



EQUITOUR

The world through horses' ears

Riding holidays through

MADAGASCAR

MOROCCO

CANADA

CROATIA

IRELAND





The most dangerous of all worldviews is
the worldview of people who have not
looked at the world.

Alexander von Humboldt





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EQUITOUR

Riding Holidays

The whole world on horseback

Dear ,

What could be better than discovering the world through two horses' ears, conquering foreign cultures and impressive landscapes on horseback, among like-minded people with a reliable four-legged companion?

In the second issue of our travel magazine, you can once again look forward to exciting reports, background information and interviews on the subject of equestrian travel. Let yourself be whisked away to distant worlds: From cool Ireland to the Moroccan desert, from bears in Canada to lemurs in Madagascar, this time the literary journey takes you on a journey of discovery.

The horse breeds you encounter are as diverse as the destinations: From the wild horses of Alberta, the mountain horses of the Altai and the Himalayas, the desert horses of Morocco to the powerful Irish Tinkers. The local horses are perfectly adapted to the conditions and inspire the riding guests - whether galloping along the beach, riding in the desert or on adventurous climbing passages.

Have fun reading and dreaming!

Gabriele Kärcher & the team from EQUITOUR



Jessica Kiefer, Managing Director, talks about her work, which is also her passion:

How and when did you join EQUITOUR?

After completing my master's degree in linguistics, I first planned to work as a research assistant at the to apply. Then a riding colleague told me about EQUITOUR

To be honest, tourism was rather foreign to me, but in combination with my favourite hobby, I was immediately intrigued. I googled it, and sure enough, a position in product management had just been advertised. One month later, in October 2008, I started the job and have not regretted it!

Is this your dream job?

Yes, of course there is also some dry office work and the whole corona crisis was and is not exactly a pleasure, but otherwise it is. The work never gets boring: writing texts, designing websites, partner visits, trade fairs, collaborations with magazines and associations... there's always something else to do. Often ten things at the same time, but I don't like boredom anyway. I also particularly like the fact that we have been working with many riding stables for decades, and many regular customers have been loyal to us for years. During the crisis, some even called to ask what the situation like. Because it is such an individual product and the contact with customers and businesses is very personal, I still really enjoy my work. Classic mass tourism, on the other hand, is completely alien to me.

Do you have horses yourself?

Yes, I fell in love with Arabian horses as a child and own two Arabian mares, mother and daughter. I take them on long rides and short trail rides in the Black Forest.

Which is your favourite country?

Hard to say, perhaps Mongolia. Travelling the land of nomads on horseback was a childhood dream, and it was completely fulfilled: The people, the horses and the way of life absolutely thrilled me, and I have never been as relaxed as after these two weeks in which the five of us travelled through the lonely steppe without a watch or internet access. My ultimate tip for anyone who some distance and time out!

How many EQUITOUR tours have you been on yourself? I don't know, but probably around 20. My favourite thing is trail riding in the mountains, but I also love the deserts and steppes. My top three, apart from Mongolia, are Jordan, Kyrgyzstan and Iceland. Simply beautiful. Next up is our new mountain ride in North Macedonia.

You have recently taken over as Managing Director. What are you planning for the future?

By and large, the concept is to be continued in this way. Our trips in small groups are sustainable and personalised. We try to offer less, but only the best. This has its price, but I think our customers know how expensive a horse with equipment is and appreciate the quality.

What is important to me personally is that the groups are as homogeneous as possible, that nobody overestimates themselves and that you know exactly what to expect. We now ask very specifically about the experience of our guests and, if in doubt, we also advise guests not to go if it doesn't suit them. This is also for the sake of the horses. We have also lowered the weight limits in many cases for the benefit of the horses. However, riding ability and personal fitness are ultimately more important.

One topic that has come up a lot recently is special rides for senior citizens, which we will definitely be happy to address.

Jessica Kiefer tells us about a special riding adventure in Morocco from page 22.



Island of



Madagascar



Uniqueness

Indri, Vari, Aye-Aye - the strange animals of Madagascar are as unique as the landscape of the African island state. A ride through red mountains, green rainforest and white dream beaches reveals the diversity of a mysterious country.

A country like no other

MADAGASCAR

150 million years ago, a huge land mass separated from the African continent. That was the birth of Madagascar. Today, Madagascar is the second largest island state after Indonesia and is also called "the sixth continent". Endemic species have emerged, the best known of which are probably the lemurs, which nowhere else in the world. Indri, Vari, Katta, Maki and the strange fingered animal Aye-Aye - these are the names of the graceful islanders.

Madagascar consists of the central highlands and 4800 kilometres of coastline, most of it with magnificent beaches, sandy beaches in the 19th century. On the eastern side of them, a waterway over 600 kilometres long attracts the mainly Arabs and Anglo-Arabs. Therefore, one country - the Canal des Pangalanes. special

Characteristic of the island are the intensive Landscape colours. Deep red earth, lush green grass

and white dream beaches are the colours of the country's flag. Hot springs and geysers bubble in the volcanic interior. Numerous rivers and lakes criss-cross the country.

The people live primarily from agriculture. Countless rice terraces provide Madagascar's staple food, supplemented by fish and exotic fruits. Madagascar is still little developed for tourists and is therefore a real insider tip.

Horses only came to Madagascar unspoiled, and even today there are only around 350 of them. Horse riding adventures on the island state are a very

Experience.

The crown sifaka - a climbing artist

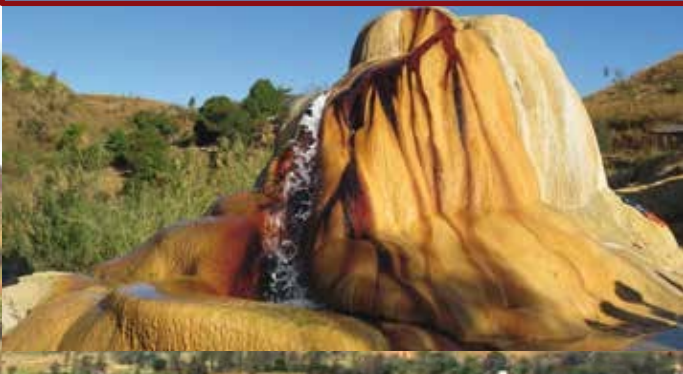


EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

The central highlands and the east coast are the destinations of the EQUITOUR riding adventures.

On the 16-day trail, you will experience the highlands and the coast intensively. On the 10-day trail, you experience the wonders of the mountain and volcanic landscape, while the 8-day trail focuses on the beach and the Canal des Pangalanes. You will see lemurs in all three programmes.
www.equitour.com/madagascar.htm

Geothermal energy creates dazzling shapes



Lily's waterfall



Country info Madagascar



Size 587 295 km²

Population: 27.7 million Capital:
Antananarivo Language: Malagasy
and French

Religion: Natural religions, Christianity Currency:
Ariary

Climate: Tropical climate with rainy and dry
seasons

Best time to visit: All year round

Rice fields as far as the eye can see



Malagasy coastal fisherman



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14 days of amazement



Angelika Kaiser's trip to Madagascar actually includes two riding tours: one through lake, mountain and volcanic landscapes in the centre-west, and the other through rainforest and over dream beaches on the east coast.



We are the attraction



Arrival at the camp on Lake Itasy



Cuddling with brown lemurs

Refreshing river crossing



manufactured and repaired. Despite the lack of everything, every horse is well cared for and all are well fed. Saddles and bridles are looked after. The horseshoes are made in-house - there is no farrier, vet or dentist.

Day 2

Assigning the horses takes a good hour, as the group quite diverse in terms of riding experience. I get a lively, friendly mare called Kallin, who really grows on me over the next few days. Kallin is sure-footed and a life insurance in every situation. If the lead horse doesn't want to go over a ditch or through a waterhole, my horse is sent ahead. Kallin tests the terrain carefully with sniffs and small kicks before deciding whether to jump or walk. We explore the terrain on a half-day ride. Rice fields, rolling hills, fields and red earth lie before us. We pass the first villages, whose inhabitants wave in a friendly manner. They radiate contentment, even though they don't own much and live off what they grow. They don't have to go hungry, there is plenty of rice, vegetables, fruit and occasionally meat. Chickens roam the villages and some keep pigs in their front gardens. During the tour, we ask ourselves whether our consumer society really makes us happy?

We quickly learn the Malagasy greeting "Salam, Salame, Salamo, Salama" - the ending depends on the village.

Day 3

After another night at the ranch, we set on a day's ride. The gentle hilly landscape with rice paddies and several small rivers us to trot into the villages. The inhabitants cheer as we trot past them. Unthinkable in Germany!

The main means of transport here is the oxcart. They are used to transport vegetables, fruit and other goods. We keep a safe distance from the oxen so as not to frighten. Trees and forests are few and far between. André tells us that wood is becoming increasingly scarce in many regions of Madagascar. Frequent fires prevent new tree growth.

During a lunch break in a larger village, we visit a market. Clothing, electronics, fruit, vegetables, rice and fresh meat - there is a wide range on offer here. The village has a school, a police station and a town hall.

In the afternoon, we head new accommodation. A lovely guesthouse with a pool, fantastic views and beautiful rooms. It is idyllically situated by a lake. We enjoy the hot shower and electricity and round off the day with a delicious dinner on the terrace.

Day 4

The terrain becomes more mountainous. We cross small rivers again, ride along narrow paths alongside fields and up the quiet, peaceful atmosphere. Every now and then we come across women cleaning their laundry in the rivers and then hanging it out to dry on a hillside over small bushes. There are many long sandy paths that encourage us to ride faster. We can't get enough of the intensely colourful landscapes. Today's camp is located by the beautiful Lake Itasy. We treat ourselves to a dip in the not-too-cold water and the fishing boats bobbing by. We cook fresh fish, rice and vegetables around the campfire.

Day 1

Madagascar's capital Antananarivo is located in the central mountainous country. At breakfast in the hotel after our first night, I spot four Englishmen wearing T-shirts printed with a horse motif. I wonder what journey they are on. Our bus arrives punctually at 9am for the transfer to the riding centre. Everyone is together: three Germans, one Frenchman and the four Englishmen. On the way, we stop at a lemur park, where we learn about different species of these fascinating endemic animals.

The journey slows as the roads get worse and the potholes get bigger. But the landscape becomes more and more beautiful, and our destination lies in dreamlike surroundings: André and his wife Silvana's ranch. After a warm welcome, we are given a guided tour of the stables.

The horses are stabled in boxes, but are allowed to move freely around the grounds during the day. Two riding arenas are located next to the

Stable. Madagascar is not an equestrian country - there are only around 350 horses on the whole island, 30 of which are in André's stable. The equipment has to be imported, much of it is home-made.

Day 5

First we ride along the lake, passing villages and extensive banana plantations. The sandy paths that follow are a joy for horse and rider. A small crater lake lies on our way to a charming little guesthouse, our next overnight stop.

Day 6

Gradually, the landscape changes. Our guide leads us into a spectacular volcanic landscape. We take a break on the banks of the River Lily and climb to a viewpoint from where we can admire "Lily's Waterfall". The waterfall is a tourist attraction, so there are several market stalls. Women us homemade souvenirs made of pumice stone. If you show an interest, however, you are besieged from all sides.

We ride on through a varied landscape until we reach a restaurant, from where we are taken to our tented camp at the Madagascan geysers. There we take a relaxing dip in the hot springs before gathering round the campfire for a drink.

Day 7

Another highlight awaits us. After a ride along huge rice fields, we reach a large lake. There we have the opportunity to gallop individually along the shore. Now my Kallin, who loves to walk, can show what she's made of and we let the wind rush around our ears on long gallops. We continue through the rugged volcanic landscape until we return to the geyser camp after several gallops.

Day 8

A two-hour ride takes us to the "Devil's Cauldron", a mysterious gorge that stretches out below us. The river Mazy has carved its way through the rock and created a round crater lake. This was the last ride in the mountains. The horses are loaded and taken back to the ranch, while we start the long, arduous journey to Antananarivo by car.

Day 9

From Antananarivo, we take the bus to the coast and the second part of the tour. It is about 250 kilometres of winding, impassable road from the central mountains through the rainforests. We arrive at our lodge in the early afternoon. The climate on the coast is tropical and humid, and now is the rainy season. It drizzles again and again.

Day 10

After breakfast, we take the bus to a second lemur park. Equipped with a carrot and banana, we set off on our search. The animals are not long in .

Some jump onto our shoulders, allow themselves to be fed and stroked. We are enchanted by the animals' gracefulness and cosiness. Less endearing are the inhabitants of the reptile park. Crocodiles, strange chameleons, lizards and tortoises fascinate us nonetheless.

After another two hours' drive, we reach our destination for today - Brickaville. Here we see our horses again, some of them new. My companion now is the lively Zipit. He is easy to handle and I would have loved to him home with me. We trot and gallop palm trees and bushes. Our tents for the next three nights are waiting for us right on the beach.

Day 11

The sound of the sea and the sunshine lure us out of our tents. What a great atmosphere for our day's ride! First we ride through a lake and then along sandy paths over flat terrain. Bushes, individual trees and palm trees grow to our right and left. We approach the coast at a gallop. A white dream beach as far as the eye see!

We stop for lunch under palm trees. On the way back we pass a lake and go swimming with the horses. An unforgettable experience! An eventful day comes to an end under a starry southern sky.

Day 12

Rainy weather! But that doesn't stop us from into the saddles. Who wants to a day's riding? We reach a fishing village via forest paths. We take a break there, explore the village and get some fresh coconut to eat. The way back leads directly the beach. The rain stops and back at camp we take off our wet clothes, dry them over the fire and savour the freshly prepared food before off on a one-hour boat trip.

Day 13

The last day of riding brings us more beautiful weather. We ride two hours back to our starting point on the coast and enjoy the last trot and canter sections. We have grown very fond of our horses and guides and it is hard to say goodbye. We get back on the bus that takes us to Antananarivo.

Day 14

We still have the opportunity to buy souvenirs at a craft market in the capital. We see André and his family again for lunch before to the airport and travelling home with a heavy heart. We take our horses, our hosts and the whole country home with us in thanks.

www.equitour.com/madagascar.htm

View of Lily's waterfall



Bubbling hot springs



Sensual delights at the market



The colours of Madagascar



Photos:
private



Magical



Morocco



Fairyland

All the senses are touched when you immerse yourself in the Maghreb country of Morocco. Desert, mountains, beach and palm trees merge into a sea of magic.

Marhaba in MOROCCO

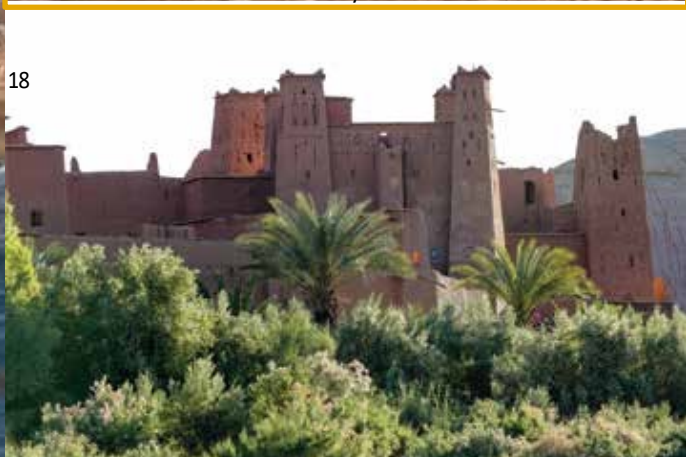
Maghreb means "place where the sun sets", i.e. it stands for west. The Maghreb includes the countries in north-west Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Western Sahara. The Berber and Arab cultures have intermingled here. What they both have in common is the millennia-old equestrian tradition.

The north of Morocco is warm and humid and green, while south of the Atlas Mountains the climate is hot and dry. The Atlantic coast is cooled by a fresh wind. In the different climate zones you will find the perfect place to ride and feel good in all seasons.

There is also an exotic culture that can be seen in the markets, bazaars, mosques and restaurants and keeps the past alive in the form of palaces, mud castles and traditions. Culinary delights, shopping and wellness are combined with natural or luxurious accommodation. The noble, highly prized Arabian and Berber horses are the perfect partners for a Moroccan riding adventure.

The Kasbah - an earth-coloured clay castle

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The wildness of the Atlantic



Market visit - a feast for the senses



Vibrant Marrakech





Berber nomad on the way to market



Oases and snow in the High Atlas



EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

EQUITOUR offers riding holidays for every taste. Riding lessons and rides at the riding centre by the sea as well as trail rides in the Anti Atlas, along the Road of the Kasbahs, through the desert valleys of the Sahara and of course on the beaches of the Atlantic. The Moroccan horse and its noble horses accompany all riders, while the proverbial Muslim hospitality sweetens their time in Morocco.
www.equitour.com/morokko.htm

Country info Morocco



Size 70 273 km²
Population: 37 million Capital: Rabat
Language: Arabic and French Religion:
Predominantly Islam Currency:
Moroccan dirham
Climate: Mediterranean in the north, hot desert
climate in the south
Best time to visit: All year round, depending on the
region

Amour et Passion

Three breeds, three classes: Berber, Arabian and Arabian-Berber. The three horses stand for Morocco and the traditions of a great equestrian nation.

The Berber is one of the oldest horse breeds of all. It has been a companion of nomadic tribes North Africa for more than four thousand years. Its loyalty to humans is legendary, which is why it is also the dog among horses. The Berber is characterised toughness and dexterity, strength, courage and strong nerves. These qualities made him the perfect war horse. The Arabs brought not only oriental culture and Islam to North Africa in the seventh century AD, but also the noble Arabian thoroughbred horse. It was of the highest nobility, of unrivalled beauty, speed and endurance. However, the courageous Berber was better suited to warfare, and so it was the predominant horse that gained a foothold on the Iberian Peninsula under Moorish rule.

Islamic rule lasted for seven hundred years and the Berber had a great influence on the Iberian horses.

The relationship is clearly recognisable in the round, twisted build, the low-set tail, the strong neck and the ram's head. The Berber-influenced Andalusian is in turn the founder of all Baroque horses and almost all American breeds.

Today, the Arabian-Berber breed in Morocco. Although both breeds have been crossbred since the Arab conquest, the systematic breeding of this horse only began towards the end of the 19th century in the course of the French colonisation of the Maghreb. The French appreciated the characteristics of the thoroughbred Arabian and brought large numbers of them to the region. From then on, Berber mares were crossed with Arabian stallions, and the result was a horse that combined the advantages of both breeds: a noble, enduring, fast horse with the courage, movement potential and strength of the Berber. The Berber was dramatically decimated, but the Moroccan royal family campaigned for its preservation and declared horse breeding a top priority. Today, there are five national royal stud farms to breeding the three breeds.



Berber



Purebred



Mares at the Meknés National Stud



Arabian-Berber



Berber saddle: As precious as the horse.

*Happiness is connected to the
horse's mane
(Arabic proverb)*





In the country

Jessica Kiefer wants to escape the German winter in Morocco. In February 2019, she travelled through the south of Morocco and discovered the magic of the Maghreb.



Gallop into eternity



Before we on our riding adventure, my girlfriend and I visit the legendary city of Marrakech. On the main square in the city centre, the famous Djemaa el-Fna, we are warmly welcomed by our host and guided through the winding alleyways to the riad where we will spend the night. Riads are typical guesthouses, usually small guesthouses in old buildings with a romantic courtyard and roof terrace. Ours is located in an alleyway in the old town, the "medina". In a good restaurant, couscous, olives and tea get us the mood for Morocco.

The next morning we visit the "souk", the market in the medina. Narrow alleyways lead through the colourful market stalls like a labyrinth. We buy spices, tea and ceramics, and at some point we have to ask for directions to find our way out again. The traders hassle us with their wares and we practise bargaining and getting rid of them. If you don't want to buy anything and don't want guided tours, henna tattoos or the like, you should Marrakech a

We escape the maze of alleyways and take the bus to Agadir. We are pretty much the only tourists on the well-filled bus. The three-hour journey takes us through the red mountains of the High Atlas, some of whose peaks are covered in snow. Only a few people can be seen - nomads herding their goats and sheep up here.

A completely normal ride

We are picked up in Agadir and, after another two hours' drive south, are greeted warmly by the riding centre manager. The rest of the riding group, three Germans and two Frenchmen, have already arrived and together we are now looking forward to the sun, beach and mountains.

The rooms are furnished in Moroccan style and several terraces offer a view of the courtyard with riding arena and horse boxes or the sea. Guests can book riding lessons, rides, short trails or endurance rides here. Elegant Arabian and Berber horses will be waiting for us over the next few days.



the Berber

What a riding centre!



Our guide Yussef



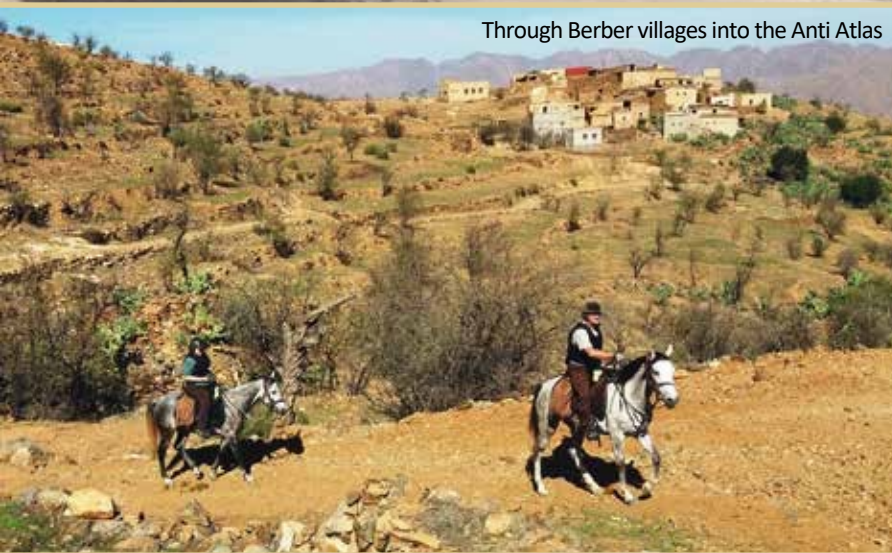
rides and a three-day mini-trail through the magical land. Riding guide Yussef organises the horses and gives us a brief introduction before we set off on our first ride. After a flat area, we trot uphill for 20 minutes and continue through the wide, sandy streets of a mountain village. The inhabitants and the donkeys look us in amazement. After the seemingly endless trotting stretch, I ask Yussef uncertainly whether we ended up on an endurance ride. But no, this is just a normal ride. Well then, this must be quite a sporty affair, at least if youtravelling with Yussef. We ride back downhill along a narrow donkey path past low bushes and cacti. Through picturesque dunes we reach the beach. The horses are immediately lively, because the beach usually means galloping, at least at low tide. In order to keep the four-legged "Ferraris" under control, we gallop at a good distance behind each other. One or other of the Arabians tests us with a jump or a bucking motion.

The rider's saddle strength is already tested at the show jumping centre. There is a beginners' programme with riding lessons for the more timid. Rides and trails require plenty of experience, not only because of the but also because of the high speed and the demanding terrain. My mare Badrel - which means full moon - a few bounces at the beginning, but I still like her and get on well with her. The guides regularly correct the horses, so they are pleasant to handle and responsive to the rider's aids.

Sand, rocks, Atlantic waves

The rides from the farm lead through sandy plains, through small villages, through the mountains and, of course, along the beach again and again. South of the riding stables, the coast is steeper with colourful rocky landscapes. Here you ride above the beach on narrow paths with a view of the roaring Atlantic. To the north, on the other hand, there are plains and huge sand dunes.

Through Berber villages into the Anti Atlas



The beach is deserted because the roaring Atlantic waves are too uncomfortable for bathers. So we can gallop endlessly. In the wet sand, horse and rider are accompanied by their reflection on one side and their shadow on the other - a magical sight!

Three-day trail

After several rides, we set off on the three-day mini-trail, which takes us into the hinterland. We head south along the rocky coast before heading for the mountains of the Anti-Atlas. We ride through a green valley, past gardens and cacti up to some Berber villages. Around the villages we meet donkeys, probably the Berbers' most important work animals. They are much more frugal, hardy and practical than horses. During the day, the women are out in the fields with the donkeys to harvest green fodder and other crops. While the women work, the donkeys are

The animals are pegged out and looking for food in the barren landscape. It's unbelievable how they and the goats and sheep find something to eat here. Cattle in Morocco, on the other hand, live in stables as they cannot feed outside and cannot stand the heat well. As they hardly any horses themselves, the locals are delighted to see our horses. We are always greeted in a friendly manner in French and people wave to us.

Arrival in Anfoud



Meeting the locals



and wishes us a good journey. After a wonderful ride through the red mountains full of cacti, argan trees and low bushes, we reach our camp, which is already fully equipped by our always cheerful cook and driver.

was built. After a delicious dinner, we round off the evening around the campfire under a starry full moon.

A guest with Berbers

The next day, we descend from the mountains into a wide, barren plain. We ride through several villages and idyllic gardens. In the fields we meet herds of goats and sheep and their shepherds. Our destination for the day is Anfoud, a typical Berber village, where we are greeted by excited village children. We are invited to spend the night in the mud house of a Berber family. Grandparents, son with wife and two children greet us with a beaming smile. The guest rooms are large and pleasantly cool, as the small windows only allow a little light and warmth into the rooms. A long corridor leads into a small courtyard. Here, the grandmother bakes flatbread for us in the wood-fired oven. A donkey stands a little to one side, looking happy and well cared for. The sheep and goat shed adjoins the courtyard.

The family serves us a delicious feast of couscous and tajine. The woman of the house must have spent hours cooking. We are touched by the hospitality and the evening with the Berber family, even though we don't speak the same language. Dead tired, full and satisfied, we fall into bed. The call of the muezzin wakes us the next morning. We take our leave and ride quickly towards the sea.

To the horizon

It's low tide and an endless gallop along the beach lies ahead of us. We canter for so long that at some point I cautiously ask at the front whether we would like to ride at a walk again. I get an uncomprehending reaction from my fellow riders!

During the break, the horses take a long sand bath and the men actually plunge into the roaring Atlantic. We women prefer to just let the waves wash over our feet and then take a siesta in the dunes.

We continue to ride along the beach until we reach the farm, but the tide is now high. We have to move inland to the dry sand, which is too deep for galloping. The beach is littered with large, pink-coloured boulders. Seagulls fly up, fishermen search for mussels and squid. A few campers from Europe have also ventured here.

Finally, we cross the narrow ridge of a huge dune. Then our trail and our riding week in Morocco comes to an end and we say goodbye to our beloved horses, hosts and fellow riders. The riding holidays and the

Minitrails whet the appetite for more. There are various distance programmes along the coast for sporty riders, while the red mountains of the Anti-Atlas offer wonderful riding routes for hikers. This was my third visit to Morocco.

Nevertheless, there are still many new things to discover in this enchanting country.

Jessica Kiefer

Link: www.equitour.com/mmesta.htm



On the trail of Yussef

Other countries, other customs

Horses and people all over the world



In this country, we thank our horses with a treat after a good ride. Whether it's an apple, carrot or ready-made treat from the shop - most horses are happy to this thank-you gift. However, if you are travelling to Mongolia, you can leave your treats at home. The Mongolian horse won't eat what it doesn't know! Their diet consists of steppe grass and hay. Treats or even food from humans are alien to it. Not only in Mongolia, but also in many other countries, different rules and customs apply when dealing with horses than here.

Mongolia

In Mongolia, the horse has a completely different status. The Mongolians are strict, but fair and consistent with their animals. The horses are not humanised, they have to work, but they are respected in their natural environment and have unparalleled freedom. There are no fences, the animals graze in the open steppe. In front of the yurts, the tent huts of Mongolian nomads, there are horses that are needed for the day's work, often tethered for hours, sometimes saddled and harnessed to a high line. The small, tough animals stand there devotedly, without fidgeting. They learn patience from an early age, as even the foals are tethered. The mothers move away to graze and only come when their full udders squeeze them. The mare's milk shared between the two and four-legged friends. First the foals are allowed to suckle, then the mares are milked.



Iceland

Icelanders have a similarly free life. They also have to work. Equestrian tourism is already much more widespread here than in Mongolia. Many Icelanders are therefore trail riders that also help the farmers with cattle drives. They also live on large, but fenced-in pastures. Summertime is working time, and when the tourists arrive, several horses are provided for each rider. The riders change horses on the way so that none are overworked. The other horses run free the riding group. Some riders lead the procession and some ride at the rear, making sure that no animal gets lost.



Photos: private, Gabriele Kärcher, Yvonne Koall



Morocco

Desert countries like Morocco cannot offer their horses grazing areas like Iceland or Mongolia. Here it is even more animal-friendly to keep the horses in cooler stables. Nevertheless, horse lovers allow their four-legged friends daily exercise. A special feature of Morocco is that mainly stallions are ridden. Even on the EQUITOUR tours, stallions are often ridden and are surprisingly sociable. Moroccans consider castrating stallions to be cruelty to animals. Different countries, different customs, different thinking! But Moroccan riders prove that stallions are also horses and are suitable for normal everyday work. Even encounters with foreign free-ranging stallions are no problem! Obviously a matter of utilisation and good training.





India

Hinduism that cows are sacred and horses are divine. Everything has a spiritual meaning in India. Even the three mounts: the elephant stands for luck, the camel for love and the horse for victory.

The value of a horse depends very much on its colour. White horses with light-coloured skin are bred for religious ceremonies, especially weddings. Black horses mean disaster, as black symbolises death and darkness. Favoured lucky charms are piebald horses and foxes with markings, preferably with the "five divine signs", i.e. with a broad blaze and four white legs. Indians decorate and paint their animals with devotion.

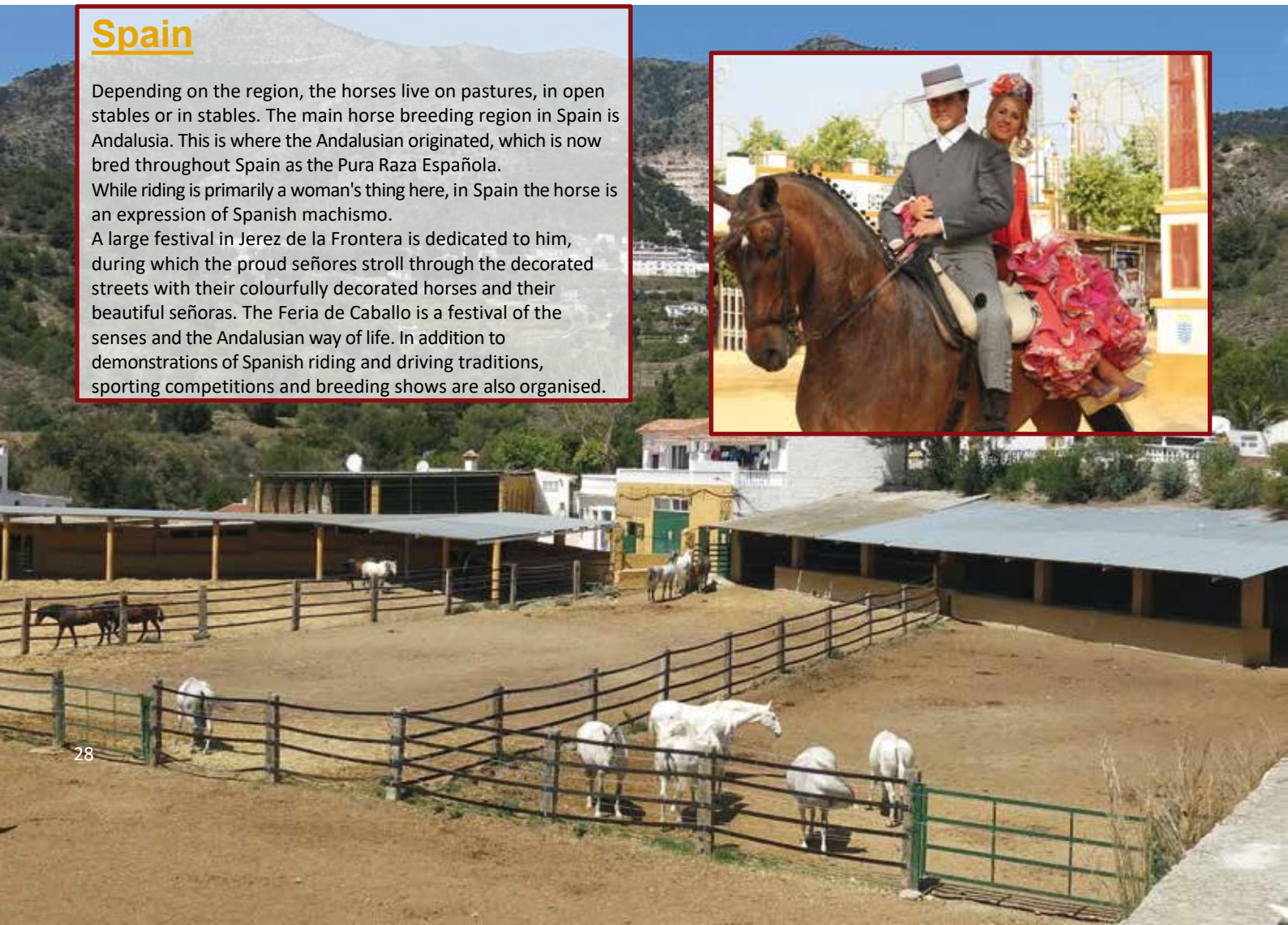
The trademark of Indian Marwari horses are the inwardly curved ear tips, which often even touch each other. They symbolise the animal's special attentiveness.

Spain

Depending on the region, the horses live on pastures, in open stables or in stables. The main horse breeding region in Spain is Andalusia. This is where the Andalusian originated, which is now bred throughout Spain as the Pura Raza Española.

While riding is primarily a woman's thing here, in Spain the horse is an expression of Spanish machismo.

A large festival in Jerez de la Frontera is dedicated to him, during which the proud señores stroll through the decorated streets with their colourfully decorated horses and their beautiful señoras. The Feria de Caballo is a festival of the senses and the Andalusian way of life. In addition to demonstrations of Spanish riding and driving traditions, sporting competitions and breeding shows are also organised.



Canada

Countries with vast steppes and prairies are true horse paradises. These include the endless expanses of Canada, where horses live according to their primal nature. Hundreds, even thousands of hectares of grazing land allow them to live freely in the herd. The ranchers often don't see their horses for days on end and have to go out by quad bike or pick-up truck to track them down. In the pick-up, they bring hay or concentrated feed to the pasture when needed. The noise of the engine therefore the horses, which trot along expectantly.

These semi-wild horses have a natural for humans, which has a positive effect on handling and training.

This type of horse husbandry creates the best conditions for healthy, strong-nerved, sure-footed and enduring riding horses - the ideal partners for the riding tour.



Photos: private, Gabriele Kärcher

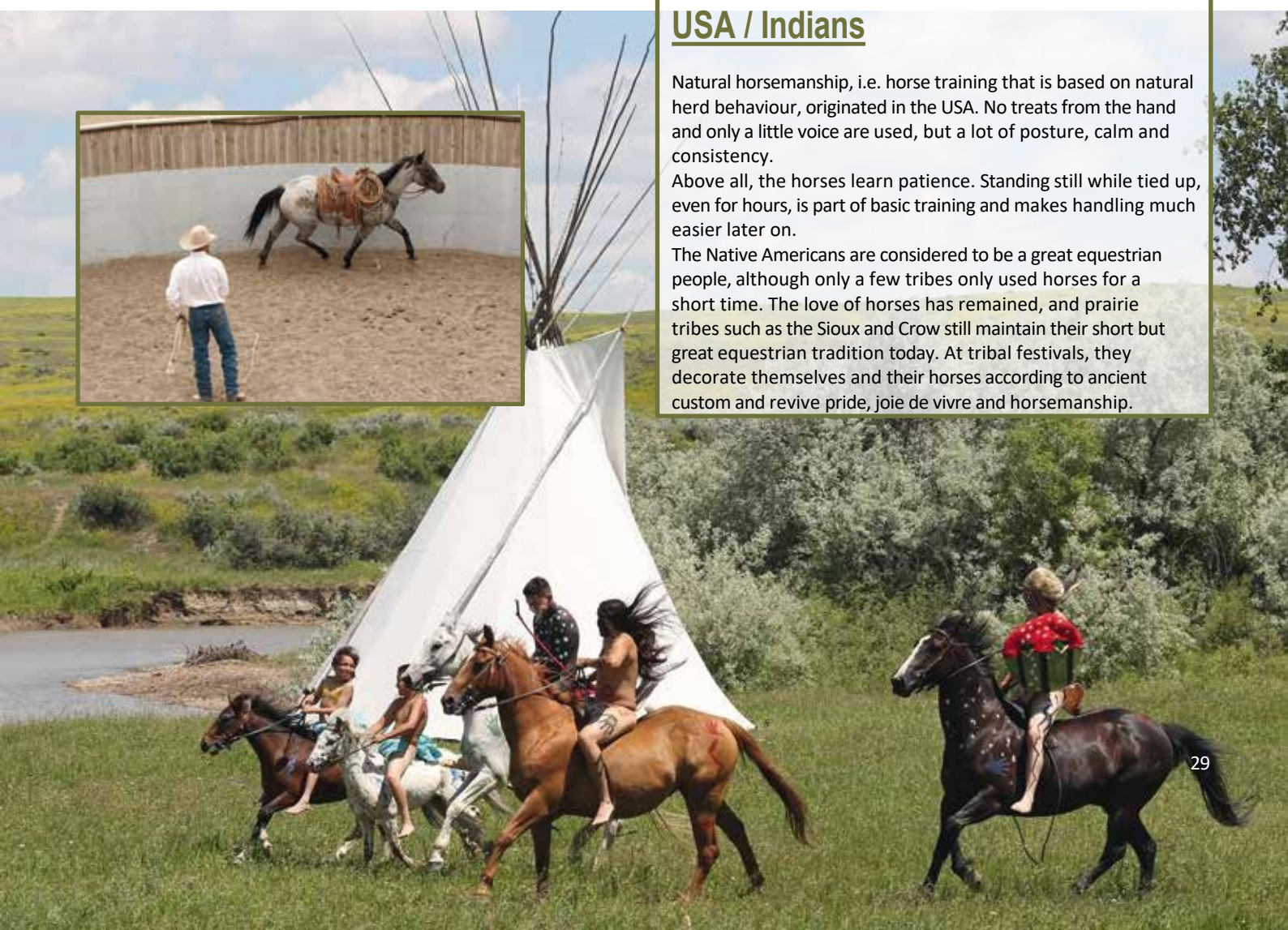


USA / Indians

Natural horsemanship, i.e. horse training that is based on natural herd behaviour, originated in the USA. No treats from the hand and only a little voice are used, but a lot of posture, calm and consistency.

Above all, the horses learn patience. Standing still while tied up, even for hours, is part of basic training and makes handling much easier later on.

The Native Americans are considered to be a great equestrian people, although only a few tribes only used horses for a short time. The love of horses has remained, and prairie tribes such as the Sioux and Crow still maintain their short but great equestrian tradition today. At tribal festivals, they decorate themselves and their horses according to ancient custom and revive pride, joie de vivre and horsemanship.



Bye-bye civilisation!

Canada! The name alone awakens longings!
Wide open spaces, wilderness, adventure! The cowboy state of Alberta lies
between the Rocky Mountains and endless prairie. You can only reach its
most remote paradises on horseback.

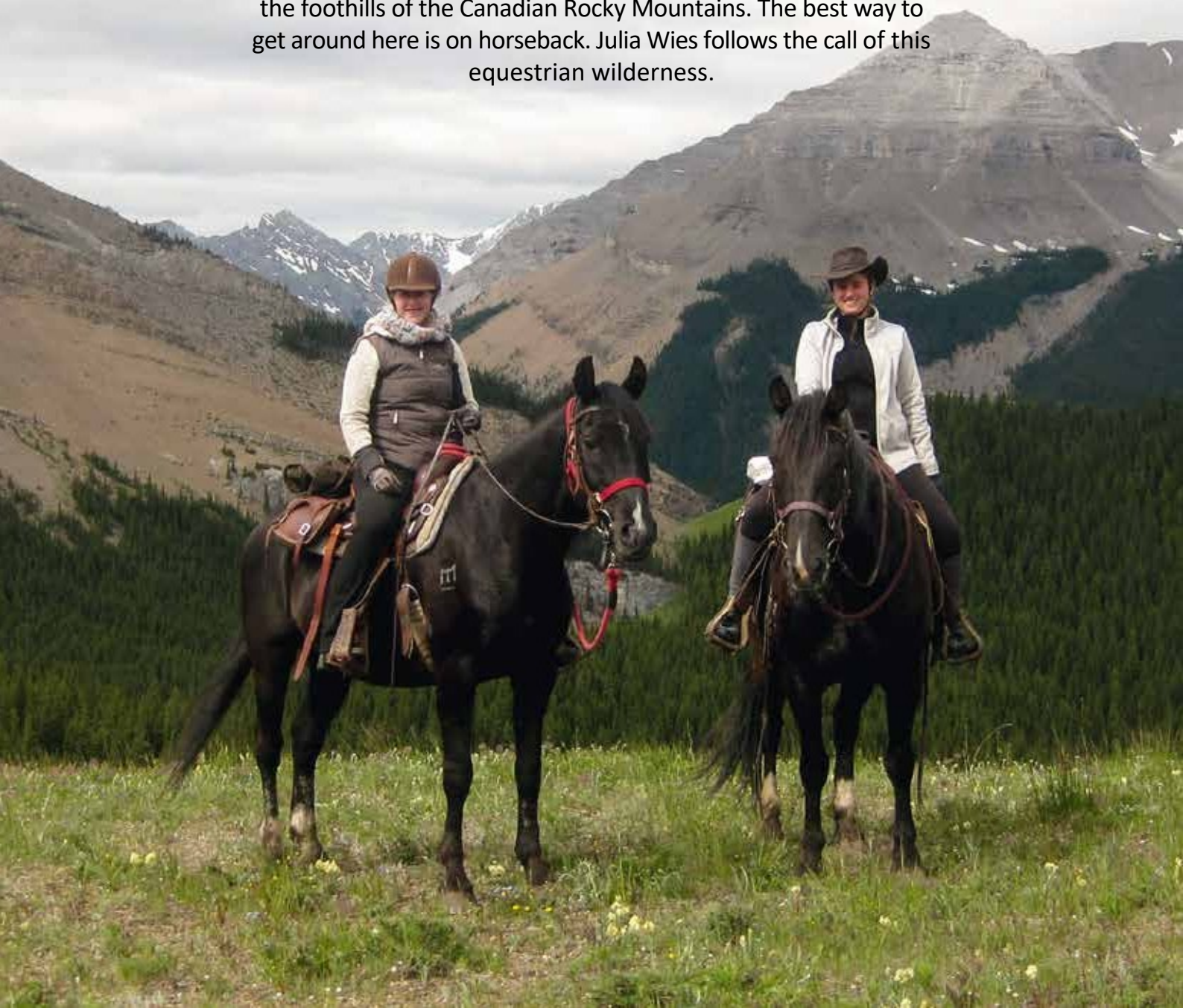
Canada



Travelogue Canada

Through the wilderness of Kananaskis

Inaccessible, wild landscapes characterise Kananaskis Country in the foothills of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. The best way to get around here is on horseback. Julia Wies follows the call of this equestrian wilderness.



Day 1: Howdy, Cowboy Country

After a nine-hour flight, I land in Calgary, the largest city in the Canadian cowboy province of Alberta. Exploring the city, I'm looking forward to the solitude. Nestled in unspoilt nature, our guest ranch is close by Bragg Creek, about an hour and a half's drive from Calgary. We are warmly welcomed as guests. The ranch crew and our group of riders hit it off straight away. Two guides, Neal and Robin, will accompany us, and other helpers will look after the camps, kitchen and packhorses. As is customary here, we will ride on cowboy saddles and receive the necessary instruction in the western riding style. After a tasty burger from the barbecue, it's time to pack. Each rider is given a duffle bag - a large pannier - with an insulating mat and sleeping bag. Only what we absolutely need for our own luggage goes into the bags, everything else stays at the ranch. There are no accompanying vehicles. The duffle bags and all the camp equipment are transported by packhorses, while we riders carry the essentials for the riding day in saddlebags. Full of anticipation, we get to each other better around the evening campfire. The participants come from Washington, Vermont, Nova Scotia and Germany.

Day 2: Bye-bye civilisation!

A delicious breakfast fortifies us before setting off into the evening. Yoghurt, fruit, bread rolls, croissants, jam, honey, Nutella, cheese and sausage, plus orange juice, coffee or tea. Then we finally get our horses, which we will look after ourselves for the whole week. Sosci, a pretty Quarterhorse mare, is assigned to me for the first day. Grooming, saddling, mounting. Each horse is equipped with two saddlebags, one of which is for the lunch picnic. The guides check once again that everything is in order, then we ride off.

The crew walks separately with the pack horses so that we can trot and gallop unhindered.

After a short ride along a dirt road, the terrain becomes more difficult. Although there are always opportunities to trot and canter, the predominant gait is walk. We ride along narrow paths and cross-country through pine forests, through Fisher Creek, then climb uphill to Mesa Butte and a plateau with breathtaking views of the surrounding, partly snow-covered mountain peaks. White-tailed deer and mule deer cross our path and countless birds can be seen and heard. Neal tells us about the flora and fauna during the breaks, while our horses graze contentedly.

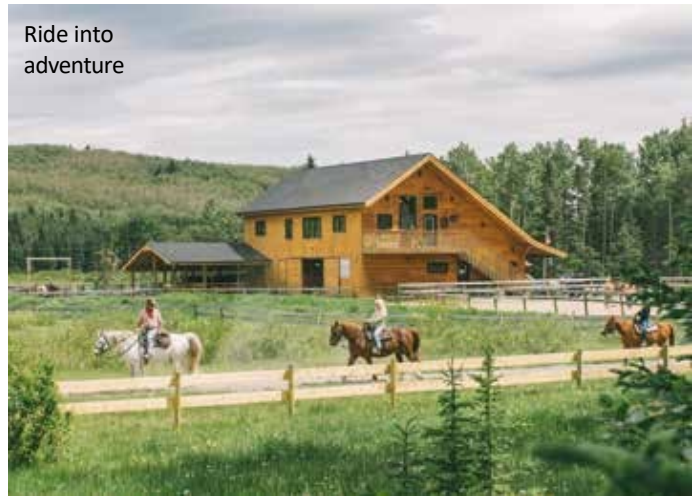
We ride along above a lake until we finally reach the lunch spot. Today we have a saddlebag picnic of tortillas, which everyone can fill to their own taste.

In the afternoon, we ride to the lower Threepoint Creek and reach the first camp after five hours. The tents are already pitched and dinner is sizzling on the fire. Everyone tends to their horses and sets up camp in the tent. Hungry, we tuck into the cowboy supper, but don't forget to take our horses to the river for a drink before going to bed.

Day 3: Forgetmenot

We are woken by the tantalising aroma of blueberry pancakes. It makes you want to get up. After breakfast, we pack up, load the panniers and saddle our horses. As Sosci still needs to build up his fitness, I change and ride Pippin, a former wild horse.

Ride into
adventure



Alberta's magic



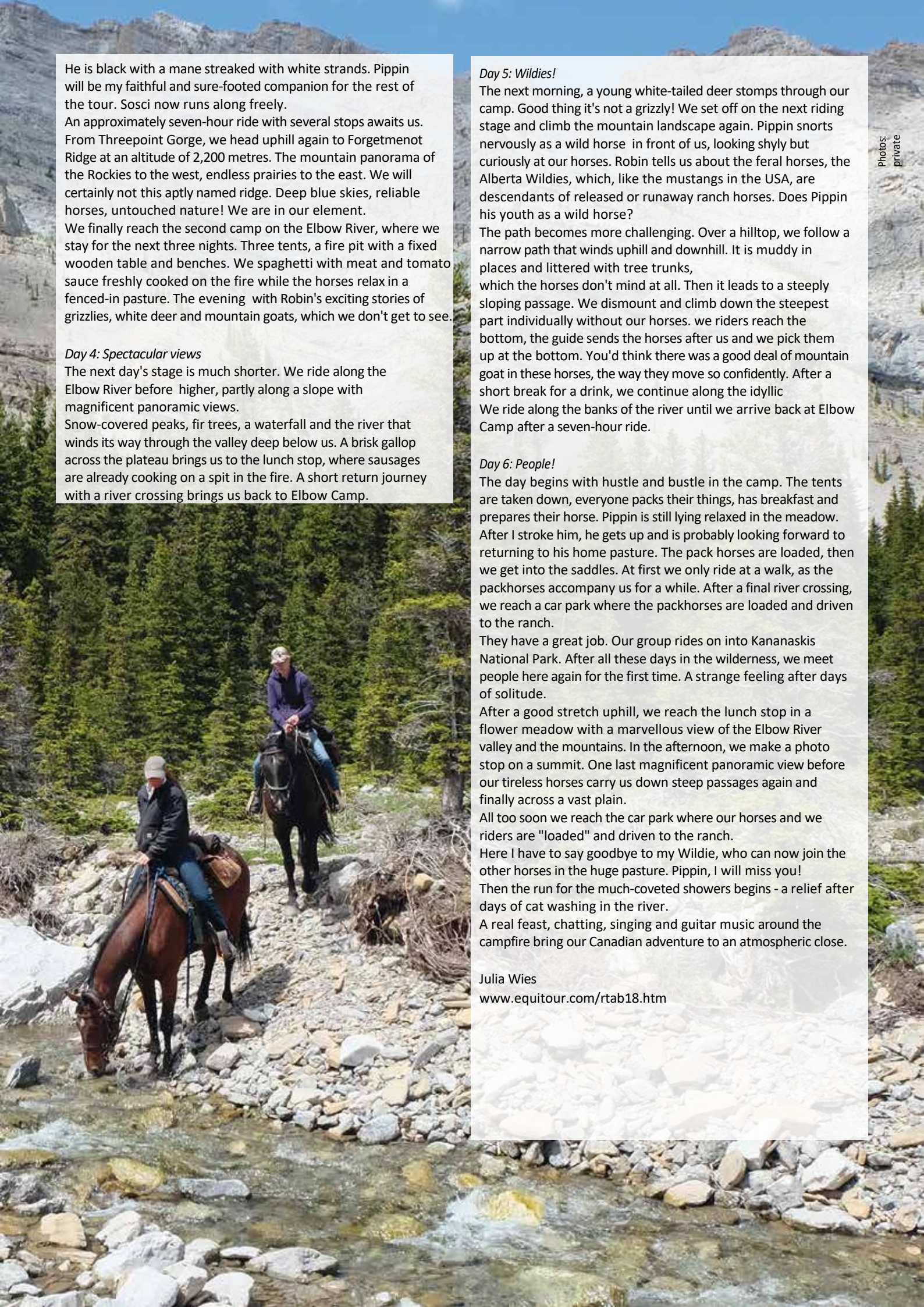
Moments of the
soul



All you need







He is black with a mane streaked with white strands. Pippin will be my faithful and sure-footed companion for the rest of the tour. Sosci now runs along freely. An approximately seven-hour ride with several stops awaits us. From Threepoint Gorge, we head uphill again to Forgetmenot Ridge at an altitude of 2,200 metres. The mountain panorama of the Rockies to the west, endless prairies to the east. We will certainly not this aptly named ridge. Deep blue skies, reliable horses, untouched nature! We are in our element. We finally reach the second camp on the Elbow River, where we stay for the next three nights. Three tents, a fire pit with a fixed wooden table and benches. We spaghetti with meat and tomato sauce freshly cooked on the fire while the horses relax in a fenced-in pasture. The evening with Robin's exciting stories of grizzlies, white deer and mountain goats, which we don't get to see.

Day 4: Spectacular views

The next day's stage is much shorter. We ride along the Elbow River before higher, partly along a slope with magnificent panoramic views. Snow-covered peaks, fir trees, a waterfall and the river that winds its way through the valley deep below us. A brisk gallop across the plateau brings us to the lunch stop, where sausages are already cooking on a spit in the fire. A short return journey with a river crossing brings us back to Elbow Camp.

Day 5: Wildies!

The next morning, a young white-tailed deer stomps through our camp. Good thing it's not a grizzly! We set off on the next riding stage and climb the mountain landscape again. Pippin snorts nervously as a wild horse in front of us, looking shyly but curiously at our horses. Robin tells us about the feral horses, the Alberta Wildies, which, like the mustangs in the USA, are descendants of released or runaway ranch horses. Does Pippin his youth as a wild horse?

The path becomes more challenging. Over a hilltop, we follow a narrow path that winds uphill and downhill. It is muddy in places and littered with tree trunks, which the horses don't mind at all. Then it leads to a steeply sloping passage. We dismount and climb down the steepest part individually without our horses. We riders reach the bottom, the guide sends the horses after us and we pick them up at the bottom. You'd think there was a good deal of mountain goat in these horses, the way they move so confidently. After a short break for a drink, we continue along the idyllic We ride along the banks of the river until we arrive back at Elbow Camp after a seven-hour ride.

Day 6: People!

The day begins with hustle and bustle in the camp. The tents are taken down, everyone packs their things, has breakfast and prepares their horse. Pippin is still lying relaxed in the meadow. After I stroke him, he gets up and is probably looking forward to returning to his home pasture. The pack horses are loaded, then we get into the saddles. At first we only ride at a walk, as the packhorses accompany us for a while. After a final river crossing, we reach a car park where the packhorses are loaded and driven to the ranch.

They have a great job. Our group rides on into Kananaskis National Park. After all these days in the wilderness, we meet people here again for the first time. A strange feeling after days of solitude.

After a good stretch uphill, we reach the lunch stop in a flower meadow with a marvellous view of the Elbow River valley and the mountains. In the afternoon, we make a photo stop on a summit. One last magnificent panoramic view before our tireless horses carry us down steep passages again and finally across a vast plain.

All too soon we reach the car park where our horses and we riders are "loaded" and driven to the ranch.

Here I have to say goodbye to my Wildie, who can now join the other horses in the huge pasture. Pippin, I will miss you!

Then the run for the much-coveted showers begins - a relief after days of cat washing in the river.

A real feast, chatting, singing and guitar music around the campfire bring our Canadian adventure to an atmospheric close.

Julia Wies

www.equitour.com/rtab18.htm

Nature wonderland

CANADA

Car or motorhome, hiking boots or snowshoes, motorised or dog sleds, kayaks or houseboats are all good ways to explore Canada's wilderness. Even better: in the saddle of a reliable trail horse. EQUITOUR riding holidays take you to four attractive provinces.



Mighty wapitis roam the forests of Canada



The unspoilt expanses of Jasper National Park



Trail ride through autumnal splendour of colour



Free Spirits: the Alberta Wildies

EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

Through raging wild rivers and fragrant forests, the dizzying heights of the Rockies and the endless expanses of the prairies. Experience the many faces of Canada on horseback. Multi-day trail rides through the wilderness or a cowboy feeling on a cattle ranch - EQUITOUR offers riding adventures in four provinces.
www.equitour.com/canada.htm

Country info Canada



Size 9 984 670 km²
Population: 37 million Capital: Ottawa
Language: English and French
Religion: Mostly Catholics and Protestants
Currency: Canadian dollar (CAD)
Climate: Polar climate to temperate climate Best time to visit: All year round

British Columbia

British Columbia is Canada's westernmost province and offers the greatest variety of landscapes and climates. Sun and sandy beaches on the Pacific coast, ice and glaciers in the Rocky Mountains, desert climate in the south. BC travellers will find wilderness and solitude but also vibrant cosmopolitan cities such as Vancouver and Victoria. It is a perfect place for horseback riding and wildlife watching.



Alberta

Alberta, the cowboy state of Canada. Alberta comprises the eastern part of the Rocky Mountains with its Banff and Jasper national parks. The turquoise-coloured lakes and rugged mountains are spectacular. The eastern part of Alberta is prairie country. Herds of cattle and buffalo and even wild horses roam its vast expanses. Between mountains and prairie lies the picture-book region of Kananaskis.



Saskatchewan

In the language of the Cree Indians, Saskatchewan means "fast-flowing stream" (Kisis-katchewanani Sipi). The Saskatchewan River meanders through the vast grasslands. The province is sparsely populated and is considered an insider tip for visitors to Canada. Saskatchewan offers the most hours of sunshine of all Canadian provinces and attracts ambitious hobby cowboys to real working cattle ranches.




Yukon is the magic word for real adventurers. The province, whose history is characterised by gold rushes and adventurers, lies between BC and Alaska. Today, the unspoilt nature, characterised by tundra, mountains and glaciers, attracts visitors. Wildlife, the Northern Lights, the midnight sun, caribou hikes and dog sledding are just some of Yukon's attractions.



The ADVENTURE RIDERS

Wilderness up close



On horseback from Tierra del Fuego to Alaska. With this idea in mind, Günter Wamser jumped into the saddle in Argentina in January 1994 and headed north. He has been accompanied by his partner Sonja Endlweber since 2007. She talks about the Canadian wilderness.

We - four mustangs, dog Leni, Günter and I - have already over 6000 kilometres, from the Mexican border through the Rocky Mountains to Canada. But compared to what we experience in the wilderness of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area in northern British Columbia, our ride so far has been a walk in the park.

The fascination of the far north

Here, the West is still a landscape without roads and towns and without signs of civilisation. This is exactly what makes this wilderness so special for us. We can roam through valleys and over mountain ranges for weeks without encountering a single person.

One morning, Günter wakes me up and gives me a sign to be quiet. He points outside. There, less than three metres from the tent, stands a huge buffalo. It seems to be asleep, its mighty skull swaying gently up and down. We sneak silently out of the tent and wait at a safe distance for several hours until the bison leisurely moves away.

Even if they sometimes quite adventurous, the encounters with wild animals are among the highlights of our trip. Over the past few weeks, we have wolves, moose and grizzly bears.

Flying provisions

We had been preparing our ride through the Muskwa-Kechika wilderness for months. There is no opportunity to buy food on the way. Our journey becomes more and more

to the expedition. Former lumberjack Wayne Sawchuk knows the region like no other. He helped us with the preparations and a route through the wilderness on our map. He had food parcels flown into the wilderness for us and deposited them there, safe from bears. We spend about four weeks travelling from one food depot to the next. In between, we transport food for a month on the packhorses.

Test of courage river crossing

How carefree our journey would be if it weren't for the big rivers. They flow from west to east, which means we have to cross them on our route northwards. There are no bridges in the wilderness. One of these rivers, the

Halfway River, now lies ahead of us. It has risen sharply after the recent rainfall. The grasses and bushes on the banks are under water that is so murky that I 't recognise the stones at the bottom. Do we really have to through there? The very thought gives me goose bumps.

I take off my shoes, trousers and jacket. I sit in the saddle in my pants and T-shirt. I hold on to the saddle horn with one hand and clutch Leni with the other. Without hesitation, Günter leads our little caravan into the river. The tips of my toes dip into the water, it's freezing cold. We ride deeper and deeper into the river, the water rises further and further, reaching up to my thighs. The horses wade powerfully ahead. The pain in my feet becomes unbearable. When I can't it any longer, my riding horse finally jumps out of the water and onto the bank.



Way of Life

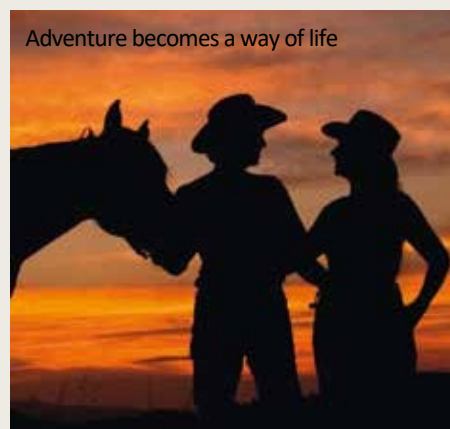
Günter and his Mustangs



A Canadian summer day



Adventure becomes a way of life



The Halfway is just one of many rivers that we are this summer. On our ride through the Yukon, we want to avoid the big rivers and opt for a route along the Mackenzie Mountains.

The wilderness of the Yukon

"As far as I know, no one has ever ridden horses through this area. If you make it, you'll be the first!" With these words and a big grin on his face, Terry sends us on our way. He runs a small hunting company in the Yukon. Actually, it never our intention to play pioneer. Nevertheless, we are now entering a vast, unknown land full of unanswered questions, but also full of secrets that we want to discover. Following in the footsteps of the moose and caribou, we spend four months travelling through the Yukon wilderness to the gold mining village of Dawson City.

Battle against the elements

The journey is anything but easy. We fight our way through dense bush and swamps, it storms and every now and then it even snows in the middle of summer. "Why are we doing this to ourselves?" we ask ourselves at times. But in the evening, with a cup of tea and our cold feet stretched towards the campfire, the world looks different again. We proud to have overcome all the obstacles. Proud of the horses in particular, who accompany us through all the ups and downs, proud also of Leni, who keeps up so bravely. We are happy and content and sometimes can't quite understand why ourselves.

The magic of the path

The book about the adventure

Sonja Endlweber
& Günter Wamser

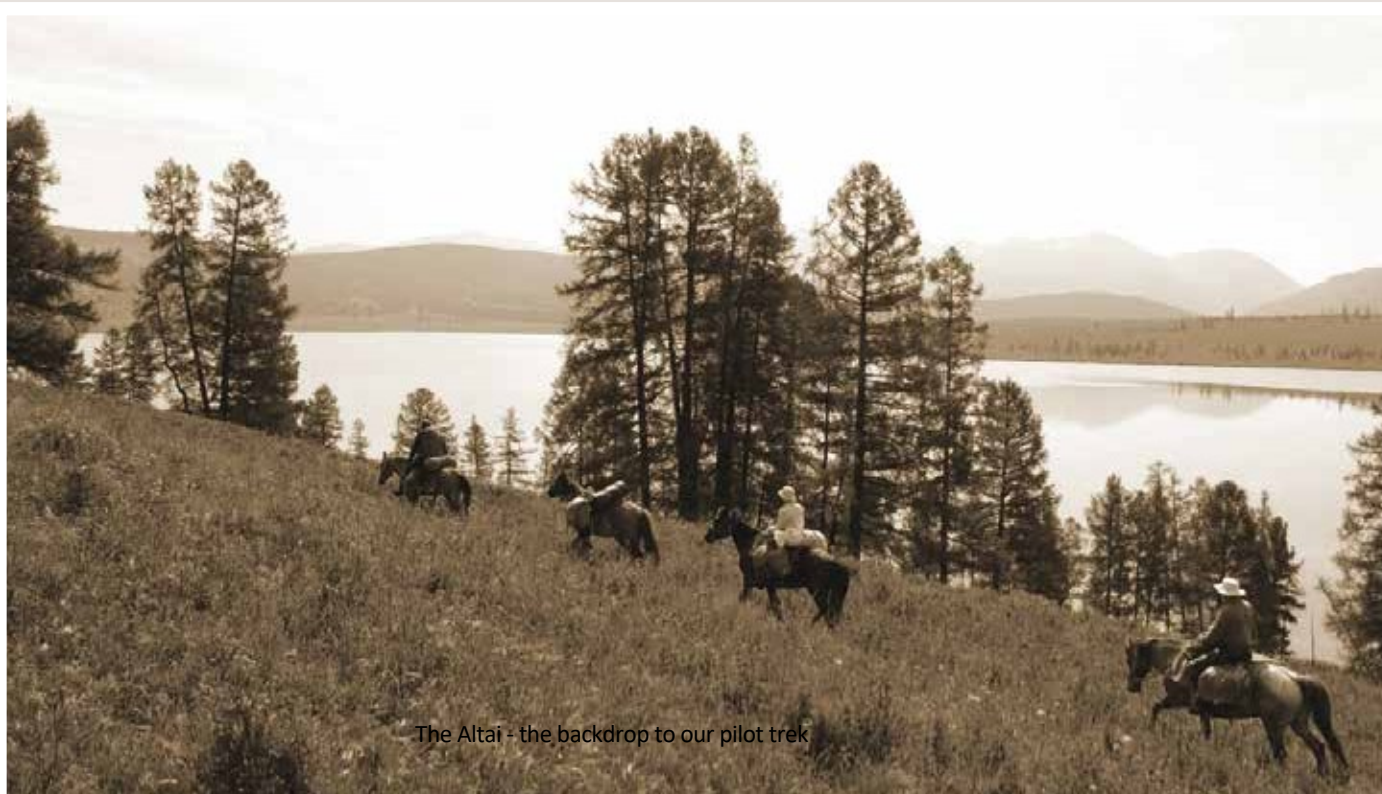
432 pages
plus 32 pages of colour
photos Hardcover
ISBN 978-3-00-046361-7

EUR 19,90
Available via
www.abenteuerreiter.de



20 years ago, Günter Wamser decided to break out of a safe life and his own way: with horses from Tierra del Fuego to Alaska. In autumn 2013, he reached his destination together with his partner Sonja Endlweber. The Magic of the Road tells the story of the last stage of this long journey. journey: From Waterton National Park in the far south of Canada to Denali National Park in the centre of Alaska. Günter Wamser and Sonja Endlweber travelled four years and 5,000 kilometres with their four horses and dog Leni. It is the story of two people who dare to live their dream together.

Who is afraid



The Altai - the backdrop to our pilot trek

A good thirty years ago, EQUITOUR owner Diethard Franz undertook a daring pilot trip in the Russian Altai.

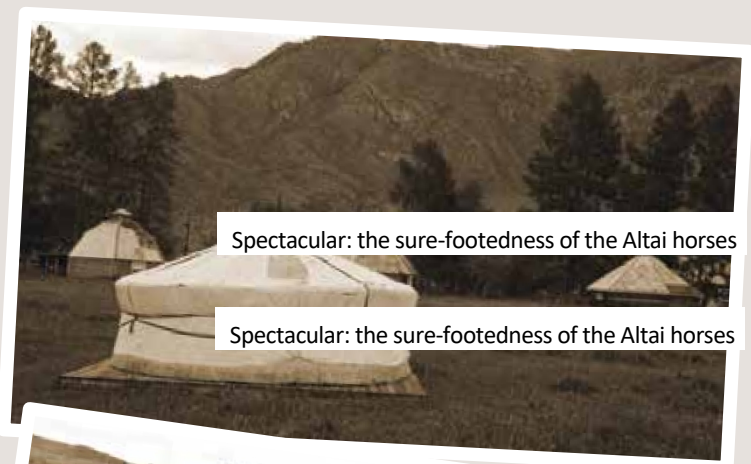
To Siberia for horse riding? Where it cold, swampy and full of tigers (mosquitoes)? Who would think of such an idea - apart from Franz? That was a good thirty years ago. 3500 kilometres - that's the distance between Spain and the North Cape. That's how far Siberia stretches from the Arctic Ocean to the borders of Kazakhstan, Mongolia and the People's Republic of China. In this quadrangle, the peaks of the Altai rise up to four and a half thousand metres into the sky. The different altitudes and amounts of precipitation result in varied vegetation. Just the thing for nature-loving riders!

Sergei and Vera, a teacher couple from Barnaul, who earned a few roubles on top of their meagre teaching salary during the summer holidays with hiking and riding tours, welcomed us

After a long journey via Barnaul, we arrived at the Mancherok holiday camp. After a six-hour bumpy journey, the only vehicle suitable for the mountains, a military lorry, brought us to the starting point of our riding tour, a shaman camp consisting of yurts for accommodation and the shaman's hut. Shamanism is still among the indigenous peoples of Siberia. In case of illness and for predictions about the future, the rural population the shaman. Myths and fairy tales are an integral part of folklore.

A fun-loving man showed us the horses, which always saddled and ready to ride in front of the tent. If you wanted to get your camera from the accommodation yurt 200 metres away, you took one of the horses, which accelerated from zero to top speed in an instant. After two minutes, you were back and put the racer back in the "horse car park". Everyone was assigned their horse for the next few days, and instead of a leisurely introductory round, they immediately off on a race to the edge of the forest 500 metres away and back. Nobody thought for long about how to get along with an

of the Tiger?



Spectacular: the sure-footedness of the Altai horses

Spectacular: the sure-footedness of the Altai horses



Altai horse. As soon as we set off, we had already mastered the route and we were surprised ourselves at how quickly we had adjusted to the completely unfamiliar horses. Nevertheless, we were aware that there were only a few opportunities to gallop along the way.

The Altai horses were not only fast, they also carried a lot of weight. They could carry up to 150kg, even over difficult terrain. So we packed our equipment in huge bags to the left and right of the saddle of our riding horses. Carrying packhorses would have been extremely inconvenient.

We were immediately surrounded by a wild, unspoiled natural landscape. If a tree falls here, it stays down. Steppe grass grew metres high in the valleys. There are no bridges over streams and rivers.

So feet up and off through the floods. For the next ten days there were no visible paths anyway, the only encounter was a group of Mongolian horsemen on the hunt.

probably not. Engrossed in conversation with a lovely fellow rider, we strolled along. And immediately the rider in front of us disappeared. And when I say "disappeared", we really didn't see or hear anyone. We did exactly what you shouldn't do in this situation: move a few metres forwards, sideways, backwards, then the tour guide will never find you again, because the two-metre-high grass immediately swallows up all traces. So hang in there, at some point they will realise that two riders are missing... Not at all! Because the guide can only see the two

At times, horse and rider sank into the metre-high grass. So it was good to stay close to the tail of the rider in front. And that's what I



horses behind him and has to rely on all the riders following close behind.

Towards sunset - we were still sitting in the grass trap - the "Siberian plague" arrived. There were so many mosquitoes that we could hardly protect ourselves from them. But immediately after sunset half an hour later, the plague was again. As darkness fell, we began to feel queasy, 150 kilometres as the crow flies and seven days' ride from the nearest settlement. Pictures of the Siberian tiger



Riding adventurers in luck



Overwhelming nature



Crossing the river - no problem for the Altai horses



Our last stop: the wild and romantic Telezker Lake

seem to appear in the mind's eye, unaware that a single tiger needs a territory of 200 to 400 square kilometres and has no appetite for a horse with a human on top of it anyway. Our companions went hunting almost every night, often without catching a single lean hare. Only a few local hunters had ever tigers. But the fantasy, the films fuelled the mental cinema.

Nevertheless, my fellow rider and I remained steadfast, rooted to the spot where we had lost the group of riders.

The group had already arrived at the next camp when two horses went missing. The tour guide was also worried and went looking for us. We were not "rescued" until around 9 p.m., about five hours after we had gone missing.

There was great rejoicing and joy in the camp - and cook Vera conjured up a real cake to celebrate the day, baked on the campfire.

It has to be said that this was the partners' first tour with "western" tourists. Earlier participants, mostly from the Soviet Union and Mongolia, but also from the former GDR, probably had more wilderness experience. In any case, they were probably not as stupid as we were. Incidentally, according to Wikipedia, there have been no tigers in the Barnaul area for a century, which is why our tours have so far completely loss-free. We fortified ourselves with Vera's campfire cake and were amazed at the excellent cuisine: from breakfast to dinner, we had perfect food thanks to the food we had brought with us.

Food. You can even transport eggs and flour on a horse and else a rider's heart desires, including alcohol.

The next few days rewarded us with spectacular landscapes and panoramas. The last riding stage took us to Lake Telezker, a blue pearl in the wilderness at an altitude of 500 metres. Now it was time to say goodbye to Sergei and the horses. He had to bring the animals back to the starting point. How did he that? Well, all it takes here is one rider to move a herd of twelve horses. Unfortunately, I couldn't ask him how many days it took him. No doubt Sergei knew shortcuts, and the horses are used to running free. They were let out to graze every night and most of them spend the winter in the wilderness anyway.

Meanwhile, we took a ferry to the last camp site, where the military helicopter was supposed to pick us up the next day. At least that was the plan. But it never came!

Waiting. It wasn't until the next day that he approached with a roar. The pilot barely noticed my questioning face. No explanation for the delay... Well, we are in Siberia. The helicopter was there, but it still wasn't going back. The weather made the take-off was impossible. The three co-pilots unloaded their only piece of luggage - a crate of vodka. This was not unwelcome, because even summer nights are cold in Siberia. After days full of challenges, we felt as desolate as the military pilots.



Altai horse

The Altai horse is a breed from the Altai that is over 2000 years old. Small, strong, calm and tough, it is used by mountain farmers as a work and transport horse. It can carry up to 150 kilograms and is a perfect and indestructible trail horse. Altai spend the Siberian winter on their own in the mountains and are nevertheless willing and trusting riding horses.



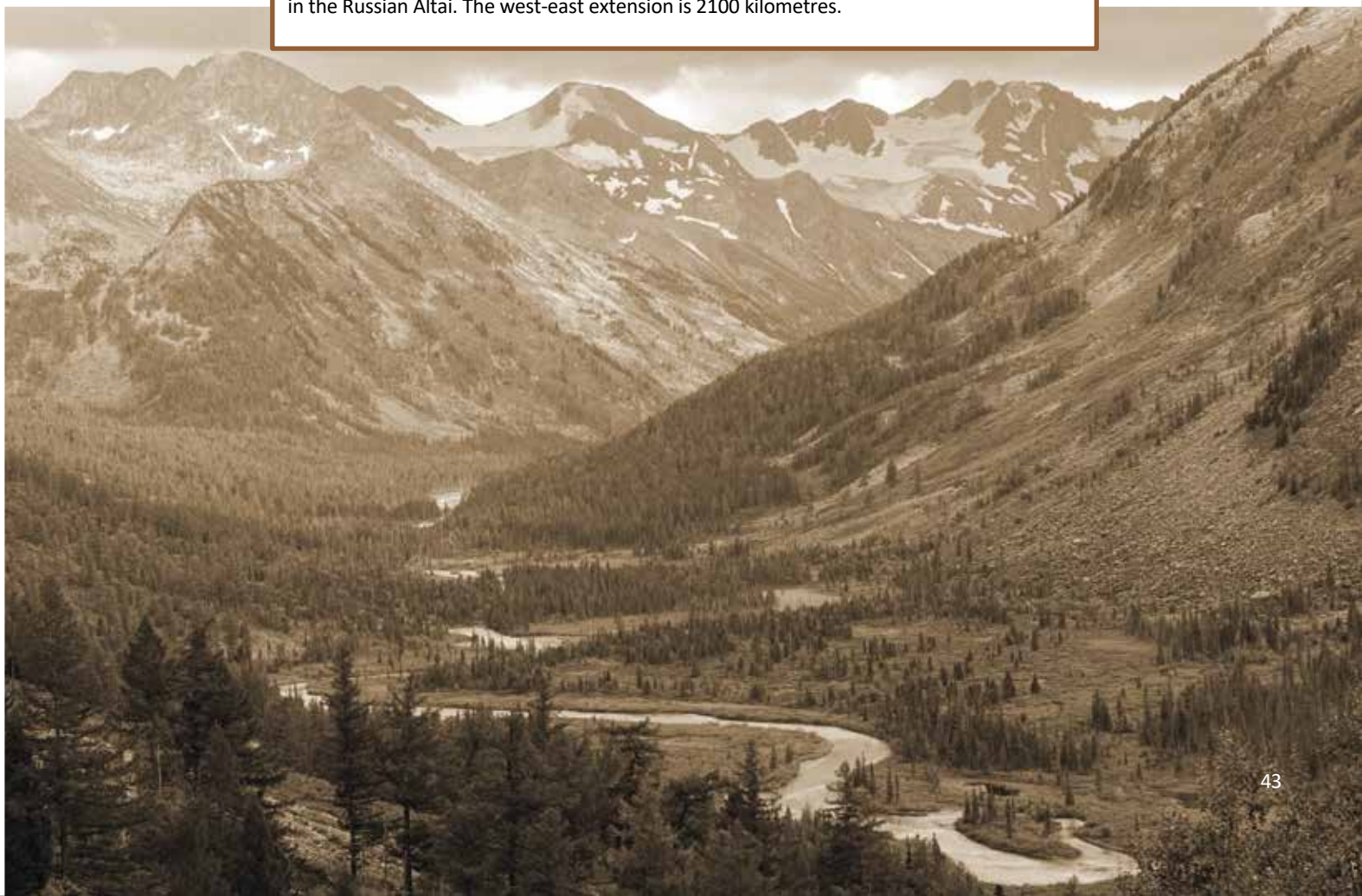
Population

More than half of the inhabitants of the Russian Altai are Russian. The indigenous population, the Altai people, belong to the Turkic peoples. Their language is Altaic.




Altai

The Altai is a high mountain range in Central Asia that across Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and the People's Republic of China. The highest mountain is the 4506 metre high Belucha in the Russian Altai. The west-east extension is 2100 kilometres.





Wild forests &



Away from its islands and Mediterranean beaches, Croatia's hinterland offers true treasures. Crystal-clear lakes, roaring waterfalls, karstic mountains and unspoilt primeval forests are places of strength for the soul.

Croatia



Falling water



Riding in the land of falling lakes



Glistening lakes, rushing waterfalls, wild nature, new friends and swift horses are Angelika Kaiser's memories of a unique riding adventure.

The journey begins with culture in Split, a city steeped in history. This is where my friend and I meet up with our riding group. Together we visit the ancient Diocletian's Palace, the Cathedral of St Domnius and browse the small market stalls, which offer everything from fruit and vegetables to art and clothes. We wait in a cosy street café for the transfer to the riding stables and use the time to get to know each other.

Lisa, our riding guide, picks us up and introduces us to the friendly farm owner Ivo. We move into simple but clean rooms and then have a look at the horses. They graze on huge areas and are allowed to be real horses here. We immediately feel at home with our fellow riders, the hosts, the horses and the farm. After a cosy get-together, we go to bed full of anticipation.

Strengthened by a hearty breakfast, we help with the preparations and let Lisa show us the right horses. There are mainly bay and chestnut horses in the paddock, but Lisa knows them inside out and tells us a story about each one. So we're with real horse personalities right away.

My trail horse is a former racehorse, small and full of speed. It fidgets around impatiently when being groomed and saddled. Obviously it can't wait to get going any more than I can.

First we to familiarise ourselves with our horses on a day ride. Soon we are surrounded by unspoilt nature. We ride through green scrubland, over stony terrain and a mountain. Wherever, we test our horses

at the trot. They go forwards diligently and are still easy to handle.

A delicious lunch awaits us on the hill:

"Peka", a Croatian speciality with chicken, potatoes and vegetables. Our vegetarian is also catered for according to her wishes. We in the natural surroundings, give the horses a break and finally ride back to the farm. A brisk gallop strengthens the reliability of our

horses have our complete trust. All the riders are happy with their four-legged partners and are looking forward to the next day and setting off on their big riding adventure.

Rocky plateau



Endless meadows and scrubland



The adventure begins

Gračac is the starting point of the riding tour. Our horses have already travelled ahead in the van when we set off on the three-hour journey. This gives them time to graze before we mount up and ride off. We ride across flower meadows with a marvellous mountain panorama towards Udbina. Now there is nothing but us, the horses and nature.

From time to time we come across herds of cows and are forced by the odd fence to look for new paths. What the heck - after all, we've booked an adventure! Again and again, we enjoy beautiful trotting routes and gallops until we finally reach our accommodation for the night. Here, a huge paddock awaits the horses and an idyllic place for us to relax. The rooms are simple but functional and everyone is looking forward to a hot shower. As adventures go, there are surprises. The shower is not hot, but it is refreshing! Nicky, the owner of the house, has created a true paradise in the middle of nowhere.

We make ourselves comfortable in the gazebo, watch cute puppies playing, enjoy a meal together and try Nicky's homemade schnapps. We have to take a few bottles home with us. After a good night's sleep, it takes us some effort the next day to the horses out of their lush and spacious pasture. A nasty one awaits me

Encounter with happy cows



Croatian delicacy: Peka

Surprise: my little racer is lame that I can't ride him. I look wistfully after the group. But Ivo is there with a horse trailer, he invites me along and we set off to get a replacement horse.

A horse called "Donkey"

Friendship and good relationships are essential in Croatia. Ivo quickly finds an acquaintance who puts his best horse at my disposal for our tour. I like the pretty animal, despite its characteristic drooping ears. We lead him into the trailer as the sky closes in and it starts to rain heavily. Lucky for me: my fellow riders get soaking wet and I sit in the dry carriage and enjoy the countryside while Ivo heads for my group's rest area. Once there, the rain stops and my new horse is allowed to join the others in the pasture. Everyone stands at the fence and appraises the new arrival. He doesn't let himself be put off, starts to graze a little away from the herd and, thanks to his ears, is now affectionately known as "Donkey".

After lunch, we saddle the horses and ride off.

"Eselchen" is the opposite of his predecessor: calm, composed and absolutely relaxed. He lets nothing and never

manden - an absolutely reliable horse. We ride across meadows and fields and through a small wood again. Finally we reach a village and our accommodation for the night. A small hotel with nice rooms and good food. Once again, we let ourselves be pampered and round off the evening in good company.

The falling lakes

After a ride in the morning, the highlight of our tour awaits us: the Plitvice Lakes. A bus takes us to the starting point of a several-hour hike along the spectacular lake landscape. The small river Plitvica connects sixteen lakes that one another in terraces. Their turquoise-coloured water is so clear that you see right to the bottom. The picturesque waterfalls between the lakes are spectacular. They give this region the nickname "Land of the Falling Lakes".

Rugged rocks, dense vegetation and ancient moss-covered tree trunks, which sometimes protrude into the water, emphasise the wildness of this landscape. We would have loved to dive into the crystal-clear water, but swimming is forbidden to protect nature. The lake landscape is part of the Plitvica National Park, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and under special protection.

Refreshing: swimming with the horses



Bears, wolves and lynx roam through the dense forests, but are nowhere to be seen. So we quietly watch the glistening water, forget about time and let our minds and souls wander. The most famous of the lakes is the "Silver Lake" from the old Winnetou films. Impressed by the energising nature, we drive back to our accommodation, where a crispy suckling pig brings the day to a pleasurable close.

Splashing and climbing

The next day, we ride through idyllic villages, across meadows and through pine forests to a small lake, which now us the opportunity to swim with horses. We unsaddle, put on our bikinis and ride into the refreshing water. The horses' hooves start to beat wildly in the water, so we are all soaking wet before we the deeper water, where the horses lose their footing and start to swim. A wonderful feeling!

After a refreshing dip, we dry off in the sun before getting dressed again, saddling our horses and galloping across the vast meadows. We climb the Licka Pljesivica mountain at a much slower pace. At times we dismount and lead the horses to take it easy on them. In over

1600 metres above sea level, we reach the lunch rest area.

We continue across a plateau in the afternoon until we reach the next village at a thunderous gallop. We are greeted warmly by the village community, we are well fed and then settle down more or less comfortably in the hay camp. The last stages also lead us through varied nature with breathtaking panoramas. Slowly begin to feel melancholy as we say goodbye to our beloved horses. While the horses are loaded for the return journey, we sit together and review the past few days. That same evening, we head back to Ivo's farm, where we fall tired into our beds.

Cool, rainy weather reflects our mood on the day of departure.

Together with our group of riders, we walk through Split one last time before boarding our flight home one by one.

The magical Croatia, our hosts and the horses will remain in our memories - until our next visit.

Angelika Kaiser

www.reiterreisen.com/pli008.htm

Photos:
private



Rushing: the Plitvica waterfalls

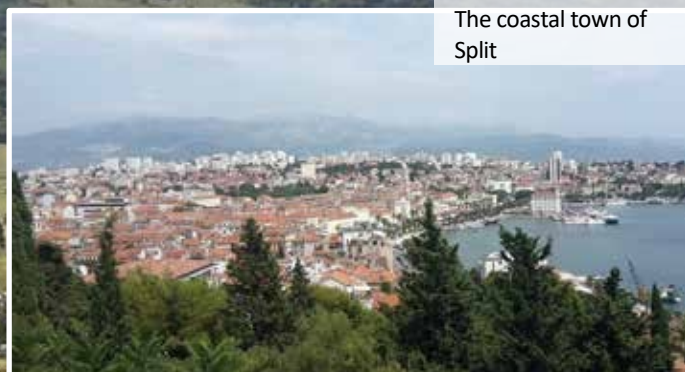
Land of treasures

CROATIA

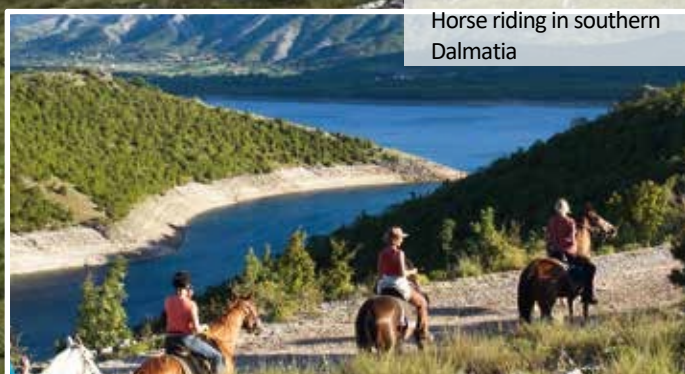
Not in America - in Croatia, hobby cowboys searching for the treasure in the Silver Lake in the footsteps of Winnetou will find it.



Crystal clear lakes



The coastal town of Split



Horse riding in southern Dalmatia



Wooden walkways lead through the lake landscape

6176 kilometres of coastline - more than Spain - offers Croatia its 1244 islands. Each of the millions of beach holidaymakers a sunny spot. Those who love solitude and looking for adventure, travel to the hinterland. Contrasting natural landscapes, charming villages, karstic mountains and jungle-like forests characterise the country.

Wild West fans know that the rocky gorges in South Dalmatia were the location for the old Karl May films. Travelling through the "Land of the Apaches" in the saddle transports many a rider to the dream world of Winnetou and Old Shatterhand.

Participants of the EQUITOUR Plitvice Trail will not only find the legendary treasure in the Silver Lake, but also a whole series of mighty waterfalls and turquoise lakes. The Plitvice Lakes National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Endless gallops across vast prairie landscapes are just as much a part of a riding holiday in Croatia as warm hospitality, well-trained horses and responsible tour guides

and local specialities. Croatian warmblood horses, thanks to Anglo-Arabs and thoroughbreds bring you sure-footed and reliable from stage to stage.

Croatia also has a lot to offer outside of the riding programme: Historical towns and cultural monuments, boat tours with dolphin watching and island visits, underwater worlds for divers, harbour towns with moorings for sailors, adventure tours for cyclists and, of course, beaches, beaches, beaches. Sometimes kilometres of coastline, sometimes idyllic bays.

In addition to the natural and cultural attractions, the Croatians themselves to relaxation. Stress is alien to them; relaxation, tranquillity and humour are their most important characteristics. Time for a chat over coffee, slivovic or one of the excellent Croatian wines takes precedence over business appointments. It can't hurt to a little Croatian mentality home with you.

EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

Three of the most beautiful Croatian holiday regions are the destinations of the EQUITOUR riding holidays. The Plitvice Lakes with their spectacular waterfalls, the karstic backdrop of the Winnetou films in Dalmatia and the Adriatic peninsula of Istria. All three programmes offer scenic, culinary and equestrian highlights with Croatian hospitality.

www.equitour.com/croatia.htm

Country info Croatia



Size 56 594 km²

Population: 4 million

Capital: Zagreb Language: Croatian

Religion: Predominantly Roman Catholic

Currency: Croatian kuna

Climate: Mediterranean, continental inland Best time to visit: May to October

Spectacular waterfalls



From *Bavaria* to *Ireland*



Interview with Tour guide Ursula



Ursula "Uschi" O'Connor comes from Bavaria, but has lived in the north-west of Ireland for almost 30 years. With the right mix of nonchalance and responsibility, she guides EQUITOUR guests around the island. She tells Jessica Kiefer about her life as a tour guide.

Ursula, how did you end up in Ireland? In 1994, the O'Connor family switched from cattle breeding to a horse farm and riding business. I was one of the first holiday guests, so I was from the very first summer. At first I only came for the school holidays, then I fell in love with Raymond, the boss's son. When I became pregnant with our daughter, it was an easy decision to move to Ireland.



I had completed my last teaching test as a secondary school teacher in Bavaria a week before maternity leave. With my second state examination in my pocket, my child in my belly and my belongings in the Kadett, I set off on a long journey to a new life in Ireland at the beginning of 1999. And as they say here: "I haven't looked back since"!

What do you particularly like about your new home?

Nature, the sea, life "in sync" - i.e. in harmony with the tides, the weather and the animals. The Irish are very hospitable, so it not difficult to feel at home here. The lack of public money, organisation and efficiency is made up for by the Irish with their helpful nature and their "sense of community", their sense of community.

Do the Irish really spend so much time drinking Guinness in the pub? And does it really rain that much?

The pub used to be something like the living room of the Irish, where people met to chat, have fun, sing, laugh and drink. Unfortunately, many small pubs have closed in the last five years, especially in the countryside. The reason for this is the introduction of a drink-drive limit, corona and the new trend of people partying at home. Guinness is a fine thing, but not every pub is equally good. It's worth asking the locals where the best Guinness is on tap. For us, it's Lang's Bar in Grange. About the rain: there is a saying "In Ireland the sun shines ten times a day", i.e. rain and sun alternate constantly. You get wet and immediately wind-dried again. The good thing is that it never gets too hot to ride and there are very few flies and horseflies, especially by the sea.

What is so special about Ireland as a riding country?

The Irish are daredevils. Jumping, hunting and pony games are much more popular with the local population than dressage. At our farm, things are a little more "German", which means that we pay attention to solid basic training.

if only for the safety of the riders. But of course the fun doesn't fall by the wayside.

The Irish horses are great and ideal for our beach riding business; Irish Cobs, i.e. Tinker, Irish Draught and Connemara or a mix of all three breeds. Almost all of our horses were born and raised here, they live in the herd in the pasture, are sure-footed and well-balanced, and we make sure that they all enjoy job.

What do you recommend to guests in Ireland, what should they see or do apart from riding?

As a nature lover, I personally enjoy hiking, stand-up paddleboarding and surfing. The sheepdog shows are great. Culturally, there is a lot to do: traditional music, many music and literature festivals in summer. I also recommend the Stone Age tombs, which located in special, mystical places.

Tell us a little more about yourself: What kind of training do you have? What is your job on the farm? How many horses do you have? I am the contact person for everyone, I look after the yard and around the office. I also train the horses and give riding lessons. I have gained a number of qualifications in Ireland, including Ride Leader with BET (British Equestrian Tourism), Level 1 Coach with HSI (Horse Sport Ireland), Level 2 Coach with Centreed Riding®, Road Safety Trainer with the British Horse Society, Safeguarding 1 and 2 with the British Driving Society and I also have first aid qualifications. Raymond takes care of the farming and technical side of things. He masters the horsepower of the fleet and keeps the farm running smoothly. Our farm is right on the Atlantic Ocean, which is great for all kinds of wonderful beach rides. Our most important employees are the horses, with 35 horses currently romping around in our pastures.

Thank you very much, Ursula! On the following pages we will tell you about your beautiful island.

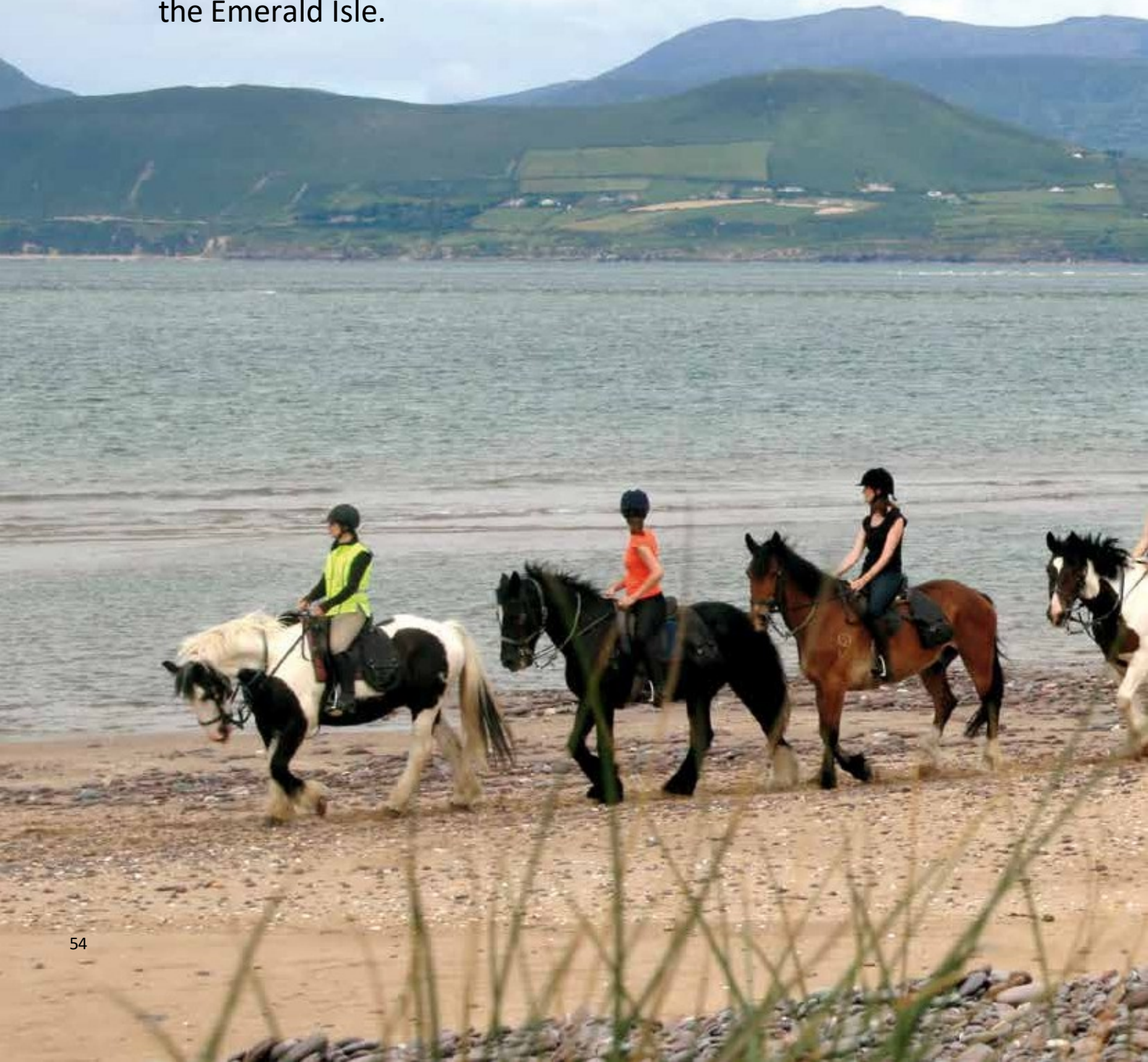
Ursula's riding stable www.reiterreisen.com/ivt008.htm





Green

The beat of the horses' hooves, the sound of the tin whistle, the roar of the Atlantic - visitors quickly find their way into the rhythms of the Emerald Isle.



Ireland



Rider's happiness



Charming IRELAND

Rain can't shake the Ireland fan. The Emerald Isle has its own charm that makes many a visitor addicted.

"If you don't like the weather, wait half an hour!" - the saying from Ireland aptly describes the changeable climate of the Emerald Isle. When the sun shines from a deep blue sky, it bathes the island in rich colours. But rain showers are as much a part of Ireland as Guinness, whiskey and afternoon tea.

For riders, the temperate climate is ideal for galloping along wide beaches, roaming through meadows and forests or up the quiet mystique of the moors - the "bogs". Castle ruins, dilapidated houses and stone-grey cathedrals open your eyes to the history of the country. In the pubs and bars of the cosy villages, the Irish way of life takes hold of every visitor. Irish folk music inspires you to dance and sing along.

There are many opportunities for horse lovers. Demanding sport riders will find first-class training opportunities, occasional riders can swing into the saddles of reliable four-legged friends, experienced hikers can experience the legendary character of Ireland on a riding adventure lasting several days.

In the streets of Killarny



Typical Irish farm



Dilapidated chapel



Mystical: the Irish "bogs"



Ireland's horses

Ireland's sport horse breeding is of global importance, especially in show jumping and eventing. We take a look the original Irish breeds: the Irish Cob and the Connemara Pony, a sporting talent with wild roots.

The Irish Cob, also as the Tinker, was bred as a powerful draught horse. There are three sections into which cobs are divided according to size. Typical is the dense long coat

and the bushy pasterns. They are just as reliable and enduring as draft horses as they are as trail horses for long hacks.

The Connemara pony is the oldest breed in Ireland. They have lived semi-wild in the barren and marshy Connemara region for several centuries. The ponies were refined with Arabians, Berbers and English thoroughbreds and are now first-class riding ponies for competition, but also for leisure and trail riders.

Profile Irish Cob

Country of origin: Ireland

Size: 128 to 170 cm stick size

Conformation: Strong riding and driving horse, often piebald, also self-coloured, lush coat

Interior: Strong in character, fearless, frugal Info: Zuchtverband für Deutsche Pferde, <https://zfdp.de/>

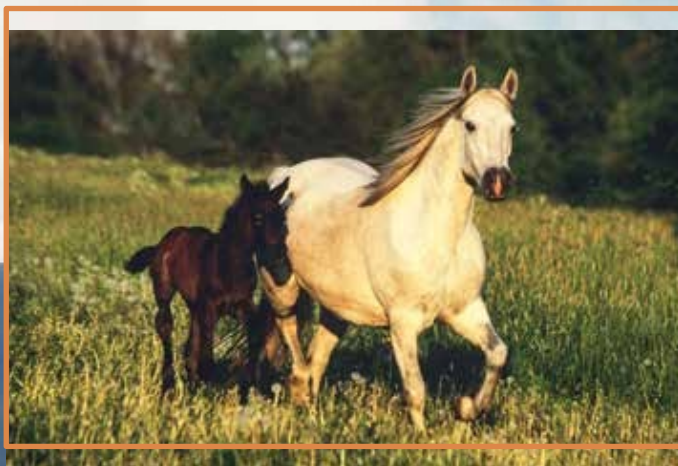
Connemara profile

Country of origin: Ireland

Size: 128 to 148 cm stick size

Exterior: Athletic riding pony with good proportions. Interior: Versatile, reliable, willing to perform

Info: Connemara Pony Association e.V. connemara-pony.de/



EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

Along the west coast, EQUITOUR offers riding holidays for all tastes. In the north-west, young people can combine riding with English lessons. Riding stables in Galway and on the Atlantic offer lessons, cross country and trail rides for families and adults. In County Kerry and Connemara, various riding tours lead along the coast and through the lush green hinterland. www.equitour.com/ireland.htm

Country info Ireland



Size 70 273 km²

Population: 5.1 million Capital: Dublin

Language: Irish, English

Religion: Predominantly Roman Catholic

Currency: Euro

Climate: Temperate maritime climate

Best time to visit: May to September

Travelogue Killarney Reeks Trail

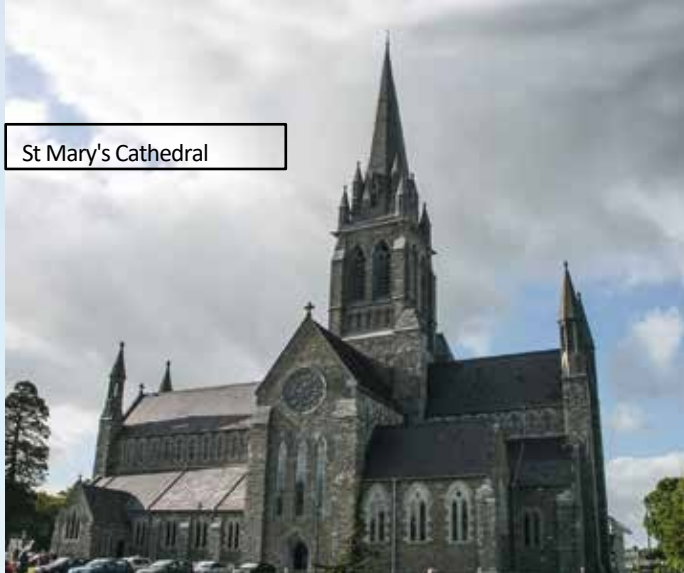
From pub to pub



To combine cooling off with a riding adventure, Denise Neufeld takes off to Ireland in early summer, where she learns to love Irish horses, lush green landscapes and Irish conviviality.



St Mary's Cathedral



Refreshment before the riding tour



The seven-day Killarney Reeks Trail has piqued my curiosity, so I travel to Killarney, where the stable is. The town itself is the starting point of the Ring of Kerry scenic route, which is popular with tourists. I love the town centre with its countless traditional pubs and the impressive St Mary's Cathedral.

Irish veterans

I am warmly welcomed by Aoife - the name is pronounced "Ifa". Aoife and her family are true Irishmen and horse experts through and through, who built up the family business over decades. They currently own 160 horses, 60 of which are used as trail horses.

will be. Most of them graze in the surrounding paddocks, but we can get to know a few horses in the stables. It's a colourful mixed herd with mainly Irish breeds such as Cobs, Connemaras, Irish Draught, but also Scottish Clydesdales. The first sight of these heavyweights some of my fellow riders wonder whether they are spirited enough for a faster pace.

These concerns are dispelled with the first canter jumps.

After a tour and a brief chat about my riding experience and my desire for a horse, I check into the hotel, a comfortable city hotel with a large room and a Jacuzzi bathtub, which I immediately to the test.



The next morning at breakfast, I meet my fellow riders, easily recognisable by their riding gear. We are a colourful group from Germany, Canada, the USA and France. After a hearty Full Irish Breakfast, we are driven to the starting point of the riding tour, where our horses are already waiting for us. I am given the big black horse Ben, I like straight away. We are already sitting in the saddle when the whisky bottle is passed round again.

Ireland's colours and shapes

Everything looks exactly as you would expect from the Irish butter advert. Intense green hills, blue lakes and sheep everywhere. As you know, it often rains in Ireland, but that's exactly why the island is so green, like nowhere else I've ever seen.

We ride through a mountainous landscape. This area is home to Ireland's highest mountain range, the Macgillycuddy's Reeks, which are up to 1000 metres high. After a steep climb, we find ourselves in the middle of the Windy Gap, where the wind is literally whistling around our ears.

Picnic with a twist

Donie, the boss himself, welcomes us for lunch in his picnic car. There's everything you need to put together your own sandwich - plus fruit, cake and biscuits. It seems that some of us are already fully accustomed to Irish customs and ask for a shot of whiskey in their tea or coffee.

Well fortified, we and the horses enjoy a short break while Donie proudly shows us the latest addition to his horse family. A little stallion is playing happily with other foals in the paddock.

In the afternoon, we ride past Lake Coomasaharn and through the Irish bog. Piles of freshly cut peat are piled up along the way. All the horses prove their agility in all gaits, and when we are brought back to the hotel after the first day of riding, we are all very enthusiastic about our four-legged companions and look forward to the rides to come.

Socialising in the pub

We spend the next two nights in the tranquil fishing village of Glenbeigh. In the pub, our predominantly female riding group quickly becomes an attraction and we experience an entertaining evening with the locals and quaint pub personalities.

A highlight awaits us the next day: the beach ride! We reach the deserted beach of Glenbeigh. A rider's dream. The sun is also on our side and spoils us with constant rays. Wonderful long gallops make our riders' hearts beat faster. A fellow rider takes an involuntary dip thanks to her water-loving horse.

Ye-Haaa!



The week flies by. We get to know Kerry from all sides - riding over mountains, past lakes, through wide fields and forests, along the coast and through small villages. It is not uncommon for us to become a photo motif for other tourists.

From Killarney to Waterville

Our guide Lena tells us interesting facts about the country and its history. We often see dilapidated ruins, some of which back to the time of the great famine in the middle of the 19th century, in which one million Irish died and two million people were killed. emigrated. But Ireland is also home to countless castles from the Middle Ages and Celtic buildings. After the first riding days in the mountains around Killarney and Glenbeigh area, we explore the area around the coastal village of Waterville, where Charlie Chaplin regularly spent holidays, on our last riding stages. The weather in Ireland is just as varied as the landscape. Even though it is unusually fresh for May, we are lucky and are spared heavy rain. It only pours on the last day of riding, but that 't dampen our spirits as we get soaked from top to bottom on the last gallop anyway. We dash through the waves at full speed - what a grand finale! Happy and satisfied, we end our riding tour and say goodbye with a heavy heart to our wonderful horses, who can look forward to their lush meadow. We drive back to Killarney, where we round off a great week with Guinness and live Irish music in the pub.

www.equitour.com/kil008.htm



Ireland - Sheep's Land



Happy Trails!



Radiant riders!



Photos: private

FOLLOW the HORSES

The Spiti ponies in the Himalayas

Photojournalist Gabriele Kärcher meets people and horses on all continents without bias or judgement. In India, she follows not only noble Marwari horses, but also less revered mountain ponies, which nevertheless deserve just as much respect.

"What do you find special about the Spiti ponies?" Kirpal Pathania, the Director of the Department of Agriculture and Livestock in Shimla, asks me. In addition to the noble Marwaris, there are a number of lesser-known pony breeds in India, one of which I would like to get to know. The Spitis originate from an area in the Himalayas at an altitude of almost 4000 metres. Kirpal is almost personally impressed by the extreme robustness, strength and frugality of the breed.

Shimla lies at an altitude of 2000 metres in the foothills of the Hima- laya. The town has a tidy European feel. It was the summer residence of the British colonial rulers and numerous buildings are reminders of this.

I enter a small tourist office and meet Satish, who is amazed at my interest in the Spiti ponies. Apparently no guest has ever asked about them. Spiti Valley is no longer accessible now, at the end of October, but Satish still knows where I can find the extraordinary ponies.

The next morning we set off for Kufri. We head even deeper into the majestic mountain world. The Indian civilisation

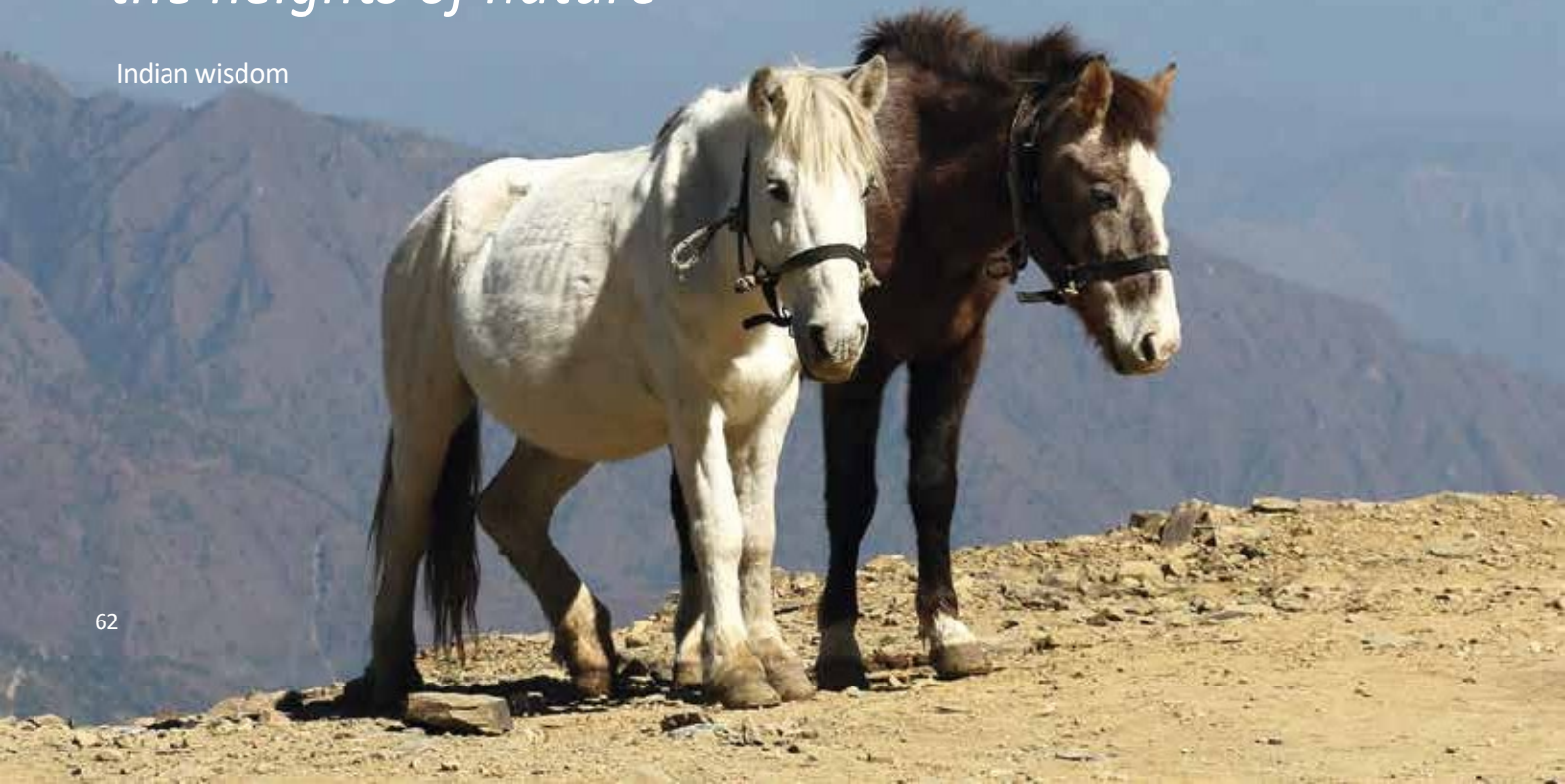
has long since reached the Himalayas. Whole blocks of flats cling to every slope. Driver Rana steers his little Tata briskly through the hairpin bends. Constant honking is essential for survival, as oncoming traffic often only appears at the last second.

As soon as you enter the village of Kufri, ponies are lined in a group at the side of the road. They are the taxis of the mountains for visitors and locals alike. Red plush cushions lie on their rock-hard saddles to cushion inexperienced riders. Clusters of ponies and their owners wait for customers on every street corner in the village. Busloads of tourists and pilgrims let the well-behaved animals carry them up the steep path to the almost 3,000 metre-high summit of Mahasu Peak.

Your destination is the temple of the goddess Deshu and an amusement park. Shaggy yaks can be mounted for photo opportunities. The hard-working ponies are given a drink of water, then they trot back down into the valley - sometimes unaccompanied by humans. Satish and I make our way to the summit on foot. There is a lot of activity at the top, but I enjoy the breathtaking view over an ocean of mountains a little further away.

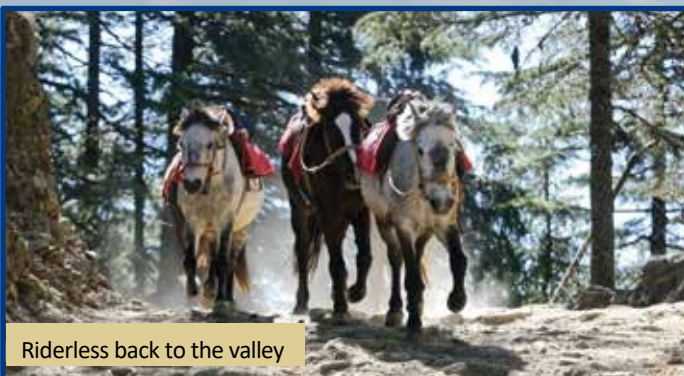
*The primal soul dwells in
the heights of nature*

Indian wisdom





The good mountain taxis



Riderless back to the valley

Spiti Pony - naturally free from giddiness

The Spiti Valley, 400 kilometres, or a good 10 hours' drive Shimla, is the home and namesake of the pony breed. Spiti ponies are extremely tough, frugal and resilient. This comes at the expense of beauty. The animals have bones like cold-blooded animals, are strong as bears and indestructible. The head is large and coarse, the legs short and stocky. Grey horses predominate, but there are also browns, foxes and blacks. They barely reach 130 cm in height. Spiti ponies are certainly not particularly fast, but when it comes to climbing, they are to none. They are simply perfect for this region.



Horses and inspiration 2023

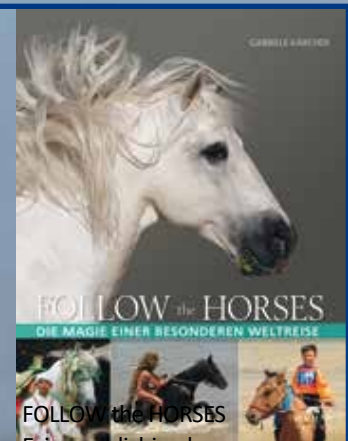
Photo calendar DinA3

Horse photographer Gabriele Kärcher has travelled all continents in the footsteps of a wide variety of horses and equestrian peoples. Brilliant horse photos of her travels, accompanied by wise words of wisdom from great minds, will accompany you through 2023.

Info: www.sorrel.de



Photojournalist
Gabriele Kärcher



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Imprint:

EQUITOUR

The world through horses' ears

© 2022

1st year, issue 2

Customer magazine of the
EQUITOUR Riding holidays - EQUITOUR AG

Publisher:

EquiConsult Eurl

1c, rue principale

F-68130

Franconia

dfranz@equiconsult.eu

Responsible:

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Editing and layout:

Gabriele Kärcher / www.sorrel.de All
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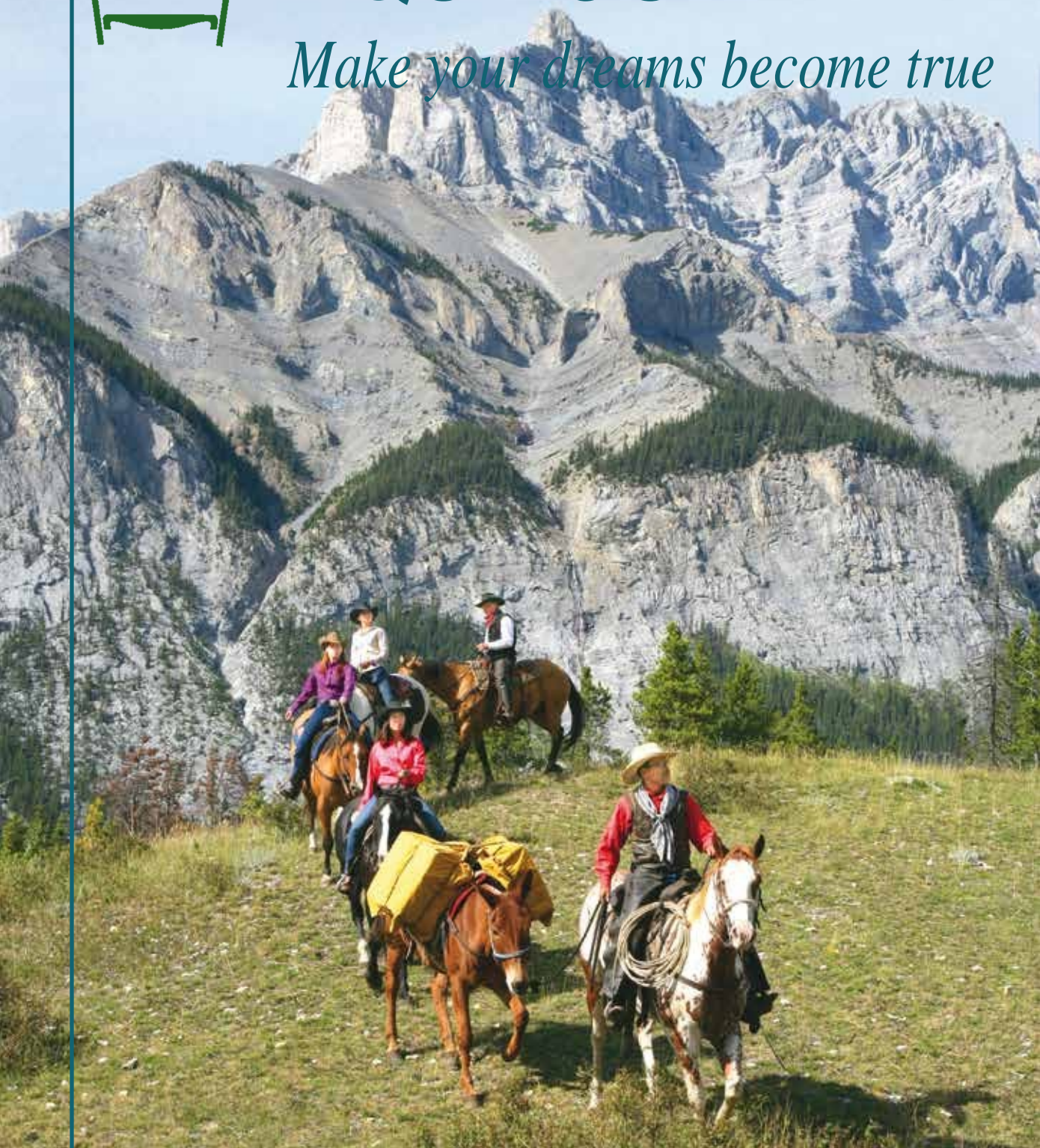
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