



EQUITOUR

EDITORIAL 2/2023

The world through horses' ears

Riding holidays through

FRANCE - Grand East

JORDAN

KENYA

SICILY and SARDINIA

MEXICO







If man has ever made a great
conquest, it is that he has won
the horse as his friend

Conte de Buffon



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Product check riding
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Photos: Gabriele Kärcher, private





EQUITOUR

Riding Holidays

The whole world on horseback

Dear ,

For 50 years, EQUITOUR has been offering sustainable holidays on horseback all over the world. We discover fascinating landscapes and foreign cultures without leaving a trace. We believe that there is no better way to get to know a country, its people and horses while completely switching off. Free time and trail riding, which slowly became popular in the 1970s, is at the centre of our trips. What makes travelling on horseback so special?

The combination of travelling and riding enables close cooperation and promotes trust between rider and horse enormously. Anyone who has ridden together with their horse along steep slopes, rivers or ditches travelled across vast beaches into the sunset or endured a day in constant rain or even a desert storm, you will know that by the end of the ride you are a well-coordinated team. Many of our guests find it difficult to say goodbye to their four-legged holiday partner.

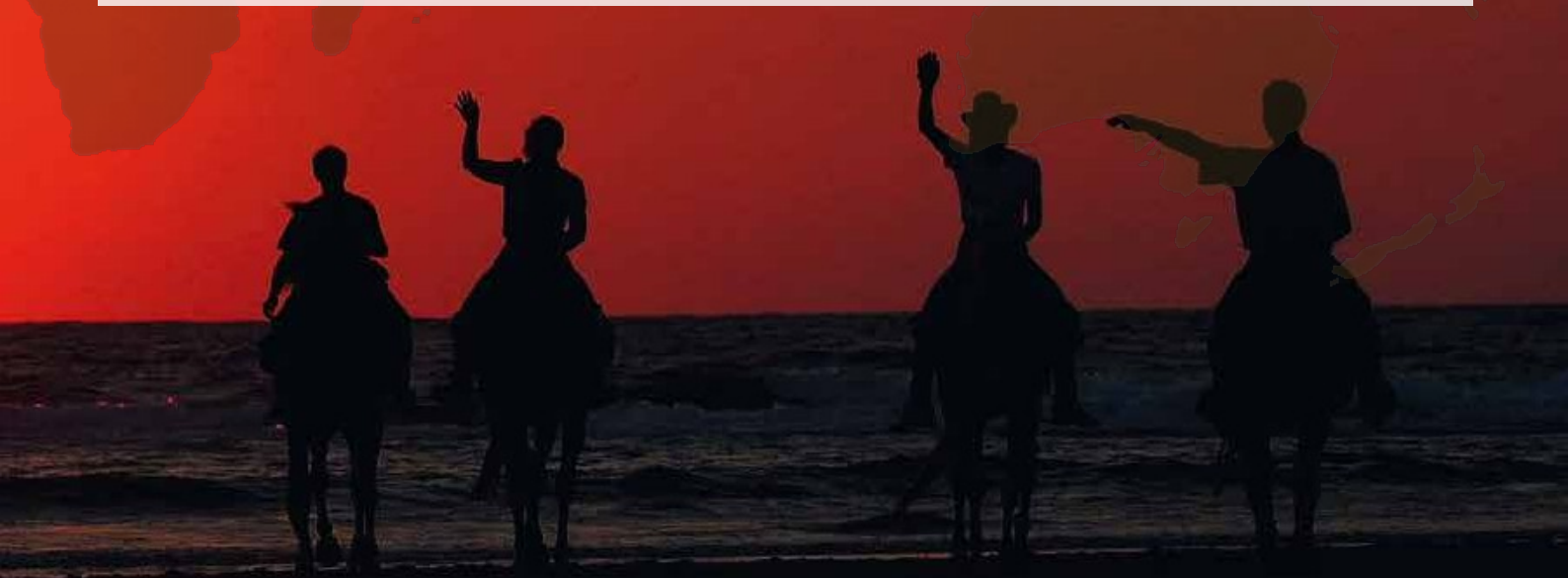




Horses not only enable us to explore magnificent landscapes, whether mountain peaks, beaches or deserts, they also take us on a journey of discovery of foreign cultures, as they create a connection with the locals. The Most people enjoy the sight of horses, and you are no ordinary tourist. Even if no common language is spoken, the passion for horses unites people across all cultural differences.

A feeling of boundless freedom takes hold of you as you ride through lonely landscapes. The connection with nature and animals lets you recharge your batteries and forget everything. There is a reason why therapeutic riding exists. So we wholeheartedly agree with the quote on page 3!

Your Equitour team.



Savoir Vivre



France



The French know how to live and enjoy life. In addition to the cultural and culinary wealth, sporty trail riding is a real French speciality.

France

Land of (riding) pleasures

You can almost taste the names - Baeckeoﬀe from Alsace, red wine from Burgundy and the king of sparkling wines from Champagne.
But culinary delights are only one part of the pleasures of north-east France.



Culture, castles, fortresses, forests, lakes and the famous French cuisine attract millions of visitors to France every year. With EQUITOUR, you can get to know all facets of the country. In this issue, we are focussing on the "Grand Est" - three north-eastern regions that offer top-class tourist treats. "Santé!" - Health, says the French - to your health!

Alsace

Alsace can look back on an eventful history having alternately to Germany and France. The mixture of both cultures characterises the people and their way of life. Situated between the Rhine and the Vosges mountains, Alsace offers picturesque wine villages, the much-visited capital city of Strasbourg with its world-famous cathedral, but also unspoilt nature in the eastern Vosges. Riders and hikers can roam through vast forests on secluded paths and visit spectacular castles. In traditional inns, the Ferme-Auberges, you will find rural charm and, for example in the form of Baeckeoﬀe, a hearty Alsatian stew.

The Champagne region

Like Alsace, Champagne is also part of the "Grand Est" region. "Champagne is our heritage, our identity," say the inhabitants. Kilometres of vineyards confirm to visitors the dominance of the sparkling grape juice to which Champagne owes its UNESCO World Heritage title. Gentle

The hilly countryside allows the grapes to flourish and offers an attractive holiday destination alongside rivers, forests, dreamy winegrowing villages and historic towns.

Burgundy

Burgundy also offers first-class grape juice. The region around the city of Dijon attracts real gourmets with its excellent cuisine. Historic villages blend harmoniously into the lush green countryside.

Landscape. Riders can combine their passion with wellness for body and soul. In the centre of Burgundy lies the oldest natural park in France, the Morvan, an unspoilt low mountain range with forests and heathland as well as six large lakes that are ideal for swimming and water sports: www.equitour.com/france.htm





Alsace capital Strasbourg



Picture-book village of Grancey-le-Château



Ancient and cosy: Ferme Auberge



Photo stop at the church

EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

Our offers cover the whole of France from. In the Grand Est, you can enjoy the culinary specialities in the regions of Alsace, Champagne and Burgundy as well as the rides. Experience the wild nature of the Alsace-Vosges Trail, ride through the lush vineyards of Champagne or experience the Morvan Nature Park in Burgundy. Decide according to your ability and desire.

www.equitour.com/france.htm

Country info France



Size: 632 733 km²

Population: 68 million Capital: Paris

Language: French

Religion: Predominantly Christian

Currency: Euro

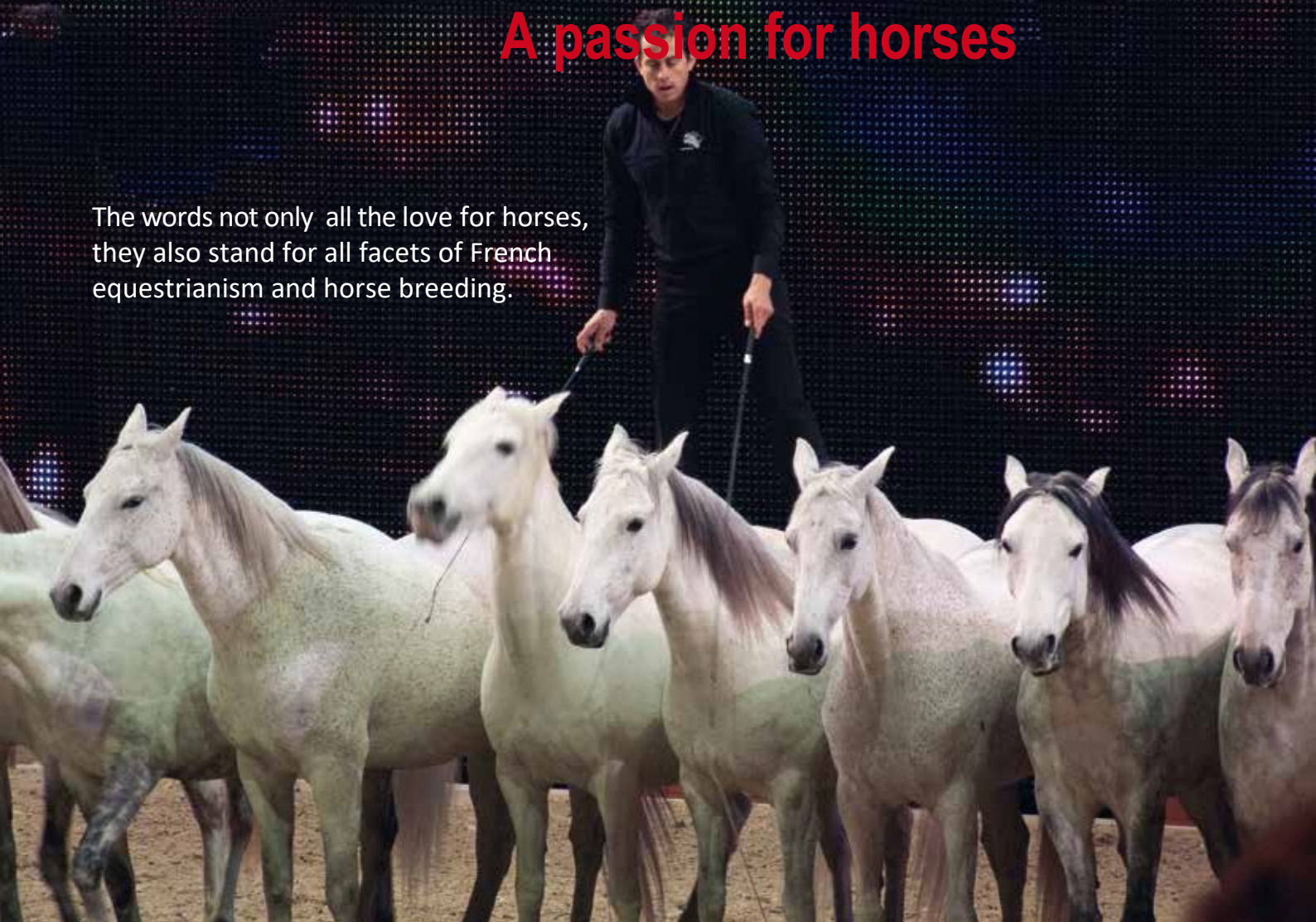
Climate: by region temperate, maritime,

Mediterranean Best time to visit: all year round

Cheval Passion

A passion for horses

The words not only all the love for horses, they also stand for all facets of French equestrianism and horse breeding.



Names such as Lorenzo (pictured above) and Frédéric Pignon, who show masterpieces of dressage and communication between man and horse with their horses, are known worldwide. Their liberty dressage with free-range horses is breathtaking.

French show jumpers and horses have made history, just think of the unforgotten black horse Jappeloup with his rider Pierre Durand.

French riders don't just perform at their best in the show jumping and dressage arenas. For them, the cross-country is also a place of extremes. In addition to extremely demanding endurance rides

They invented the trec sport, a combination of endurance, orienteering and eventing that requires courage, skill and complete trust. In addition to fast rides and difficult terrain obstacles, control, skill and precision are required. Trec sport has also been available for riders for some time now.

In addition to records in sport and show, trail riding is a big thing in France. Professional trail riding guides, known as guide de tourisme équestre in French, undergo two years of training at the trail riding academy before guiding their guests through the countryside on horseback.



Trec rider in the Vosges



Guardian in the Camargue



Equitour riding tours - only with professional trail riding guides

FRANCE'S HORSE BREEDS



Selle Français

"Selle" means saddle, so the Selle Français breed is the quintessential French riding horse. It is just as suitable for sport as it is for leisure riders. The Selle Français is 1.55 to 1.75 metres tall and has a reliable character. The breed was created after the merging of regional breeds with the aim of creating a capable sport horse.



Anglo-Arabian

The Anglo-Arabian is, as the name suggests, a mixture of Arabian and English thoroughbred. This successful horse is bred all over the world, with France being a stronghold. The Anglo-Arabian has proven itself in one sport in particular: endurance riding. Anglo-Arabians are unbeatable in both high performance sport and trail riding.



Camargue horse

Everyone knows them: the grey horses from the Rhône delta. Camargue horses are still today by French cattle herders, the Guardians, to herd and drive their herds. They are strong-nerved, powerful leisure horses.



Merens

And then there are the black horses from the mountains. Merens horses are kept semi-wild on the mountain pastures of the Pyrenees. They are sturdy working and leisure horses with a willing and fearless character.



Percheron

France probably has the greatest variety of cold-blooded breeds. The best known is the heavy Percheron, a colossus weighing up to one tonne. The Percheron has a noble head and a harmonious build.

A Scotswoman in Alsace

Interview with Tour guide Alice

There's never a dull moment with Alice Schwitzgebel. She radiates joie de vivre and has a lot to say about her life's journey, which has taken her from Scotland via Germany to Alsace.



Irresistible: the apples on the go



You were born in Scotland, how did it come about that you now have the live in Alsace?

Yes, Scotland is where I grew up and where I spent my first experience with horses. I have always dreamed of parents took me to riding lessons. always loved the German language and how I ended up studying German in Scotland, with which

clear goal of emigrating to Germany.

My parents lived in Strasbourg for a few years before I was born. castle. I therefore enjoyed travelling from Germany and gaining Alsace, where met my husband. He is a lumberjack, but my It was very useful for me as a translator and interpreter. I have It was easier to move with my business than it was for him. That's I moved to France.



Alsatian half-timbered charm



Santé and have a good ride!



Paddy: a horse to have fun with

How did the trail riding centre come about? Has it always been your dream?

In the Northern Vosges, trail riding centres were still a gap in the market. Beautiful, sandy paths lead through the mixed forest. There are many castle ruins, magnificent rock formations and views across the Rhine plain to the Black Forest and the Hochvogel mountains. There are pretty villages with half-timbered houses decorated with flowers, orchards, vineyards and, and, and.

Your herd is a colourful mix, is there a breed of horse that you are particularly enthusiastic about for trail riding?

Yes, I have a preference for Irish Cobs. In German they are often called Tinkers. However, "Tinker" is a dirty word in English, so I don't like to use it. In Scotland I have I learnt to ride Irish Cobs and Highland ponies. Irish Cobs have chilled-out disposition and hardly anything them. And I LOVE piebalds! I have a small herd of large-framed Irish Cobs, which are highly sought after. My herd also includes two Irish Draughts - Irish cold bloods. In terms of temperament they are cold-blooded, but in terms of build they are rather heavy warm-blooded horses.

Do you have a favourite horse that you grown particularly fond of?

My favourite horse is definitely my Paddy, an Irish Cob of course. I bought him when he only six hours old. He to me when he was six months old, I started riding him when he was three and harnessed him for the first time when he was four. A few years later, I was runner-up in the French TREC driving championships with him. And I travelled over 700 kilometres across France with him in a carriage to take part in Equiran- do, Europe's largest trail riding meeting.

The Alsace region does a lot

Advertising for their riding trails and centres. Can you ride everywhere and what are the bridleways like?

We have a very active equestrian tourism association and many projects have already been realised. We have a directory of trail riding centres whose operators often speak German. We have worked out circular rides and day rides and put the GPX tracks for almost 3000 kilometres(!) online for free download. We are now in the process of putting GPX tracks for coachmen online. Riding is permitted on all paths that are over two metres wide. Carriages also allowed everywhere. The sandy paths in the Northern Vosges are perfect for kilometre-long gallops. In the High Vosges, the paths are stonier and you are travelling in a pre-alpine mountain landscape with breathtaking views and glistening mountain lakes - this is the legendary blue Vosges line.

Why would you recommend Alsace? What the region?

The delicious food, the good wine, the beautiful Alsatian German, the culture, the history, the combination of Germany and France, the charm of the villages, the landscape, the hospitality, the tranquillity of the forests. Just come and experience it all for yourself!

Thank you very much, Alice!

Alice's riding programme: www.equitour.com/alista.htm

The interview was conducted by Jessica Kiefer / Equitour

Travelogue Burgundy Nature Park

Riding, feasting,



Slowing down life and stepping up the pace of riding - Isabella Heider likes this mix on her short holiday in the natural paradise of Burgundy.

Full-bodied wine - that is what the name Burgundy is primarily associated with. But this does not do justice to the region in north-east France, as Burgundy has much more to offer. For horseriders, for example.

We spend two days at the family-run guesthouse of the EQUITOUR partner and experience the beauty of the area and the professionalism of the riding centre on two half-day rides. The old building has been modernised and looks inviting and well-kept. Tables, chairs and deckchairs invite you to sunbathe, read, linger and relax. On hot summer days, you can retreat to the interior, which remains pleasantly cool thanks to the old stone walls. The famous wine and excellent cuisine with regional specialities such as quiche, ratatouille and rich cheese platters provide for your physical well-being.

Fortified with top-class French delicacies, we turn our attention to real reason for our stay: horse riding. The horse pastures are about a ten-minute walk the inn. Our riding guide Léon speaks German, English and French. He shows us around thirty horses of different sizes and breeds, all of which are well-fed, athletic and well-groomed.

look healthy. They spend the whole summer in huge paddocks. They rarely see their stables. They approach us with curiosity. Léon knows his horses and chooses three suitable ones for us. We can choose between English saddles and trail saddles. Then Léon gets us in the mood for the ride ahead. We will cover just under 45 kilometres in four to five hours. So this will be a fast ride! Physical fitness and riding experience are essential for this adventure.

We go up and down over meadows and through forests, over stubble fields and through small villages. We hardly meet a single person during the entire ride. The horses are sure-footed, strong-nerved, persistent and obedient. They are also spirited and keen to run, which makes them just right for this demanding gallop tour. Even after kilometres of cantering, they show no signs of fatigue. Quite the opposite: after what feels like ten minutes of galloping over a stubble field, our four-legged partners even pick up the pace once more. A pleasure for horse and rider. After this lively tour, we arrive tired but happy in the evening. back to the farm. We look after the horses and enjoy a sumptuous three-course meal.

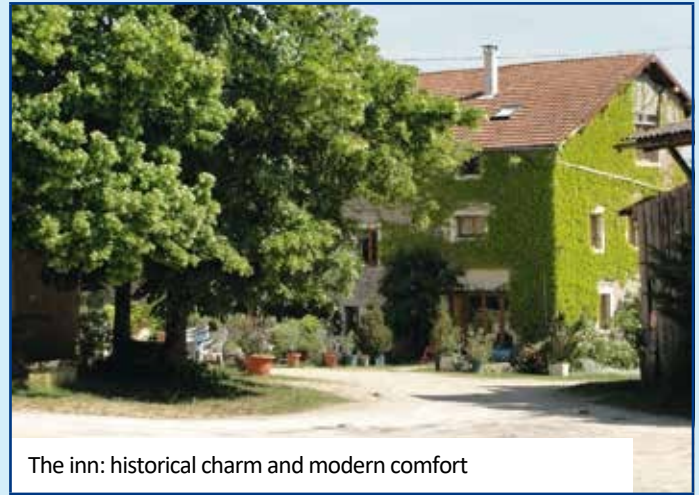
Relaxing

Even if the riding programme is demanding, non-riders will also get their money's worth. The nature park offers many opportunities for walks and hikes. Idyllic villages lie in the middle of the nature park, and for city lovers, Dijon is not far away.

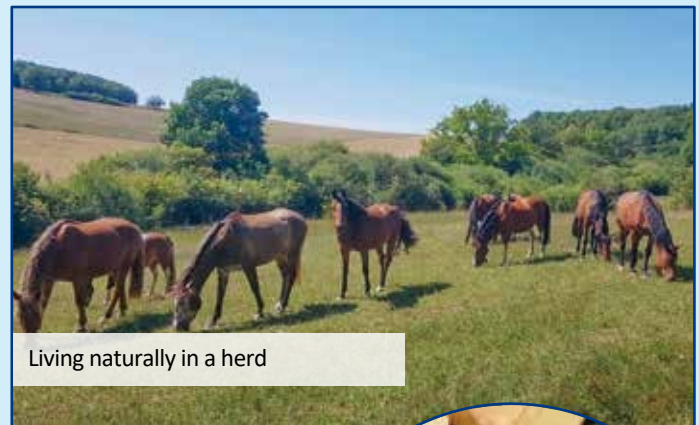
We go to bed full of anticipation for the next day. After a typical French breakfast of baguette, butter, jam, honey and Nutella, a leisurely ride is on the programme. Léon three new horses for us, this time somewhat calmer ones that are also for less experienced riders. They are sure-footed, reliable and balanced. But they can also step the gas if we want them to.

On the slower ride, we pay more attention to the idyllic surroundings and recognise the differences in the vegetation of the nature park. On the way, Léon tells us a lot about the region and the special features of Burgundy. This three-hour ride also provided us with a lot of fun, entertainment and knowledge.

We say goodbye to Léon and the horses and, after a delicious lunch, also to our hosts. These were two unforgettable days in Burgundy, which we always remember fondly.
Isabella Heider www.equitour.com/bursta.htm



The inn: historical charm and modern comfort



Living naturally in a herd



Cheese delicacies



Gallop across the stubble field

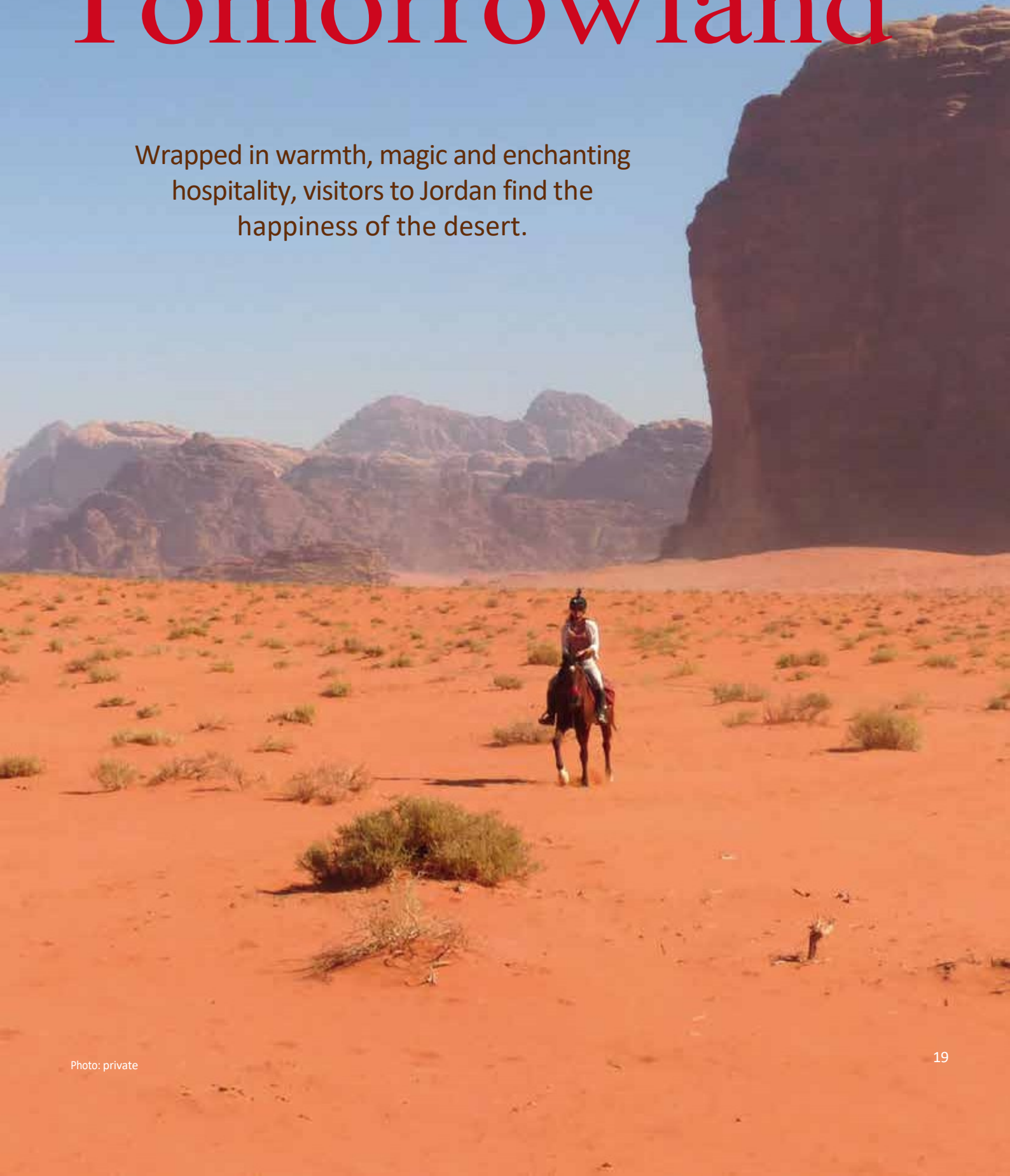


Jordan



Tomorrowland

Wrapped in warmth, magic and enchanting hospitality, visitors to Jordan find the happiness of the desert.



Jordan

Magical fairytale land

The pink rock city of Petra, the salty Dead Sea and the bizarre Martian landscape of Wadi Rum are adventure stops on a true fairytale journey.

Wadi Rum

With its alternation of bizarre sandstone cliffs and desert sand in various shades of red and beige, Wadi Rum looks like a surreal Martian landscape. The natural and cultural treasures of the Orient enchant visitors from all over the world.

Equitour leads experienced riders in the saddle of noble thoroughbred Arabians through oriental impressions. It is not too hot in Wadi Rum, as it is relatively high up and therefore has a very pleasant climate. Typical of the desert: it can cool down considerably at night.

Wrapped in fluttering Bedouin robes, the famous Lawrence of Arabia fought with the Arabs against the Turks and to the fall of the Ottoman Empire. In the picturesque valley of Um Ishrin, travellers can relive the British hero's exploits at original sites, which were also the filming locations for the Hollywood classic.

Wadi Rum Village is the only settlement in this region, and this small desert town becomes a bustling tourist centre every year. Camels and off-road vehicles are available for desert excursions. Riders naturally prefer real Arabian horses.



Bedouin and his horse



Colours of the Wadi Rum

Petra, city of the Nabataeans

Riders and non-riders alike will find amazing cultural treasures such as rock paintings in the wadi. But the most important destination for those interested in culture is the rose-coloured city of Petra with its rock-cut houses and palaces. A narrow canyon, the Siq, is something like the entrance to the rock city. After 1.2 kilometres of narrowness, it opens up to reveal the Khazneh al-Firaun, the Pharaoh's treasure house and probably the most important rock-cut building in the city. Sandstone-carved houses, temples, tombs and caves amaze visitors.

The marvel of Petra is the most important of the Nabataean cities, which emerged from the trading centres of this nomadic people.

The Dead Sea

The Dead Sea is another place of wonder. It is on average 120 metres deep, and yet you can hardly drown in it. This is because the high salt content ensures that you can lie on the water without sinking. However, the bath is not without danger, as the highly concentrated minerals are poisonous to the human organism. Anyone who swallows this water is in mortal danger. Apart from a few microorganisms and algae, there are no living creatures in the Dead Sea, which gave the lake its name.



Evening atmosphere at the Dead Sea



Salt crusts on the shores of the Dead Sea

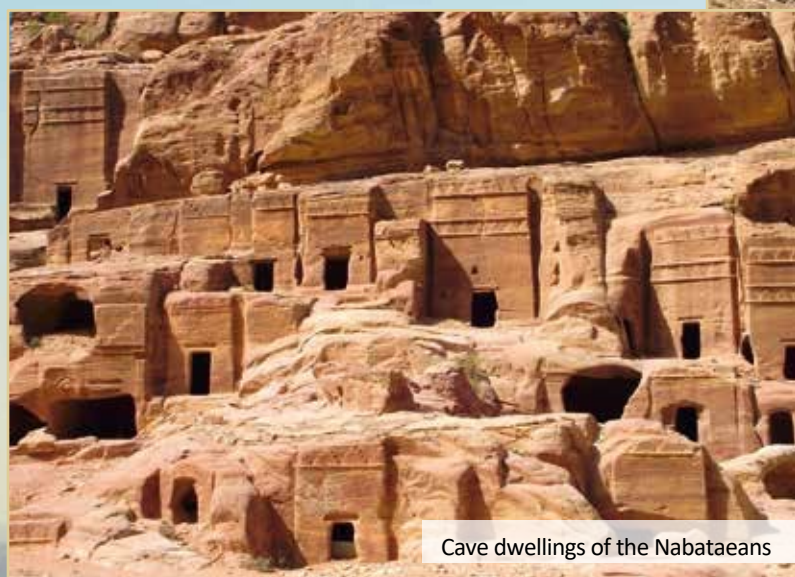
Search
you must go to the
palaces for glory,
If you are looking for wealth,
you have to go to the markets,
If you are looking for
happiness, you have to go to
the desert.

Arabic proverb

The Siq Canyon,
access to the rock city of Petra



The Ed-Deir Monastery



Cave dwellings of the Nabataeans



Single-hump desert taxis

Country info Jordan



Size: 89 342 km²

Population: 10.2 million Capital:

Amman

Language: Arabic

Religion: Predominantly Islam

Currency: Jordanian dinar

Climate: predominantly dry desert climate Best
time to visit: September to May

EQUITOR RIDING PROGRAMME

The desert camp is the starting point for spectacular rides through the variety of colours and shapes of Wadi Rum in southern Jordan. The rides are fast and long and are only suitable for experienced riders. Natural and cultural sites such as the Dead Sea and the city of Petra complete the riding programme.

www.equitour.com/rum010.htm

Travelogue Jordan

The magic of Wadi Rum



The interplay of warm red colours accompanies riders and horses on their way through the Wadi Rum. Lara von Breidenbach talks about her magical ride



After arriving in Amman and spending the night in a small hotel in Madaba, the next morning we travel through a varied landscape to Wadi Rum Village, where our desert adventure begins. The village lies between steep rock formations that the landscape of Wadi Rum. Our group consists of a French couple, a Czech and one other German besides myself. We hit it off straight away and quickly find the right bond with our four-legged companions, most of whom are fine thoroughbred Arabians. We meet our guide Suleman, who gives us a brief introduction.

As we ride off towards the desert, children from the tranquil village follow us for a while, stop at some point and look after us. Free-range camels belonging to locals stride past us.

Then we immerse ourselves in the endless white of the desert, in a play of colours from the deep blue sky and the red and orange tones of sand and rock. Occasionally, a gnarled bush or a scrawny tree thrives in the dryness.

The first ride takes us to our desert camp. Excited about the next few days, we tie the horses to long ropes underneath a steep rock face. A row of spacious tents stands on a hill their inner walls decorated with Arabic patterns. The "bathroom" consists of an outhouse, a washbasin and a simple shower room, all hidden behind a few concrete walls. The main tent is covered with carpets, mats and blankets. At the back is a fireplace where flames blaze from morning until late at night. A pot of local sweet tea is kept warm in it, which is drunk from tiny glasses throughout the day. We quickly get used to this tea ritual.

The cook conjures up various delicacies from his simple kitchen. Flatbread goes with every meal, and there are often rice dishes with meat and vegetables.

In the morning, eggs, hummus and "Lebanah", a type of cream cheese, are served with bread and coffee.

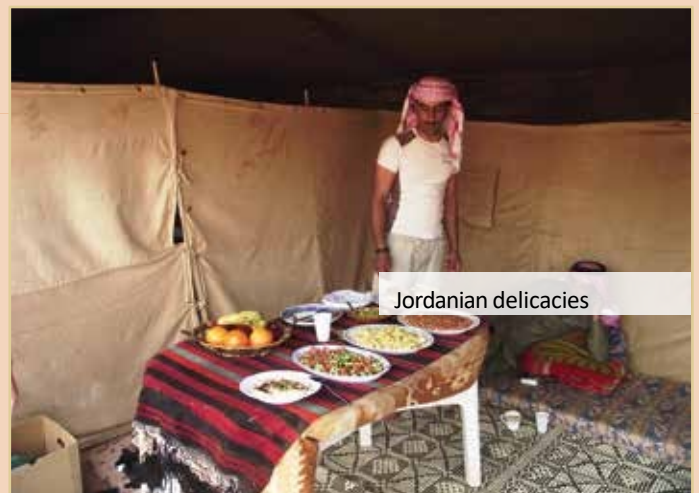
We sit around the campfire. We are often joined by Bedouins - friends or relatives of our guide. We listen eagerly to their stories and talk about the political and economic situation. We are particularly touched by their singing, which they accompany with the lute.



Children of the desert



Noble Arabian horses



Jordanian delicacies



Lute sounds around the campfire



The happiness of the desert

We sleep on foam mattresses and in sleeping bags - as warm as it is during the day, it can just as cold at night. Once I slept outside under the twinkling starry sky and saw a shooting star just before falling asleep - fantastic!

Unfortunately, Suleman falls ill and has to be replaced by Aied. On the following days, he takes us to different areas of Wadi Rum in the mornings and afternoons. We come to Jebel Burdha, a rock with a large hole in it - the shape is reminiscent of a bridge. Next to it is the cosy tent of a Bedouin who offers his wares and invites us in for tea. Almost every one of us buys a cloth from him, as it protects us from the wind, sand and sun. The Bedouin shows us how to wrap it around our heads in the Arab way.

The ride continues through deep canyons to the ruins of the house where the famous Lawrence of Arabia once lived. We encounter camel caravans, marvel at the largest dune in Wadi Rum and even spot a fox.

In between, our light-footed horses inspire us on long and fast gallops over the desert sand.

On one of our rides, we tie the horses to a few seed trees and venture on foot into a gorge, the Barrah Canyon, where we come across ancient rock paintings. We are constantly impressed by the landscape, the bright colours and the ancient culture of this country.

We review our experiences with a full heart. Our guides, who are always up for a bit of fun and us their stories about Wadi Rum. Our horses, which carry us through the desert with endurance in long strides and fast trotting or galloping sections. These animals were born for the desert. Every ride is a pleasure and each of us has built up a real relationship with our horse. Mine even allows me to snuggle up to him one morning after I've found him lying down. Early in the morning, I often climb the rocks surrounding the camp to admire the sunrise. At lunchtime, it's time for a siesta or a game that a Bedouin teaches us: the "game board" is carved into the sand with your fingers, and small stones and sticks are used as pieces.

After unforgettable days in the desert, we say goodbye to the camp and ride back to the stables with heavy hearts - not

without organising a little race. In the stables, the horses are given a refreshing shower and then happily join their mates. We have to say goodbye to almost all of our fellow riders in Rum Village.

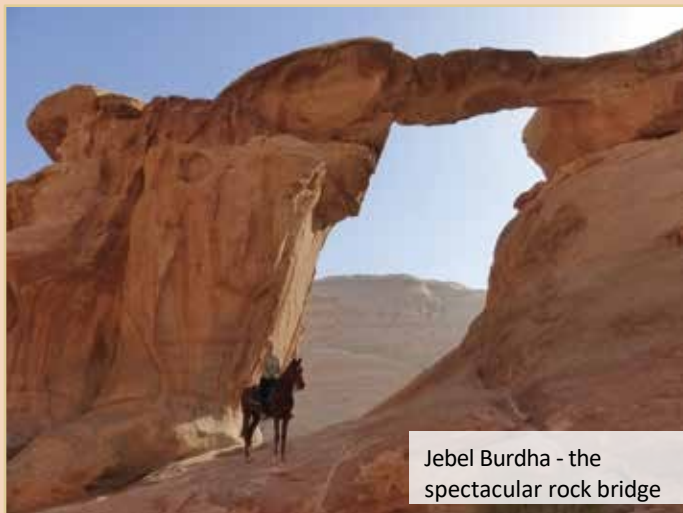
The two of us travel on to the ancient rock city of Petra. In the four-star hotel, we enjoy the spa area and a sumptuous buffet. On a guided tour of the city, we marvel at the buildings and facades carved into the rock and the enormous size of the city. We are particularly impressed by the mighty treasury carved into a huge rock and the Ed Deir monastery towering high above the city. My fellow traveller rests for a while and I move on alone to a place that calls itself the "end of the world". And that's the impression made by the lonely rocky outcrop, which a breathtaking view of an endless mountain landscape. At the very front, a Bedouin crouches on the edge of a rock and plays his lute. He fearlessly dangles his legs over the abyss. Inspired by the moment, I settle down and listen to the sounds.

After a relaxing evening at the hotel in Petra, our destination the next morning is the Al Karak fortress, a sprawling ruin that offers a sweeping view over the surrounding villages and lands. On the onward journey to Madaba, we make a stop at the Dead Sea, which can carry people due to its high salt content and the resulting high density of the water - we drift blissfully on the water and look across to Israel, which appears very close. We continue to Mount Nebo, also with a view of Israel. Before arriving in Madaba, we visit a mosaic workshop where we are shown the processes involved in making mosaics.

In Madaba, I take a walk through the streets, visit a church, explore a few shops and watch the hustle and bustle of the city.

It is with melancholy that we return to Amman the next day and start our journey home. The many impressions remain in our hearts: the marvellous horses, the spectacular desert, the friendliness of the Bedouins, the culinary delights and, last but not least, our great group.

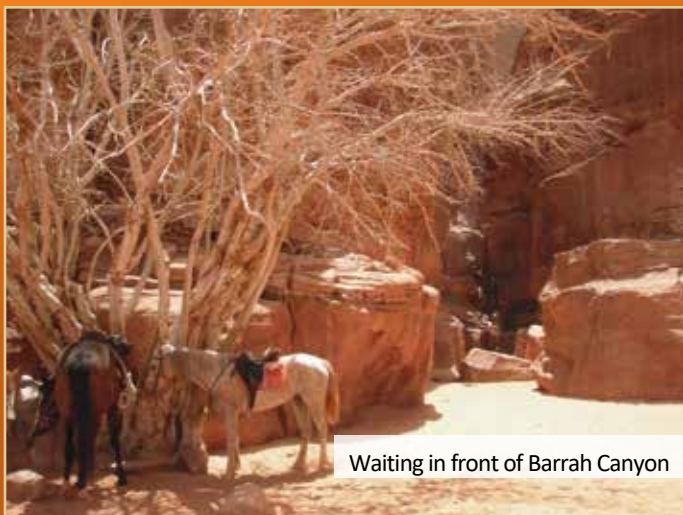
Lara von Breidenbach www.equitour.com/rum010.htm



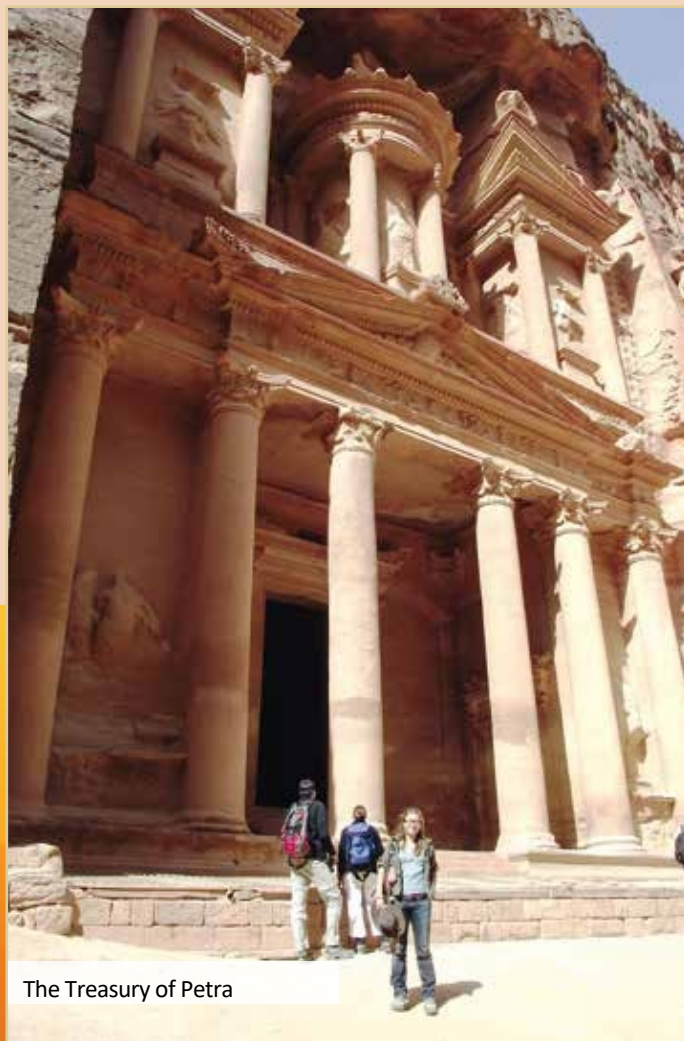
Jebel Burdha - the spectacular rock bridge



Aied explains the rock paintings



Waiting in front of Barrah Canyon



The Treasury of Petra

The Nabataeans

The rides lead through the land of the Nabataeans, an amalgamation of early nomadic peoples who united to form a kingdom around 150 BC.

The Nabataeans their wealth on the control of water points and the caravan trade. They gradually established trading centres in the desert, which developed into important cities such as the rock city of Petra.

Floating in the Dead Sea

A tailor-made riding holiday



From beginners to experienced riders - Equitour offers riding programmes for every level. The important thing is the right self-assessment. Elisabeth Hambrügge, a riding instructor of many years' standing, explains what is important.

All participants should be at roughly the same level, especially when experiencing a multi-day trail ride, because nobody wants to be a drag on the others, and good riders want to ride according to their ability and fun factor.

When booking, we therefore ask about your riding experience, riding style and level of training. If you have a foundation in riding in your youth, you might say: "Riding is like riding a bike - you never forget how to do it". That's true. But that's not enough to say: "I can ride". Because practice and conditioning play an equally important role.

To make your own assessment easier, we divide our offers into four levels:

A

stands for beginners

From complete beginners with no experience of riding, saddling or bridling to insecure, less experienced riders, everyone can take part here. For such riders, there are lunge lessons, riding lessons and the first quiet rides to the appetite for cross-country riding.



A horseshoe

Programmes with a horseshoe appeal beginners, i.e. less experienced riders. They already had

They know all three basic gaits, even without confident in their balance. On a riding holiday, newcomers gain routine in the saddle, both in the riding arena and in the field.



Two horseshoes

Riders with at least three years of riding experience, who sit firmly and balanced in the saddle in the riding arena and cross-country and have mastered the light seat, can already book most Equitour programmes. They are qualified for their first trail rides. Those who are still unsure can first try out star rides, i.e. riding programmes with daily rides. This is also ideal for older riders or if you not sure whether you are fit enough to tackle a week-long trail.



Three horseshoes

These rides are only suitable for experienced riders. Participants should have at least five years of regular riding experience, including sound riding lessons and numerous cross-country rides on different horses. They should be able to cope with spirited and sensitive horses. Then you can our gallop tours, riding faris, horse drives and cross-country trails.



Beach gallop - a treat for experts



High school of dressage

The right riding programme for every level

Photos:
private



Learning to ride on the track...

Equitour the whole range of riding pleasure. And you can ride from one level to the next with the trips on offer, as we have partners who pick up riding students where they are and take them significantly further. For example, our riding paradise in the Mühlviertel in Austria or the riding centre in Galway, Ireland, or the riding facility on the French Atlantic coast. These are just a few of the offers that are suitable for all riding qualifications.

Beginners and newcomers are best catered for during stationary stays. The riding time is shorter than on trail and star rides. Nevertheless, they can still experience nature on trail rides, for example in the Bavarian Forest. Experienced riders in good physical condition spend an average of five hours a day in the saddle on trail rides. However, trail riding is different from dressage riding or riding lessons. It is not about riding the horse through the poll and the aids. Trail riding is all about balance and trust. You ride with a light rein connection and little pressure and let the horse take you along.

However, riders who want to improve their dressage or show jumping training will also find the right programme at Equitour. You can learn difficult dressage movements on the Pipa Tour (piaffe and passage) in Alcainça under expert guidance on noble Lusitanos. Show jumping riders can learn in Masuria (Poland)



... and in the field

or in Galway, Ireland, to tackle new challenges on the show jumping course.

The following applies to all participants: riding is communication between rider and horse. The horse should not perceive us as a disruptive factor, but should accept our weight because we follow its movements and do not disturb its own balance.

We are doing sport with a living creature that a flight animal. If a horse is frightened, it can take flight. Even a professional rider cannot this.

This makes it all the more important at that moment that the rider reacts in a controlled manner. This means: keep your thighs on, cross-cue and stay balance. Don't disturb the horse and it happen. The horse senses it when the rider remains calm: "Ah, my rider knows what he's doing, he stays with me and doesn't disturb me". The rider's confident behaviour towards the horse gives the horse confidence in moments of fright.

That is the special thing about our beautiful sport: the horse is an individual with its own feelings and reflexes and not an inanimate piece of sports equipment like a tennis racket or football. We have to learn to interact and adapt with our sporting friend, then he will willingly carry us through the wide world and let us discover it through the horse's ears.

Elisabeth Hambrügge



Riding safari to the Big Five for very experienced guests.

Moments for

A group of approximately ten people are riding horses through a lush green savanna. The riders are dressed in casual outdoor attire, including hats and long-sleeved shirts. They are spread out across the frame, with some riding white horses and others brown ones. The background features a line of acacia trees and distant blue mountains under a clear sky.

Every encounter with African big game causes palpitations. The very brave dare to go on safari on horseback and feel a deep sense of awe when they come face to face with a lion or elephant.

Kenya



Photo:
private

Life



Kenya

In the realm of the Big Five



"I had a farm in Africa" is how the famous film "Beyond Africa" begins. Karen Blixen looks back on her years in Kenya, and the longing that lies in this sentence is felt by anyone who ever set foot in the country.

The story of Karen Blixen was told 100 years ago. Much has changed land has changed. From desert areas to mountains, changed, but the great herds still roam the savannah, a coast with dream beaches to tropical savannahs. savannah, a coastline with dream beaches to tropical savannahs, and the magic of the wilderness is greater than ever. Wetlands on Lake Victoria.

Then as now, the safari is THE African adventure. opportunities and every visitor wants to see them: Big Five: is elephant, rhino, buffalo, lion and leopard. They are the coveted north, but the many other migrations. Huge wildebeest and of antelope, zebras, giraffes, hippos and crocodiles, cheetahs, ostriches, warthogs, and many more. largest of them all take our breath away and touch our hearts. which is divided in terms of landscape and climate into an eastern and a western part. divided into an eastern and a western part.

Several national parks and nature reserves offer the best opportunities for unforgettable animal sightings. The Masai Mara A nature reserve that adjoins the Serengeti in Tanzania to the Serengeti and are just as fascinating for their spectacular animal known as the "Big Migration". The Amboseli National Park herds acacia woodlands, open velds, marshlands, hyenas, jackals, all set against the magnificent backdrop of Mount Kilimanjaro. The The largest national park is Tsavo National Park in the south-west, divided into an eastern and a western part.

Kilimanjaro - the "white mountain"





What do the buffaloes think?



You can explore larger areas by jeep or bus, and the rangers communicate with each other about the best places for animal sightings. Approaching the big game on horseback has its own special charm. You can gallop alongside giraffes, zebras or wildebeest and the thrill of coming face to face with an elephant or lion. The horses are amazingly fearless and their guides know the wilderness and its inhabitants and will not put you in danger.

The biggest danger for every Kenya tourist is that they become addicted to travelling to Africa again. Like Karen Blixen, you will have home stories for life from every visit.



Meeting with a local



Wanderer of the savannah

Kenya country info



Size: 580 367 km²

Population: 53 million Capital:

Nairobi Language: Swahili, English

Religion: Predominantly Christian

Currency: Kenyan shilling

Climate: subtropical to tropical, dry and humid zones

Best time to visit: all year round

EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

All four riding programmes lead you to Kenya's greatest treasures - the wild animals. Accompany the "Big Migration", the great animal migration in the Masai Mara Nature Reserve. Enjoy the pleasant climate in the Laikipia Highlands at the foot of the mighty Mount Kenya. Or look for the Big Five in Amboseli National Park with a view of the famous Kilimanjaro.

www.equitour.com/africa.htm



Masai Mara



The Masai Mara is Kenya's most animal-rich nature reserve and a dream destination for Angelika Kaiser. The safari on horseback exceeds her wildest expectations.

Even from the small charter plane that flies us into the bush, we have a view of the African bush landscape and animals. Simon is waiting for us at the airstrip, with the jeep.

to camp, we spot impalas, giraffes, zebras and a hyena. On arrival we are amazed by the luxurious tented camp with real beds and towels, showers and toilets standing in extra tents. We settle in and meet at the laid table. The ver-

The camp is located directly on the river where hippos roam. Their grunts and roars are heard alongside other animal sounds. Again through a soundscape that remains etched in our memories to this day. Every day we experience the endless expanses of the African continent. You can't feel safe and unobserved here. Awake in the bush, without stress and without noise. Pure nature - that is the only thing that gives us a shady African feeling.

Through bush and savannah

In the afternoon, we go on our first ride and I spot the first wild animal I get to my horse for the week. It is a treasure - easy - our guide, Rideable, forward-going, eager to jump and fearless. On the drive we explore the area and spot a few giraffes, elephants and even antelopes. I have travelled to various regions of Africa via the bush but still can't get over the wildlife torches and fresh water. and toilets. Watching a herd of elephants bathing, playing or watching a herd of elephants eating or watching a giraffe as we The food is delicious with game, fresh vegetables and salads. fishing - these are moments for life!

Over the next few days, we ride through changing landscapes. sounds. Sometimes we pass through endless savannah, then rocky area with hills - the best place for big cats. The same senses are absolutely essential. In search of that We have to recognise the bushes that provide shade for a rest,

Riding Safari



Giraffes: Animals like towers



Luxury in the wilderness



that lions have the same idea and many shady spots are already occupied. You don't want to disturb lions while they are napping, especially not on foot!

A small surprise awaits us as we make our way through denser scrubland and suddenly hear a distinct hissing. A lioness with cubs that we get too close to gives us a clear warning and we slowly and carefully retreat. A short time later, we see the same lioness hunting an antelope. Creeping forward on silent paws, she approaches her prey, which escapes over a slope. Breathtaking! Time and again we see hippos foraging outside the water. Extreme caution is also required here, as hippos are very aggressive and quickly feel provoked. We learn the iron rule: never stand between a hippo and the water with your horse!

On a ride through dense, high grassland we come across

A black rhino looks over at us briefly and then trots off.

Lion banquet

Every ride is different and the wildlife sightings are unpredictable. We experience a special event when a giraffe that has fallen to the ground is surrounded by several lions. We keep our distance and watch spellbound as the lions feast on the giraffe carcass. We keep our distance so as not to provoke the animals. In the evening, we return to the scene of the action by jeep, as we can get closer in the vehicle. Around 20 lions feast on the giraffe carcass. Fascinating! I've never seen so many lions at once.

We drive out by jeep several times in the afternoon or towards evening to get closer to the animals and fully on our observations.

At sunset, we stop in the middle of the wilderness and enjoy the view over a sundowner. There is no better way round off an eventful day.

One of my highlights is the sight of several cheetahs. I am particularly fascinated by the majestic beauty of these cats. Graceful, elegant and lithe, they combine strength and speed. They usually travel alone or in pairs. We get quite close to cheetahs on horseback and once by jeep and admire them once at midday rest and once at a walking pace - images like these stay with .

Time and again we encounter huge herds of zebras, buffaloes or antelopes on our rides, we see jackals, giraffes with young animals and huge herds of eland. Sometimes you don't even know where look first, as we are accompanied by many wild animals that have no fear of us or the horses.

The great hike

Everyone has seen a documentary about the dramatic crossing of the Mara River by herds of wildebeest and zebra. We've all seen the images of crocodiles lurking and snapping at us. And like the wildebeest and zebras, we now stand tensely on the riverbank. Our guide Simon ventures into the water and explores the situation. Not only hippos and crocodiles, but also the strong current harbours danger. In the middle of the river, Simon to the left, his horse stumbles and hippos next to him. Our breath catches. But Simon is an experienced guide - he cracks his whip and the hippos dive away. Simon looks for the best passage, then comes back and guides us through the water. We have to hold on tightly to the reins, keep an eye on the bank and keep strictly behind each other. We wade through the Mara, lose our footing for a few metres and our horses have to swim. It's amazing how fearlessly and safely they master this task. We reach the other shore beaming and relieved - some of us with shining eyes, others can see the tension ebbing away. This is pure adventure!

Audience with the king



Simon leads us through the river



The week passes quickly and inevitably the time comes to say goodbye. Eventful days and unforgettable experiences lie behind us. Some of us are now heading home, while I will be travelling to two more places in Kenya.

Kenya's comfort zone

A Land Rover takes you through the tea plantations of Kericho to the luxurious Deloraine House. The sprawling estate is one of the most exclusive accommodations in Kenya and offers every comfort. Over 80 horses graze on lush pastures around the main house. A pool, tennis and polo court as well as a cross country course are available. After a short ride in the lush green surroundings, we can try our hand at the cross-country course. From Deloraine, I continue my journey alone. A driver takes me through typical African villages to Laikipia Safari Lodge. 30,000 hectares of wilderness without fences and with countless wild animals. Just 50 kilometres the equator, at the foot of Mount Kenya, I once again find an impressive variety of animals and ecosystems: Big game such as elephant, buffalo, lion and leopard, but also rare species such as wild dogs, as well as antelopes, gazelles, giraffes, zebras, wildebeest and countless species of birds and reptiles.

In the north of the farm, vast savannahs provide a home for antelopes, cheetahs and ostriches. In the south, the bush is denser

and turns into acacia forests, which are home to several herds of elephants. I explore the farmland on horseback, by jeep and even on a camel. I also experience the peace and quiet by the pool, the delicious food and the comfortable accommodation, which nothing to be desired. It is all the more difficult to say goodbye to the lovely people, wonderful horses, nature and the many wild animals. See you next time!

Angelika Kaiser

Masai Mara ride with optional extension at Deloraine House: www.equitour.com/mmr011.htm

Laikipia Safari Lodge: www.equitour.com/sossta.htm

Rest in the bush



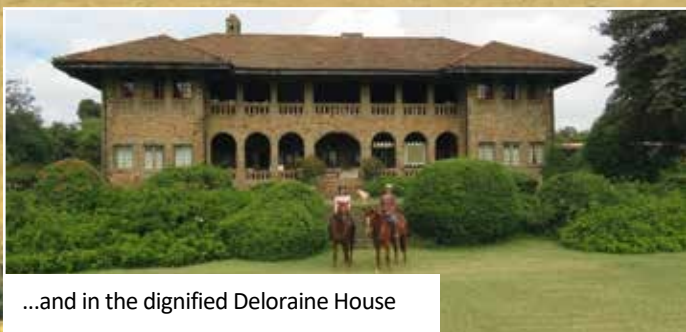
Pure adrenaline at the sight of the huge bull elephant





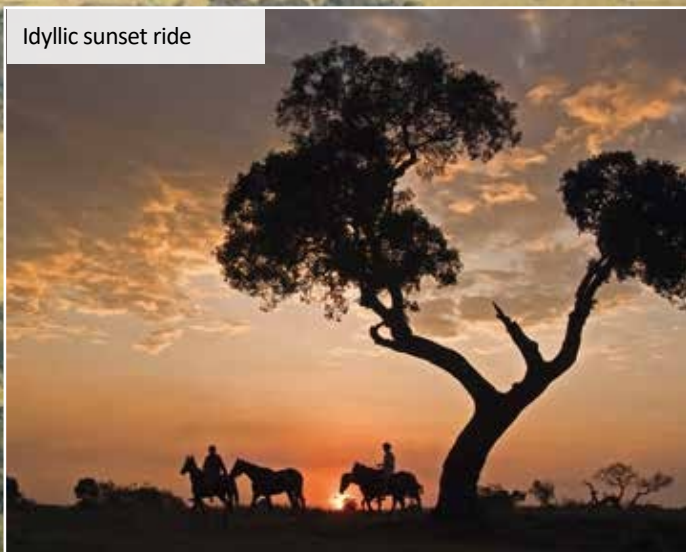
Race in the savannah

Africa style in the wilderness camp...



...and in the dignified Deloraine House

Idyllic sunset ride



Paradise in the

Who needs the Caribbean when paradise is in the Mediterranean?
Sardinia and Sicily offer travellers dream beaches, feel-good time
and thrills under the southern sun.



Italy



Photo:
private

Mediterranean Sea



Sicily

Queen of the Mediterranean



Sicily rightly bears this royal name, as it is the largest island in the Mediterranean, with mountains rising to over 3,000 metres into the sky and wealth of natural and cultural treasures.

Even Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was fascinated by the diversity of Sicily.

inspired. In his work "Italian Journey", he writes aptly:

"Italy without Sicily does not make a picture in the soul: here is only the key to everything."

In fact, Sicily's landscape is so varied that every visitor into raptures: swimming in the sea, skiing, hiking, horse riding, exploring historic towns and picturesque fishing villages and, as the icing on the cake, climbing the still active volcano Mount Etna. The mixture of excitement and relaxation is unique.

The north of Sicily is green and mountainous. The two mountain ranges of Madonie and Nebrodi are the destinations of the Equitour riding tours. The relatively rainy region offers lush green landscapes with rivers, lakes and extensive forests. Cork oaks, beeches, cedars, pines and a type of fir typical of Sicily, the Nebrodi fir, grow here.

Equitour guides its guests in the saddle through the nature parks of the Madonie and the Nebrodi Mountains with their sprouting vegetation. The Etna National Park is quite different. The flanks of the famous volcano are reminiscent of a lunar landscape. Nevertheless, there are sandy tracks that you to gallop.

Constantly bubbling earth reminds visitors of the elemental forces of nature. More than 200 craters, including four main craters, bear witness to Etna's thousands of years of activity.

In surreal contrast to the black, seemingly lifeless ground is the delicate light green vegetation that thrives on the fertile soil. From the summit of the 3,300 metre high mountain, you can see the beauty of the island all the way to the Italian mainland.

Sicily's diverse history stands alongside its natural diversity. Due to its location, the island has always been of great importance for seafaring and trade. Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Arabs, Byzantines, Normans and Spaniards all conquered the island and their cultural mark on it. The eventful past can be seen in the towns and traditions of today's Sicily.

Culture and activities are complemented by culinary delights. Fish and seafood, pizza and pasta, bread and cheese varieties and delicious dolci, i.e. desserts, rounded off with first-class Sicilian wines. All this makes a visit to Sicily a real treat, which has its own special charm at any time of year.



The Basilica della Collegiata in Catania



Horses living in the wild in the Madonie



The charm of old towns



Bathing paradise: Sandy bay on the rocky coast



Evviva! On Mount Etna

Country info Sicily



Size: 25 700 km²

Population: 4.8 million Capital:

Palermo Language: Italian

Religion: Predominantly Roman Catholic

Currency: Euro

Climate: predominantly warm, dry Mediterranean climate, snow also falls in the mountains Best

time to visit: all year round

EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

Sicily's mountains in particular are the backdrop for the two Equitour riding tours. The highlight is the seething Mount Etna, but the Madonie and Nebrodi nature parks as well as extensive forests, rivers, lakes and historic towns are also on horseback. Sicilian hospitality and culinary delights crown the programme.

www.equitour.com/italy.htm

Ride on the volcano



Mount Etna smokes menacingly as Jessica Kiefer and her group of riders move across the lava fields on its slopes and immerse themselves in Sicily's unique natural parks.

The starting point of the riding tour is an agroturismo, a typical rural hotel near the Madonie mountain range. It is early July and the landscape is correspondingly barren. A few historic villages nestle against the mountainsides. Franco, one of the two riding guides, explains that Sicily once densely wooded, but the Romans cleared much of the forest to build their city.

In the hotel, a large pool, hammocks and numerous seating areas you to linger. But we have come to conquer the island on horseback, so the next morning we set off on our first ride in the surrounding area. The riding group consists of Germans, French, Valaisans and Americans, a total of ten women and two men. I am given a petite Arabian gelding called Dago, a former competition horse of the "runs until he drops" type, who I fall in love with straight away.

We ride through pastures and stop at a shepherd's hut, where the extended family is already gathered. The shepherds live

During the summer, the farmers and their cattle, sheep and goats graze on the mountain pastures and cheese, such as ricotta and the typical Sicilian hard cheese "Caciocavallo". After tasting cheese and grilled specialities, we ride up the serpentines to a former monastery. A fog front rises and envelops the small forest on the other side of the mountain, through whose thicket a narrow path leads us back down to a wide panoramic path. We return to the Reiterhotel through rocky terrain.

The actual riding tour begins the following day, taking us from the Madonie Nature Park to Mount Etna. We leave the limestone cliffs of the Madonie and ride along well-kept forest paths lined with stone walls. Here we meet workers who build stone walls, maintain paths and clear the forest floor of needles and leaves. The latter is for fire protection. The "Forestale", or forest guard, an important employer in Sicily.



In the Madonie Nature Park



The purest lunar landscape



In the vegetation-rich Nebrodi National Park

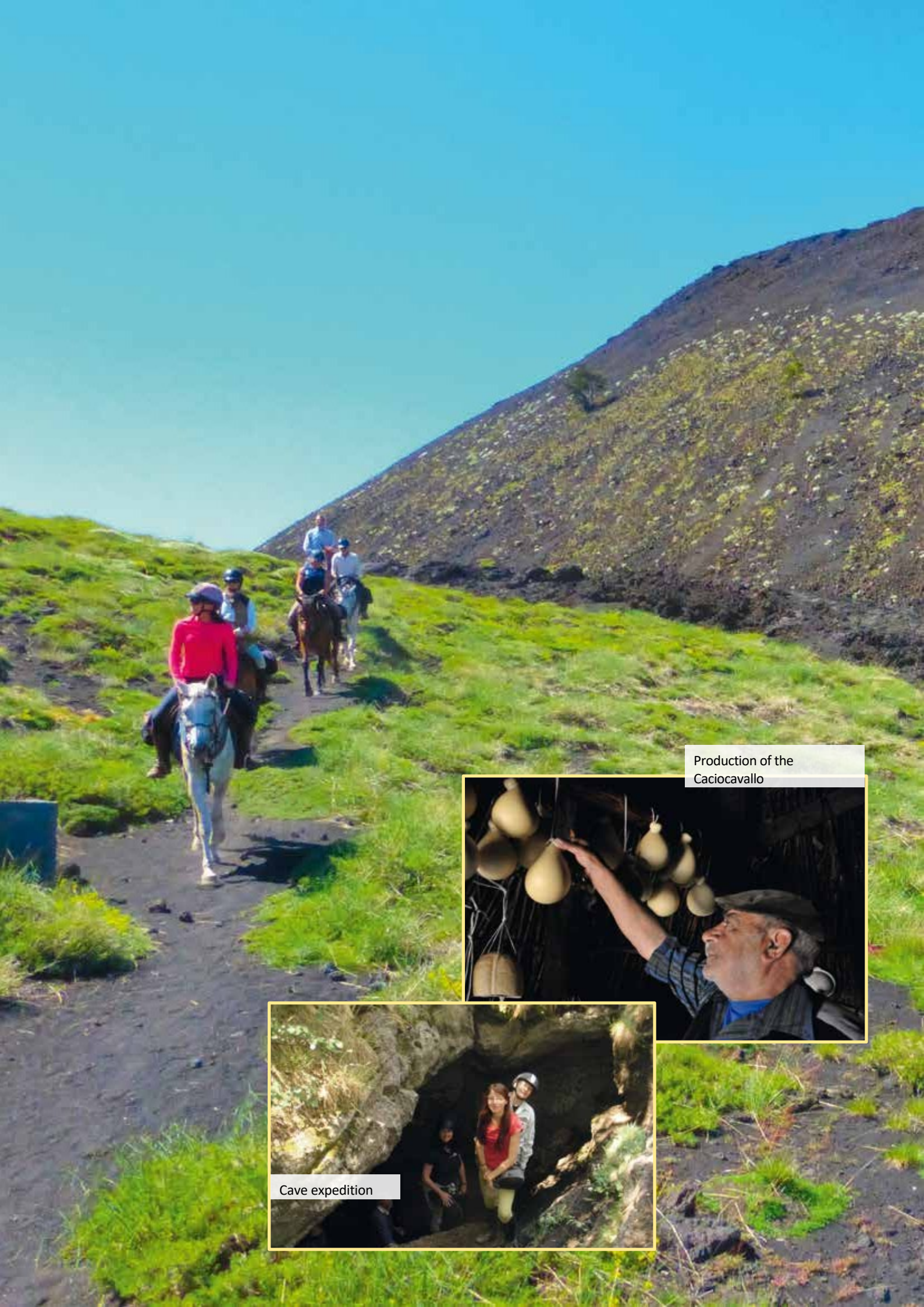
After a picnic lunch, we arrive in an area of Tuscany. Golden cornfields and purple-flowering artichokes characterise the landscape. The sun spoils us on a long afternoon ride. Near Gangi we reach our country hotel, Villa Raino, a stylishly renovated manor house. Today, the horses share a huge meadow with the farm owner's sheep. The owner welcomes us with sweet aperitifs. After an evening dip in the pool, a multi-course dinner is with the best Sicilian wine.

The next morning we set off in the direction of Capizzi. After a long gallop, we reach a wooded plateau. We take a long lunch break in the shade of the trees. We then take a wide forest track through the fragrant mixed forest, at the end of which we ride along the road for a while.

Capizzi lies between cattle and horse pastures. Eventually we reach a small farm where the horses spend the night.

The farm owner breeds Sicilian pigs that look like small wild boars. The piglets escape through holes in the fence and approach our horses, which don't move any further. disturb them. One of the piglets later ends up on the table for dinner the grill.

In the days that follow, we head into the forests, across alpine meadows and to the lakes of the Nebrodi Nature Park. We move up and down at around 1000 metres above sea level. We spend the following night near Lake Trearie in a simple country house. Riding guide Paolo is also a chef and serves gnocchi with pistachio sauce by the crackling open fire. For dessert, we have cream slices called "Testa del Turco" (Turk's head), which a reference to the victory of the Normans over the Turks. Sicily, it should be noted, has been invaded by many different peoples. Romans, Arabs, Turks, Normans, Germans, Greeks and Carthaginians have all left their mark on the island.



Production of the
Caciocavallo



Cave expedition



Blooming meadows



The snow-covered, smoking Mount Etna



Pristine lake in Nebrodi Park



Share with the piggies

The onward journey takes us into the Etna Nature Park. The first traces of the volcano are circular craters filled with water, lava stones and purple sand. The lava sand paths offer ideal riding conditions. We climb the famous volcano through vineyards, orchards and a forest. Lava rock all around us, a breathtaking panorama in front of us. Lush broom and low trees line our path. At an altitude of over 1700 metres, we cross a huge lava field that dates back to the 1991 eruption and whose only vegetation of small fiery red bushes. "Etna is like a bottle of champagne without a cork," say the locals. The volcano is constantly active, always bubbling and then ejecting its ash every few years. Fortunately, this is not too dangerous, as the lava flows have long followed the same path towards the sea. Nevertheless, it is exciting to ride around on this mountain. Finally, we leave the unreal-looking landscape and make our way back. The next day, we ride across lava fields once again and remember the words of the locals when we see the smoking volcano.

On the way to the village of Milo, we tie up our horses in a forest and visit a cave that once as a hideout for bandits. It is a crater with two narrow entrances, but the extent of the cave underground is remarkable. Here we meet the first other tourists who are exploring the cave wearing mining helmets. The riding helmet does the trick too, so we them. The back passage was once created for the horses, a steep and narrow

Path with steps. It must been a challenge to lead the horses down here into the darkness!

After this adventure, we ride downhill over wide black sandy paths. The view of the sea soon opens up, and after almost four hours we reach Milo. Ash lies on the roadside and on the roofs of the houses. Similar to our warning signs "50 in wet conditions", there are signs here saying "20 in volcanic ash".

We ride to a donkey farm where we have to say goodbye to our horses. Michele, the farm owner, has a good 200 donkeys. Their milk is processed into cosmetics on the mainland, but also serves as an alternative for people with cow's milk allergies. Incidentally, donkey mares and foals stay together, as the mares would no longer give milk without foals. After a delicious farewell dinner at Michele's, we spend the night in a guesthouse in the village and head back to Catania early in the morning.

Franco drives us in his minibus and entertains us one last time with his knowledge of Sicily's history, culture and horses. With a kilo of caciocavallo, a litre of donkey's milk and ground pistachios in my luggage, I off on my journey home.

Paolo and Franco us to join them on their second tour of Sicily, the Ma- donie round trip. Who knows, after all, the island can be reached quickly by plane and offers countless holiday pleasures.

Jessica Kiefer

www.equitour.com/siz009.htm

Sardinia

The Caribbean of Europe

As beautiful as the Caribbean, only much closer. This is the dream island of Sardinia, whose visitors easily fall in love with it and return again and again.

Dream beaches, turquoise blue water and a picturesque mountain panorama in the background await travellers to Sardinia.

Although the second largest Mediterranean island invites you to enjoy a classic beach holiday, most visitors are thirsty for action and take advantage of the sporting activities on offer, such as surfing, diving, sailing, golf, hiking, climbing, cycling and, of course, horse riding.

The rocky hinterland offers adventurous trails and spectacular views of the island and the sea. Towns and villages like something out of a picture book offer an old culture, plenty of culinary delights and Italian flair.

An insider tip, especially for horse lovers, is the Giara di Gesturi, a 550 metre high nature reserve with many wild and feral animals such as wild cats, martens, sheep and feral domestic pigs. And around 600 feral small horses, the Giara horses, live here undisturbed and largely left to their own devices. Once a year, however, the horses are rounded up and counted. To limit the population, some animals are caught and tamed on this occasion.



Horses and horse breeding generally very important in Sardinia. This is also true of the Sartiglia, the large equestrian carnival in the lagoon town of Oristano on Sardinia's west coast. Embedded in religious rites and traditions, masked horsemen past the streams of visitors. They accompany the King of the Sartiglia, who greets the visitors and rides three times under a star suspended from a rope. The highlight is when he races towards the star at full gallop to pierce it with his spear. A task that requires a great deal of skill and, if successful, brings blessings to the city.

In addition to Carnival, Sardinia celebrates around 1000 religious and secular festivals every year, which based on ancient Sardinian traditions. Sounds, colours, smells and dances convey the Sardinian way of life and joie de vivre to guests from all over the world.



Semi-wild Giara horses



Masked riders at the Sartiglia



Sardinian Anglo-Arabian

Sardo

The Sardinian horse goes back to Arabian, Berber and Spanish horses. It is also known as the Sardinian Anglo-Arabian and is systematically bred in Sardinia.

The Sardo is robust, sure-footed and reliable, making it the perfect touring horse. He is 1.50 to 1.60 m tall and predominantly brown or chestnut in colour.



The unspoilt mountains

Sardinia country info



Size: 24 090 km²

Population: 1.6 million Capital:

Cagliari Language: Italian

Religion: Predominantly Roman Catholic

Currency: Euro

Climate: warm, dry Mediterranean climate

Best time to visit: April to October

EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

EQUITOUR takes its equestrian guests to the heights of the Sardinian mountains, through bizarre rock formations and across white sandy beaches. Day rides, trail rides and riding lessons are offered as required, supplemented by a varied additional programme with typical island food and enriching contacts with the friendly Sardinians.

The island spoils riders and non-riders alike with culture, wellness, restaurants and marvellous beaches. In short, the perfect mix of activity and idleness.

www.equitour.com/italy.htm



Regional delicacies

Island adventure South Sardinia

Riding in the Garden of Eden



Jessica Kiefer and her friends explore the Caribbean of the Mediterranean, as Sardinia is also known, on varied day rides.

Riding guide Manolo always has an infectious smile on his lips. No wonder, he lives in a true paradise where, thanks to the mild climate with plenty of sunshine, lush nature, marvellous beaches and healthy Mediterranean cuisine, a comparatively high proportion of the population is over 100 years old. The Sardinians live mainly from natural, extensive agriculture, fishing and tourism in the summer. Nevertheless, the coasts are unspoilt and there are no large hotel complexes. Holidaymakers stay in flats, agriturismo, family-run hotels or on campsites.

Our starting point is a family-run hotel in Sant'Antioco, the town on Sardinia's small neighbouring island of the same name. Every day, Manolo leads our riding group for four to six hours along the coast and into the mountains in the hinterland, from where there are breathtaking views of the green hills and the deep blue sea. After the rides, there is still time for a stroll, a visit to the ice cream parlour, the supermarket or for an aperitif at the harbour before we have dinner in the hotel restaurant.

It is the beginning of April when we arrive via Cagliari to our island adventure on horseback. The season is just starting, there are only a few surfers on the beach. This gives us the opportunity for long beach gallops and undisturbed midday rests in deserted bays. The hinterland is also still deserted and we enjoy the rich vegetation on our day rides. We ride through eucalyptus and pine forests, cactus avenues and the dense macchia, the evergreen Mediterranean scrubland with junipers, strawberry trees, rosemary, the endemic mirto, wild olives, low palm trees and much more. On the narrow overgrown paths, which are up to 5000 years old, we have to duck again and again. Sardinia and Sant'Antioco are not only rich in nature, but also in history. The town of Solki was founded by the Phoenicians as early as 800 BC and was conquered 200 years later by the Carthaginians and renamed Sant'Antioco. The town quickly developed into one of the most important trading towns on the Mediterranean route. We also pass two nuraghi (stone buildings with cellars) and medieval villages on our rides. The Nuragics were a people

of seafarers who lived in Sardinia in the Bronze Age around 4000 years ago.

And the incredible splendour of flowers everywhere - it's like riding through a single paradisiacal garden. In between, there are always sheep, to whom we owe the excellent pecorino cheese at our lunch picnic. Five million sheep live in Sardinia, which means that there are five sheep for every million Sardinians. Equally important are the fish and seafood, which find the best conditions in the clear, clean water and provide culinary delights every evening. Freshly caught mussels, scampi, calamari, tuna and much more can be found on the restaurant menus. Water birds also benefit from the rich fish and crab population: on our rides through the extensive salt pans between Sant'Antioco and Sardinia, we encounter countless flamingos, herons, seagulls and sandpipers. The shallow water of the salt pans is reddish in colour from the crabs, which in turn gives the white-bodied flamingos their pink colouring.





Sardinia's floral splendour



Delicious: Sardinian cuisine



Turquoise water



1000 years old: the Chiesa di Santa Maria di Palmas

The Sardinians love horses. There are big horse festivals, for example Celsius for the carnival equestrian festival in Oristano, where costumed riders perform their riding skills. The weather is warmer than at home, but there is a fresh breeze that brings rain on two days when riders on decorated horses show off their riding skills.

The Sardinian farmers are already looking forward to the good hay harvest made possible by the rain. Typical are the large-framed Sardinian Anglo-Arabian horses, to which He changes our wish on a rainy morning include my mare Aisha. Manolo has a programme for every tasteprogramme, and we visit the Is Zuddas stalactite cave, where he has the right horse: among his 15 or so trail horses, one of the most famous is Aisha. The cave is known for its white blankets, which look like thousands of lively Arabians and sporty Anglo-Arabian horses. ice crystals. In the afternoon, we ride everything from rainbows to the calm Appaloosa. The horses are in a very We ride through the salt marshes and enjoy the magical play of light. excellent condition and have fun, especially when galloping Despite the rainy days, we are also happy and satisfied with our island adventure. colourful sea. Another time it goes through the marshland past lush meadows.

The ride through the maquis is challenging. Narrow paths lead over rocks and through dense undergrowth. We have to keep our heads down and are glad of our riding helmets and chaps. Wide sandy paths lead through small forests, fields and gardens, past artichokes, yellow daisies and blossoming almond trees.

At the beginning of April, it is a maximum of 18 degrees Celsius. The weather is warmer than at home, but there is a fresh breeze that brings rain on two days when riders on decorated horses show off their riding skills. Instead of being disgruntled, Manolo is happy

The Sardinian farmers are already looking forward to the good

He changes our wish on a rainy morning include my mare Aisha. Manolo has a programme for every tasteprogramme, and we visit the Is Zuddas stalactite cave, where he has the right horse: among his 15 or so trail horses, one of the most famous is Aisha. The cave is known for its white blankets, which look like thousands of lively Arabians and sporty Anglo-Arabian horses. ice crystals. In the afternoon, we ride everything from rainbows to the calm Appaloosa. The horses are in a very We ride through the salt marshes and enjoy the magical play of light. excellent condition and have fun, especially when galloping Despite the rainy days, we are also happy and satisfied with our our island adventure.

Anyone travelling to Italy should always some space in their luggage. Limoncello, pecorino, amaretti and other delicacies end up in my suitcase. They make saying goodbye a little easier and remind me of the wonderful time I had in the south of Sardinia for the next few weeks. Jessica Kiefer

<https://www.equitour.com/sulsta.com>



PRODUCT CHECK HOLIDAYS

How does EQUITOUR test?

Every Equitour riding programme is put through its paces in advance. tested. Product Manager and Managing Director Jessica Kiefer travels the world and tests offers. Gabriele Kärcher asks her what is important.



Are you looking for potential partners or are organisers applying to you?

This varies, as a rule the riding centres contact us and we then check whether a collaboration is possible. Sometimes we also receive recommendations or become aware of interesting programmes through the web and press, which we then contact ourselves. If we are looking for a new programme in a particular area, we do targeted research online. This is quite time-consuming, as many farm websites are out of date.

What are the minimum requirements for taking the test?

Without horses there is no horseback riding trip. The first step is to clarify whether there are enough horses available, because even though we like to work with small groups, there should be at least eight serviceable horses to make a co-operation worthwhile. Substitute and exchange horses are also required. With eight horses, a maximum of five to six guests can be accommodated. be used. We prefer breeds that are typical of the country. Icelandic horses in Spain or Haflinger horses in Turkey are not what the guest expects.

Secondly, we clarify the question of accommodation. For a riding tour, the provider does not necessarily have to have its own accommodation, but for a programme with star rides, accommodation and riding stables should be in the same hands if possible, or at least in the immediate vicinity. From tented camps to luxury lodges, there must be something for every customer's wishes and requirements. Establishments that only offer family flats are unsuitable, as we have many guests travelling alone or as a couple who want to be cooked for on holiday.

We value good, regional, freshly prepared food. Finally, we need an attractive riding programme. Riding tours and rides should offer variety and lead through beautiful countryside with few roads. For pure riding programmes



Jessica Kiefer with a happy Berber horse in Morocco

riding must fill the day. For others, a few hours in the saddle are enough to time for other activities.

Is the test ride a riding trip organised especially for the test or are you riding a regular programme?

When a new riding tour is added, we accompany a regular offer with guests to get a real impression of the process. If the ride is fully booked, it shows how a larger group is handled. With often very different guests, the riding guides have to cater to each individual. For new rides, a preliminary visit is advisable to ensure that the conditions for acceptance met.

What is tested?

The most important thing is the horses and how they are kept. Ideally, horses should be kept in groups in robust and/or open stables. This is not always possible, for example if stallions are kept or horses for sale are used that are only on the farm for a certain period of time. Some horses are also better in boxes with a run-out. But we always make sure that the horses are kept in the best possible conditions. Only then are the horses happy and well-balanced. A good feed and health condition of the horses is the basis for a successful riding holiday. They must fit and suitable for the programme on offer, i.e. have strong nerves, stamina and sure-footedness for the tour and be well trained for the dressage course.

Then we take a look at the equipment. Do the saddles fit or are there chafe marks? For safety reasons alone, all halters, bridles, saddles and blankets must be in reasonably good condition. Of course, with intensive use, saddlery will not look like the well-maintained and comparatively little-used brand-name saddle at home. It is important to take good care of it and, if necessary, to replace stirrup leathers, reins and girths before dangerous tears occur.

What demands are there on the partners?

We demand professionalism from operators and riding guides on site. Ideally, the main guides should have completed training as a riding guide; in France there is a special two-year training programme. At the very least, you should have a few years as a back-up guide behind you before you think about organising rides yourself. Anyone who has ever done this knows what it means to a private ride with a friend. In addition to expertise, you need to have a feel for your guests, as they have different expectations and sensitivities. It's not easy to always strike the right note. Especially when you have to explain to someone that his/her riding skills are . Friendliness is the be-all and end-all, because you want to be treated as a guest and customer by the organiser, not as a necessary evil.

The use of unprofessional staff, such as employing the girl next door as a guide or riding instructor for paying adult guests, is unacceptable. An example from Iceland shows how important test rides with existing contractual partners are. Our eighteen-year-old back-up guide from Sweden was completely overwhelmed with guests and horses. And the more experienced riding guide at the front was struggling to manage everything on her own. Some of the riders were not up to the demands of a highland ride with a free-roaming herd and fell off their horses several times. The farm manager, with whom we no longer work, did not consider it necessary to ride along himself and only came with the pick-up when necessary, for example to collect the fallen riders. This example shows how people and circumstances can change. Fortunately, nothing worse happened and it was still a great riding adventure for the tough and experienced Equitour guests.

What is important when it comes to accommodation and catering?

We pay particular attention to cleanliness, but apart from that, an overnight stay in straw can be planned, which will be advertised accordingly. The most important thing is a precise description so that nobody is disappointed. As

As a product manager, I always make up my own mind on site. Personally, I prefer staying with locals in a mattress camp to a luxury hotel with a marble bathroom and fireplace. But of course we also offer this, because tastes differ. The price-performance ratio must be right. If you book a trail ride for 2500 EUR, you can expect to stay in nice hotels and not in simple guesthouses with shared rooms - unless you are in high-priced Iceland. Prices vary not only according to comfort, but also according to destination. But demand also the price.

When it comes to food, we favour regional cuisine, because it should be an overall experience of the country. We offer individual holidays and not mass tourism. Some of our programmes are not suitable for vegans or people with food intolerances. This must be clarified in advance. Then there are differences in the daily programmes. With some partners

In France dinner is not served before 9pm. This is a problem for some German guests, which is why we also have to write this out. However, we are not trying to change local customs here.

Who tests the trips?

This task is assigned to the Equitour product managers.

Photos: private

hold. We also have former employees who are happy to step in. Unfortunately, you can't apply to be a test rider. There is a lot to discuss besides riding. If riding centres are starting up or have not yet had any guests from German-speaking countries, we have to state our conditions and possibly put forward suggestions for improvement.

This requires experience, negotiating skills and language knowledge. The bloggers and journalists who write our travel reports also generally visit existing programmes and us with travel reports, pictures and videos. However, we are always happy to receive constructive feedback and reports from our customers. They use it enormously to constantly check the quality of the trips and make changes if necessary.

Well-groomed horse, intact equipment



Trail horses must be fit and sure-footed



Typical of the country: horse, riding style and accommodation

MEXICAN



Mexico



Photos:
private

MELODIES

Barren plains, blooming abundance, racy horses and warm-hearted people - in Mexico, travellers experience how dreams reality.



Highlands & Canyons Ride

IN THE BLAZE OF COLOUR

Denise Neufeld is a touring rider with worldwide experience. The combination of fast rides and changing landscapes has overwhelmed even her.



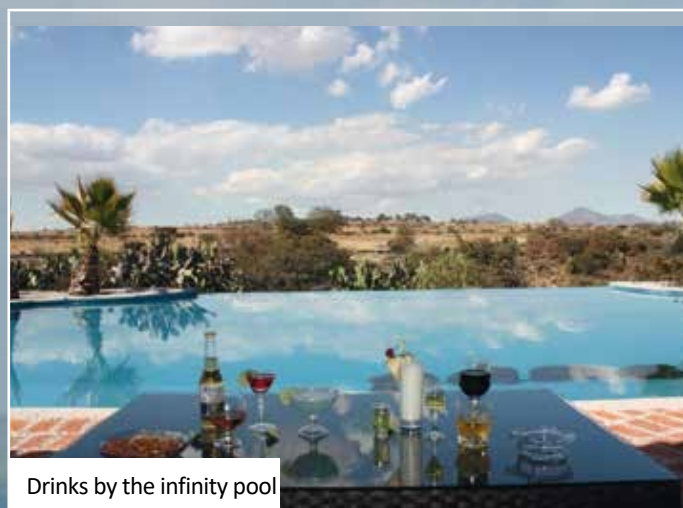
Rancho Mexicana, my home for the next two weeks, is not far from the metropolis of Mexico City. After just an hour and a half's drive, chauffeur Tomás takes me from the hustle and bustle of the metropolis to the solitude of the Mexican highlands. Endless pastures where cows and sheep graze surround the ranch. Gentle hills rise up on the horizon.

Host Uschi is Swiss, but has lived in Mexico for many years and has built up the ranch with a lot of love. The centrepiece is the main house with the lounge, a bar with billiard room, the large open-plan kitchen, the dining room and a beautiful courtyard from which you access the guest rooms. The conservatory and terrace overlook the inviting infinity pool, and from the heated Jacuzzi you can see the small waterfalls below the ranch. Everything is decorated in typical Mexican style with flowers, art objects and loving details in bright colours that radiate Mexican joie de vivre. In the "Pueblito", the neighbouring building, there are further, individually designed guest rooms.

IN MEXICO



The super friendly team



Drinks by the infinity pool



YIPPIE! Gallop across the highlands

The location of the ranch at 2300 metres above sea level and the mountain range around the ranch, give it a Average temperature of 23 degrees Celsius. With over 330 sunny days a year for fast rides.

stallions and 22 geldings, who together us. Most of them are Criollo Quarter Horses Aztecas, an Arabian and a Andalusian.

that are freshly prepared. ride, I get the pretty brown stays. Riding is done in the style of the Mexican cow horse.

boys, the Charros, the North American western riding style, the resembles. After a short briefing, we set off.

The wide, flat land surrounding the ranch is perfect Under blue skies, we move in a relaxed The herd comprises 11 Canter across meadows and fields while the wind blows around ears. I immediately took "my" Tequila to my heart. There are also and I imagine he likes me a bit too.

After the ride, I enjoy a delicious lunch in the glorious sunshine delicious lunch. The menu usually includes typical Mexican dishes dishes that freshly prepared. From the guaca- ren. For my first mole, grilled meat and mango sorbet - the stallion "Tequila" no wishes unfulfilled!

The participants of the riding tour will arrive in the next few days. We are a colourful group: four people living abroad Germans, a Canadian, an Englishwoman, three Frenchmen, a Pole and a Dutchman, all excited about the upcoming ride. Then the time has come: the big tour begins. We fortify ourselves with a sumptuous breakfast buffet, because from now on we can expect up to nine riding hours a day. Our horses spend the nights in different places, while we riders are taken to the ranch every evening and can enjoy the comfort of the place.

The charros saddle the horses. All the participants quickly get ips with the horses and the riding style. I ride Tequila, who is already familiar to me. So nothing stands in the way of long gallops. We make rapid progress before reaching rocky hills, which we climb. The terrain is not easy. We ride steeply uphill over a rock. A slippery challenge for the shod horses, but they climb like mountain goats. In the village of San Juan Daxthi, we are served a genuine Mexican meal in the restaurant.

Lunch is served. Afterwards, we have the opportunity to the local market.

Then we continue in the saddle, and after an extended afternoon ride, we pamper ourselves in the ranch's own spa area in the evening. Soothing massages help to prevent sore muscles.

The next morning, a few intrepid early risers turn up for yoga. I prefer to sleep a little longer. We start the new day on horseback in high spirits. Despite my many years of trailering experience all over the world, I am surprised at the number of gallops on the long riding routes. The horses run until the last day without any signs of fatigue.

Admittedly, the landscape didn't look very varied when we arrived at the ranch, but this soon turned to be a misjudgement. The surroundings change every day and the contrasts couldn't be more different. We ride across fields, past cacti and bizarre rock formations, through dense, enchanted forests, rugged valleys and over steep hills



Daily changing landscapes



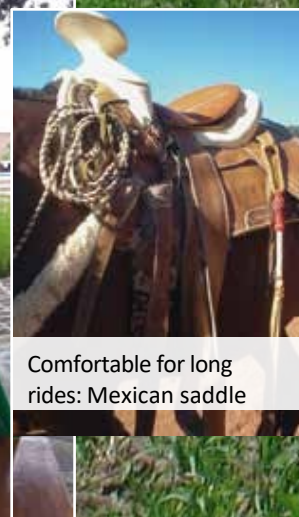
The guest rooms: colourful and lovingly furnished



Fun for everyone at the lake



Delicacies on the go



Comfortable for long rides: Mexican saddle

and mountains, past dazzling blue lakes and old churches, along lush green, tree-lined riverbanks and through remote villages. At one point, we have the opportunity to bathe in a lake with the horses.

Then the contrast again: a day in the mountains. We ride slowly up and down over the rough terrain. At the same time, we have to be careful not to get stuck in one of the large cacti. to get stuck. The reward for our efforts is a spectacular 360-degree view from the summit of the "Cerro de los Caballos" - the mountain of horses.

Another time we ride across a huge plateau, where we enjoy an unforgettable lunch break on the banks of a lake. We watch the local farmers working the fields with their oxen and take a dip in a small pond. Our wranglers are always looking out for our well-being and are always up for a joke. The two ranch dogs, Chispa and Kayla, who accompany us almost every day, also make us laugh when they chase birds in vain or accidentally fall into the water.

At the end of the riding tour, I am both happy and sad. Happy about the experiences of the last few days, sad about the imminent departure the next day. Uschi offers us another short ride on the day of our departure, early in the morning at , before we have to leave for the airport. But after a whole week of non-stop riding and before a stressful 24-hour return journey, do I really want to get out on the horse again in the cold before sunrise?

YES, OF COURSE! And it's not just me, our entire group is sitting in the saddle of our beloved four-legged friends at dawn. We step on the gas one last time and fly over the fields faster than ever, while the sun slowly rises on the horizon and transforms the sky and earth into a breathtaking sea of colours of gold and orange. Adiós Mexico lindo! There couldn't a more beautiful farewell!

Denise Neufeld

www.equitour.com/it-mxrlc02.htm



Horses like mountain goats

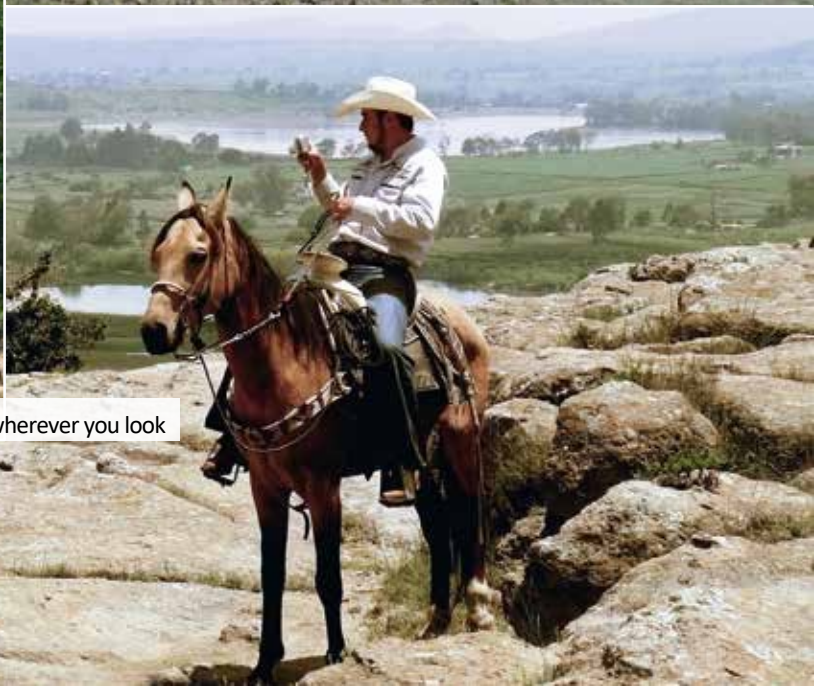


Photo motifs wherever you look

A man wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt, black trousers, and a white cowboy hat is riding a brown horse. He is seen from behind, looking out over a vast, green landscape. The landscape features rolling hills, scattered trees, and a small body of water in the distance. The sky is clear and blue.

Mexico

Mexico, a land of longing

Exuberant joie de vivre, yearning melancholy - Mexico touches the senses and the soul.

México eterno - eternal Mexico - is what Mexicans call their country, which is characterised by thousands of years of history and in which the myths and rituals of pre-Columbian civilisations such as the Aztecs, Maya, Olmecs, Toltecs, Zapotecs etc. have formed a fascinating connection with the Christianity that the Spanish brought to the country and its people.

The Spanish conquest was an enormous turning point the history of Mexico. Before the violent conquest by the Spanish, there were over a hundred different ethnic groups. The colonial art monuments combine the cultures and create a new image of Mexico. Since the time of independence

It was in the course of the 20th century, from 1821 onwards, that the lively diversity emerged that is closer to us today than the often mysterious and incomprehensible evidence of the lost Mesoamerican cultures.

The spirit of this eventful past wafts over the con- trastful nature with the dominant central highlands, deserts, primeval forests, river and lake landscapes and the peaks of the Sierra Nevada, which are over 5000 metres high. The diversity is framed by dream beaches on the east and west coasts. The different regions are home to a diverse fauna, including the puma, jaguar and ocelot, as well as a variety of bird, reptile and monkey species.



Magnificent: Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City



World-famous: Chichen Itza



National drink: Tequila



Mysterious: Aztec calendar



Refreshing: Ride through the surf



Delicious: Genuine Mexican tacos

EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

The Equitour programmes are located in the central highlands, where a pleasant climate and first-class riding conditions prevail all year round. Experience the cultural treasures, changing nature, Mexican traditions and way of life on horseback. Stationary on a comfortable hacienda or on a trail from place to place - Mexican friendliness accompanies you everywhere.

www.equitour.com/mexiko.htm

Country info Mexico



Size: 1 972 550 km²

Population: 127.5 million Capital:

Mexico City Language: Spanish

Religion: Predominantly Roman Catholic

Currency: Mexican peso

Climate: ~~subtropical, alpine, arid~~ depending on the region Best time to visit: all year round

Mexico is considered one of the most fascinating countries in the world due to its rich history, the combination of indigenous and Spanish accents, the variety of landscapes, the rousing music and dance tradition and, above all, its people.

For riders, nothing beats exploring the country in the saddle. They combine fast rides with wellness and comfort or ride to UNESCO World Heritage Sites or along the historic Silver Route to the centre of the famous Tequila region. Teams and horses help you the rest of the world in Mexico.



Mexicans love their country, their traditions and riding. They celebrate life, and even the dead are given a holiday.

México!

There is always an occasion to celebrate. Saints are celebrated all year round, carnival is very , as is Independence Day. The "Día de Muertos", the Day of the Dead, is eerily beautiful, when the deceased are not remembered with sadness but with colourful skulls, splendid costumes and paintings, dancing and laughing.

Of course, horse festivals and equestrian games are also very . The national sport is charrería, which comparable to the North American rodeo. It originated from the work of the charros - the Mexican equivalent of the North American cowboy. Their tasks were to herd and care for huge herds of cattle. The herds were owned by large Spanish landowners who, after the conquest of Mexico, built magnificent haciendas and claimed huge areas of land.

Indigenous people were not allowed to ride in the beginning because the Spaniards feared dangerous uprisings. But riding for days in the blazing sun was too hard for them, and so they transferred this

They preferred to give their labour to the indigenous people, who quickly became first-class horsemen. The charros were able to ride and train horses for difficult tasks, they were fearless in handling the semi-wild bulls and they became perfect at roping. These tasks gave rise to Mexico's national sport - the charrería. In large competitions and festivals, the charreadas, the charros test their courage, skill and ability in the saddle, on raging bulls and in lasso throwing. The highlight and greatest test of courage of the charreada is the "paseo de la muerte", in which the rider jumps from a horse onto a wild horse at full gallop.

Mexico's emblem is the sombrero, the huge hat that provides perfect protection from the sun and that every charro wears with pride. Mexicans love colours, so they dress colourfully and conspicuously at all festivals - even on the Day of the Dead.

¡Arriba! - Let's go! Let's follow in the footsteps of the great explorers and peacefully and joyfully explore the many facets of Mexico.



Colourful living



Happy Day of the Dead



Sombrero - more than just a hat



Genuine Charros

Caballo Mexicano

Azteca

The first horses in Mexico were the horses of the Spanish conquistadors. They shaped almost all American breeds. Mexico has only had its own breed of horse, the Azteca, since the 1970s. The breed was created by crossing Quarter Horse or PRE stallions with Criollo mares. Aztecas are medium-sized, robust, enduring, strong-nerved and versatile. They have a friendly, calm nature and are excellently suited for cattle work, but also for show and dressage. They in all colours except piebald. Their height is between 1.40 and 1.55 metres. A studbook was founded in 1982 with the name Asociación Mexicana de Criadores de Caballos de Raza Azteca.



Photos: Gabriele Kärcher, Vardan Sevan/Pixabay (Day of the Dead), private



FOLLOW the HORSES

KAIMANAWA

New Zealand's wild horses



Photojournalist Gabriele Kärcher meets people and horses on all continents in an unbiased and non-judgemental way. In New Zealand, she is enchanted by the wild horses in the centre of the North Island.



The bus tortures its way along the steep gravel roads of the Kaimanawa Mountains into wild horse country. The landscape is characterised by a sea of tussock grass interspersed with beech trees and stone yews. We are in the Waiouru military area, which only its gates to visitors once a year. This is for the buses of the animal welfare organisation "Kaimanawa Heritage Horses" (KHH), which organises a trip to the Kaimanawa wild horses in December.

The story is always the same: Feral horses are slaughtered by farmers as unwelcome competitors for food. The KHH has been for the wild horses since 2003 and publicising the atrocities. The Kaimanawa Mountains are the last refuge of the hunted horses. The military, which operates a training area in this region, declares its willingness to protect the animals. Despite target practice, the "quays" are safe here today. Our bus drives past barracks, weapons and ammunition depots.

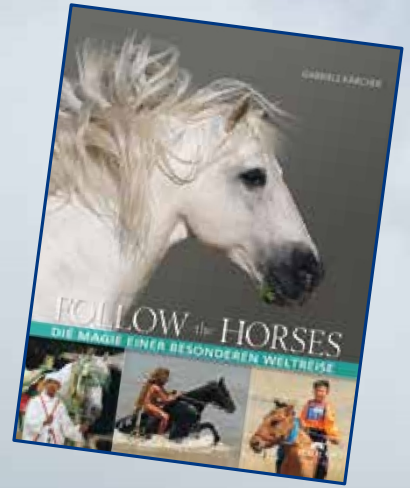
pots. After just under an hour, the first kaimanawas appear. My heart is pounding as if I've never seen wild horses before. A small group, led by a grey stallion, stands on a hill. The visitors get off the bus and brace themselves against the icy wind that across the land. People and horses eye each other. Between curiosity and nervousness, the shy animals remain at a safe distance. Cameras click, eyes light up. Horses that no human has ever touched have this very special aura. The pride and dignity of freedom.

A visitor tiptoes a step or two towards the horses. That's enough, and the grey snorts in alarm. Synchronised, the horses turn and dash off. Many eyes wet not only from the wind, stare after the cloud of dust. More groups appear, consisting of two to ten horses. They climb steep slopes like chamois.



"My breath is my food," said an old Māori warrior who a long time ago in the inhospitable mountain region in the centre of the North Island. "Kai" stands for food,

"Manawa" for breath - this is how the mountains and the wild horses living there got the name Kaimanawa.



Photojournalist
Gabriele Kärcher

Pictures, adventures and
insights from my travels:

FOLLOW the HORSES
Evipo publishing house
160 pages, EUR 29.80
www.sorrel.de/die-pferde-world-travel/

Between caution and curiosity



From the wilderness to the riding arena without coercion



The foals lie carefree in the sun in places sheltered from the wind.

The most trusting are the bachelor groups, which allow the two-legged friends to get a little closer. In order to protect the sensitive ecosystem, so-called "samples" are carried out every two years.

Surplus horses are herded into corrals and with new owners. Unfortunately, there are not enough interested parties who are able to keep or even tame a wild horse. In 2014, KHH the Kai-manawa Challenge, a training competition in which wild horses are broken in by professional trainers. The aim is increase the number of placements. At the "Kaimanawa Whisperers" in the north of the island, I learn how, with sensible handling, wild kaimanawas become magical and gentle mounts.

Photos: Gabriele Kärcher / www.sorrel.de

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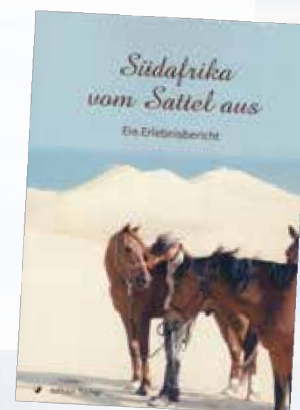
They experience moments of happiness and also despair - until they find themselves in the end.

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Gabriele Kärcher

FOLLOW the HORSES

Meeting horses and horse people on every continent - that is Gabriele Kärcher's lifelong dream. In 2013, she packed her suitcase, camera and laptop and set off on a long journey. She visits equestrian festivals, indigenous peoples and wild horses. From her experiences around the world

"Follow the Horses" - a printed dream journey and Gabriele's declaration of love to the world of horses.

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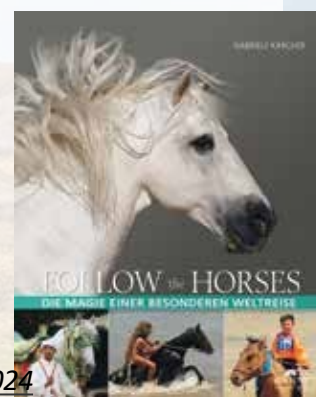


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Horses and inspiration 2024

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"Beware, this book is addictive!" warns Gabriele Boisselle, fell in love with horses and the magic of the legendary volcanic island on her very first trip to Iceland. Her book presents the quaint little horses as an important part of Icelandic culture. Her texts and photos her enthusiasm for the country and its inhabitants.

www.boisselle-shop.de
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The wide world of horses

XXL calendar with perpetual calendar.

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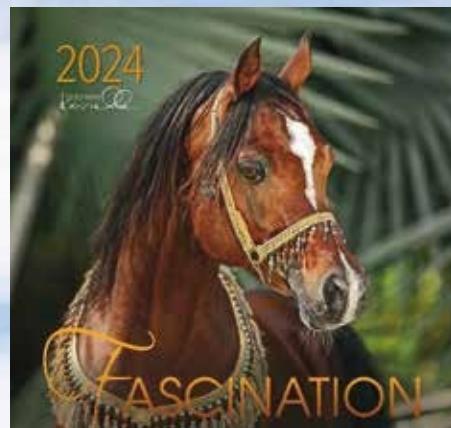
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Icelanders 2024

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Background image: Gabriele Kärcher

Imprint: EQUITOUR The world through horses' ears

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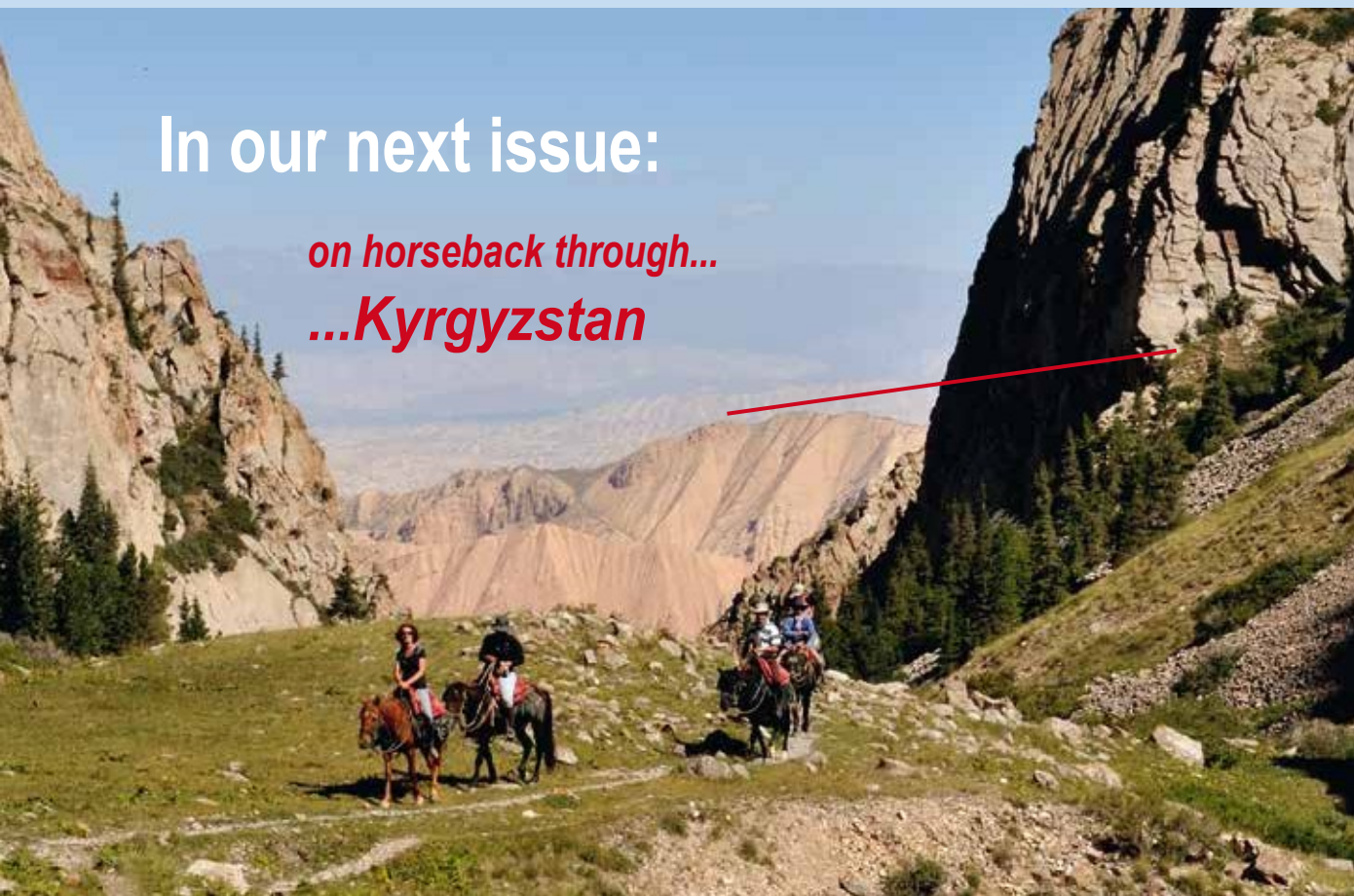
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