



EQUITOUR

The world through horses' ears

Anniversary-Output

Riding holidays through

ANDALUSIA

USA - RANCHES

NORTH MACEDONIA

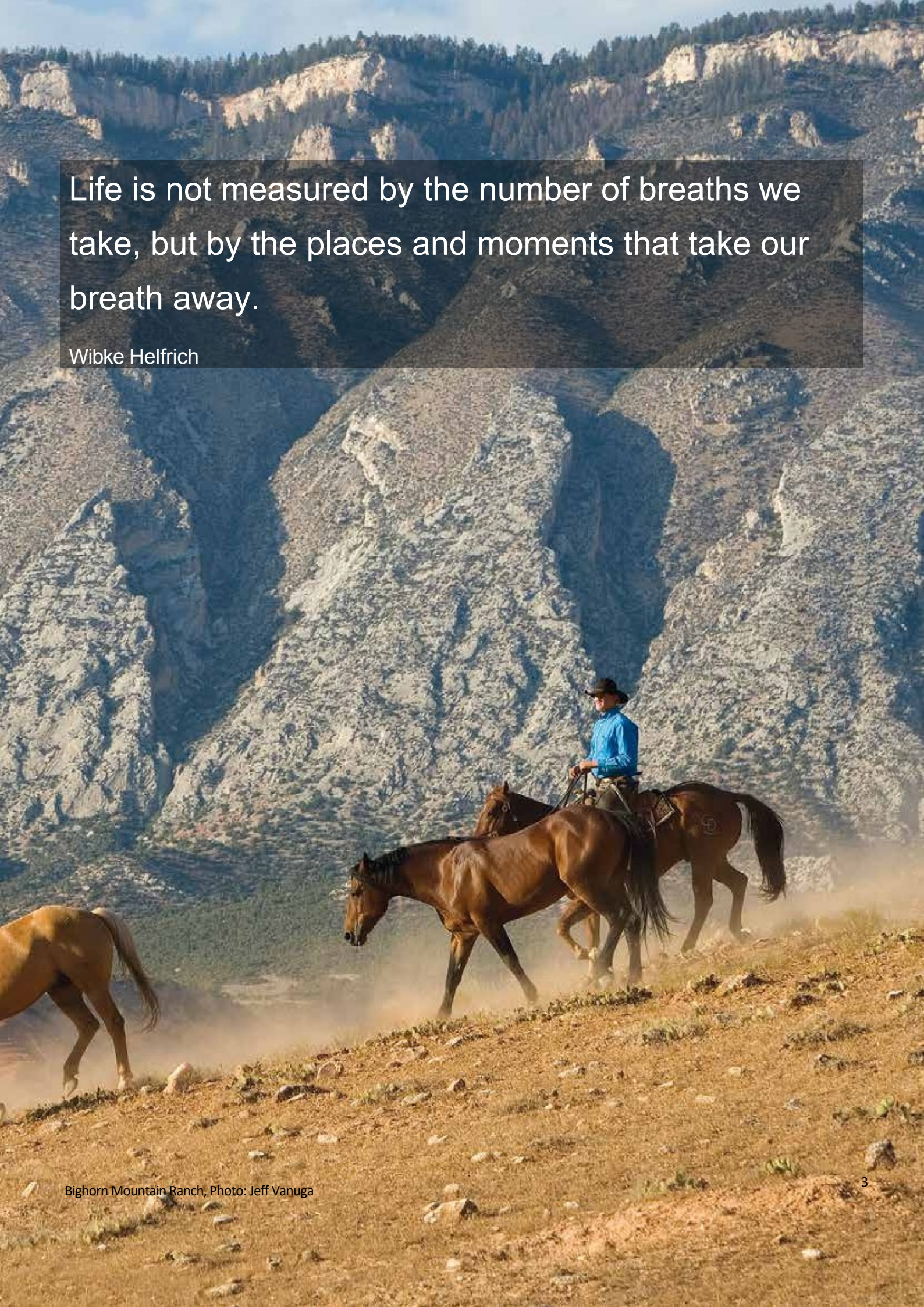
SWEDEN

SRI LANKA



2



A person wearing a blue shirt and a cowboy hat is riding two brown horses along a rocky, dusty ridge. The horses are galloping, kicking up a cloud of dust. In the background, a deep, rugged canyon with steep, layered rock walls stretches into the distance under a clear sky. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the places and moments that take our breath away.

Wibke Helfrich



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Photos: Gabriele Kärcher, private





EQUITOUR

Riding Holidays

The whole world on horseback

Dear ,

Equitour turns 50!!!

In 1973, the time was ripe for the first equestrian holidays. It was the time of Ursula Bruns, who reformed equestrianism and focussed on species-appropriate husbandry and leisure riding in harmony with horses and nature in her magazine "Freizeit im Sattel". At the same time, travelling to distant countries was becoming increasingly popular: Germany was doing well economically and riding and travelling were becoming more and more to more and more people.

This is how the first Equitour trips came about, with hiking trips through Andalusia included right from the start, which Horst Stern described in 1976 in his classic book "So verdient man sich the "spurs". His humorous travelogue shows how exotic such a journey seemed at the time. Later, Hungary, Morocco, Iceland, the USA and many other classic equestrian destinations were added. Today's exotic destinations are Madagascar or Kyrgyzstan, which nobody would have thought of in 1973. You can now travel to over 60 countries with Equitour. The concept is simple and timeless: holidays in small groups with like-minded people offer an intensive experience of nature and culture, far removed from mass tourism. A large number of regular customers and always new customers appreciate it. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your trust and your loyalty, some of which has lasted for decades - here's to the next 50 years!

The EQUITOUR team



Elisabeth Hambrügge found her dream job in January 2022. Since then, she has been the contact person in Service and Product Management at Equitour.

How did you come to Equitour? By chance or a long-awaited dream job?

I have known Equitour for many years, both from Equitana and from my work in a travel agency. In my 30 years at the TUI travel agency, I have also a Equitour trip for customers from time to time. As a passionate rider in tourism, it is definitely a dream job for me.

What is special about the horse riding holidays product?

Travelling close to nature away from the tourist crowds and then on horseback. Whereas at TUI I mostly sold package holidays with large hotel chains and cruises, here it's completely individual trips in mini groups. It's nice that you talk to customers and partners from rider to rider. Everything is very personalised.

As a travel expert, you have already travelled to many countries, what is still on your wish list?

I particularly enjoy travelling South America on horseback and riding safaris in southern Africa. But I'm always up for fun in the saddle and enjoy getting to know new riding styles and horse breeds. As a classical German dressage rider, this is a completely new experience for me.

Which trips and partners have you already got to know and what is your current favourite?

So far, I have travelled to Andalusia, Masuria, Müritztal and Portugal for Equitour. I've just returned from the Arrabida Nature Park near Lisbon, where Carlos guided me through the mountains. A really great horseman with his own Lusitano breeding programme and species-appropriate grazing. He has grown fond of every horse.

Do you have horses yourself?

I grew up on a farm in the Münsterland horse region. My father bred Westphalian warmblood horses, so I was already in the saddle at the age of three and had my own pony. From the age of ten, I went to competitions every weekend. I was an active competition rider for 30 years, training horses and giving riding lessons. I ran my own riding business for six years. I gave up my last horse Stella, a Welsh B pony, in 2020. A dream pony that I rescued from the slaughterhouse trained up to elementary level. But she was actually too small for me.

Now I'm enjoying the time without my own horse and the associated obligations. Maybe one day I'll get my own horse again and then certainly another warmblood, but that's not planned for now.

Thank you very much, Mrs Hambrügge!

Elisabeth Hambrügge and her Welsh pony Stella



In Rhythm



Andalusia



of the horses



Spanish horses and Spanish riding masters have brought their skills and dancing grace to the whole world. The deep bond between man and horse can be felt by every traveller who immerses themselves in the land of origin of all equestrian art.

Travelogue Gibraltar-Atlantic Nature Park Ride

To the southern tip of Europe

After five decades in the saddle, Elisabeth Hambrügge has fallen in love with the Spanish way of riding and life in Andalusia's forests, mountains and beaches.



On the first day of our trail, our group - four guests and a guide - meets up at Felix and his mother Carmen's farm "Cortijo Las Majadillas" north of Los Barrios. That very evening we get to know the horses. They will be our companions for the next few days.

The beautiful finca is the starting point for our trail ride. After a hearty breakfast, we set off the next morning. We can choose between English and Spanish saddles. I decide in favour of the Spanish saddle and have my first very positive experience with it. The seat is wide and comfortable and also padded with soft sheepskin. I have to get used to the Spanish stirrups, which are made of metal with a wide tread and somehow remind me of cowbells. However, they work perfectly. The shape gives the foot a secure footing so that you support yourself well on uphill and downhill stretches and thus relieve the strain on the horse's back.



Through green thickets...

... and over steep mountain paths





Beach in sight!



Dream beach gallop



A feast for the palate and the eyes



Amigos

Our starting point is located directly in the Los Alcornocales Nature Park. We ride across meadows and gentle hills between the cork oaks. Time and again we come across free-roaming cattle, which a look at us as we ride past.

There are occasional gates separating the plots and animals from each other, but you have the feeling of being in the middle of nowhere. No roads, no people. Just us and our horses. So we slowly climb up the mountain slopes over hill and dale. Sticks and stones - what are obstacles for other horses are child's play for our skilful Andalusian horses. I have been deeply impressed by this from day one, and this breed convinces me more and more every day. The horses combine calmness, sure-footedness and elegance, temperament and a healthy forward drive.

We cross streams with large stones and in some places we dismount and walk. I have to restrain myself from controlling my horse and just watch as it skilfully steps over all the bumps. The Andalusian is always in control. The rider behaves passively and trusts his horse's abilities. That works and relaxes me immensely.

With almost fifty years of experience as a rider and trainer of warmbloods in competitive sport, getting to know the Andalusians on this breathtaking ride has broadened my horizons. It also allows me to appreciate and soak up the wonderful surroundings in the Los Alcornocales Nature Park. Silence, peace, nature and the horses.

We eat our packed lunch under shady trees at lunchtime and let our gaze wander over the breathtaking mountain panorama.

In the afternoon, we climb further metres in altitude and finally reach an old country inn, where we and the horses for the night. We fortify ourselves with delicacies from the open fire and enjoy the simple, warm and authentic Spanish hospitality.

Photos: private

The next riding day takes us over the mountains and back down into the valley, where we head for the southernmost city in Europe, Tarifa. Once there, we ride towards the coast. Now, in April, it is still low season, the beach is deserted and we can gallop to our heart's content. A real highlight! A stylish hotel near Tarifa awaits us for the night. Here, we riders find comfortable accommodation, and our horses a cosy place to stay. lush pasture. Two-legged and four-legged friends can feast and relax after a long ride.

The rest of the ride takes us along the coast. We can see the Rock of Gibraltar and even the opposite coast of Morocco. After riding for several hours, we reach the next hotel, which also has a real Spanish flair. A small, overgrown bullfighting arena under our balcony as overnight accommodation for the horses, and we enjoy the sight of our dear companions.

The next day is free of riding. What a disappointment, I want to continue riding! But the programme is more than convincing: we attend the lunchtime show at the Royal Andalusian Riding School in Jerez. The high art of riding on noble Spanish stallions is well worth seeing. We are also impressed by baroque-style riding centre. Afterwards, we attend a dance show in a small flamenco bar in Jerez and savour tapas and sherry. Again, all I can say is: authentic Spanish, very close to the feeling. Finally, the next day we head north back to the starting point in Los Barrios. We savour the last ride to the full. Then, with a heavy heart, we say goodbye to our faithful four-legged friends.

After a week together experiencing nature, the Spanish way of life and unforgettable riding adventures, our group has grown close together, which we celebrate on the last evening. Elisabeth Hambrügge www.equitour.com/gib008.htm

Andalusia

The

Andalusia's blooming poppy

Equestrian Eldorado



Hardly a other country characterises the entire hippological world as much as Spain. Especially in the south, horse breeding, horsemanship, dancing and celebrations are living traditions.

The Andalusian city of Jerez de la Frontera is the centre of horse breeding. Every year, Spanish breeders, riders and horse lovers from all over the world come together for the *Fería del Caballo*, a colourful week-long festival celebrates the Andalusian way of life. Find out more on page 64/65.

But Andalusia offers more than just colourful festivals. The varied landscape and sunny weather offer perfect holiday conditions. Long sandy beaches on the Mediterranean and Atlantic, the mountains of the Sierra Nevada, shady cork oak forests and spectacular natural parks are the setting for unforgettable riding adventures.

In the province of Almería in south-eastern Andalusia lies the Cabo de Gata Nature Park, which invites visitors into unspoilt, wild nature. The landscape is as unspoilt as the people are rustic. You can enjoy genuine and unadulterated southern Spanish hospitality. Thanks to the unspoilt nature and the charm of the small fishing villages, Cabo de Gata has been the setting for several Hollywood films. Here you can in the footsteps of Indiana Jones and Lawrence of Arabia.

Better known is the Sierra Nevada, Spain's high mountain range with peaks over 3000 metres high and permanently covered in snow. But here, too, you will explore the unknown paths on horseback, as we take you to the northern, less travelled part of the mountain range. On horseback you will climb to an altitude of 2000 metres, pass

12 Pine forests, pastureland, mountain lakes and crystal-clear mountain streams. As a highlight, you ride to the "Fin del Mundo", the "end of the world". This is a gorge reminiscent of the Grand Canyon, with rock caves in which people still live today. Awe is guaranteed.

If you are looking for horsemanship rather than the wilderness, Equitour offers renowned instructors and first-class horses in the region around Seville. There they can train in classical dressage and enjoy a relaxed Spanish holiday.

Equitour offers eight different programmes in Andalusia. Star ride, coastal ride, riding tour, dressage, hotel or beach holiday with rides - the south of Spain is undoubtedly the Eldorado for all riders and horse lovers.





Andalusia wild and green



Gallop through the pastureland

Photos:
private



In the heights of the Sierra Nevada



Historic Castillo de La Calahorra



El Fin del Mundo - the end of the world



Cosy rock caves



Learning from the best

The cradle of horsemanship



Improve your riding skills in five days? Yes, you can. The García family's well-maintained riding centre is located on a stylish hacienda. The right pedigree horse is available for every level of rider. You can improve your seat on the lunge line and familiarise yourself with the most demanding dressage lessons under the guidance of certified instructors and riding masters, including Olympic rider Rafael Soto.

Experience the professionals in the saddle in the show "How the Andalusian horses dance" at the Royal Andalusian Riding School

in Jerez de la Frontera. The stallions' dance consists of exercises such as the piaffe, the courbette and the capriole.

Not only the horses, but also the people dance a proud and wistful dance, the flamenco. Experience a fiery, sad and rhythmic flamenco show in Andalusia's capital city, Seville.

The programme is rich in tradition, the hotel is stylish and the wine and food are outstanding. Truly a programme at the highest level!



ANDALUSIA Riding programmes



EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

Andalusia is a horse and equestrian universe of its own. Whether beach hotel, star rides, lessons from beginner to high school or riding tours. The landscape: sandy beaches, cliffs, rolling hills and rocky mountains and even desert. Picturesque nature parks with bull pastures and cork oaks. And the sun shines most of the time, even in winter.
www.equitour.com/spanien.htm



Country info Andalusia



Size 87 600 km²

Population: 8.4 million Capital: Seville

Language: Spanish


Religion: Christianity

Currency: Euro

Climate: Mediterranean climate, dry hot summers, mild winters

Best time to visit: All year round

Pura Raza, Pura Nobleza



Pure breed, pure nobility - this is how the Spanish describe their horses. And rightly so. Spanish horse breeding is one of the most important in the world. As touring horses, Spanish breeds are willing to run, sure-footed and reliable.



PRE - Pura Raza Española

PRE stands for Pura Raza Española, i.e. pure Spanish breed. Only the PRE is recognised by the breeding association as a pure Spanish horse. The size ranges from 150 to 172 cm stature. The grey colour predominates, but there are also dark PREs.



Tres Sangres

Around 100 years ago, the Andalusian was turned into an even more powerful horse by crossing English thoroughbreds and Arabians. The "Tres Sangres" combines speed and gentleness with the rideability of the Spaniard.



Andalusian

The old name for Spanish horses, which is still in use today, stands for all horses that do not necessarily have full pedigree papers. The Andalusian can be just as beautiful, elegant and rideable as the PRE.



Carthusian / Cartujano

Carthusian horses go back to the breeding of the monks of the Carthusian monastery, who great importance to pure blood. Today you can experience the monastery horses in special demonstrations.

Tarifa riding centre

Between the continents

To escape the cold, grey late autumn, Angelika Kaiser and her friend travel to the southernmost city in Europe - Tarifa. Sunshine in November, marvellous horses, hours of riding - and all worries are forgotten.

Tarifa is a small, tranquil town and a good starting point for exploring the surrounding area. Cádiz, Jerez de la Frontera, Seville and Granada are easily accessible from Tarifa. Excursions to Gibraltar or across the strait to Tangier in Morocco are also possible. However, you should then book a few extra days so that you don't miss out riding.

We land in Malaga and have booked an extra night there for a relaxed arrival and a tour of the city. From Malaga, it's just under two hours to Tarifa.

Our hotel offers spacious rooms, a restaurantbar, outdoor pools, sauna, solarium, jacuzzi, gym and yoga classes. The marvellous view of the sun setting over the sea from the bar, accompanied by a delicious drink, and the holiday feeling is perfect. The riding stable is just a minute or two's walk. So in the mornings we can enjoy the

Horses help. Klaartje is responsible for the horses and the riding tours. Her horses are out in the pasture all day and live in large herds in a species-appropriate way. Klaartje herself comes from the Netherlands, but speaks perfect German and looks after her animals with a lot of love. Almost all of the horses come from poor conditions. With a lot of patience and understanding, Klaartje has turned them into well-behaved and trustworthy riding companions.

We have booked the riding week with as much riding as possible, so we are on horseback for three to four hours a day. The horses are well-balanced and forward-going, and Klaartje makes sure that everyone feels comfortable on their own horse. So it's no problem to change horses if the rider-horse pair doesn't harmonise so well. Three other Germans ride with us and we get on really well with them.



The landscape is varied and completely captivates us. We ride along the beaches on the Costa de la Luz and enjoy the trotting and cantering routes. The soft sand beneath us, the sun above us, the roaring ocean beside us, all our worries far away. This is freedom!

We cross cork oak and pine forests and watch birds high above us. We continue through unspoilt nature, partly across fields and narrow paths or even cross-country. We pass fincas and small farms, and time and again we come across cows, pigs and donkeys. We enjoy their joie de vivre. We ride over small hills and steep paths, past cliffs with views of Morocco. We combine a visit to the Santuario de la Luz monastery with a picnic. Everyone takes something to eat from their saddlebags, so we can sit together in a cosy atmosphere and fortify ourselves. We are surprised by a brief rain shower, but it subsides after just a few minutes. There is something peaceful about listening to the sounds of nature and the contented snorting of the horses during the picnic breaks. We have a typical Spanish meal in a venta, local inn, where we feast on tapas and other regional specialities at the large outdoor table.

We enjoy the wonderful days on horseback and the time at the hotel. We try our hand at yoga there before rounding off the last day and our riding week with an evening drink at the bar. It was a successful and wonderful week in a marvellous landscape with great horses. We would love to come back.
Angelika Kaiser, November 2022 www.equitour.com/tarsta.htm

Africa is so close



Jacuzzi with a view



Dream hotel, pool and palm garden



Equestrian bliss on endless beaches



Photos: private

Encounter in the mountains



From *Holland* to *Andalusia*

Interview with Tour guide Klaartje

Klaartje Muijser from the Netherlands dreams of the Wild West. But chance lures her to Andalusia. The planned two weeks turned into twenty years and sixteen horses of her own. Today, she uses them to guide tourists through her adopted country.

How did it come about that emigrated from Holland to Andalusia?

That was pure coincidence. I had just finished my studies and wanted to join the cowboys in the USA for a few months to work on a ranch. A friend called me because she was looking for a replacement in Andalusia at short notice. I needed the riding guide. I agreed to help out for a fortnight, packed up my dog and arrived in Andalusia at night. When I looked out of the window in the morning, I immediately fell in love with the country. Two weeks have now turned into twenty years.

What do you like so much about Spain?

In addition to the weather, the beautiful nature: every day when I ride through the dunes, along the beach and through the pine trees and bull pastures, I still think "Wow, this is so beautiful!"



FRIENDS



beautiful!!!!". Tarifa is also a very special place with two seas that meet and two continents - it is just 14 kilometres across the sea to Africa.

Plus, of course, the Spanish way of life, which is so much more relaxed than in Germany or Holland. You simply have time and don't stress yourself out. The only thing is, if you really want to get something done, the "Tomorrow is another day..." is not so helpful. I will definitely never return to Holland. My friends and family come to visit me regularly in Tarifa.

Was it your dream to run a riding stable or did it happen by chance?

Even as a girl, I dreamed of doing something with horses, but as I had my A-levels and my parents expected me to study, I applied for a place to study veterinary medicine. However, I wasn't accepted and so I studied psychology and orthomolecular medicine instead. I later trained as an equine therapist. The riding stable in Tarifa was a great opportunity that arose after I worked in various stables in Andalusia, Africa and Lapland for six years. The owners of the Hurricane Hotel are horse riders themselves, so a horse stable was part of the hotel right from the start.

What do you particularly enjoy about your work?

My 16 horses are like my family. They all come from bad stock. I have grown very fond of them, and when we are out and about with the guests, there is always communication between me and the horses. I also lead all the rides myself. I am particularly pleased when my guests are beaming with happiness because they are comfortable on the horses. I train them with a lot of love and patience so that they are reliable and easy to ride without a bit. My horses live in a herd on huge pastures and are therefore happy and well-balanced. In winter, they have at least three months off. I love Andalusian horses in general, they are gentle and sensitive, very people-orientated and always clear-headed and controllable. They are simply a joy to ride!

Is there a personal favourite horse, or do you have a horse with a special story?

My bay, who I bought as my first own horse in Andalusia, permanently threw his previous owner. It was love at first sight for me, and I soon gained his trust and was able to ride him without a bit. To this day, I only ride him myself. Later I got another bay, my toughest case! It took two years before he was rideable, and I only ride him myself. The last private horse I bought is a stallion who in a paddock near my house. He stood for 13 years in a single stall before I took him on and so, like many Spanish stallions, he is unfortunately not socialised at all. He was standing at one of the ventas I go to with the guests and I felt very sorry for him because his condition was pathetic. Nowadays, we go for wonderful after-work rides together, even at sunset on the beach. He has so much fun that he would run endlessly. He doesn't know the urge to be stabled.

What do you recommend to guests in Andalusia? What must be seen and experienced?

My tip for really beautiful horsemanship is to visit the Yeguada Cartuja Carthusian stud farm near Jerez. The Carthusians (Cartujanos in Spanish) are an ancient breed that dates back to the monasteries. Beautiful Spanish horses and a harmonious dressage performance.

I discovered dolphin and whale watching by boat for the first time. The dolphins are so trusting that they swim alongside and under the inflatable boats. A fantastic experience!

Tarifa also has a beautiful Moorish old town with white houses and narrow alleyways. The white villages in the hinterland, e.g. Vejer de la Frontera, are also famous. Jerez and Gibraltar are also worth a visit and are not too far away.

Thank you very much, Klaartje!

Klaartje's riding programme: www.equitour.com/tarsta.htm

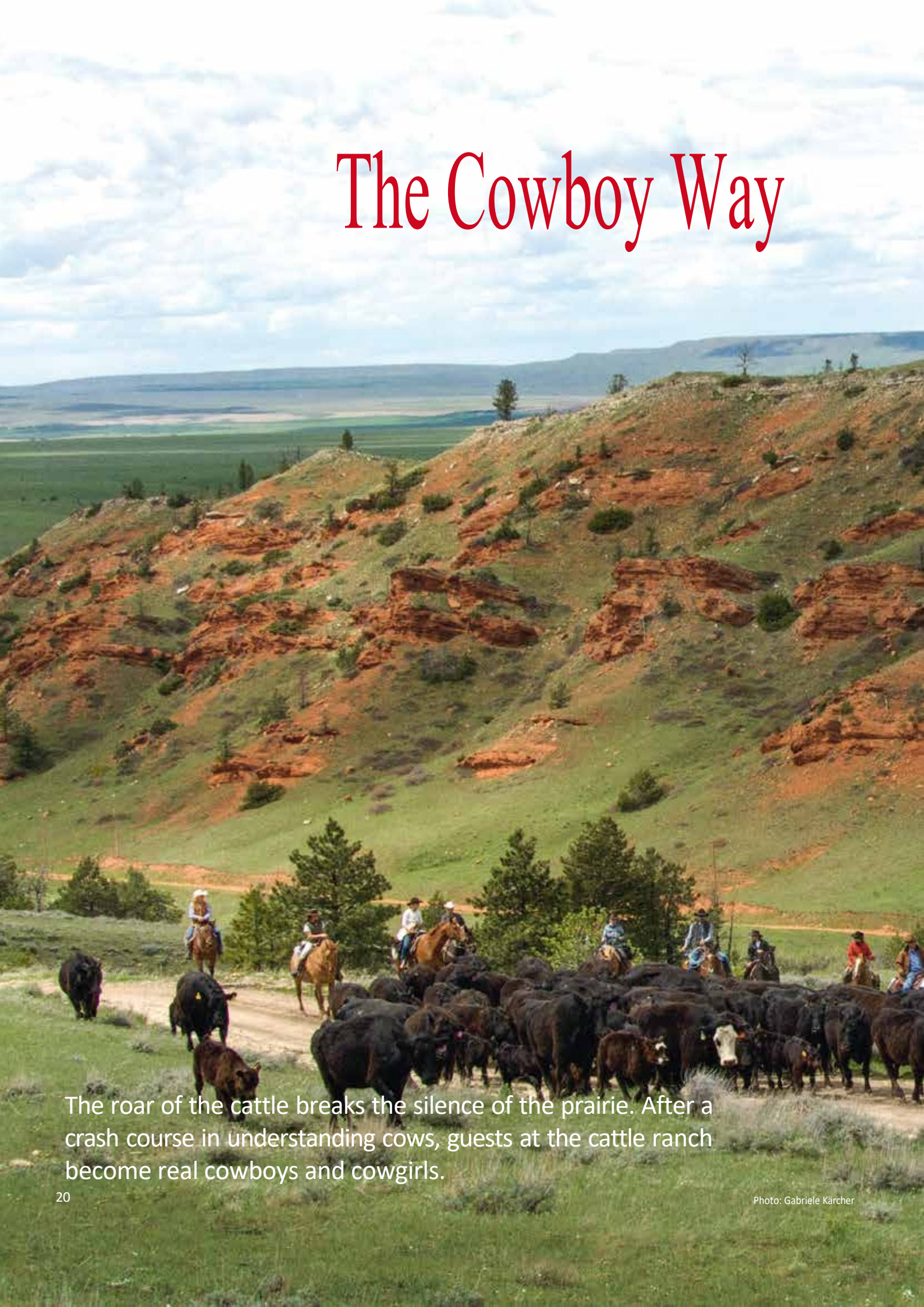
The interview was conducted by Jessica Kiefer / Equitour

Happy horses

Spanish cowgirl



The Cowboy Way

A wide-angle photograph of a cattle ranch scene. In the foreground, a large herd of black cattle is being moved across a green grassy field. Several cowboys, dressed in traditional Western attire including hats and chaps, are riding horses and herding the cattle. The background features a prominent hill with exposed red rock layers and patches of green grass. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds. The overall atmosphere is one of a traditional cowboy experience.

The roar of the cattle breaks the silence of the prairie. After a crash course in understanding cows, guests at the cattle ranch become real cowboys and cowgirls.

of Life

USA



Adventureland

America's Wild West

Where the view loses itself in the vastness, where nature sharpens the sense for the essential, where time slows down and the moment stretches out, there lies the land of cowboys and a place of longing for adventurers.

"You can take the cowboy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the cowboy". That is the longing motto of Doug from Billings, Montana. Doug grew up on a cattle ranch and worked as a cowboy for many years. That was his life. Gradually, quad bikes, trucks and lift trucks took over his job, and today he works as a car mechanic. But when a rancher calls because he needs mounted help with the cattle drive, Doug takes time off, swaps overalls for boots and chaps and swings into the saddle of Roanie, his cowhorse, to pursue his old passion - as a cowboy.



Some pastureland is impassable for quad bikes, and so they still exist today, the real cowboys, even if only a few can still make a living from driving cattle. In recent years, the profession has made a comeback - on cattle ranches that have discovered tourism. Some ranching families, who have been breeding cattle for generations, have set up guest rooms or entire log cabins and welcome adventurers from Europe every year to give them a taste of the simple life, the "cowboy way of life".

"To understand horses, you have to think like a horse. To understand cows, you have to think like a cow" - with this cowboy wisdom, greenhorns are guided by the professionals to help with the cattle drive and cattle sorting. Well-trained cowhorses also help less talented guests to like real cowboys or cowgirls. Ranch holidays have become a big thing, especially in the American West. There is something for every taste and every budget. From simple, authentic working guest ranches to luxurious guest resorts designed specifically for tourism, some of which offer swimming pools, spas and gourmet cuisine. Riding in unspoilt nature and experiencing the wilderness is of all of them. Those who wish can practise lasso throwing, assist with horse training or calf burning. Some ranches organise riding competitions, for example barrel racing. Other pleasures of ranch and cowboy life include country music, bonfires, rodeos, trips to museums, national parks or shopping. Many a manager or businesswoman arrives in a designer outfit and leaves with a Stetson, chequered shirt and cowboy boots. And a taste of freedom and adventure.



The Wild West

It was the time of outlaws, soldiers of fortune and revolutionaries who gave the "Wild West" its name. The area stretched from the Great Plains, the large plains west of the Mississippi, to the Rocky Mountains. But the days of Billy the Kid and Jesse James are over. The West is no longer wild, at least not in the sense of raids, battles or Indian wars. It is still wild in its nature, in the abundance of wild animals, unspoilt land and remoteness. The present-day states of Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Nevada and Arizona still offer endless mountain and prairie landscapes where you can ride for days without meeting a soul. And there are still huge herds of cattle

over ranchland covering thousands, even tens of thousands of hectares.

Country info USA



Size 9 834 000 km²

Population: 330 million Capital: Washington D.C.

Language: Predominantly English and Spanish

Religion: Predominantly Christian

Currency: US Dollar

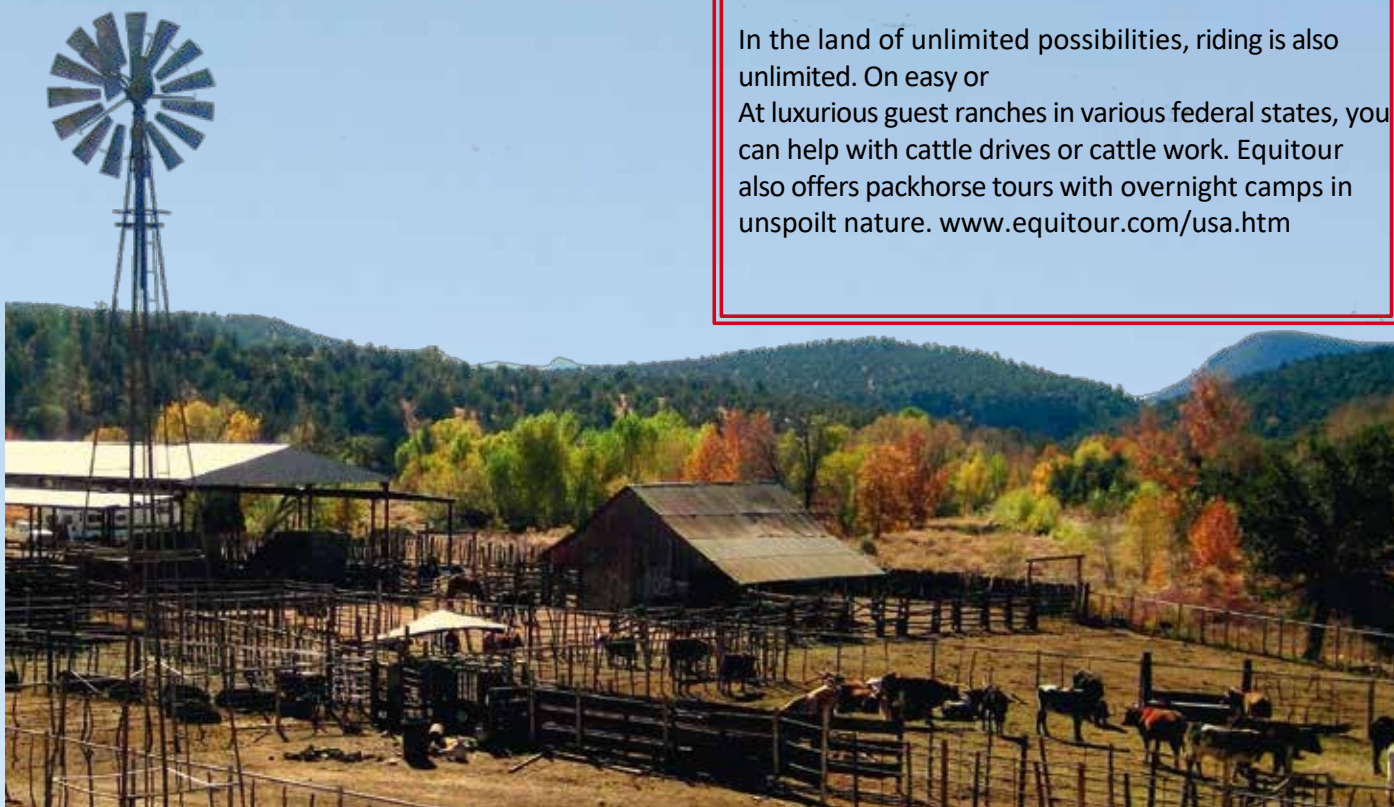
Climate: various climate zones

Best time to visit: all year round

EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

In the land of unlimited possibilities, riding is also unlimited. On easy or

At luxurious guest ranches in various federal states, you can help with cattle drives or cattle work. Equitour also offers packhorse tours with overnight camps in unspoilt nature. www.equitour.com/usa.htm



Saddle up!

The cowboy values good horses, not necessarily breeding papers. The predominant breeds are Quarter Horse, Paint Horse, Appaloosa, but also mixtures and tamed Mustangs. A western horse must be strong, fast and enduring. Added to this is the "cowsense", the instinct for cows.



Paint and Quarter Horse
- the partners of cowgirls and cowboys.





Quarter Horse



Paint Horse



Appaloosa



Mustang

QUARTER HORSE

The horses of the American settlers helped with cattle and field work, they pulled the family carriage to church on Sundays, and they served as racehorses for their owners' passion for riding and competing. This is how the Quarter Horse, one of the most versatile horse breeds in the world, came into being. They even beat thoroughbreds in quarter-mile racing. They owe their breed name to the Quartermilerace.

Today, the Quarter Horse is the largest horse breed in the world in terms of numbers. Western riding disciplines such as cutting, working cowhorse and reining developed cowboy work. Quarter Horses are compact, fast, agile and ready to perform. They have a reliable character and strong nerves. Their speciality is cowsense, the instinct to drive cattle independently.

PAINT HORSE

The Paint Horse is the chequer variant of the Quarter Horse, for which a separate studbook been kept since the 1960s. Single-coloured offspring of Paint Horses are regarded as Solid Paint Bred Horses. Paint horses largely have the same characteristics as their solid-coloured brothers.

APPALOOSA

"The horses are our four-legged brothers," said the Nez Percé, an Indian tribe from the American Northwest. Their territory was on the Palouse River, which gave the horses their name. "A Palouse Horse", later Appaloosa. Nez Percé breed was partly based on wild mustangs, which they captured and tamed. Colourful horses, especially the tiger piebald pattern, had a special significance for them. The eye-catching Appaloosas became a popular western horse breed worldwide. Although there also solid-coloured Appaloosas, the tiger piebald pattern is the most important breed characteristic.

MUSTANG

The legendary North American wild horses are descended from runaway and released domestic horses. They found ideal living conditions on the vast prairies. Today, over one hundred mustang herds still live in state-controlled areas. From time to time, animals are taken from the herds and auctioned off to interested parties. Mustangs are strong, courageous, sure-footed and extremely robust. They therefore have characteristics that equip them for the free, wild life.

Travelogue Montana

The great cattle drive

At work? On holiday? Who does that? Adrienne Friedlaender and a group of adventurers swap office chairs for western saddles and hire themselves out as cowgirls and cowboys on a cattle drive in the Wild West. This makes work really fun!

The bumpy ride through the hilly prairie feels like travelling back in time. The mobile phone network ends with the paved road. Now, in spring, the land is green and lush.

After an endless drive up into the Pryor Mountains in the US state of Montana, the huge off-road vehicle stops in front of the gate of the Dryhead Ranch.

The ranch's four log cabins, green hills and red-yellow rock faces of the Bighorn Canyon are reminiscent of wild west films. But the old ranch is anything but a cinema set. It is a working ranch.

Real cowboys do real work here. The

The ranch itself is firmly in the hands of women. The 59-year-old Jennifer Cerroni is the fifth generation to run the ranch, her 84-year-old mother Iris sits in the office and her sister Jackie cooks hearty cowboy food.

The real cowboy life

Guests are welcome at Dryhead, but the focus is still on working with the animals. If you're looking for luxury and wellness, you've come to the wrong place. Instead, there is real cowboy life! "As long as our guests are here, they are part of the family," says Jennifer. That is the magic of Dryhead Ranch.

The highlight of the cowboy job is the cattle drive, the big cattle drive that even a state border. Twice a year, the ranchers drive their herds along the Old Sioux Trail, which through Montana and Wyoming. The cattle spend the winter in the sheltered valleys near Lovell, Wyoming. In spring, the cattle drive leads from their winter quarters up to the lush mountain meadows around the ranch in Montana.

Before the harsh winter sets in, we head back down to Wyoming.

We set off to drive the cattle into the mountains. After the transfer from the ranch to Lovell, the professionals Jake, Chris, Will and Sky, together with their cowboy apprentices, set about bringing 250 Black Angus cows and their calves "home". At their side are eight herding dogs, without whom nothing would happen on the cattle drive. The cattle drive lasts four days, with six hours of riding in the dust, sun and nature every day. This is the holiday guests' dream come true.

Let's go!

"Always keep to the side and never ride in front of the herd!" In chaps, leather overtrousers and cog spurs on his western boots, head cowboy Jake stands in front of us. He chews tobacco, spits on the red sandy ground and looks round: "Everything else will follow ..." Even his thick moustache can't hide his amused grin. After the driver's briefing, he's the right horse for everyone. Shortly afterwards, we sit in the western saddle and spread out around the herd.

Jake opens the gate and the huge herd storms out. And like generations and thousands of cattle before them, cowboys and herd make their way north.

"Hey, hey, go, go!" The cheering shouts of the cowboys are accompanied by the bellowing mooing of the herd of cattle. The cows and calves move forwards, close together. It's not a wild chase, but a calm march. Otherwise the calves would not be able to keep up for long.

The sky of the "Big Sky Country" stretches to the horizon over red rocks, green hills and snow-covered mountain peaks. We get a taste of the freedom of the West.

If you want to experience that western feeling but shy away from long days in the saddle, you can also organise your cowboy life a little more quietly. During a "ranch week", guests help the cowboys with their work - on horseback, of course. Burning, vaccinating and catching the cows are on the programme.

The outlier

The cows set the pace and time doesn't matter. So we ride at a moderate pace. The ground is dry and the air tastes of earth. Riding behind the cows, we quickly realise that the cowboy bandana more than just a fashion accessory. Pulled up under the eyes, it protects us from the clouds of dust whirled up by the moving cattle.

Suddenly, a calf from the herd. Jake's border collie mix immediately sets its sights on the little runaway. "Max! Go ahead! Bring him back" - run and bring him back, Jake calls to his dog. The dog rushes the calf like an arrow. Despite all his zeal, however, he doesn't manage to bring the fleeing calf back to the herd. But when all else fails, the cowboy reaches for the lasso! Jake spurs his horse and follows the calf at a stretched gallop. At full speed, he swings his lasso, throws it unerringly around the calf's neck and comes back with the runaway in tow. Jake winks at the guests, spits and shouts: "How I this stuff!

Close to the sky

We ride through canyons, washed-out ditches, over sandy paths and endless plateaus. "The outside of a horse is good for the inside of a man" - horses are good for a man's soul. This Churchill quote also applies to cowboys. Alan Turner, 56, from England, also this wisdom. For the past twelve years, the businessman has swapped his business suit for chaps and boots for one week a year. "Here on the prairie, away from the office, phone and appointments, I can switch off completely. Working with cattle and horses gives me the feeling of being part of nature."

After around six hours, we reach the end of the first day's stage. The tired cows are allowed to rest and regain their strength in a fenced-in meadow until the morning. Slightly bow-legged and with a stiff gait, the hobby cowboys lead their horses into the corral and provide them with hay and water. Their knees and rumps ache, but they all have a satisfied smile on their faces.

The reward

"Everything all right? How was your day?" Jennifer walks busily between horses, dogs, cowboys and cows. She is

came with her off-road vehicle to take the two-legged friends back to the ranch. Before that, they have lunch from the luggage compartment: sandwiches, soup and banana cake. Sky sits on the ground, leans against the gate of the corral and bites hungrily in his sandwich. Contrary to the claim cowboys never take their hats off, his is lying next to him in the sand. He wipes the sweat from his white forehead with his bandana and lets his damp hair dry in the wind. His tanned cheeks glow from the sun.

After arriving at the ranch, the smell of braised meat lures us into the "cook house". Work gloves and hats lie on the windowsill. That's all the cowboy takes off during the meal. The wheel spurs on his dusty boots clink with every step he takes along the buffet. "Today I've cooked a recipe from my grandmother," says chef Jackie, explaining the dishes served. "It comes from the church ladies of Dryhead." And they knew what cowboys like: chicken marinated in milk, breaded with crackers and braised in the oven. Served with homemade bread and salad.

The day ends with lively conversation on the veranda of the bunkhouse, the guest accommodation. It offers simple but cosy Western-style rooms.

Far away from the light of the nearest town, the stars twinkle like diamonds in the night sky. Only the howling of the coyotes breaks the silence of the night.

We made it!

Another three days of riding and cattle driving lie ahead of us. The road climbs steadily and, unnoticed, we finally cross the border into Montana. We consciously breathe in the vastness of the natural landscape.

"Hey, hey, go, go!" A feeling of pride, but also melancholy, overcomes us as the ranch appears in front of us. After four days, 90 kilometres and 20 hours in the saddle, the herd pushes through the dryhead gate. Jake closes the gate behind the last calf, chews, spits and laughs: "We made it!" We've made it! Around him, dusty, sweaty but happy faces under worn hats. Now we feel like real cowboys.

Adrienne Friedlaender

www.equitour.com/wrwy02.htm

www.equitour.com/cdwy01.htm





The Pryor Mustangs

Free Spirits

Not far from the Dryhead Ranch you can meet North America's living legends: real wild mustangs.

For several hours, the pond lies quiet and unspoiled between pine forests and mountain meadows. A dun mare appears between the trees, trotting leisurely to the watering hole. She leads a group of mustangs that want to quench their thirst. The seven or eight horses line up side by side on the bank and lower their heads. Other groups soon appear, keeping their distance until the first group has finished. Each group consists of a stallion, a few mares and their foals.

As if they had made an appointment, more and more groups of mustangs appear, it is a rendezvous of wild horses. Some splash around happily in the water, while a few young stallions approach a strange group and risk a scuffle.

There is hardly any other place where natural wild horse behaviour can be observed as well as in the Pryor Mountains. One to two hundred mustangs live almost completely on their own on a good 16,000 hectares. The Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range is one of 177 state-controlled mustang sanctuaries.

Small but nice, it offers visitors excellent opportunities for Mustang observation.

The Mustang region stretches across the states of Montana and Wyoming. The wild horses spend the summer on the herb meadows at an altitude of 2500 metres. Depending on the weather, they move to the lower altitudes of Wyoming in autumn.

Gatherings are organised every few years to control the population. The mustangs are tracked down by helicopter and herded into corrals. For some horses, this is the end of their freedom. They are handed over by "adoption" to competent and tested interested parties. Only after a year are they allowed to take ownership of the mustangs. This prevents slaughterers making a profit by buying mustangs.

The majority of the penned mustangs are released back into the Pryor Mountains after the Gathering. And into further years of freedom.





Battle for the mares

Rund 50 000 wilde Mustangs leben heute noch in den Weiten des amerikanischen Westens. Sie sind aufgeteilt in 177 Schutzgebieten, genannt „Herd Managment Areas“, kurz HMA.



Mit gesenktem Kopf treibt der Hengst seine Stuten



Ranches of the West

On her 2017 road trip, Julia Wies visited several ranches for Equitour and was thrilled. Here she reports on her experiences in the American West, where she tasted the freedom of cowboy life.



Dryhead Ranch, Montana

We already know this ranch high up in the Pryor Mountains from the travelogue on pages 26/27.

150 horses and over a thousand head of cattle are part of the operation, which guests help look after. Something very special about this ranch is the horse drive. Some of the younger horses have to be driven from the ranch to a distant pasture. I am given the experienced bay horse "Buzz" for this unique ride. The three of us trot briskly in front, with three other riders following the free-roaming herd. We cross wide open spaces until we reach the selected pasture, where the grass is lush and the young horses can grow up freely and undisturbed.

Info & Booking www.equitour.com/wrwy02.htm



Lonesome Spur Ranch, Montana



Between Beartooth and Pryor Mountains lies the Lonesome Spur Ranch, a real working ranch, which means there is plenty of cattle work. The main house and a few guest cabins form the centre of the property. Guests can familiarise themselves with the horses in the riding arena and on the trail course. Branding in spring, sorting cows, small and large cattle drives are authentic ranch work and at the same time a programme for holiday guests.

Once the cattle have been looked after, ranchers and greenhorns ride out into the marvellous countryside. I accompany a camp adventure in the Pryor Mountains. A rough gravel track takes us to the camp, where we unload the horses from the trailer and get into the saddles. My Paint Horse Paily carries me safely through untouched wilderness, over rugged mountain terrain, through forests, rivers and wide prairies. The name "Bigsky Country" for Montana becomes apparent here. Our become as wide as the land. I am deeply touched by the simple life and the close-to-nature riding and enjoy the evening campfire in the camp. Info & Booking www.equitour.com/wrmt06.htm



Bighorn Mountain Ranch, Wyoming



I'm sitting on the terrace of my room, looking at the majestic Bighorn Mountains and looking forward to the day's ride ahead. In the morning, the horses are loaded and we drive into the Bighorn National Forest. The riding groups are divided up according to ability so that everyone gets their money's worth. We ride slower routes together. For a faster pace, the more experienced riders split up and enjoy long gallops. Delighted by the gallop, we then ride together again at a walk through the mountains and across flowering mountain meadows. We stop for lunch at a crystal-clear lake. As we ride on, we spot a mighty bull moose and a calf between the trees. Goosebumps! It's a long ride, but I'd like it to be even longer.

We return to the ranch in the late afternoon, where we are allowed to view photos taken by our wranglers and make them available guests to download during "cocktail hour" before dinner. At the evening barbecue, we are spoilt with meat and vegetables from the grill.

In addition to horse riding and ranch work, guests can enjoy fly fishing, shooting, hiking and canoeing or excursions, for example to the famous Yellowstone National Park.

Info & Booking www.equitour.com/grwy01.htm



Pure adventure ...

Western-style luxury



Drowsy Water Ranch, Colorado



In the middle of the Rocky Mountains lies a little paradise: the Drowsy Water Ranch. An extensive programme offers fun for the whole family. Swimming pool, hot tub, volleyball court and a small lake surround the stylish main house and individual guest cabins. Rafting, ziplining, hiking, plus entertainment with square dancing or campfires. The main activity is, of course, horse riding. Holiday guests are into different groups according to ability. Beginners can practise their skills during riding lessons or on leisurely rides. I can the wind blow around my nose on my black horse "Montana" on longer and faster rides through the magnificent mountain and forest landscape.

We have heard black bears, and many guests have seen them. At the end of the holiday, the best and funniest experiences are presented in the form of a short show. An amusing highlight! "It's the horse, the landscape and the good company that keeps guests coming back," says host Lauren, and I can well understand why.

Info & Booking www.equitour.com/grco01.htm



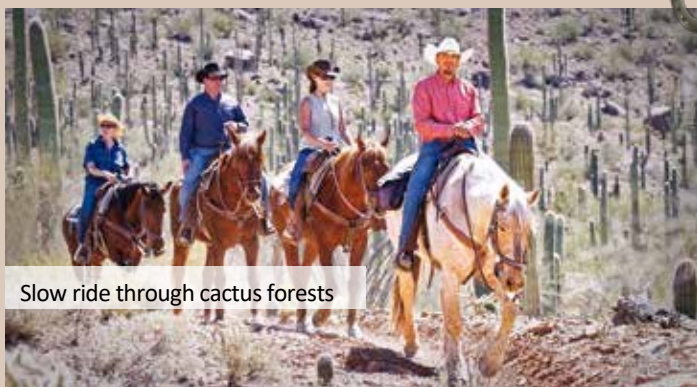
Coming home



Scrambled eggs in the Rockies



White Stallion Ranch, Arizona



Slow ride through cactus forests



Ranch of the Southwest

Plenty of Western history in a completely different environment awaits me at the White Stallion Ranch in Arizona. In the hot, dry south, desert and cacti are the backdrop to the ranch holiday. A luxurious ranch house plus adobe bungalows in the style of the Pueblo culture serve as guest accommodation. The pool invites you to take a dip and you can relax wonderfully on the loungers in the quiet zone. The tennis court, games room, sports field and petting zoo for kids offer more action. Further entertainment can be found in the reading corner, the bar, the computer room or shopping in the hotel's own souvenir shop. Popular excursion destinations include the western town of Tucson and the desert museum. Hikes and covered wagon rides also take non-riders into the surrounding area.

But of course, riding takes centre stage here too. The individual rides have names such as "Mountain Fast Ride" and "Slow Ride", which give you an idea of what to expect.

On the "Breakfast Ride", we saddle up the horses early in the morning and ride through the cactus landscape to the covered breakfast area. The horses get a break while we riders blueberry pancakes, scrambled eggs and sausages. What a way to start the day!

The team penning competition gets exciting in the afternoon. The teams of riders have to select three animals from a small herd of cattle and drive them into a corral. My horse "Manthy" knows what to do and makes my job easy. It makes me feel like a real cowgirl.

An artist's demonstration of lasso throwing, pistol juggling and whip cracking fascinates us and shows us what we can still learn.

Info & Booking www.equitour.com/graz03.htm



BEST-OF our regular customers

Riding holidays can be addictive. But it is a healthy and wholesome addiction. Long-standing and loyal customers in particular tell us about their personal favourite Equitour programme.

Ate Schöffnacker:

From the five decades in which I have been travelling on horseback (since 1976), many memories have remained that I regard as my "fund". Occasionally I can contribute to the entertainment with stories from them. Sometimes an image just pops back into my head and makes me smile. For example...

...my mare in Ecuador, whose foal accompanied us on the tour
...the evening in Wadi Rum, where we two riding guests (female) sat a campfire in a group of Arabs in traditional white cloaks and of course understood nothing except the special nature of the experience

...the afternoon in Crete, where we stopped as a "girls' group" in a café and got talking to the men sitting there, who told us about their years in German factories and bought us coffee

...the downpour in Sardinia, from which we tried in vain to escape under dry bushes

...accommodation in luxury lodges in Peru with jacuzzi under the stars at an altitude of approx. 4000 metres

...the horse in Romania, which was called Ördok (devil), but behaved very well and at the end of the tour in a yard without a rider jumped over a hurdle "just for fun"

...grilled guinea pigs in Peru

...apple strudel and schnapps varieties in Austria

These are just a few unforgettable experiences.

Every single trip has enriched me in its speciality. I am therefore unable to recommend a particular tour.

My last riding trip, the Ruta del Vino, was my thirtieth trip with Equitour and my fourth riding tour with José and Eva. The two of them are just great!

What I like best? Apart from Eva's picnics, José's choice of horses, the varied landscape, the fine hotels, the good food, the help with mounting, the calm handling of the horses - difficult to say!

www.equitour.com/vin008.htm



Stefan and Bernadette Basler:

Our favourite out of fifteen riding trips is Best of Botswana: This riding trip was our second trip to the Tuli Block and also to the Okavango Delta.

We have to say that the Tuli Reserve in particular has changed a lot. The animal world and nature are much more beautiful than they were fifteen years ago.

The various camps are also simply brilliant. Such accommodation is simply unbeatable for adventurous riders!

We also really enjoyed the Okavango. No wishes were left unfulfilled. John and his team spoilt us very much.

Of course, the accommodation is also amazing. We had daily encounters with elephants and the "water canters" (gallops in the water) simply knock your socks off.

A rider couldn't wish for more. For example, we galloped with a herd of zebras and once with tsessebes & wildebeest in the water. Yeeehhaa!!!

www.equitour.com/tul008.htm & www.equitour.com/oko008.htm



Mihaela and Valeriu Toma:

We have now been on fifteen riding holidays with Equitour and are thrilled!

The most beautiful riding holiday we with Equitour was the "Atlantic Ride France". Everything was perfectly organised, lovely people, familiar atmosphere, great, warm support.

Many thanks to Michel (our experienced, excellent riding guide) for his commitment and for the competent support. We felt spoilt.

The horses are very kind, well-trained, super-trained, sure-footed and powerful, for all tastes and all abilities. suitable for individual riding abilities. The landscape is beautiful and varied.

It was a very nice riding holiday in a great natural setting. And the weather also played along. The beach gallop on the former racehorses (lhoby and Fidji) is unforgettable.

The picnics in the great outdoors were always very tasty. Very good hotels, with charm and excellent food. Our expectations were exceeded.

Many thanks to Equitour for the friendly and detailed advice and all the necessary clarifications.

www.equitour.com/mim008.htm





TRAVEL TIPS - You have to see!

Over 400 riding programmes worldwide make the choice difficult! We asked the travel experts: What must you have seen and experienced?

Crossing the Andes

If you are looking for an unforgettable adventure, I highly recommend crossing the Andes! I particularly remember the independence ride from Chile to Argentina.

If you can do without the pleasure of a comfortable bed and can survive several days of digital detox, without mobile phone reception and social media (you won't it!), you will be rewarded on this ride with breathtaking landscapes away from civilisation and campfire romance under the starry skies of the southern hemisphere. On this pack trip, you will ride along the historic route as the freedom fighter San Martín did over 200 years ago. It probably hasn't changed much since then. You won't see any roads for days, let alone cars, and you won't even meet any people - at most a shepherd with his goats. Instead, you are accompanied by gigantic mountains, condors circle in the sky and guanacos roam the plains in the distance. New impressions await you behind every peak. Green valleys, rugged cliffs, torrential streams, red rocks - nature creates the most beautiful paintings! One particular highlight riding past the Aconcagua, the highest peak in the Andes and the highest mountain outside the Himalayas. It is impressive how sure-footed and persevering the criollos and mules are as they you through this extreme terrain. After crossing the Argentinian border, you slowly descend back into civilisation and finally reach Mendoza and Argentina's most famous wine region. With a glass of red wine "back in reality" you can reflect on the last few days, which like another world. Denise Neufeld was Equitour Product Manager for 10 years and is now a loyal customer

www.equitour.com/it-chrt05.htm



My ultimate tip from our travel programme: During my stay in Portugal, I visited two riding stables in close proximity and was able to combine two completely different programmes:

The Arrabida Nature Park is about 70 kilometres Lisbon. There we star rides in the nature park and on the beach. The programme ends in Lisbon. Here you can plan horse-free sightseeing tour. Afterwards, I recommend a visit to Alcainca near Lisbon. Alcainca is a riding school with well-trained Lusitanos. Under expert guidance, the high school is made understandable and tangible here. Alcainca also offers working equitation, which particularly popular in Portugal.

This combination is special because you can combine a pure nature experience in the Arrabida National Park, including beach riding, with advanced riding training at Lu sitanos and experience Lisbon in between. Elisabeth Hambrügge - Product Manager at Equitour since 2022: www.equitour.com/alcsta.htm & www.equitour.com/bay008.htm

More than 20 riding holidays have taken me around the world and every

The tour offered an incredible variety of impressions, natural and cultural experiences, unique encounters and horses that grew close to my heart. From Spain and Jordan to India, from Greece and Croatia to Namibia and many other countries, where, in addition to unique horse breeds such as the Marwari horses in Rajasthan with their sickle-shaped ears, there was also authentic contact with locals, such as when visiting a Masai village in Kenya on the Masai Mara riding tour, which was certainly one of my most exciting riding tours with the experience of the "Big Migration" on horseback - right in the middle of it, instead of just being there.

But the friendly fellow riders from all over the world also always contributed to the success of a great tour, with many happy moments. In addition to the soothing togetherness, there was also the equally soothing solitude, for example in the sheer endless expanses of the Namib Desert, where you didn't see any human tracks for days on end, but at night you could see a



breathtaking starry skies and the wild horses of the Namib. In total contrast: the colourful hustle and bustle at what is probably the largest horse festival in the world in Jerez de la Frontera, of course in proper Spanish riding costume on horseback!

There are so many more experiences to tell, including unforgettable moments in Botswana, South Africa and Kenya when you lions, elephants, buffalo, hippos and leopards on horseback. It takes your breath away. It would go beyond the scope of this magazine to tell you all about it... That's why I'm already looking forward to my next riding holiday with Equitour!

Julia Frey, member of the Board of Directors and former Managing Director of Equitour Big Migration, Kenya: www.equitour.com/mmr011.htm

After 15 years with Equitour and at least 20 riding holidays, it's hard to say which was the best trip. There were so many highlights!

The "Central Mongolia" trip was an absolute childhood dream for me, which I can warmly recommend to anyone who wants to switch off completely. Travelling without a clock, without a mobile phone, to the rhythm of the nomads and in harmony with nature is incomparable. The vast steppe landscape and the relaxed nomads ensure total relaxation from the very first moment!

I also travelled to Morocco several times, and I will never forget spending the night in the living room of a Berber family, who entertained us like royalty and gave us an insight into their lives without a common language. Such cultural experiences make travelling with horses something very special. In my opinion, Iceland offers the best riding experience! Although I prefer warm, dry weather, I went on two highland tours. "Flying" with a free-range herd of Icelandic horses over hill and dale through a bizarre landscape that changes as quickly as the weather is simply a joy! The indefatigable Icelandic horses, which swim through even the deepest glacial rivers without batting an eyelid, are unbeatable as trail horses! And they are always good for an adventure - on every tour, the herd escaped once, which you then have to circle back to a spot of lush grass at breakneck speed. In the highlands, however, it can take several kilometres before such a spot appears. Horse drive and roundup were therefore included.

Next up, however, is another trip to Sardinia, my favourite nearby destination. This will be my fourth time riding here and I'm really looking forward to the fantastic landscape with mountains and beaches. Jessica Kiefer, Managing Director of Equitour
Iceland www.equitour.com/lmn009.htm



Wild and wide



Alone in the world, travellers on horseback in the mountain wilderness of North Macedonia.

North Macedonia 

Equestrian Land



Adventure North Macedonia

On the trail the Miyak



Jessica Kiefer explores the land of the Miyak in the saddle of Arabian horse "Sandokan". It is quite possible that she will be watched by wolves, bears, chamois and eagles.



"This will be a very emotional journey" is how riding guide Vasko prepares us for our six-day adventure ride through the mountains of North Macedonia. This is followed by an introduction to the Miyak, an ancient Macedonian tribe, in whose footsteps we will be travelling, appropriately enough on horseback. The Miyak, who dedicated themselves primarily to cattle breeding, have always had close to horses. As riding and transport animals, they have of great service to the people in the remote mountains.

Vasko, himself a true Miyak, keeps his 40 or so horses as free as possible, regardless of the dangers by wolves. That is the custom among his people. The horses spend the winter near the capital Skopje in stables and large runs with plenty of food, as they would lose too much weight in the mountains and would hardly be usable before mid-June.

The touring season lasts from May to the end of October, and it's hard to say which the best time. We have in favour of July. In addition to mirabelle plums, raspberries and strawberries along the way, midsummer brings us pleasantly warm temperatures and we don't have to freeze during the two nights in the tent either.

Our group consists of ten female riders from Belgium, Germany, Denmark and France. We hit it off straight away. The horses are allocated after a trial round in the round pen. My companion for the week is the pretty bay Arabian gelding Sandokan, supposedly the fastest horse in the stable. That doesn't seem important to me for a mountain trail, because in my experience you mainly ride at a walk in the mountains with one or two controlled gallops a day. This week I will learn that there is another way.

Because soon it's "Heida!" - off we go on a race across wide mountain meadows. As I'm personally a fan of controlled cantering, I ride Sandokan at the back, which is no problem. I also let the young back guide Sheip, who rides an athletic grey horse, go first, as the two of them are only too happy to jump into the race.

The Miyak horses are not assigned to a specific breed. There are different types: the stocky mountain pony with a straight head, stable build and lush coat, the somewhat finer type with an Arabian influence and the athletic types that resemble the Achal-Tekkiner, such as Sheip's horse. We also have a pacer in the group who reminds me of the Turkish gafted horse, the Ravan.

All the horses are geldings who know each other well. This means we hardly need to pay attention to the distances, which makes riding in such a large group easier. Vasko that we don't just ride behind each other in the open terrain, but that everyone rides actively on their own. If you just want to chill out, you've come to the wrong place. In addition to the fast and numerous gallops, all riding days are exceptionally long, often around 40 kilometres. But for the fact that we spend up to eight hours in the saddle, we don't have to a finger otherwise. The horses are saddled up and unsaddled for us, the tents ready when we arrive and our cook takes excellent care of our physical well-being. Vasko's organisation is perfect: Team A

- Riding guides, Team B - catering, Team C - grooms. At the ranch it probably goes until Team X, that's how many people he employs. Everyone is always in a good mood and always endeavours to our every wish. The whole team around Vasko seems like one big family, you just have to feel at home here. A riding adventure at its best!

The long riding days take us to breathtaking vantage points up to 2600 metres with views over deep valleys and endless lonely mountain ranges where you can see the tree line. The view stretches as far as Bulgaria and Albania. Vastness and solitude as far as the eye can see - North Macedonia is a true dream destination for riders.

The beautiful natural landscape is home to many wild animals, including eagles, chamois, bears, wolves and even wild horses. Twice we see a chamois on rocky mountain slopes. Eagles circle majestically high in the sky. Unfortunately, there are no wild horses to be seen, but we do come across free-roaming herdsmen's horses with curious foals. As we come out of the forest, we hear a loud cracking sound in the undergrowth: presumably probably a female bear, says Vasko. Unfortunately, we don't get to see her, but once it has rained, we discover a fresh bear track, and in a high rock face we see a bear den, the hibernation shelter. Bears are mainly vegetarians and therefore not normally dangerous for horses. They feast on mirabelle plums, raspberries and wild strawberries, which grow in abundance and which we also enjoy.

Other four-legged inhabitants are the sheep that roam the mountain pastures during the day. The huge white-grey sheepdogs of the local Šarplaninac breed protect the flocks with bared teeth and aggressive barking. They instil respect in us too, but their strength and size are necessary to defend the grazing animals against wolves. Even on horseback, I don't feel entirely at ease when we meet the dogs with their bushy teddy fur, which makes them look even bigger.

Photos: private

Between heaven and earth



Gallop! North Macedonia



Wild living in the mountains



Encounter with sheep and their guardians



Without them, however, traditional sheep farming in the mountains is impossible, because after North Macedonia banned the shooting of wolves, they have proliferated and a major threat to grazing animals. Vasko has even lost individual horses, especially foals, to wolves.

Sheep farming is on the decline today, as cheese production and meat sales are not a lucrative business. The shepherds spend the summer in simple huts, enveloped in the scent of the sheep, which attracts masses of flies. It takes a long time milk hundreds of animals by hand in the mornings and evenings, and in between the men are busy making cheese. Leisure and family time fall by the wayside. Vasko takes us to a sheep farm where we can watch the milking and the production of soft and hard cheese. We stop several times for lunch in the shepherd's huts with hospitable shepherds.

When we are not staying in tents, we sleep in hotels and guesthouses in the tranquil Miyak villages. Not many tourists get lost in the mountains. Vasko's horse-riding business is an important employer up here. In summer, the riders come, and in winter, the tireless Vasko guides skiers off-piste through his beautiful homeland.

We experience absolute silence and solitude on a sunrise ride. We climb into the saddle at 4.15 am. The route through the darkness leads up a steep path that a marvellous view over the mountains and Lake Mavrovo. The Miyak shepherds are also in the habit of riding at sunrise.

to ride to viewpoints to reflect and give thanks for their lives. An atmospheric ritual when the horses and riders wait until the sun slowly bathes the mountains in soft shades of grey.

Vasko has organised a less quiet surprise for our return to the ranch: We are welcomed by a traditional group of musicians with "timpani and trumpets". It sounds like a whole orchestra, but there are actually just four of . Their music is reminiscent of the traditional Miyak high time, as it still celebrated today. Such a festival with dancing, ancestor invocation and horse riding lasts three days and is always organised in May for all those who wish to marry. An old wedding custom requires the bride's family to give the young couple a horse as a good luck charm.

Our riding week in the Macedonian mountains comes to an end far too quickly with this special farm festival. But we savour the healthy nature with dense beech forests, blooming alpine pastures, wide plateaus, rugged rocks, clear mountain streams and lakes and the insights into the culture of the Miyak people. Vasko passionately shares his enthusiasm for the country, its people and horses with his guests. His infectious manner leads to guests hugging the horses and the team on the last day with tears in their eyes. The week in Vasko's care felt like two weeks. Full of impressions and emotions, we finally say goodbye to our two- and four-legged friends.

Jessica Kiefer, July 2022 www.equitour.com/maz008.htm

Arrival at the sheep farm



Vasko explains the cheese production



Happy sheep



Campfire romance



On the shores of Lake Mavrovo



In the heights of the Bistra Mountains



North Macedonia

Alone with nature

Few tourists are drawn to North Macedonia. But those who have been there once are enchanted by the charm of this little-travelled Balkan country.

Regional delicacies



Master of cheese making



View of the Bistra massif



The small landlocked country of North Macedonia is unknown to many. This is precisely what makes the country an insider tip for looking for peace and unspoilt nature on holiday. Untouched wilderness characterises the centre of the country, where alpine mountain peaks and deep valleys alternate with extensive plateaus and lowlands. Wild animals such as bears, wolves and even the rare Balkan lynx roam the extensive forests. Despite these predators, red deer, chamois and countless smaller animal species also find a perfect habitat.

North Macedonia used to be the southernmost province of Yugoslavia. To this day, the country is economically backward, but open and friendly in human terms. Agriculture is very important and people often live from sheep farming, especially in the mountains. Milk and cheese products are sold on the markets and abroad. Every sheep farm also has horses, which are used in rough terrain. They are used for transport purposes and otherwise lead a free life. Also indispensable are the huge, fearless herding dogs, the Šarplaninacs, which are able to keep hungry wolves away from the flocks of sheep.

North Macedonia's most spectacular tourist attractions are the deep Matka Gorge, the Mavrovo National Park around the beautifully situated Lake Mavrovo and the Mediterranean-style city of Ohrid with the beautiful church of St Jovan Kaneo, which towers high above the shores of the huge Lake Ohrid. Historic buildings, small shops in the old bazaar, restaurants and a lively nightlife can be found in the historic and modern capital Skopje.

From Mount Vodno, the summit of which can be reached by cable car, you have a fantastic view of the city and the distant mountain scenery. Visitors to the country can expect heart-warming hospitality, culinary delights and relaxed people in both the historic towns and rural regions. Another advantage: hotels and restaurants are extremely affordable, so you can all the pleasures of a holiday in North Macedonia even on a budget.

Country info North Macedonia



Size 25 713 km²

Population: 1.8 million

Capital: Skopje

Language: Macedonian, Albanian

Religion: Predominantly Christian

Currency: Denar

Climate: Winter: cold and rainy, summer: warm, dry

Best time to visit: Summer

EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

The Dolna Reka region is the backdrop for the Equitour North Macedonia Ride. It is the ancestral homeland of the Miyak people on horseback. Riding guests experience their culture and hospitality and are carried through the Bistra Mountains by sure-footed and well-conditioned horses in long stages and at many gallops. If you love the simple life close to nature, this is the right place for you.

www.equitour.com/maz008.htm

The capital Skopje

Anniversary trips

EQUITOUR is 50 Celebrate with us!

Join us on a short, exciting trip to either the Black Forest or Alsace. In addition to great trail horses and guides, Equitour also emphasises the 3Gs: Culinary delights, conviviality and cosiness. This is the motto of the two anniversary rides. They are offered exclusively for us by our experienced family-run riding centres. An Equitour employee will also accompany you on both dates. We look forward to seeing you!

1. SCHWARZWALD

Black Forest weekend with Minitrail

Date: 03 to 06

Price per person in a double room: EUR 725,-

4 days, 3 overnight stays, 4 riding days, full board, German-speaking riding guide

Where fox and hare say good night to each other, you will find the riding centre in a quiet, secluded location in a forest clearing in the southern Black Forest. The forests and pastures between Schluchsee, Titisee and the Danube offer a wide riding area with many refreshment stops and riding centres. The sprawling farmsteads are surrounded by goat and cattle pastures and the forest is dominated by fir trees, ferns, mosses and rocks. The Black Forest also plenty of culinary delights: From cherry cake to bacon, from beers to schnapps. www.equitour.com/girsta.htm



Photo stop on the lakeshore



View over the Titisee



Marvellous views



Typical Black Forest farm



2. ELSASS

Northern Vosges weekend with minitrail

Date: 05 to 08

Price per person in a double room: EUR 755

4 days, 3 overnight stays, 4 riding days, full board, German-speaking riding guide

Winding forest paths, orchards and vineyards make the Alsace-Vosges region particularly varied. Every now and then, a castle or a dreamy village pops up. Alsace is famous as a gourmet region. There are tarte flambée, game, wines and more to savour. The Alsatian way of life, food and landscapes with numerous riding routes - ideal for a riding holiday!

www.equitour.com/alista.htm

Rocky highlights



Gate to the castle ruins



Through picturesque villages



Gourmet picnic



Procedure for both programmes

Thursday:

Arrival at midday. Lunch and aperitif, then first ride out.

Friday:

Day ride with lunch picnic or refreshment stop.

Saturday:

Breakfast and start of the two-day ride.

Sunday:

Return in the afternoon, aperitif and return journey.

Photos: private

A person wearing a blue jacket and a helmet is riding a dark horse. The horse is standing on a mossy bank next to a calm body of water, possibly a lake or a wide river. The water reflects the surrounding trees and the sky. In the background, there are more trees and a forested hillside under a cloudy sky. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

In the country

In the wilderness of the north, the forces of nature clear the mind and soul. In the slowness of unspoilt life, visitors reflect on the essentials. Best on horseback, of course.

Lapland



of elves and trolls



Travelogue Lapland

Summer with the Sami

Tundra, forests, wild animals and the original Sami culture. Jessica Kiefer discovers Lapland on horseback on the Ratekjokk Trail.



Sami tent kota



As far as the eye can see, the northern Swiss tundra stretches out below us with its low forests, moors, heath and lakes. There are no houses or roads in sight. The view from the aeroplane, shortly before landing in Kiruna, the capital of the north, is overwhelming.

Until the middle of the 17th century, the Sami lived undisturbed in Scandinavia's north. But then the governments began to impose regulations and take land for settlers from the south. The peace-loving Sami hardly defended themselves against the encroachments, but nevertheless held on to their traditions and way of life and today make the best of it: in addition to handicrafts, reindeer herding and fishing, tourism is now a source of income.

This is also the case with Kerstin and Matti, who own an Icelandic horse farm. In winter, guests explore the magical snowy landscape on horseback, motorised sleighs and reindeer sledges. In summer riding tours in the mountains. For the summer wilderness tour, I head to the far north in mid-August. The participants come from Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Belgium, England and even New Zealand. In addition to Kerstin we will be accompanied by Sarah, who is studying to become a wilderness guide here. We spend the first night at the riding centre in typical Swedish guest houses. The huge paddocks stretch as far as the wide Kalix stream, which looks more like a lake here.

The next morning, we pack our saddlebags, organise our horses and set off. After a short stretch along the Kalix, we leave the paved main path and ride along narrow tracks through a low birch forest. Although the summer has been very wet so far, the ground is not slippery. The forest floor is loose and covered with springy moss. We are quickly convinced of the quality of the Icelanders. Kerstin emphasises the importance of good training. All the horses are four or five gaited, and each is fine and independent to ride. Pack horse Brenna runs freely with us and is also free during the breaks, while the others graze in a marked-out paddock. So Brenna occasionally comes to our barbecue area to see what's on .

In the evening, we reach a vast mountain landscape where a strong wind blows against us. This is where we set up camp for the next two days: two Sami tents, called kota, a barbecue area and a large paddock are sheltered by a stream. After a delicious dinner around the campfire, everyone is given a reindeer skin to sleep on, which proves to be surprisingly comfortable. A small wood-burning stove in the tent provides cosy warmth. Kerstin is a wonderful cook who conjures up three-course meals around the campfire. She serves reindeer from her own farm in all variations. But also fish and even elk. As a vegetarian, I enjoy the sight of live reindeer and elk more than anything else.



Rest in the wilderness

River crossing: it's all isi!



Guest houses and pastures

A drink for the horses



While the mighty moose gather around the riding centre in winter and help themselves to the horses' haystacks, they find plenty of food in the vast forests in summer. In summer, binoculars are therefore necessary to observe them. There are also bears, wolves and wolverines here, but they remain hidden from us.

We also enjoy the unique flora and feast on delicious fruits such as blueberries, black crowberries and the rare cloudberry. It is the perfect riding tour to relax. There is no hurry here, which does not mean that we only ride at a walk. There are always opportunities to trot, tölt or take a short canter.

We reach our next accommodation across a treeless plateau, which is already partly coloured red in autumn. The view sweeps over lakes, wooded valleys and across to the Kebnekaise mountains, which are still covered in snow. In the late afternoon, we reach Matti's abandoned home village. The wooden houses and log cabins are now only used as accommodation for the riders. There is only running water in the form of the crystal-clear river.

Of course, it's much cooler in the far north than here, so it's not T-shirt weather. Perfect for riding, especially as almost every accommodation has the obligatory sauna. The only minor drawback is the annoying mosquitoes that breed in the humid air.

climate. But with mosquito repellent, it's no problem. We enjoy the sauna before Kerstin and Sarah call us for dinner. The farmhouse harbours some treasures from the old way of life and traditional crafts. We listen to Kerstin's stories about the peaceful Sami people. The last ride takes us into the reddish-coloured mountains with great views over the Kalix, the Kebnekaise mountains and the extensive forests. At the picnic area we find fresh tracks and remains of moose. Unfortunately, the animals themselves have already moved on.

We then say goodbye to the horses, who stay behind in the Sami village, and walk the short distance down to Kalix, where Matti is waiting with the ferry. After the crossing, we take the minibus back to the riding stables and the remaining animals. In addition to almost 30 Icelandic horses, there is also a cat, two billy goats and several dogs on the farm. Six new horses arrived from Iceland in the summer and are now carefully trained. Some of the older ones will then enjoy their retirement. It is wonderful to see how well the animals are cared for. The mixture of first-class horses, great hospitality and unspoilt nature make the ride a unique experience - highly recommended!

Jessica Kiefer, August 2018

www.equitour.com/ret007.htm

Travelogue Lapland

The magic of the northern winter



Fast-paced dog sled ride



Gallop through the winter wonderland

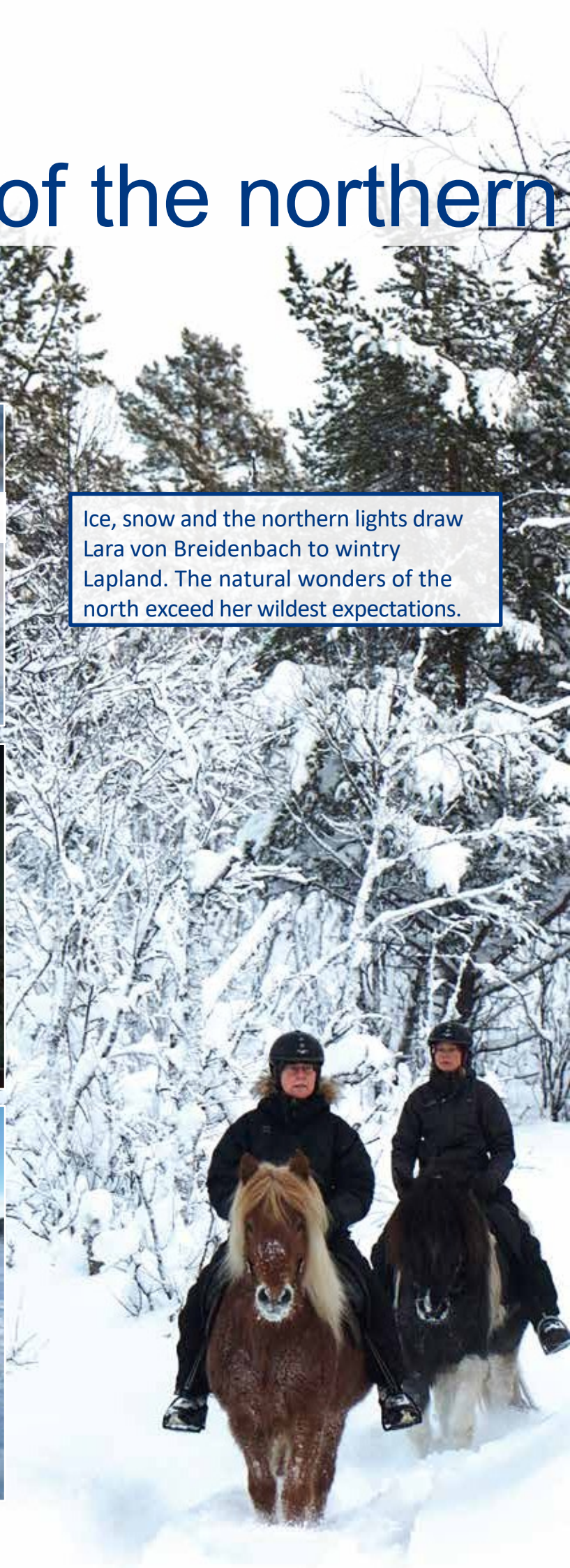


Ice, snow and the northern lights draw Lara von Breidenbach to wintry Lapland. The natural wonders of the north exceed her wildest expectations.

Dancing auroras



Ice fishing with Matti



Ice fishing, dog sleds, powder snow and northern lights - full of expectations, I fasten my seatbelt for the approach to the snow-covered runway. I hold my breath, but the aircraft comes to a safe and smooth stop.

After the first few steps over the crunching snow, I catch sight of our host Matti, who us with a beaming smile. We are three Swiss women, one French woman and me. Matti patiently answers all our questions during the journey from Kiruna to the farm in Poultsa, a tranquil collection of several farms. We arrive in the dark and are immediately lucky enough to the Northern Lights in the sky! We are thrilled!

After a delicious dinner consisting of spaghetti bolognese with elk meat, salad and homemade cake, we are called outside: A moose cow and her twin calves are nibbling from the horse hay rack. What a start to a week of adventure! We happily snuggle up in the beds of our cosy guesthouse. Only in the morning we realise how beautifully the farm nestles into the landscape - between high mountains and fairytale forests.

We have breakfast, wrap up in warm clothes and set off two by two on a snowmobile towards the lake to go ice fishing. The enchanted snowy landscape passes us by. On the way, we see moose and reindeer peering shyly at us from the undergrowth. We stop and see the moose cow we already know. She and her offspring walk past right in front of our vehicles. Finally, we cross open, snow-covered country and reach our destination, the frozen lake. We drill holes in the thick ice with great vigour. We spend the next hour lying comfortably on a reindeer hide, enjoying the view and waiting for fish. However, only one of us is successful - but for all of us there are a picnic with reindeer meatballs by the fire. After a speedy return journey, our first riding lesson awaits us after a siesta. Kerstin gives us professional lessons and introduces us to the typical Icelandic tölt.

We also see the northern lights dancing in the sky that evening, as well as every other evening - sometimes more, sometimes less intense. Over the next few days, we have more riding lessons and go on various rides in the forests and even over the ice! Once again we encounter wild reindeer and moose.

The twenty or so Icelanders on the farm are all well-trained and endearing companions. Time and again, we watch them romp across the snow-covered pasture or test their strength, bursting with energy.

Another great experience is the dog sled ride. Beforehand, we get to the dogs, Siberian huskies, and their offspring at the dog farm. After extensive petting and cuddling, things get turbulent. Each team consists of a sled with two people and five huskies. However, they are quite restless, fidgety and bark with excitement. So we have a hard time putting the harness on them and getting them line up in front of the sled. I stand at the back on the runners of the sled and am very excited. With the brakes on, we hurtle down the first hill. The ride continues in a relaxed manner and we cheer - it's unique to glide almost silently through the woods and across open fields! After a while, we stop at a kote, the dwelling of the Sami. The dogs are shielded off, and we do the same.

Photos: private

cosy inside around the fire. We quickly build up a relationship with our dogs and harnessing them up again goes smoothly - partly because the animals are no longer so full of energy. I am wistful when we arrive back at the dog farm and have to say goodbye to them.

We spend the last afternoon at the world-famous ice hotel in Jukkasjärvi. We marvel at the differently decorated rooms, the chapel and of course the ice bar.

It's unbelievable how much attention to detail has gone into transforming the ice and snow into a work of art. Afterwards, we round off the evening in a cosy restaurant.

We spend the last morning in Kiruna. We visit the sights of the city, go for a stroll and a coffee. Then our short holiday in the ice and snow is already over. We will always remember the huge amount of adventures and Matti, Kerstin and the animals home with us in our hearts.

Lara von Breidenbach www.equitour.com/retwin.htm

Found food



Cosiness in the kitchen



Ephemeral ice hotel



Lights of the North

LAPPLAND

24 hours of daylight in summer and dancing northern lights in winter - the phenomena north of the Arctic Circle make it difficult to choose the time to travel.



Summer lake landscape



Wintery mountains



Speedy sleigh rides



Lapland is not a separate country. It stretches across the Scandinavian peninsula and a total of four Countries: Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. adapted to the cold and harsh nature are the Sami people, who are part of the magical Nordic country. The unhurried lifestyle of the indigenous people of Lapland. Fishing and reindeer herding are their traditional sources of income. They used to live in a nomadic lifestyle, but today's population lives in villages and farms. Their deep connection to the wilderness remains. Moose, bears, wolves wolvernes and many other wild animals are the Sami's neighbours. Their most important livestock, domesticated reindeer, are kept in large herds in a semi-wild state. Endless forests, mighty rivers and wast lake districts give way in the west to treeless tunndra that stretches into the highest

EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME



EQUITOUR riding guests get wonderful hours in the saddle and an insight into the Sami culture on both of the Sweden programmes on offer. In summer, you can travel through the country on horseback with up to 24 hours of daylight. In winter, rides add to the Nordic magic with aurora borealis, sleigh rides, ice hotel and much more.
www.equitour.com/skandinavien.htm

Country info Sweden



Size 447 435 km²
 Population: 10.5 million
 Capital: Stockholm Language: Swedish, Sami Religion: Christianity Currency: Swedish krona
 Climate: polar in the north, mild and humid in the centre Best time to visit: June to September

Photos: private

Riding in the Arctic Circle



Semi-wild reindeer



Art in the ice hotel



Sami in traditional costume



Moose - the deer of the north



Horse riding holidays in the past and today

A review by Jessica Kiefer and Diethard Franz Safety, catering, photos, destinations - Equitour equestrian tours have become has developed enormously in terms of quantity and quality. What has not changed is the love of horses and the joy of riding adventures.

*What
has changed?*



High heels instead of helmets: ok forty years ago

Not without a riding helmet

The riding helmet:

A hat on the road to success! Until the 1990s, people rode without riding helmets as a matter of course and let the sea breeze blow around their neat layered cut, matching their flowing horse mane and indulging in the feeling of freedom. Then the velvet-covered riding caps became more and more common, and today the most important part of the body is packed into technically sophisticated ventilated riding caps costing several hundred euros. As a result, riders can forget about their hairstyle at the lunchtime picnic, but there also far fewer serious riding accidents, which is why the riding helmet, although not , is highly recommended.

Ten years ago, people often asked whether riding caps compulsory. Today, a photo showing riders without helmets can sometimes trigger a shit storm ...

Drinking strength & cigarettes:

steadily. The younger generation seems to prefer chatting and posting to drinking in the evening. In the past, people used to sit together at the bar for long periods of time.

Inside the saddle in the mornings these days, they are usually well-rested and sober. Whereas it used to be good manners in

the past, the two

54

The most common drugs are much less popular today, which detract a little from the sociability, but is certainly good for health and the programme. The horses can only be happy if nicotine fumes and tipsy riders are the exception. Farewell Marlboro Man, today you will have to consume your cigarette in the smokers' corner at a proper distance.

Accessibility:

A tiresome topic. Shouldn't a trip be about getting away from it all? Nowadays, mobile phones are a constant companion on horse riding trips. You ride past the most beautiful rocks and the rider looks at her mobile phone instead of paying attention to nature.

The only thing that helps is the Equitour management's idea of collecting the mobile phones at the start of the riding tour and only returning them at the end. Then my mobile phone wouldn't have fallen victim to a hard gallop in 2020.

We recommend a digital detox with Sepp: our equestrian farm in the Bavarian Forest does away with Wi-Fi and encourages guests to socialise over a beer in a rustic saloon - we're up for it!

Supposedly say more than 1000 words... Many a selfie has already cost the adventurer his life on the cordoned-off rock. Fortunately, on a trail ride, the survival-oriented horse ensures that you follow the group safely, even if you are eager to take photos or film. So as long as you don't lean too far out of the saddle, you're safe on a horseback adventure.

In the age of Insta, Facebook, TikTok & Co, it seems that a trip is only real if you can immortalise yourself in hundreds of pictures and impress your friends, followers, etc. As a riding guide, you can plan an extra 30 minutes for photo stops - and always smile, please. Some riding guides specifically head for vantage points and places of interest in order to feed the photo mania. Some guides have also fallen into this mania themselves and delight their guests with group photos and videos. The only unfortunate thing is when the fellow riders look like underground workers thanks to the GoPro on their bulky plastic helmets.

The good thing is that if you have missed a waterfall, rock or cathedral along the way - perhaps by glancing at your mobile phone - someone is guaranteed to have taken a photo of it and you can find it later on Insta. The highland riders in Iceland who follow the free-roaming herd at particularly high speed are always amazed at what they have missed along the way.

Higher, further, more exclusive:

While the Andalusians and their horses and riding style seemed very exotic to Host Stern in 1976, Spain is now a completely normal destination for many people and the fantastic Spanish horses have now also become naturalised in German-speaking countries. Fortunately, "overtourism" does not affect our Andalusians. And even in Spain there are completely unknown, authentic corners that you can still discover. In fact, a short journey from the coast to the hinterland is enough to experience Andalusia's unspoiled nature. If that's not enough, we recommend Armenia, Uganda, Senegal or Uzbekistan - we are always discovering new and exciting destinations on horseback!

The trend is generally moving away from the masses and towards exclusivity: will Equitour 2030 also offer the first riding holidays with a private charter flight from the front door? No, we won't for the sake of the environment, as our trips are already exclusive enough as it is, as anyone who has travelled through the steppe with two people or even alone with at least three guides will realise.

Out: the Marlboro Man

including an overnight stay in the living room of the guide's family and relatives. It doesn't get much more authentic than this! You can book a charter to the exclusive Chilko Lake Lodge in Canada or to the Okavango Delta with spectacular views with us - after all, it's hard to get to these breathtaking riding paradises any other way.

Data protection:

A hot potato. Who isn't happy when they have to accept the privacy policy on every website? Few people go to the trouble of the settings for every site, it's like small print and package inserts. In the past, used to send participant lists with names, addresses and contact details to all riders, but today we are only allowed to forward contact details individually at the request of guests. This also ensures that the wife does not find out if the secret lover is travelling with her husband, as actually happened.

Unfortunately, we cannot reveal what ultimately of the marriage and the love affair after the unfortunate exposure for reasons of data protection. However, Diethard Franz still vividly remembers the phone call from his extremely angry husband more than 30 years later.

Food:

One of the most important questions of all: what's for dinner? In the past, there were two categories - omnivores and vegetarians - but nowadays the diet of guests is a science in itself. Gluten-free, lactose-free and, if possible, vegan - the latter is perfectly understandable when you think of the factory farming in Mongolia. But what do the Mongolian riding guides think when that is exactly what is on the menu - meat, dairy products and flour? They probably think it's a weird kind of religion or even fanaticism. Europeans have long since emulated the Americans, and so we have received many a long list of "I eat - I don't eat", sometimes without any structure.

Whether fanatical, spoiled or allergic, it's not getting any easier for riding stables. A suckling pig on the barbecue now more guests to be horrified than delighted...

Thank goodness the applies to the trail horse today as it did 50 years ago: hay without end and oats on top. Even if the feed industry in this country is also trying to thousands of feed supplements to horse owners, the trail horse that gets enough exercise can still enjoy its oats - grain mash instead of grain-free, meal time!

Important: regional cuisine
strengt

Unimportant: Drinking





Sri Lanka Under the

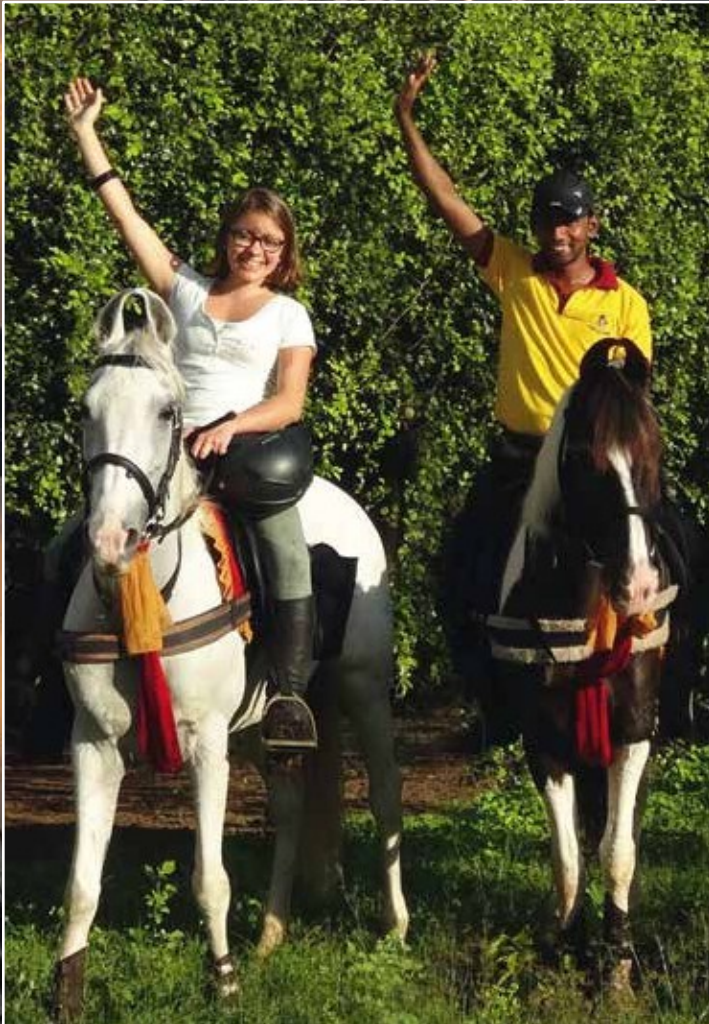
Landing in Colombo is like entering paradise. Cosy warmth, diverse nature and magical culture welcome the guest. Noble Marwari horses complete Sri Lanka a rider's paradise.



tropical sun



Exotic land -



On the back of a noble Marwari horse and in the abundance of Sri Lanka, Lara von Breidenbach experiences paradise on earth.

It is pitch dark. Around me, the rustling of the palm leaves in the wind, the sound of the waves in the night. A spicy scent floats in the air - I take a deep breath. I open my eyes, lift my head and look out of my bed over the lagoon:

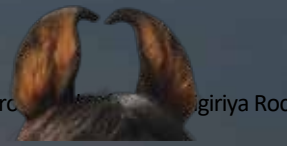
The moon reflects mysteriously in the water. In the moment, smile and snuggle back into the soft cushions. Welcome to paradise, welcome to Sri Lanka - ayubowan!

Ahead of us is a journey from Colombo via the quiet coastal town of Negombo, the beach and palm paradise of Kalpitiya, the historic ruins and temple city of Anuradhapura and the

impressive palace ruins on the famous Sigiriya rock in the jungle. The journey continues via the impressive cave temples of Dambulla, the magnificent Kandy with the Temple of the Tooth, Nuwara Eliya as the highest point of the journey amidst the tea plantations, the wildlife-rich Udawalawe National Park, the lush tropical area around Tissamaharama and finally back to Colombo via the colonial harbour town of Galle.

Our eager and lovable driver and guide Leslie and our experienced riding guide Ishan show us four Europeans their wonderful Sri Lanka for almost two weeks - on horseback, in a minibus, in a jeep, in a boat, in a tuk-tuk and on foot. The island be-

Travelogue Sri Lanka phantastic horses



Encounters



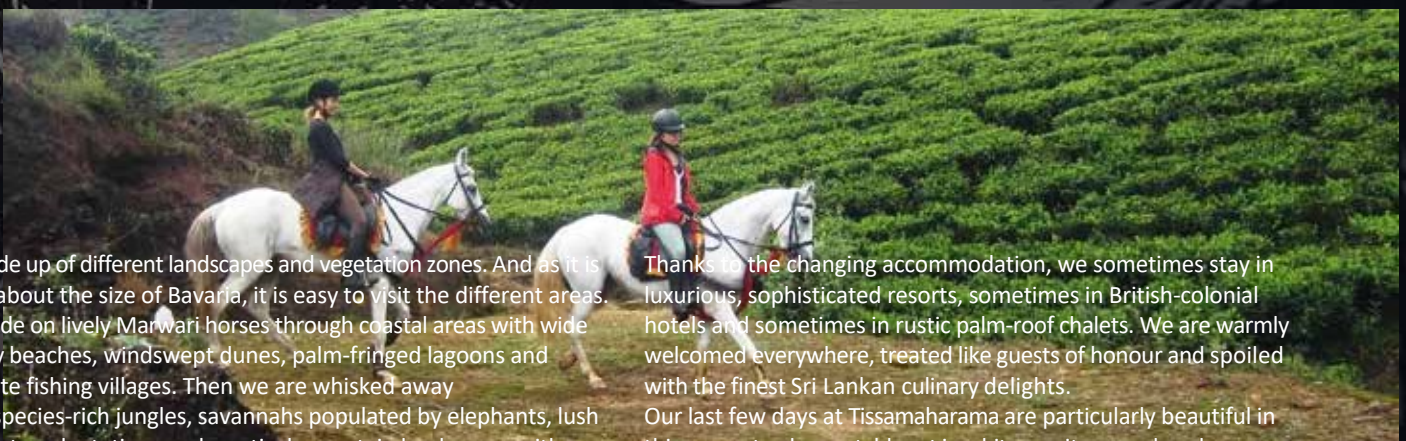
Through endless tea plantations



Banana tuktuk



Culinary delights



is made up of different landscapes and vegetation zones. And as it is only about the size of Bavaria, it is easy to visit the different areas. We ride on lively Marwari horses through coastal areas with wide sandy beaches, windswept dunes, palm-fringed lagoons and remote fishing villages. Then we are whisked away into species-rich jungles, savannahs populated by elephants, lush green tea plantations and mystical mountain landscapes with mighty waterfalls and breathtaking views over mist-shrouded valleys. And finally, we experience picturesque lakes surrounded by lush vegetation, plantations and rice fields against the backdrop of deep blue shimmering mountains.

Thanks to the changing accommodation, we sometimes stay in luxurious, sophisticated resorts, sometimes in British-colonial hotels and sometimes in rustic palm-roof chalets. We are warmly welcomed everywhere, treated like guests of honour and spoiled with the finest Sri Lankan culinary delights. Our last few days at Tissamaharama are particularly beautiful in this respect, where a table set in white awaits us under a large, shady tree. During the day, this is probably the most idyllic place for a delicious curry, with a view of the horses roaming free. In the evening, the light from the oil lamps hanging in the branches creates a cosy atmosphere for a barbecue.

Riding or swimming?.....



.....Best to do both!



On our journey through the former Ceylon, we are not only inspired by the diversity of nature in the saddle, but also gain deep insights into the fascinating culture of the country during our riding-free time.

We visit several UNESCO World Heritage Sites, various temples (we even a temple ceremony in Kandy), receive interesting guided tours of a timber and a tea factory and visit a spice garden and a botanical garden. In the spice garden, we enjoy a fantastic spice tea and a massage with oils with an enchanting fragrance. We also climb the steep Sigiriya rock for probably the most spectacular view, attend an impressive show with traditional dances and go on a jeep safari through a national park as well as a boat and a tuktuk ride. Our breakfast at sunrise by a lake strewn with lotus flowers particularly beautiful. But even on horseback you can experience culture through the pointed tips of the Marwaris' ears: one day we come across ancient ruins in the middle of the jungle, magically refracted by the light of the morning sun. On another day, we set off for a Buddhist monks' school. There we give the horses a break. Together with a young monk, we climb a small, densely overgrown mountain on foot. After a strenuous scramble to the top, a ruined temple and breathtaking panoramic views await us. After our little excursion, we are invited by the monks for some Sri Lankan pastries, coconuts and fruit.

But even when we are not riding past a lovingly decorated temple or enchanted-looking ruins, our rides are varied and exciting. On our first ride near Kalpi- tiya, for example, we get caught in the dark because we have been watching the fishermen at work on the beach for too long. And then it starts to rain lightly, which we are happy about in the heat. The rain at night creates a very unique and enchanting atmosphere - probably also because a kind of firefly dances through the air. I listen to the buzzing, humming, whirring, cooing, chirping, chirping, beeping and croaking - the operating noises of this area, which swell more and more in the darkness. The way back takes us through a few small villages. As there are only a few horses in Sri Lanka - just 250 in total - we are an attraction, and the people and children come running happily out of their huts and houses

and wave to us. Throughout our journey, we encountered this friendliness and cheerfulness in every place - that's what makes our trip so unique.

The next day, the ocean stretches out on one side and a wide lagoon surrounded by a sea of palm trees on the other - with nothing but sandy beaches in between. After a while, we find ourselves on a headland, the other side of which now also surrounded by the sea. Over the beach, along sandy paths and through mangroves, we reach original fishing villages, most of whose houses are made entirely of palm leaves. No more cars make it here. Several small wild donkeys look after us curiously as we watch the fishermen hauling in their oversized nets. After this unforgettable ride, the next highlight awaits us: bathing with the horses in the sea. My grey mare Kushi (which "ticklish") is not convinced at first. But after some good coaxing and pats on the back, she takes a liking to it and even dips her head under the water.

If one of the bigger waves comes, we may even dive off completely - not so easy to stay on the horse!

In order to make all these fantastic experiences possible Our riding guide and grooms do a marvellous job every day. I am fascinated by their perfect balance between horse and guest care. Not only are we riders provided with everything we need and looked after with great consideration, but we also meet the support vehicle once every hour during the rides. It's like a kind of pit stop: the "cooling water" for the horses is already waiting, there is a "spare parts store" in the car and a photo shoot often takes too.

What also fascinates me about Sri Lanka is the religious, ethnic and cultural diversity: there are Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Christians and indigenous tribes who all seem to get on well with each other.

The gallops are unforgettable: on the beach into the sunset, along the shore of a lake where lazy water buffaloes doze, on the tracks of elephants or through huge tea plantations in the mountains. I will always remember so much about Sri Lanka. The island of paradise has a spell over me. My "goodbye" is a promise. Lara von Breidenbach www.equitour.com/sri013.htm

Traditional dance show



Buddhist temple



Living in paradise



Guide Ishan and his Marwari

Is he waving at us?



Animal bathing fun



Friendly beach guests



Pearl of the Indian Ocean

SRI LANKA

Nature or culture? Beach or mountains? Action or relaxation? If you can't decide, you can experience it all while riding through Sri Lanka.



The huge Tissamaharama stupa



Pachyderms up close



In the ancient Indian language of Sanskrit, Sri Lanka is called the "honourable island". A thoroughly apt name, as the island nation offers an unrivalled wealth of natural and cultural treasures for its size.

Like a drop of water, Sri Lanka lies south-east of India. The equator is not far away, so the climate is tropically warm and humid. Dense jungle, central mountainous country and wide Dream beaches are the face of the country. Hardly any other country of comparable size can Sri Lanka's biodiversity. Elephants, leopards, crocodiles, deer and countless species of birds live on the verdant island. Lakes, lagoons, rivers and waterfalls nourish flora and fauna.

The cultural treasures are as lush as the nature. Historical

Sites, ruins, temples and Buddha statues, huge tea plantations and lively cities invite you to marvel and enjoy. The friendly and humorous Sri Lankans are great hosts and love to be seen doing their traditional work such as fishing, harvesting tea, bananas or coconuts.

Most tourists are drawn to the dream beaches of Sri Lanka. Swimming, whale watching and diving are the main attractions. Riders see more when they through the rainforests up into the central highlands on Marwari horses, visit cultural sites and get to know the locals. The wide beaches can then be enjoyed at least as much at a brisk gallop as bathing.

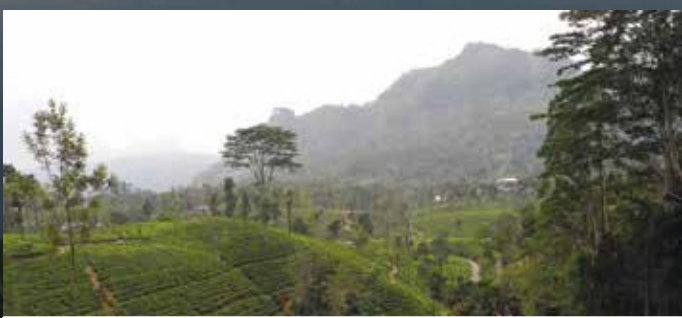
UNESCO cultural heritage : Sigiriya Rock



Fortress ruins on the Sigiriya rock



Market of colour and abundance



Plantations of the famous Ceylon tea

Photos: private, Gabriele Kärcher

MARWARI HORSE

Marwar is a region in Rajasthan, India. Noble horses were bred there for centuries for military service. Native ponies were refined with breeds from the Central Asian steppes and Arabs. Marwaris are slender, long-legged horses with a proud bearing and great stamina. The shape of their ears, whose inwardly curved tips often even touch, makes them unmistakable. In 2001, the first Marwaris were imported to Sri Lanka, where only a very small population of horses still lives today. The gelding Coco is the grandson of Sri Lanka's first horses and one of the proven Equitour touring horses. Two years after the Marwaris, Kathiawaris and Sindhi horses also arrived in Sri Lanka. Both breeds are related to the Marwari.

Marwari profile Size: 145 -

165 cm Stock size Origin:

Rajasthan, India Colours: all

Character: courageous, proud, headstrong

Characteristics: sure-footed, persistent, reliable



EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

Explore jungles, palm beaches, lakes and lagoons, mountains and rocks, towns and cultural sites on two riding tours. Important sights such as the Sigiriya rock or the cave temple of Dambulla as well as changing nature and a jeep safari are part of both tours. Immerse yourself in all the magic of Sri Lanka.

Country info Sri Lanka



Size 65 610 km²

Population: 22 million

Capital: Colombo, Sri Jayewardenepura

Language: Sinhala, Tamil

Religion: Predominantly Buddhism Currency:

Sri Lanka Rupee

Climate: tropical, humid

Best time to visit: November to April

Photojournalist Gabriele Kärcher meets people and horses on all continents in an unbiased and non-judgemental way. In Andalusia, she visits the horse capital of Jerez de la Frontera at the time of the great Fería de Caballo.

In May, the equestrian world of Spain flocks to the largest Spanish horse festival, the Fería de Caballo in Jerez de la Frontera. The gateway to González de Hontoria Park is the entrance to the Andalusian way of life: decked-out riders and horses, magnificent carriages, colourful dresses, wine, lights, rhythms and flamenco. Andalusian machos parade through the streets on their racy horses, their chests swelling with pride. I can't tell which they are more of: their noble steeds or their beautiful señoritas, who cling to them in brightly frilled dresses.

The streets are decorated with flowers and garlands. Riders and carriages stroll through the in the shimmering heat until nightfall. Then the horses are tended to and the festival continues. Millions of lights illuminate the promenades, where locals and visitors from all over the world stroll until the early hours of the morning. Cosy casetas line the streets, which are festive stalls run by brotherhoods offering tapas, wine and sherry. There's dancing, drinking and socialising.

laughs and cries, because even the toughest machos become melancholy to the sound of sad guitars. Nevertheless, the Fería de Caballo is all about the noble horses of the Pura Raza Española breed. They and the traditional horse breeding are extensively praised and celebrated.

The most beautiful of the beautiful and the best of the best vie for prizes, trophies and awards at show jumping, dressage and driving competitions as well as top-class breeding shows. Emotions run high in the Sportstadion when breeders and riders their stars dance.

Pura Raza, Pura Nobleza: Pure breed, pure nobility is the motto of the breeding association. And the Spanish beauties here fulfil this throughout.

Exhausted and tired, but also happy and inspired, caballeros and visitors said goodbye and are already looking forward to next year. "Hasta la vista!" - Until we meet again.



FOLLOW the HORSES

Fería de Caballo - Festival of the senses



Spain's proud equestrian world



Festival of lights



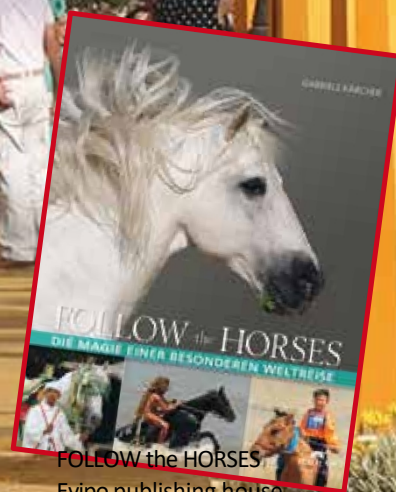
Presentation of the beauties

Every year in May, the city of Jerez de la Frontera is dedicated to horses for a week. The roots of the gigantic Fería date back to 1248, when a cattle market was established in Jerez. Over the centuries, the market became increasingly important and, together with the hippological importance of Andalusia, into an internationally renowned horse festival.

Fería de Caballo, Jerez de la Frontera
6 to 13 May 2023



Photojournalist
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FOLLOW the HORSES

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