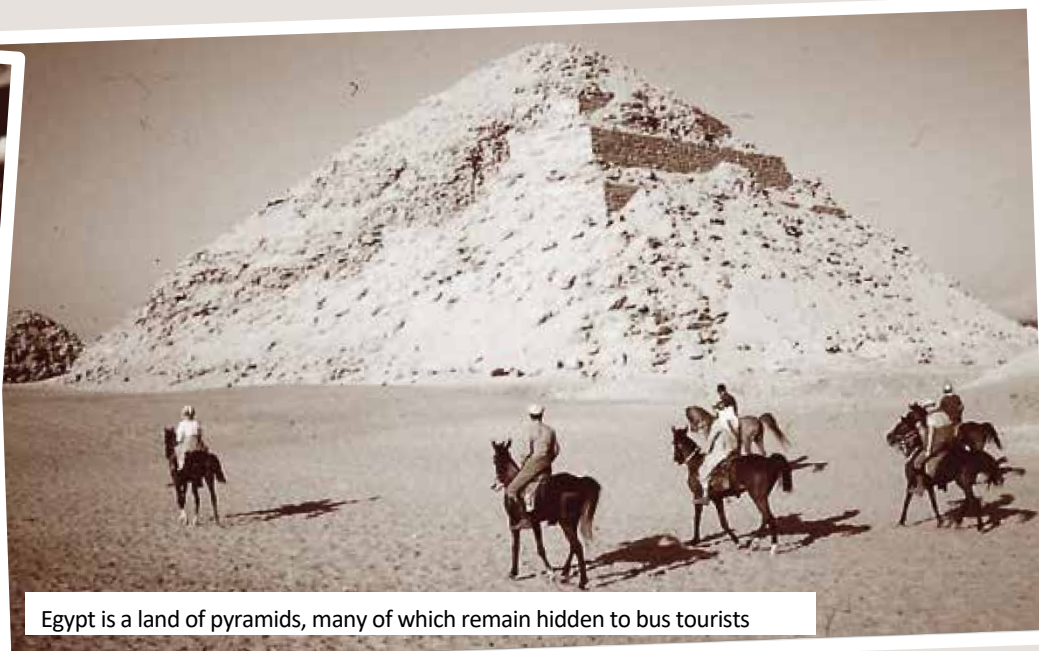
Dusty and sweaty, we reached the Valley of the Kings after an exhausting but exhilarating day's riding. Dirtied but proud, we rode right up to almost Tutankhamun's tomb.

Filled with 500 kilometres of adventure and riding experience, we off on our journey home. To this day, we still remember the warmth and hospitality in the villages, our wonderful team and, of course, the enduring and marvellous Arabian horses. Anyone who ever ridden through the desert on a noble Arabian horse will always want to go back.





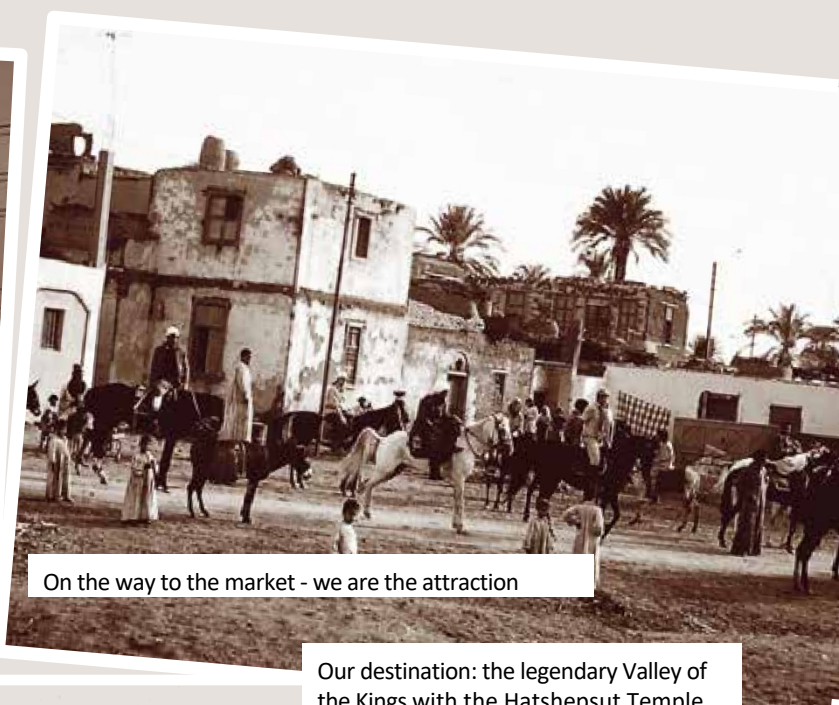
Charming birthday guest



Egypt is a land of pyramids, many of which remain hidden to bus tourists



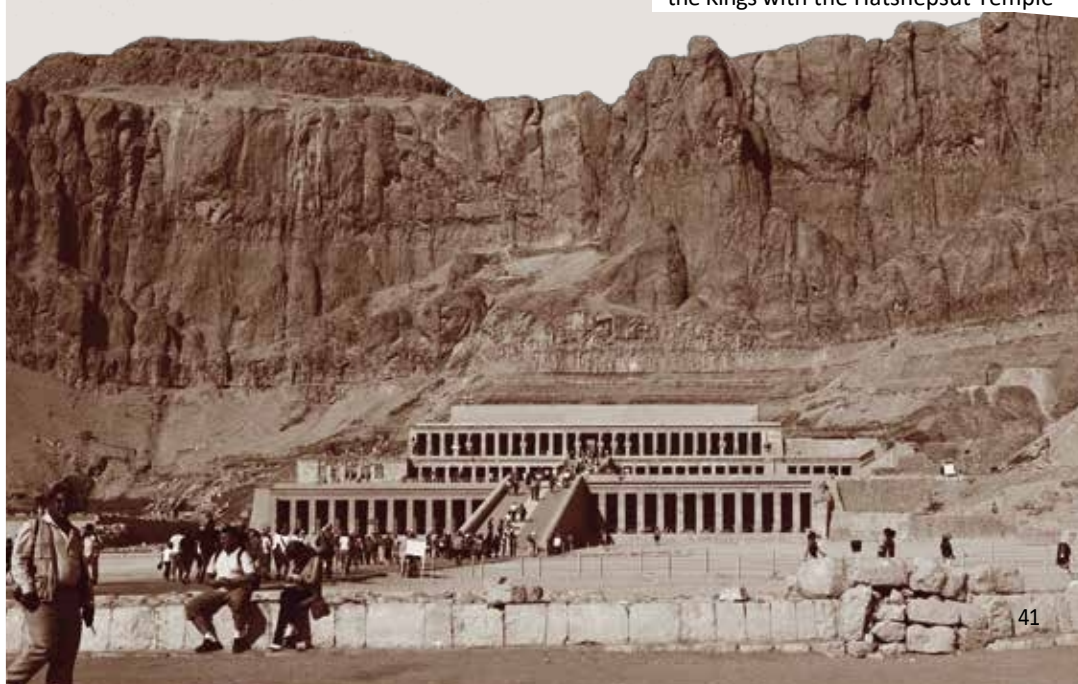
Egyptian horse transport: Loading problems? Unknown!



On the way to the market - we are the attraction



Our destination: the legendary Valley of the Kings with the Hatshepsut Temple

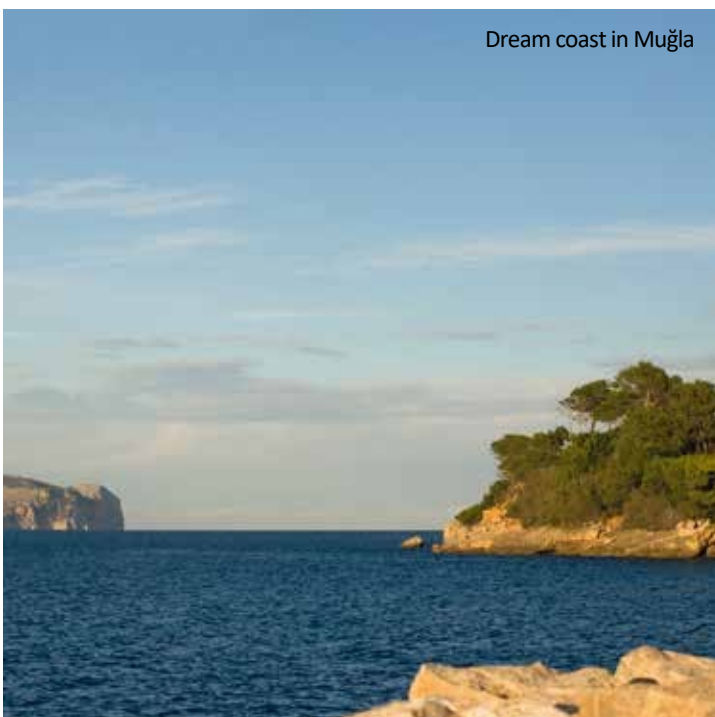






# Hoş geldin in Turkey

Lonely beaches, ancient cultural sites, bizarre mountain landscapes. the diversity of Turkey on horseback is even more beautiful than exploring the diversity of Turkey. EQUITOUR horse riding holidays take you to three particularly attractive regions of Turkey.



Dream coast in Muğla



Who needs Canada?



## Muğla: Dream beach rides

The Turkish Mediterranean coast is so much more than just beaches and sunbathing. Over 600 kilometres of sea, beaches, historic towns and fishing villages offer a wealth of delights and sights.

The province of Muğla lies in the far south-west. The city of Köycegiz

is the starting point for a riding tour with many highlights.

The Köycegiz Lake of the same name offers beach gallops and the opportunity to swim, either in the lake or in the hot springs of Sultaniye.

Ancient cultural sites such as Kaunos with its Lycian tombs carved into the rock are monumental witnesses to ancient civilisations. On the secluded beach of Iztuzu, you can combine the pleasures of horse riding and swimming in the sea.

## Taurus: Myths, temples and ruins

When you think of a holiday in Turkey, you might not think of mountain tours first, but the mighty Taurus Mountains offer adventurous trails with spectacular views of the mountains, sea and coast. And a good dose of mythology. It begins at the summit of Tahtali Dağı, which translates the throne of the gods. Which is why the 2366 metre high mountain also known as Mount Olympus.

According to Greek mythology, Bellerophon, a grandson of Sisyphus, kills the fire-breathing chimera in the shape of a lion's head, a goat's body and a snake with the help of the winged horse EQUITOUR.

Where EQUITOUR once reigned, today an EQUITOUR riding tour leads along mule tracks, through wild mountain forests and deep gorges of the legendary mountain range. Riders pass a series of mystical temples and ruins and immerse themselves in the myths and legends associated with them.

## Cappadocia: Land of fantasy

Visitors to Cappadocia in the centre of Anatolia feel like they are on an alien planet. Natural rock sculptures, into which cave dwellings and entire towns been carved by human hands. Over a period of several million years, volcanic eruptions poured up ash and lava. This formed several layers of tuff in different colours

and degrees of hardness. Wind and weather washed out the soft material, leaving the harder material behind. This created valleys with narrow rock towers, the fairy chimneys.

The region became an important early Christian centre. Cave dwellings and cave churches were built, often as protection against raids and persecution. They were built into the rocks or even deep underground. What once protected the inhabitants now fascinates visitors from all over the world.

The name Cappadocia has nothing to do with the characteristic buildings. It probably comes from the Persian word Kat- patuka, which means "land of beautiful horses". And there was indeed significant horse breeding here in ancient times.

Fascinated by both the horses and the landscape, horse trainer Sandra Fencel reports on the following pages about her unforgettable ride through this magical land.

## Taurus: The valley of the wild horses

From the land of beautiful horses to the valley of wild horses. Back in the Taurus Mountains, reminiscent of the Canadian wilderness.

Mountains, forests, torrents, green high valleys. One of the valleys is called Enif Yayala and is home to wild horses. EQUITOUR partner Beate Deniz leads her guests on an adventurous ride through unspoiled nature to the wild horses. Find out more on page 50/51.

### Country info Turkey



Size 783,562 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 83,614,000

Capital: Ankara Language: Turkish

Religion: Predominantly Islam

Currency: Turkish lira

Climate: temperate to hot depending on the region, also cold winters in the mountains

Best time to visit: All year round

Spectacular Cappadocia



Real wild horses in the Taurus





# CAPPADOCIA

As in







# another world

Bizarre rock towers, wondrous caves, gentle sandstone formations. The Turkish region of Cappadocia seems like a surreal land.



## Cappadocia Trailride

# Once-in-a-lifetime

You think you're a sporty rider? This ride could push you your limits. That's what happens to Sandra Fencel, a horsewoman through and through and set for adventure. It will be the ride of her life.

Casual: Guide Niko



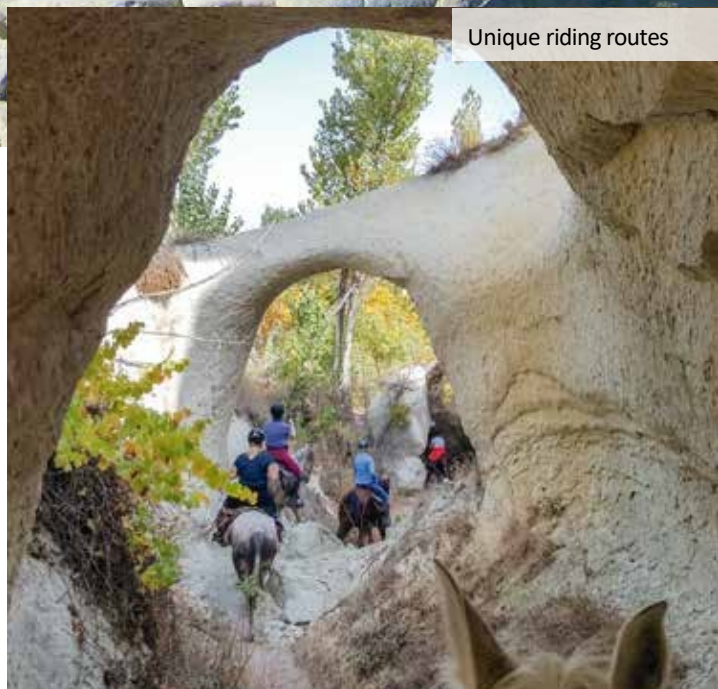
Niko's self-built tack room



Friends: Sandra and Seker







Cappadocia, yes, that's right, a still relatively unknown but spectacular region in the heart of Turkey. My best friend Alex and I have no idea what awaits us when we sign up for the six-day trail ride. We were initially fascinated by the unique landscape in Central Anatolia, which is even listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The mountains and the natural stone towers, in which a number of "cave hotels", i.e. accommodation in caves, are embedded, are characteristic of the area. In our hotel cave, we get to our fellow riders and our French-born guide Niko. Niko leaves us in no doubt as to what awaits us this week: daily riding stages of around 35 kilometres and steep climbing tours on foot.

Between anxiety and anticipation, we fortify ourselves with an excellent Turkish dinner. As a former hotelier's child with a gourmet palate, I can only praise the traditional food in the hotel and on the route in the highest terms. An evening tour of the small town of Mustafapaşa puts us in the mood for the vibrancy of this country.

The next morning, we are to Kapadokya Ranch. It is located at an altitude of over 1000 metres in the Unesco Nature Park and the home of Niko and his family. 25 Arab and Arabian mongrels, some donkeys, goats, chickens, rabbits, dogs and other animals lead a marvellous life here. There are no stables or boxes, the horses live in the meadows around the ranch. Nestled between white sandstone hills, the buildings and corrals blend perfectly into the landscape. Niko's craftsmanship can be seen in the extravagant, height-like tack room, which he modelled himself out of a rock.

#### Encounter with sugar

Before we get into the saddle, Niko gives us a theoretical introduction to the do's and don'ts of trail riding, equipment and care of our riding horses. Some of them are former racehorses. With a good judgement of his guests, he assigns everyone their horse for the week. I ask for an experienced horse so that I can take the best photos en route. This brings me to Seker, or Zucker, a 20-year-old Arabian mare and Niko's "guide horse" for many years. Contrary to her name, her first greeting was not sweet as sugar, but rather frosty. At first, she was probably not so keen on the idea of spending a whole week with me.

#### Think like a horse

The first day of riding is something of an aptitude test. On an extreme trail around two kilometres long with natural obstacles, ditches, inclines, gallops, turns and steps, the participants have to test their suitability for the demanding tour. My Seker masters the course with ease and strengthens my trust in her.

"You have to think like a horse!" Niko advises us as we mount up the next day to begin our great adventure. A saying that I keep reminding myself of. From the very first metre, we ride through a magnificent landscape. My small, tough, somewhat prickly filly is a joy from the very beginning. It's clear from the very first steps: Seker is a fighter and in top form despite her advanced age, always light and fine on the aids. During her first fast uphill canter, she demonstrates her skilfulness, balance and sure-footedness. She seems to have suction cups on her feet, because she is travelling at high speed over smooth sandstone. All horses know no stumbling or slipping, even in rough terrain. In long gallops, we "fly" over a 1600 metre high



Plateau along the Uzengi Canyon. Yee-Haaaa! The endless expanses a real Wild West feeling. The informal riding without a fixed group order and largely without predetermined paths also feeds the feeling of freedom.

This is exactly what Niko wants to give his guests on this special trail - a bit of freedom and individualism. He has found his happiness in life in this country and is looking forward to sharing it with us.

On the second day of the tour, we pass various fields where cereals, beans and wine are grown.

Lake Damsa lies deep blue in front of us, inviting us to swim with our horses on hot days. We ride through small villages every day. The clatter of horses' hooves attracts the attention of the inhabitants. The friendliness of the people touches our hearts and we return their warm "Hoş geldin", which means "hello" in the local language.

#### Highlight in the underground

The third and fourth riding days take us underground. More precisely: to the underground cities of Golgoli and Kirkule. We leave the horses behind and explore the old cave structures on foot. The system of caves and tunnels and the idea of what life used to be like in the underground city leave us amazed and a little shivery.

The ride on through the rock arches of the Gumuslu Canyon and up to the fortress of Uchisar is spectacular. On the way, we pass glowing orchards where we pick apples and grapes for ourselves and our horses. We spend the night in a hotel in Uchisar and go to bed early, because the next morning we have to get up early if we don't want to miss a unique opportunity.

#### In the silence of the sky

Not normally early risers, Alex and I are ready on time at six in the morning to be picked up for another great adventure. Dawn bathes the surreal land in a pale light. Around one hundred ballo

ne and hundreds of shivering passengers wait at the launch site for the journey. The flames of the gas cookers hiss as they heat up the air in the giant balloons, which rise lazily one after the other. The colourful balloons rise majestically into the air.

With a slightly queasy feeling in the pit of our stomachs, we climb into the basket. As our balloon rises and drifts the wind, we relax and simply enjoy. As we glide along, we watch the sunrise over the magical land and the slowly changing light below us in complete awe. Up here, between heaven and earth, we feel nothing but peace and silence. A moment of happiness and pure joy for the soul.

#### Through colourful valleys

After this experience, we swing into the saddle, beaming and with a full heart. Passing plateaus, canyons and table mountains, we ride through picturesque valleys after their predominant colours: the Green Valley, an area of fields and forests. The Red Valley, named after the pink, red and ochre-coloured rocks. Finally, the White Valley with its bright white rock formations. The sixth and final day of riding takes us to Love Valley. This valley is world-famous, and this is probably due to the phallus-shaped rock towers. After exhausting days of riding, the participants' faces are covered in broad grins. The unanimous opinion is that you have to see it. Impressed by the images and experiences of the past few days, we arrive at Kapadokya Ranch in the afternoon.

Over a sip of tea and a cuddle with the donkeys, we back on the week before it's time to go home.

the traditional "hamam", the "wellness temple". The perfect end to loosen and relax our strained muscles and start the journey home with wonderful memories.

Sandra Fencl, [www.sandrafencl.com](http://www.sandrafencl.com)

[Infowww.reiterreisen.com/cap008.htm](http://Infowww.reiterreisen.com/cap008.htm)

In the silence of the sky





Turkish Wild West



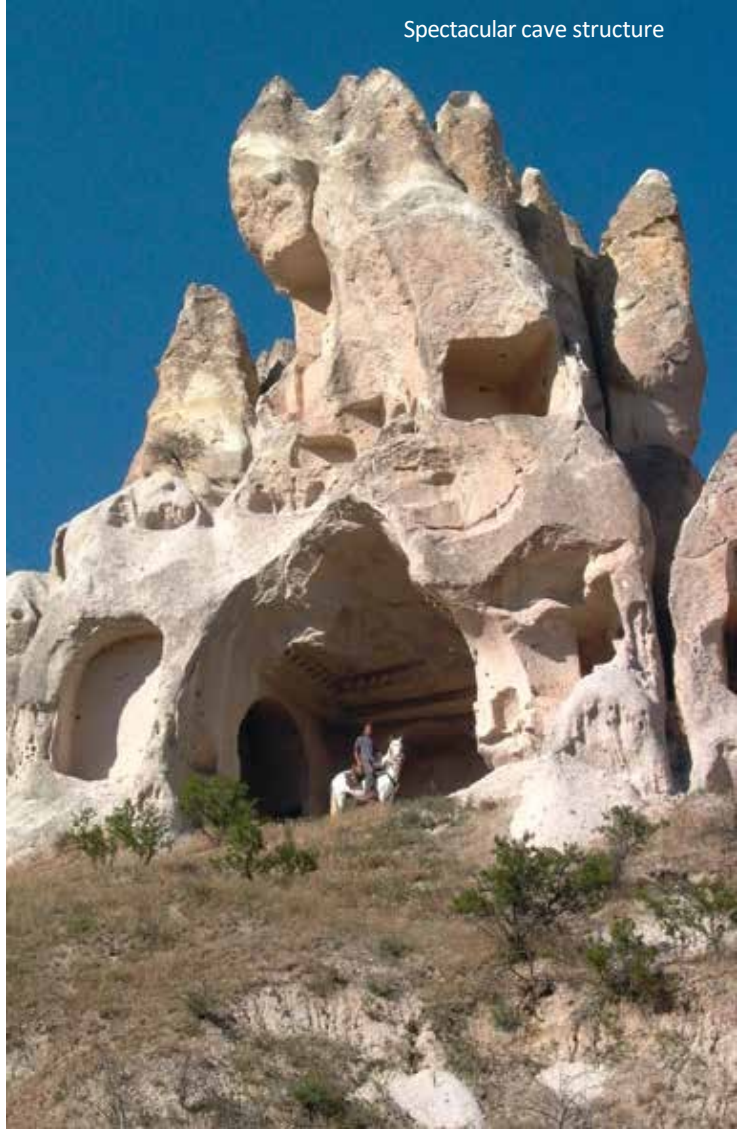
Well-deserved rest



Also for the riders



Spectacular cave structure



Photos: Sandra Fend



For every good rider, this trip is a "once in a lifetime" experience! However, you really need to be in good physical condition and some riding experience. Although the horses are all very well behaved and solidly trained, they are also temperamental and sensitive, as is typical of Arabian horses. The riding and physical demands are as high as the adventure content of this trip!



# In the valley of the wild horses

In Turkey, Beate Deniz fulfilled her childhood dream of working with horses. She tells EQUITOUR how it came about.

*Beate, how long have you been living in Turkey and how did you decide to emigrate?*

I went on holiday to Turkey for the first time in 1996 and was enchanted by the country and its people as well as the local horse breed, the Rahvans. flying 20 times within a year, I got married here and emigrated in 1998.

*What fascinates you most about your new home?*

I wanted to fulfil my dream as a girl and work with horses. I was confident that I would a job with my training in the hotel and catering industry. The unspoilt nature of the Taurus Mountains is reminiscent of the Canadian wilderness and made my equestrian heart beat faster. That's how we came up with the idea of founding the first western town in Turkey - the West Virginia City project - and riding tours.

The wild horse trails were added later. We followed the old caravan trails and stopped in the courtyard of an old We pitched our tents in a caravanserai. This free life in and with nature fascinated me. Especially the warm-heartedness and hospitality of the Turkish people. You can knock on the door of a pub at 2 a.m. and if the owner is there, he will open the door and cook you a meal. Anyone would help you you were in need.

*Were there times of homesickness or is it out of the question that you will return to Germany?*

I even came back for a short time, but not out of homesickness, but after separating from my husband. I







I was able to work in Germany and Switzerland straight away, but I became incredibly homesick - for Turkey, my environment and my animals. I returned and it was clear to me that I would stay in Turkey for the rest of my life. You look out of the window in the morning and the sun smiles into your heart. What more could you want?

*Your "Ride into the Valley of the Wild Horses" has been an integral part of your holiday programme for many years. What is the valley and the wild horses all about?*

In the high valley of Enif Yayala, wild horses graze freely in the countryside. A long time ago, when the farmers switched to tractors, the horses were no longer needed and were set free. I thought it would be a dream to ride here and worked a tour along old paths.

The wild horses behave calmly and you can get very close to them. ride up to them, observe and photograph them.

*You have Rahvan horses on your farm, an old Turkish horse breed. What do you like about them and where did the breed originate?*

Rahvans are a mix of Arabians and Berbers. They are very robust and sure-footed, yet calm and relaxed. Their stick size is

between 145 and 155 cm. Their tölt and passing gait disposition is particularly pleasant for long rides. The gaits are comfortable to sit and horse and rider do not tire easily.

From time to time we also take part in amateur pass races with our Rahvans.

*What tips can you give guests in the region around Antalya? What is apart from the wild horses?*

Oh, the Antalya region has everything your heart desires. Mountains and sea. Turquoise-coloured water, beautiful beaches and bays, ancient cultural sites. Even ski centres in winter. can ski and swim in the sea in one day. Or shop till you drop. A tip for the girls: the affordable beauty centres. Sustainability has also arrived in tourism. We are currently setting up a women's co-operative that offers products from the region. The old crafts are being revitalised and passed on to young people. An international centre for women in is also being built. The centre is right next to our hotel and can be visited.

*Thank you very much, Beate! That sounds like an exciting and meaningful life.*



## EQUITOUR WILD HORSE TRAIL

Beate Deniz's programme combines varied trail rides with sightings of wild horses. In between, there are opportunities to experience cultural sites, a spectacular stalactite cave, the ancient city of Side and dream beaches. Culinary highlights and the legendary Turkish hospitality round the perfect holiday.

<https://www.equitour.com/wvc008.htm>



# FOLLOW the HORSES

## A magical journey around the world of horses

The love of horses unites people and nations all over the world. With EQUITOUR Equestrian Travelling, you not only immerse yourself in foreign countries, you also connect with like-minded people.

Equestrian photographer Gabriele Kärcher is travelling the world for two years to meet horse people and equestrian peoples. Without much planning, she travelled to all continents and got involved with people and cultures. She finds inspiration on the Crow Indian Reservation, where she learns to surrender to life without fears, rules and restrictions. To make the best of everything that comes her way, to open her heart and eyes to the unknown.

In the introduction to her book "FOLLOW the HORSES", she describes how this came about:

We have to take a break from time  
to time and wait until our souls  
have caught up with us again

Indian wisdom



I pack matches and a packet of cigarettes in my saddlebags and ride Paint Horse Spotty into the Pryor Mountains. As so often, I'm spending the summer in the land of the Crow Indians in the US state of Montana. The mountains are sacred to the Crows. They say that the "Little People" live there, an ancient tribe of people of small stature. They only show themselves to selected people and punish people who disregard nature and the Great Spirit with all kinds of tricks. Anyone who invades their realm brings gifts such as cigarettes to appease them.

Spotty's steady steps ground me. It's just the two of us. Horses have been with me all my life. Here, in the vastness of the American West, they seem particularly close nature. After a good two hours, we reach a fire pit at the edge of the forest. A blue sky above us and the golden prairie in front of us. I saddle up and lead Spotty to a stream to drink. I myself go without food and drink for 24 hours, inspired by the Native American custom of vision quests.

I sing a little song the dense bushes to scare away black bears. They are shy and only become dangerous if you frighten them. That's what my warbling is supposed to prevent. Back at the campsite, I put the Marlboros under a bush away from the fire pit. I let Spotty graze before tying him to a tree for the night. I collect wood and dry

I put some prairie grass on the grass and, with a little effort, get a fire going. The crackling flames, the setting sun, the scent of wild sage suffocate all thoughts. Pale moonlight dwarfs the mountain slopes, I breathe in the power of the wilderness and surrender to the mystery of existence.

I draw a basic trust from nature that even covers my fear of bears and cougars and gives me the sleep of a newborn. In my dreams, I hear distant drums that accompany me from sleep to wakefulness. Spotty's impatient pounding mingles with the rhythm. I open my eyes in the early dawn. Glad not to the sunrise, I take Spotty out to graze, sit down on a stone and look eastwards.

Fascinated, I listen to the drumming, which I initially was imaginary. It accompanies the sundance, a traditional Native American ritual. The distant sounds, the morning mood, the horse's contented chewing touch my heart and soul.

Hours later, I feel a deep sense of peace. I think of the Little People. What do they want to tell me? I let Spotty carry me down the slopes of the Pryor Mountains and savour every breath. A curiosity germinates in me like a tender seedling. How many more magical places like this are there? Suddenly everything is clear! I'm going to in search of them. All over the world. That's my vision! The voices of the Little People.



Photos: Gabriele Kärcher / [www.sorrel.de](http://www.sorrel.de)



Photojournalist  
Gabriele Kärcher

Pictures, adventures and  
experiences from my  
travels:





# MONGOLIA

## Fence-less, timeless,

Mongolia is a country that can hardly be described. The sounds, the images, the smells and the taste of untamed primeval nature accompany travellers as they trace nomadic life.







# boundless







# Infinite horizons

# MONGOLIA

"It is better to see once than to hear and read a thousand times." This Mongolian proverb will resonate with anyone who has travelled the vast expanses of Mongolia.

In our hectic times, many people long get off the hamster wheel. The soul thirsts for meaning, for stillness and connection. The power of Mongolia's primal nature touches people at their very core. This makes Mongolia a dream destination for nature-loving riders and horse lovers. In the north, vast forests and lakes colour the land in deep green and blue. In the west, the mighty Altai Mountains rise up into the sky. In the south, the semi-desert Gobi stretches across the country. In between, the landscape is dominated by the pot-holed plains and hilly steppes, sometimes rocky mountain regions. Rivers run like ink-blue veins through the barren land.

Mongolia is almost five times the size of Germany and, with only three million inhabitants, the least populated country in the world. And the only one where there are as many horses as people. More than one million inhabitants live in the capital Ulan Bator, one million are spread across small towns, villages and farms where they settled down. Only just under a third of the total population still lives nomadically.

They defy the extreme climate with temperatures between plus and minus 40 degrees Celsius.

## Rough nomadic life

The life of nomads has been closely to animals and nature for thousands of years. It is a hard, deprived life, but despite hardship, sacrifice and five months of permanent frost, people still move across the steppes with their herds of cattle. The yurt - ger in Mongolian - serves the whole family as a mobile one-room dwelling in which cook, sleep and eat. The horse is a mount, a beast of burden, a source of milk and sometimes meat. While the nomadic family huddles together in the yurt, the animals know neither stables nor fences. In herds, they graze freely and semi-wildly in the area around the yurts. Farming

hardly plays a role in Mongolia due to the climatic conditions and the nature of the soil. It is the land of cattle breeders. Goats and sheep are kept throughout the country, even in the centre of the capital, while cattle, horses and yaks are kept in the central and northern steppes and mountainous regions. In the Gobi, in the south of Mongolia, Bactrian camels can withstand the drought better than horses and cattle.

## The eagle hunters

Kazakh nomads live in the Altai, who still use eagles for hunting today. In fact, the largest and strongest eagle can even beat a wolf with its powerful fangs. The Kazakhs are a Turkic ethnic group and they are Muslims. Their traditions differ from those of the Mongolian Buddhists.

The original shamanism is practised in the region of Lake Hovsgol in the north. The deep blue lake in the Mongolian taiga is considered sacred to the people. Wild animals such as bears, deer, moose, wolves and even the endangered capercaillie and black grouse gather around its waters.

All nomads live from the products of their animals. Due to the low-yield agriculture in Mongolia, a lot of meat, mainly beef and mutton, and few vegetables are eaten. Nomads drink salted milk tea at all times of the day.

The national drink is airag - fermented mare's milk. You have to be Mongolian to like this sour drink.

But whether milk, meat or wool: they only take what they need themselves. Everything is processed and utilised. The animals, especially the horses, make their contribution and are indispensable. The nomads treat nature and animals with respect, but there is no room for sentimentality. Unless we are talking about racehorses. They are the Ferraris of the steppe and make even the toughest men go into raptures. They make their grand entrance every summer at the big Naadam Festival.





Eagle hunters in the Altai

## EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

Follow the eagle of the Altai hunter as it soars to the skies with powerful wings. Gallop along the dark blue pearl of Mongolia, Lake Hvosgol. Let your gaze wander over the endless expanses of the central steppes. Experience the dunes of the Gobi Desert. Experience the metropolis of Ulan Bator and the famous Naadam festival. Follow in the footsteps of the mighty Genghis Khan. PEQUITOUR takes you through the whole country, its culture and its history. And to people whose hospitality, humour and wisdom touch the heart of every traveller.

Info: <http://www.equitour.com/mongolia.htm>

Altai: Life between peaks and clear lakes



Nomads driving cattle

The nomads live in yurts, round buildings made from a wooden frame, felt, cloth and rope. Today they have solar power, internet and motorised vehicles.



The milk is shared fraternally



Oven and hob





"Tschuu!" means forwards!

Eriin Gurwan Naadam - these are the three male games, consisting of wrestling, archery and horse racing. They are part of the Mongolian national festival.

The racehorses are an independent breed and are traded at dream prices. Only they have names, are given extra feed, are loved and pampered. They are similar to working horses in size and character, only somewhat more finely built and trimmed for speed. To increase endurance and stamina, racehorse trainers make their animals gallop, gallop, gallop. The vast expanses of the Steps are the ideal training camp. In addition, the horses are wrapped in blankets even on hot summer days, because when they are sweating profusely, the kilos tumble. Only light horses are fast horses, and only light jockeys are winning jockeys. Adults are far too heavy, which is why children between the ages of seven and twelve compete in Mongolian horse racing.

The wild boys, and occasionally girls, ride like the devil: fearless and full of the will to win. Depending on the age group of the horses, the race covers distances of 10 to 30 kilometres. Before the race, the youngsters first ride the entire distance from the finish line to the starting line, which far out in the steppe, at a brisk trot or easy canter. This means that the horses already have many kilometres in their bones before the race even starts. The kids shout "Tschuu!" to spur on their little racers and swing the tashuur, the Mongolian leather whip.

"The dust of the horse race in your lungs brings good luck," swear the Mongolians, who also get enough of it as spectators.

The winning jockeys receive a bowl of Airag - fermented

mare's milk, which also sprinkled on their horses. Speeches and songs of praise are given to the little heroes, and the proud horse owners receive framed certificates and medals. There is no big prize money, the Mongolians are mainly interested in fame and honour. Two of the male games are also played by women and girls today: horse racing and archery. Wrestling is still reserved for the men of creation. The best wrestler is determined in several rounds according to the knockout system.

Naadam - the great festival

Each provincial capital organises its own naadam festival. The winners of these regional naadams in the big final state naadam in Ulan Bator. It feels like not only all three million Mongolians are in the capital for this summer festival, but also thousands of tourists. A huge opening ceremony in the large sports stadium introduces visitors to the history and traditions of Mongolia. Ancient fighting techniques are demonstrated, as well as perfectly orchestrated riding and dance performances. Music and folklore festivals are held throughout the city. Folk groups parade across Genghis Khan Square in traditional costumes. Mongolia's most important music groups perform on a large stage. The melancholy melodies, the instruments and the typical Mongolian overtone singing reflect the Mongolian soul and move the audience to tears.

The Naadam Festival place every year in July. Not only this major event, but also the pleasant temperatures make June and July the perfect time to visit Mongolia.

## Country info

Size 1,564,116 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 3,278,000 Capital:

Ulan Bator Language: Mongolian



Religion: Tibetan Buddhism,  
Shamanism, Islam

Currency: Tugrik

Climate: Extreme continental climate

Best time to visit: June, July, August







#### Morj means horse

The Mongolian horse is a small, strong, robust horse that can withstand extreme climatic and feeding conditions. It has a large, often coarse head, a strong lower neck, a steep shoulder and flat gaits. It is simply perfect for the nomads.



#### Przewalski's wild horse

Around 300 of the only real wild horses live in Hustai National Park. After they were already extinct in the wild, Przewalskis from zoo stocks were successfully reintroduced into the wild in Mongolia. Tourists have a good chance of spotting them.



#### Genghis Khan

Genghis Khan is still the ubiquitous hero today. With the courage of his people and the class of his horses, the great ruler conquered a world empire. A huge statue made of stainless steel stands at the entrance to the Gorkhi-Terelj National Park to the east of Ulan Bator.



#### The old and the new times

Tradition and modernity come together in the capital Ulan Bator. Playful temples next to sober commercial buildings made of glass and concrete form an unusual backdrop.

Photos: Gabriele Kärcher / www.sorrel.de





## Gobi Steppe Ride

"A man without a horse is like a bird without wings," say the Mongolians. After a riding tour through the Mongolian steppe, Angelika Kaiser can empathise with this saying.

Endless expanses, deserted steppes, living in and with nature - that's how I Mongolia. The Mongolians are a horse-riding people, and so I also want to get to know this vast country the saddle.

The gateway to Mongolia is the capital Ulan Bator, the only city with an international airport. The fact that Mongolia is the most sparsely populated country in the world is not noticeable here, as around one and a half million people bustle through the capital. But that is actually almost half the entire population of a country almost five times the size of Germany.

Before south the day after arrival, we visit the Gandan Monastery, where we listen to the monks chanting in the morning. Outside are the prayer wheels, which we tap clockwise according to Buddhist rules. This is supposed to harmonise body, mind and soul. Inside the drums are scrolls with prayers that are supposed to become effective through the rotations.

Thus prepared, we set off into the endless expanses in a minibus, excited and in a good mood. We see the first herds of horses and cattle and reach our camp with a nomadic horse-breeding family after a four-hour drive. Our guides Otka and Zaya and some of the boys will us plenty to laugh about, marvel at and learn from on the tour.

We familiarise ourselves with our horses on a short ride to the water trough. The Mongolian horses are small and seem puny, but they have unimaginable strength and spirit.

I appreciate my little fox more with every kilometre. He moves forward quickly, is strong-willed but always obedient. We ride on small leather saddles, not the typical Mongolian wooden saddles.

We are very happy about this, especially after trying out such a rock-hard saddle.

### Wild and free

The horses in Mongolia live a free, independent life. They have no farrier, no vet and no fences. They don't need concentrated and mineral feed, blankets and stalls in winter - things that we for granted. They feed on lean grass or hay, receive water once or twice a day and live a semi-wild horse life.

It takes half an hour to break in a horse, then it is used to the saddle, bridle and rider for the time being. A somewhat rough way in our eyes, but very effective. Our horses are willing, well-fed and fit. They make anything but a dissatisfied impression.

The first ride, announced as a walk, soon becomes faster with trotting and cantering sections.

In the days that follow, we ride out into the steppe. The view is lost in endlessness, broken only here and there by small interrupted hills. From time to time, we hear a loud "mow" from herds of sheep or goats and a friendly "Sain Baina" from their shepherds. Wild Argali sheep, gazelles and marmots occasionally cross our path. On kilometre-long gallops, all the horses prove to be nimble and tireless. A fresh wind, sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker, is our constant companion. At a dried-up salt lake, it breaks the silence with a whistle and softens the heat of the day.

### Almost like real nomads

We move steadily southwards and finally reach the Gobi Desert. This consists mainly of dry gravel plains and barren open pastureland.

What little they have is enough for the horses to fortify themselves. In the evening, shackles are put on them so that they don't stray too far. Nevertheless, they can move with small steps







move forwards and graze. We, on the other hand, are spoilt with sumptuous meals even in the desert: Sausages, pancakes and eggs for breakfast, meat with rice or Buckwheat for lunch and in the evening with a sumptuous four-course menu. Everything is freshly prepared. We spend the night in tents or yurt camps, the traditional Mongolian tent dwellings, which are very cosily furnished. The showers and toilets are not quite nomadic, but we are still very grateful for them. In true nomadic style, our camp is dismantled in the morning, loaded onto camel carts and transported to the next day's destination.

#### High in the dunes

We approach the sand dunes, which only make up a narrow strip of the Gobi and create a desert feeling. Sand as far as the eye see. We climb the dunes on horseback, ride along the summit line and trot through the deep sand. Even after this exertion, our energetic little horses show no sign of fatigue or exhaustion.

We spend the last two nights in the comfortable yurt camp "Arbud Sands". Longer, brisk rides and a visit to nomadic horse breeders round off our riding tour. With heavy hearts, we say goodbye to our faithful horses, Okta, Zaya and the boys and silently reflect our experiences on the long drive back to Ulan Baator.

Angelika Kaiser [www.equitour.com/mgs012.htm](http://www.equitour.com/mgs012.htm)



Endless steppes



Enchanting yurt accommodation



Buddhist prayer wheels



Small, tough and wild: Mongolian horses



Varied Gobi



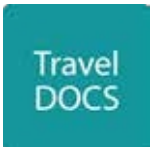
# Relax and enjoy while planning your holiday



## Let a professional make your dream holiday come true - we fulfil horse riding holiday dreams!



you want: service, quality, reliability, and everything is ready and waiting for you to set off on your very own dream holiday - we'll serve you regional delicacies as well as a fine wine ...



### Your advantages when booking a riding holiday with us:



1. You will receive comprehensive, professional advice - questions about the best time to travel, equipment, vaccination requirements, luggage - directly from our product managers.

2. Free service line from Germany, Austria and Switzerland.  
Comprehensive information on our website and by telephone.

3. Comprehensive travel documents, country information and tips.  
We provide you with a complete package: riding trip, arrival and departure, transfer organisation, travel insurance.

We will be happy to make you a personalised flight and car hire offer!



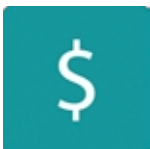
4. Trust our 50 years of experience!

5. We have tested all riding holidays for you: From A for Andalusia to W for Wyoming - we have already passed the greatest and most exotic riding adventures for you ...

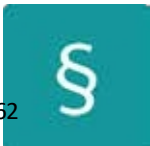


6. All employees are multilingual and have many years of experience not only in tourism, but also in the saddle.

7. You pay in euros or Swiss francs, conveniently by bank transfer.



8. Legal protection of your payment through our membership of the Swiss travel price guarantee association REISEGARANTIE. We offer you the full security of German and Swiss travel law through a German place of jurisdiction for travel registrations from Germany or a Swiss place of jurisdiction for travel registrations from Switzerland and other countries.






Always up to date - everything at a click,  
the whole world on horseback!

[www.equitour.com](http://www.equitour.com)




- \* Lots of videos and photos from our tours
- \* Detailed travel, weather and climate information
- \* First-hand travel reports and hundreds of press articles
- \* Space availability and online booking




**Reiseberichte**

Travel reports from us and our customers:  
[www.equitour.com/reports.htm](http://www.equitour.com/reports.htm)




**Wetter, Visa und Maps**

Detailed information on climate, visas, culture  
and location on each travel page.



**Kundenbewertungen**

Feedback on each programme can be found  
under Customer Opinions on the travel page.



**Mitreiterbörse**

You can find fellow riders for your tour at:  
[www.forum.reiterreisen.forum.com](http://www.forum.reiterreisen.forum.com)

## TOP group offers

Everything is better together ...

... and cheaper! Exclusive dates are generally available for groups of 6 or more.

We offer the following discounts for groups:

from 6 persons: 3%

from 8 persons: 4%

from 10 persons: 5%

Further group offers and much more on the web:

[www.equitour.com/groups.htm](http://www.equitour.com/groups.htm)

(Discounts are not cumulative, without travel, no discounts for travel agencies on long-distance travel)



## Imprint:

### EQUITOUR

The world through horses'  
ears

© 2022  
1st year

Customer magazine of EQUITOUR  
Riding holidays - EQUITOUR Inc.

Publisher:  
EquiConsult EurL  
1c, rue principale  
F-68130  
Franconia  
dfranz@equiconsult.eu

Responsible:  
Diethard Franz

Editing and layout:  
Gabriele Kärcher / [www.sorrel.de](http://www.sorrel.de) All  
rights reserved.

## Authors:

Lara von Breidenbach Beate  
Deniz  
Sandra FencI  
Diethard Franz  
Angelika Kaiser  
Gabriele Kärcher  
Jessica Kiefer  
Yvonne Koall  
Denise Neufeld

More exciting travel reports on  
[www.equitour.com/community.htm](http://www.equitour.com/community.htm)



[www.youtube.com/user/Reiterreisen](http://www.youtube.com/user/Reiterreisen)



[PEGASUS/EQUITOUR Riding](#)



[holidays](#)











# EQUITOUR

## Riding Holidays



*Make your dreams become true*

**EQUITOUR**  
**International riding holidays**

Herrenweg 60  
CH-4123 Allschwil  
Phone: +41 (0)61 - 303 31 03

FreeCall Germany 0800 -  
505 18 01

FreeCall Austria, Switzerland  
0800 - 0700 97

Email: [info@equitour.com](mailto:info@equitour.com)

Web:

**[www.equitour.com](http://www.equitour.com)**