



EDITORIAL 1/2024

EQUITOUR

The world through horses' ears

Riding holidays through

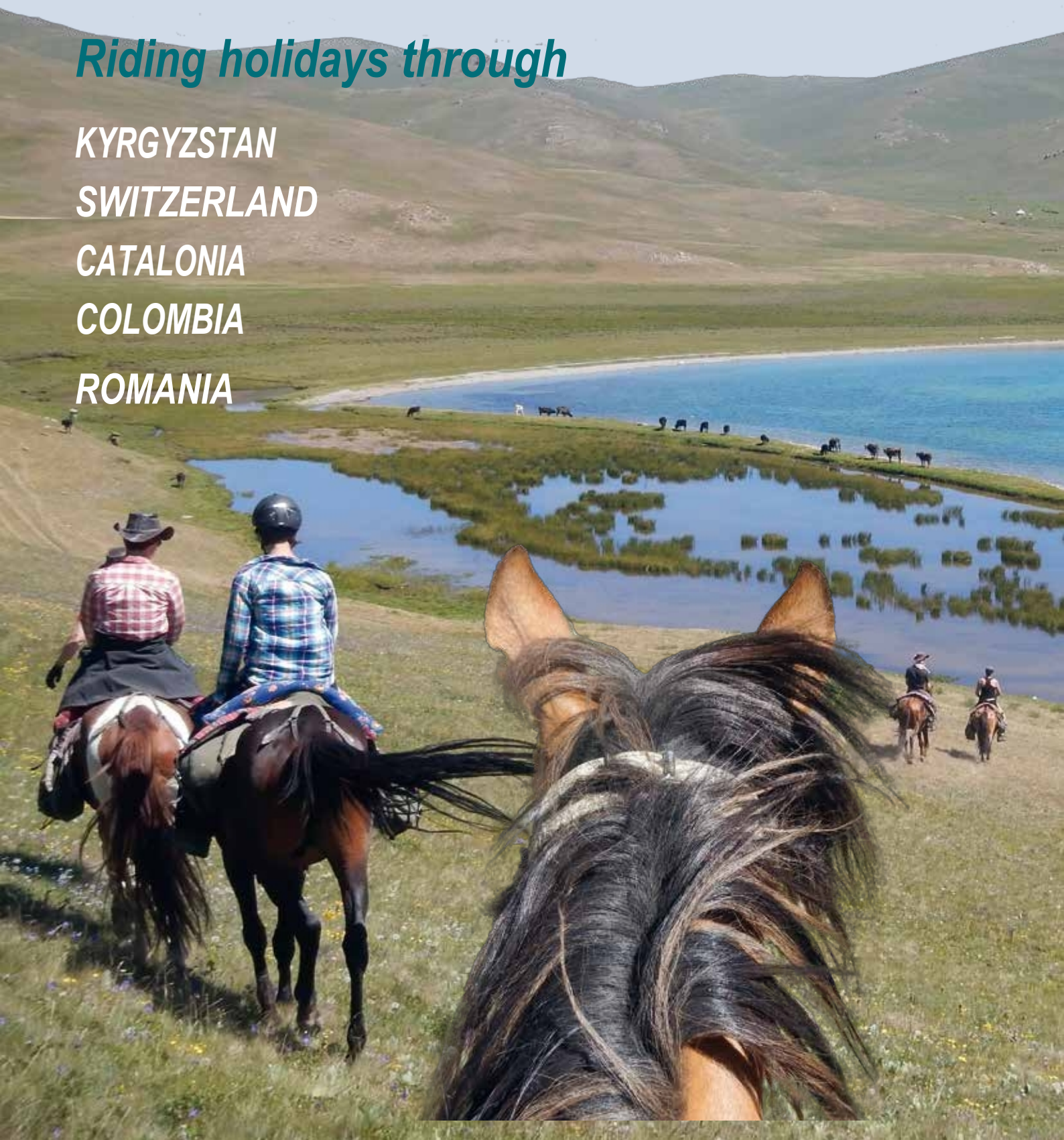
KYRGYZSTAN


SWITZERLAND

CATALONIA

COLOMBIA

ROMANIA



A group of riders on horseback are crossing a rocky stream in a forest. The scene is captured from a low angle, showing the water splashing over the horses' legs and the riders' lower bodies. The background is filled with lush green trees and foliage, with sunlight filtering through the leaves. The riders are wearing helmets and casual riding attire. The overall atmosphere is one of adventure and outdoor recreation.

Only those who
move hearts move
the world *Ernst*
Wiechert





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EQUITOUR

Riding Holidays

The whole world on horseback

Dear ,

This fifth issue of our travel magazine takes you up high - from the Alps to the Andes, the literary journey takes you to dizzying heights. So there is plenty to discover for all summiteers. If that's too high for you, you'll find a beach holiday in Catalonia on the Costa Brava. From sea level to over 3600 metres above sea level in Kyrgyzstan. At the highest altitudes, you will encounter fascinating cultures and, in addition to looking down into the depths, you will also venture to look far the horizon. We always aim to give our guests an insight not only into the fascinating natural surroundings, but also into the lives of the local people. The horses also cover a wide range: You can get to know the sure-footed Freiberger as well as the light-footed Paso Fino. Both breeds are the pride of their very different countries - but once again all the destinations presented have one thing in common: the bond with the horses, which also unites guests and hosts.

There are also plenty of wild animals to be found in the wild realms of the mountains, from bears in Romania to sloths in Colombia - so not all are the same!

Your Equitour team wishes you lots of fun
browsing, dreaming and travelling



EQUITOUR on the net

Always up to date - everything at a click:

Travelogues

Press reports and testimonials from all over the world from PEGA SUS product managers and customers. You can find the reports on the website under the respective programme or under "Info".

www.equitour.com/community.htm

Customer feedback

There is already plenty of feedback on most trips to help you choose the right trip. Simply select "Customer feedback" on the relevant programme page.

Rider exchange

A new feature is the Equitour equestrian travel forum, where you can find fellow riders for your next riding adventure and exchange ideas about the trips.

<https://forum.reiterreisen.com/>

New trips

The Equitour team is always discovering new riding holidays for you all over the world, from Mallorca to Georgia, there is plenty to discover. www.equitour.com/new.htm

Premium travel

"Once in a " is the motto of the selected Equitour riding programmes that you should not out on! From the Horse Drive to the riding safari in the Masai Mara...

www.equitour.com/premium.htm

Newsletter

Stay up to date with our monthly newsletter: New holidays, trade fair appearances, last minute, specials, competitions and much more.

Scan QR code to register

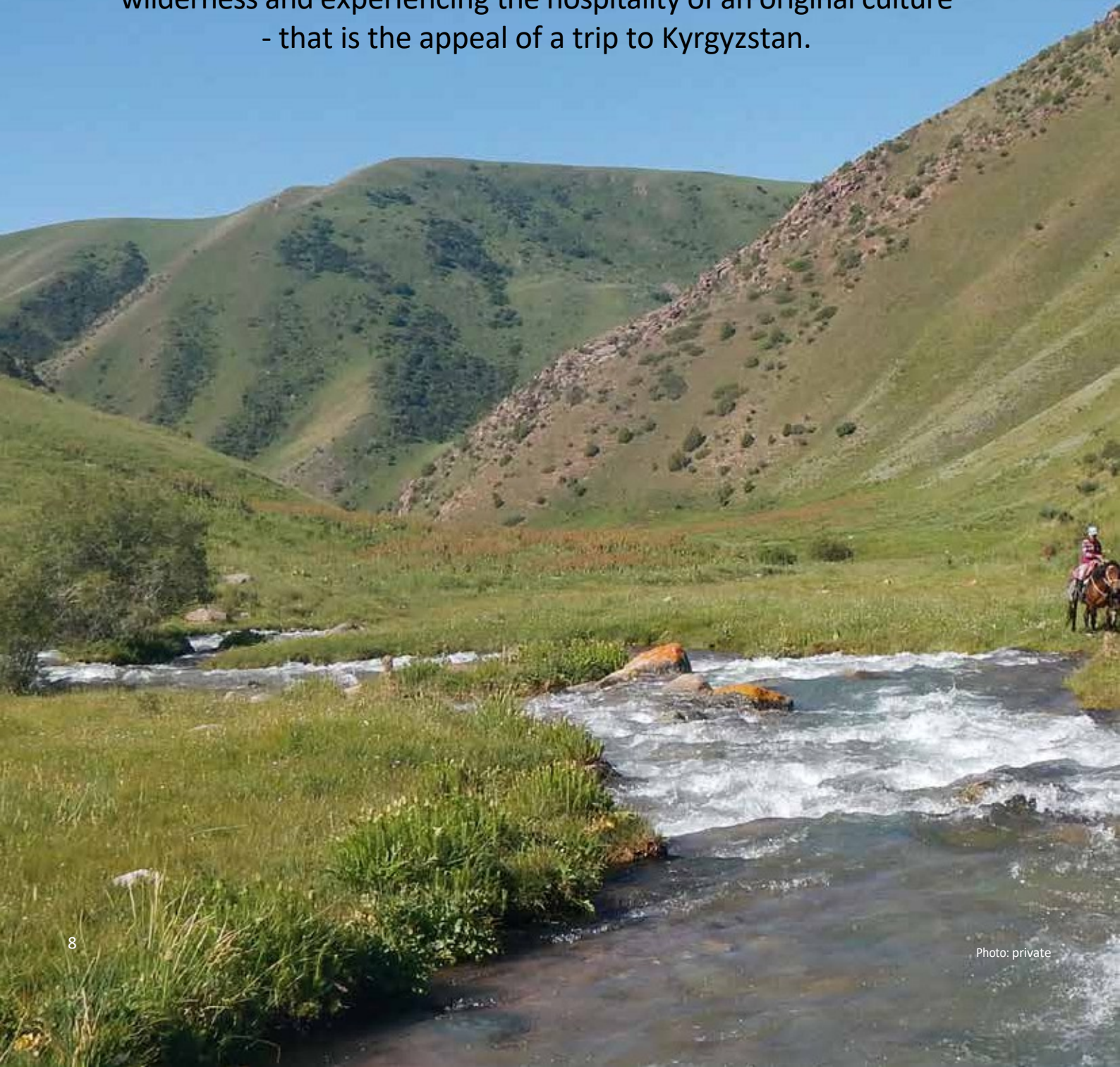


Photos: Yvonne Koall,
private



The power of

Returning to the essentials, exposing yourself completely to the wilderness and experiencing the hospitality of an original culture - that is the appeal of a trip to Kyrgyzstan.



Kyrgyzstan



Primeval nature





Land of the Sky Mountains

Rugged mountain landscapes, gentle alpine pastures, vast steppes, rushing streams and deep blue lakes. Kyrgyzstan is blessed with natural treasures that visitors can best reach on horseback.

Tien Shan - translated as "Sky Mountains" - is the name of the mountain range that stretches from west to east across Kyrgyzstan and the country its majestic appearance. More than 90 per cent of the country is mountainous, with peaks over 7000 metres into the sky. At 7439 metres, Jengish Chusu in the far west is the highest mountain in Kyrgyzstan. Snow and glaciers feed countless mountain streams, which in turn nourish fertile mountain pastures and steppes.

The people lead a modest, unspoilt life. Although only a fifth of the land can be used for agriculture, it is the most important economic sector.

Some Kyrgyz farmers live in yurts during the summer months. Cattle, goats, sheep, yaks and horses are kept semi-wild in the steppes and on mountain pastures.

Horse breeding is of particular importance. A clear distinction is made between the workhorse, which used for farming and to produce milk and meat, and the riding horse as a status symbol. Whether for work or sport, the quality of a horse is more important to the Kyrgyz than breeding papers. It has to prove itself in everyday life and in equestrian competitions. The Novokirghize has an advantage over the original type.

The markets are reminiscent of the time of the old Silk Road, which ran through the country and enabled the exchange of goods, but also of ideas and traditions between Europe and East Asia. The rail and road network - in short, the entire infrastructure - is still poorly developed today, and so there is still little tourism. For adventurers and free spirits, now is perhaps the best opportunity to travel to this unspoilt country with its breathtaking nature and hospitable people.

Horse market in Tokmok



Typical village



Kyrgyz tradition: wild horse riding games





Animal husbandry in endless expanses

Oriental-style memoria



Spectacular mountain formations

The originally steppe horse was mixed with Don horses, thoroughbreds and Russian trotters during the Soviet era and refined into the Novokirghize (New Kirghiz). The touring horses are also Novokirghizes. The golden lustre in the coat is typical of the breed, similar to the Turkmen Achal Tekkiner.

EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

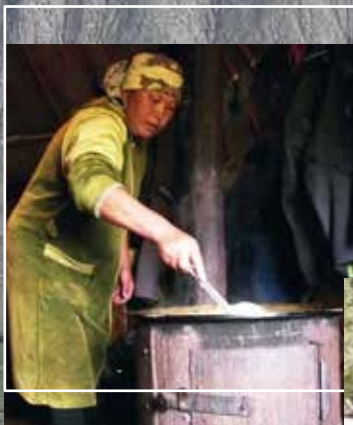
Kyrgyzstan is a country that is still little developed for tourism and is therefore a real insider tip. Only three to four times a year, our partner invites you on an adventurous riding tour through the mountain, steppe and lake landscapes of this Central Asian country.

Kyrgyz people and horses are extremely happy.
www.equitour.com/av-wkgri01.htm

Cumis

The fermented mare's milk kumi is the national drink of many Central Asian peoples. It is produced in a process of ageing and fermentation lasting several days and finally stirred in a wooden barrel. It takes some getting used to in terms of flavour, but is unquestionably good for your health.

Photos: private



Country info Kyrgyzstan



Size: 199 951 km²

Population: 7 million

Capital: Bishkek Language:

Kyrgyz, Russian Religion:

Predominantly Islam

Currency: Som

Climate: Continental dry climate Best
time to visit: June to August

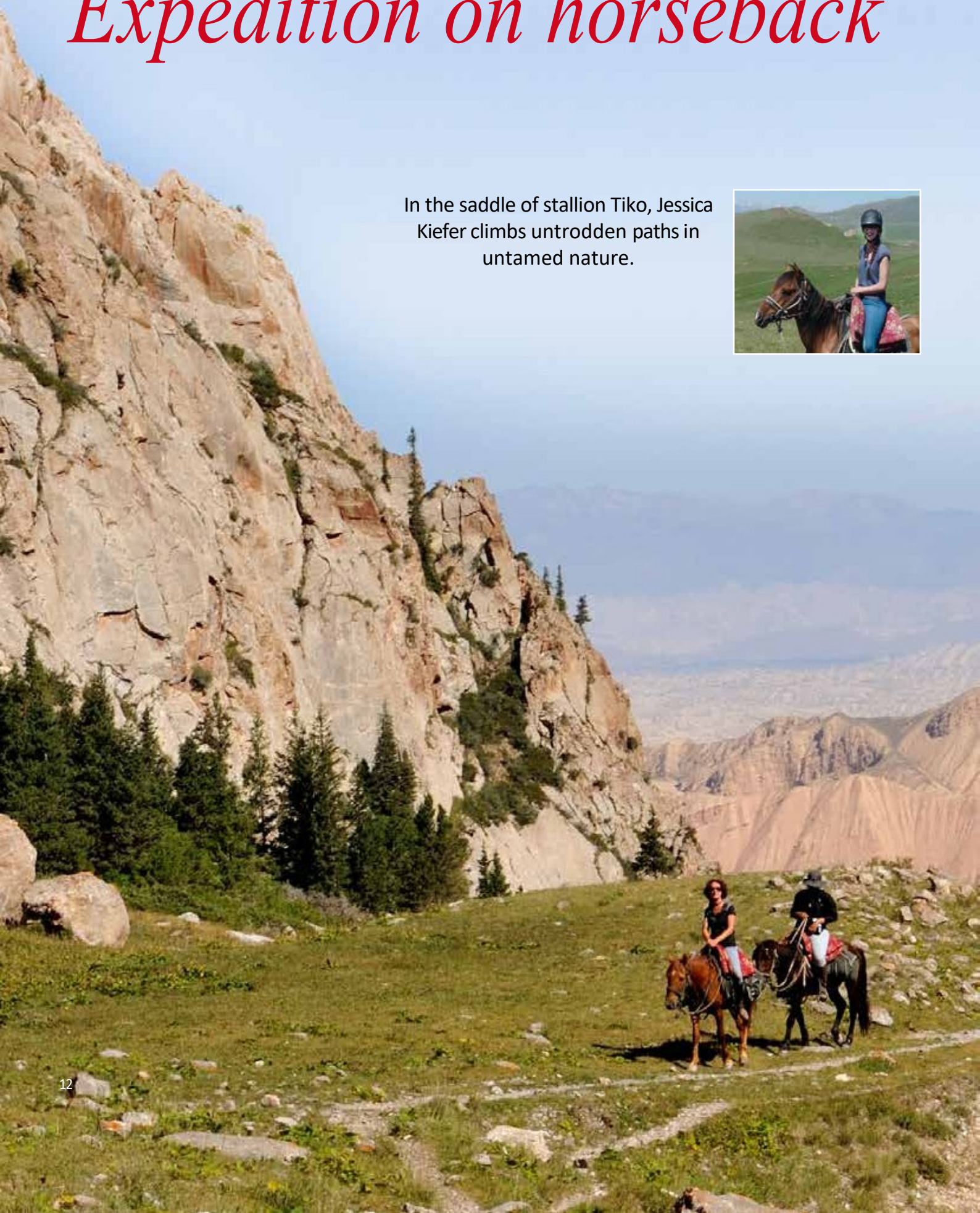


Novokirghize

Travelogue Kyrgyzstan

Expedition on horseback

In the saddle of stallion Tiko, Jessica Kiefer climbs untrodden paths in untamed nature.



"Moo" is heard repeatedly just a few metres from our tent. It's seven o'clock in the morning and we're on a plateau around 3000 metres high in the south of Kyrgyzstan. Yesterday morning we - ten guests from Germany, Austria and Switzerland - set off on our two-week adventure ride across Kyrgyzstan.

From Tash Rabat we climbed further and further up over green meadows, past striking rocks, led by Saty, the organiser, and young riding guide Beka, as well as the translator Asel. We set up camp close to a herd of cattle.

After the twentieth "moo", we surrender, slip out of our sleeping bags and take down our tents - much to the delight of the three bulls, who - obviously happy about the withdrawal of the intruders - lie down in their usual place and chew their cud contentedly.

After breakfast, I climb into the saddle of the little stallion Tiko. The Kyrgyz ride almost exclusively stallions, we only have one gelding with us. As a stallion, he was too wild, numerous scars bear witness to his violent behaviour.

Fighting. Even as a gelding, the pretty grey horse is still very agile. Instead of resigning himself to his fate like the others, he gallops off through the river despite his shackles. Two more horses follow him, bucking exuberantly, and Beka has to ride off to catch the runaways again.

The other stallions are ready and saddled. Their squealing does not bother our riding guides. On the way down we notice we hardly ever realise that we ride stallions. Only two or three of our horses react at all when we ride other horses. They are completely cold-blooded encounters with goats, sheep and cattle. Or the rustic yaks, which we mainly encounter at the Son Kul steppe lake.

Shaggy yaks



View of the Son Kul



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Our guide Saty



Between heaven and earth



Adventurous paths



Well-deserved rest in front of a dream backdrop



Minimalist steppe life



Tasting by the lake



Son Kul lies at an altitude of over 3000 metres and is one of the scenic highlights of our trip. We spend two days riding along the tranquil blue lake, whose deepest point just seven metres. We treat ourselves to a dip in its warm waters against the backdrop of snow-capped mountains.

At Son Kul, we stay overnight twice with nomadic families, who give us an insight into their culture. However, Kyrgyz farmers only spend the summer in the high-altitude steppes and mountain pastures. In autumn, they move down into the milder valleys.

For us Europeans, the use of horses takes some getting used to. The Kyrgyz like to eat horse meat, as learnt at the cattle market in Tokmok. The national drink, kumis, is from mare's milk. It has a sour, fermented flavour and most guests are satisfied with just one sip.

To obtain the mares' milk, the foals are tethered separately from their mothers in the yurts during the day. This fills the mares' udders, which are milked every two hours. The cows and their calves are treated in the same way.

At night, the foals are allowed to enjoy the freedom of the Steppe with their mothers. Unless the wolf comes for them, because foals are a favourite prey for wolves. Larger losses are prevented by the vigilant guard dogs, which give the alarm when the predators approach. Sheep and goats are driven into a pen in the evening to protect them.

In addition to the many animals, we are particularly impressed by the splendour of the flowers. I have never seen such carpets of flowers.

The dominant colour of the alpine meadows is purple. Yellow alpine poppies and forget-me-nots shine in between. A sea of edelweiss blooms at Son Kul.

We cross several passes over 3000 metres high. Each one offers an overwhelming panorama. The paths are narrow and rocky. A head for heights is a must on this ride! When the slope drops almost vertically into the depths, the only thing that helps is literally "close your eyes and keep going". The horses are fearless and sure-footed and achieve incredible things: they master rocky climbing paths, river crossings and fast gallops with aplomb. No wonder - after all, they have grown up in this rough terrain.

Kyrgyzstan is blessed with water. Wide, fertile valleys lie between the individual mountain ridges. The mountain streams allow plenty of grass to grow so that there is no shortage of hay even in the long winter months. Hydropower is also used to generate electricity, which is even exported to neighbouring Uzbekistan. The country's gold reserves are another treasure. The horses seem to roll around in it. Their coats often have a lustre similar to that of the Achal Tekkin horses. Otherwise, we encounter horses of all colours: from shiny blacks to palominos and saddle-backed tigers, everything is represented.

The landscape is just as diverse as the flora and fauna. In places, the mountains are reminiscent of the High Atlas in Morocco: barren red to ochre-coloured rock faces with individual tufts of green grass border the wide valley. The magnificent cemeteries and small mosques also have an oriental feel.

The horses casually cross rushing mountain streams



in the villages, whose silver domes stand out against the clay buildings. The villages are all very similar: ochre-coloured clay buildings on green plains, criss-crossed by water channels.

Some of the houses are painted white. Roofs, courtyard gates and fences are often bright turquoise in colour. Each house is surrounded by a garden, often a horse, a calf or a donkey. Almost every farm also has a dog and a few chickens. At the roadside we meet calves that roam around the village during the day while the cows in the pastures. People look at us with interest and greet us in a friendly manner. Shy but curious children peer out from behind the farm gates.

Life in this predominantly Muslim country is traditional. Although women can also ride horses, the division of roles seems quite rigid. Women are responsible for the household and children, while men look after the livestock. Saty's sister Gylmira is an exception. She is a self-confident and independent woman: during the trail, she accompanies us in an old Russian minibus and takes care of the guests' physical well-being. With her friendly, caring manner, she is the good soul of our tour. Otherwise, the divorced mother of several children works in electrical engineering and also runs a small farm in Kalinovka near the Kazakh border, the starting point of our rides.

Saty, who lives in Switzerland himself and only returns home for the trails in summer, gets his whole family involved: His sister as cook, his brother as driver and his nephew Beka as second guide and horse groom. Beka also diligently teaches us Kyrgyz, so that by the end we have a basic vocabulary of snail

(Ülül) to Auf Wiedersehen (Koş boluñuz). We get to other family members and acquaintances in the villages and yurts where we spend the night. One evening, several of Saty's friends come to visit our tent camp. The evening turns into a cheerful reunion with Kyrgyz and German songs around the campfire.

We have now crossed the country on horseback from south to north. After numerous mountain passes, vast steppes, wild rivers and typical villages, we approach the barren rock faces that mark the border with Kazakhstan. We finally reach Kalinovka again on the eleventh day of riding.

A marvellous adventure in a barely developed country lies behind us. After a farewell party on Gylmira's farm, it's time to say goodbye. Saty and our endearing, always cheerful Asel accompany us back to the capital Bishkek. The city of around 900,000 inhabitants is relatively new, as the Kyrgyz, like the Mongols, were nomads for a long time. Parks, fountains, squares and cafés give the capital its own special flair. We stock up on souvenirs at the market and in the department stores' - from felt cushions to bags and bridles.

Rooted between Asia and the Orient, Kyrgyzstan offers a unique adventure, both culturally and scenically. We will certainly remember the scents, the flowers, the smiling people, the beautiful horses and the high mountains of this naturally stunning country for a long time to come.

Jessica Kiefer

www.equitour.com/av-wkgri01.htm



(Re)entry

You can only learn to ride by riding, say all the smart riding instructors. It doesn't have to be at the local riding school. Equitour offers riding adventures worldwide - also for newcomers, late starters and those returning to riding.

The childhood dream of a pony farm

For many, it is a childhood dream - to roam the countryside independently on the back of a horse. But if the parents don't go along with it or there is a lack of opportunities, for better or worse it remains a dream and the guided pony ride. Later, when education, work and your own family up your time, it doesn't get any easier. At best, you can now watch your daughter galloping round the riding arena. And when everyone finally stands on their own two feet, or when they are on their own again, but now with the necessary change, one or two of them will remember their childhood dream of a pony farm. But isn't it too for that now? How long does it actually take before you can ride out on your own? How many riding lessons it take to to control such a large animal? After all, you've probably outgrown the Shetland pony from the farmyard festival by now and need to switch to a larger four-legged friend.

Before you a member of the local riding club right away, beginners' programmes such as Equitour are a way to out whether it's really the right thing for you. First of all, riding is an expensive, time-consuming and strenuous hobby. Many outsiders, non-initiates, shake their heads when you move the horse in dull rainy weather, push a cart full of manure up the pasture or cancel an evening at the cinema because the horse has a tummy ache. BUT: The happiness of the earth lies on the back of the horse! And the view the horse's ears, while you are free as

sitting on one of these idolised animals is priceless. So: do it! You won't regret it.

If you are already a bit older, it makes sense to for a "career" as a leisure and holiday rider first anyway, perhaps a riding partner, it doesn't have to be your own horse.

To start with, you can also book a riding weekend in Germany, for example, without much effort. After a briefing, you can try out what it feels like to finally ride on reliable horses. If you're not afraid of sore muscles, you can get a feel for the horses and riding after a week of intensive riding and learn a lot about handling and husbandry along the way. As the Equitour horses a really great life in the herd on large meadows and in open stables, they are very well-balanced. This is extremely important, as you first have to their trust, especially at the beginning. Unlike most children, who want to ride faster from the very first minute and can easily take a jump to the side, as an adult you are aware of the dangers. This is sometimes good thing, but often more of a hindrance, as your thoughts play a major role when riding. Your horse senses uncertainty and fears immediately. That's why you first need an even-tempered "old hand" who won't rattled when you're imagining how you'll end up upside down in the hedge.

The Equitour riding programmes, which designed for beginners, are also ideal if you can only ride on the track at home. So you can collect

cross-country experience for well-behaved horses. However, they are no substitute for sound riding lessons, which will reveal the secrets of fine communication with the horse and guide you step by step to the next level.

step by step an advanced rider. But back to your riding weekend: Have you a start?

Now you sit in the saloon with the other guests and review your experiences over a well-earned beer. If it all feels wonderful and you are travelling home with a feeling of happiness, the first step has been taken. The best thing to do now is to find a good centre where you can take regular riding lessons for at least six months. On your next riding holiday, you can then join the more advanced riders and your first canter. And at some point you'll be ready for your first trail ride - welcome to the fabulous world of horses! Jessica Kiefer

Riding adventures in the Bavarian Forest



Beach ride in Ireland



Cowgirl feeling in Arizona



Photos: Archive Boisselle, private



This is where you start:

Essential for beginners: Lunge lessons

Equitour offers riding programmes for beginners, newcomers and those returning to riding in the following countries:



Germany

In the Bavarian Forest, in the Allgäu and in the Rhön, beginners can get into Western or English saddles and take their first rides.

France

Choose from Alsace, the Pyrenees or the Atlantic coast. La Vie en rose included.

Ireland

Irish Tinkers, Connemara ponies and other breeds are to beginners in Galway and County Sligo. The Irish cheerfulness helps to fears.

Italy

Add the pleasures of Tuscany, Abruzzo or the most beautiful parts of Sardinia to your riding holiday in Bella Italia.

Austria

In the Mühlviertel you first take a few riding lessons to get your first taste of the huge trail riding network.

Poland

Riding lessons and trail rides await beginners. Live like royalty in the old castle with modern comforts.

Portugal

In addition to the well-kept riding centre, the Portugal programme offers a sandy beach, five-star hotel with sports and wellness.

Spain

From learning to ride off-road to your first beach ride: in Andalusia at Rancho La Paz and Cabo de Gata as well as on Mallorca, beginners are in the right place.

Africa

A beginner on a riding safari? At the lodges in Namibia, South Africa and Uganda, you can track down giraffes and zebras in a safe environment.

America

Anyone dreaming of the cowboy life can into the Western saddle at the guest ranches in Arizona, Colorado and/or British Columbia.

www.equitour.com/search.htm

Enter Beginner in the *Advanced search* field to find the relevant programmes.

(Re)entry

Jumping in at the deep end

The pony farm, riding school and riding holidays were the joy of my childhood. But in my teenage years, other interests emerged. Money was tight and at 18 I had to make a decision: Riding or learning to drive. I opted for the driving licence and gave up riding with a heavy heart.

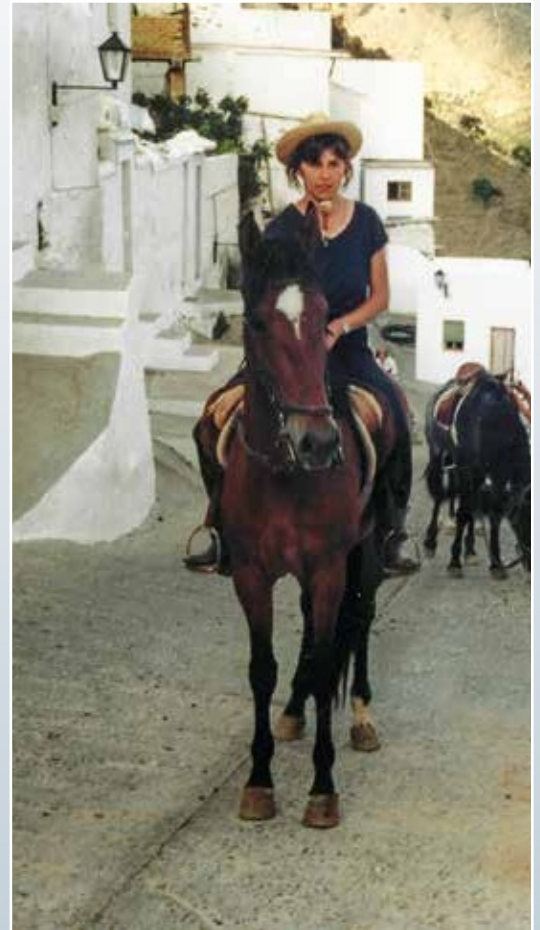
Around ten years later, I came into contact with horses again professionally. My old passion was rekindled and I booked riding lessons at a riding school. But sad, jaded school horses whose lives were between the stable and the indoor arena, with no rides and hardly any access to pasture - that wasn't for me.

So I planned a riding holiday in Andalusia with daily rides. But I was the only stationary guest, everyone else did the ten-day tour.

Antonio, the farm owner, looked at my riding style and said: "You're coming on the tour with us, otherwise we'll have to cook for you".

My return to riding was a riding tour through beautiful Andalusia on Spanish horses that love to walk and with sore muscles. From then on, nothing could stop my passion for riding.

Gabriele Kärcher





Late luck in the saddle



Riding for a late beginner

Maria Kiefer, recently retired and eager for life, supports the Equitour team on an hourly basis and talks about her recently started riding career.

I've been familiar with horses for a long time because my daughter rides. I'm often out and about with Jessica, but more on foot with a horse on a lead rope. But now my dream of riding is finally going to come true.

At the age of 64, I treat myself to my first professional riding lesson on a farm in Mallorca. As is customary, every ride begins with getting to know the horse, in my case it was "Mistral", a friendly gelding. After the first sniff, the horse is groomed and brushed, while riding guide Lily approaches with the saddle. Riding helmet on my head, a small wall serves as a climbing aid, and the next moment I'm sitting on Mistral's back. Lily explains the most important aids to me in a training arena. After starting and stopping, I steer Mistral through a small course with a slalom. And off we go into the terrain. I feel safe between Lily with mare "Frozen" and Anni on mare "Rubi", who is riding along to the event on camera. What a feeling to be out and about on horseback in this endless nature. Soon we are riding one behind the other, sometimes side by side. If there something special to see, we stop. Lily always keeps an eye on me and yet she lets me find my own rhythm. I'm amazed that my horse trusts me and that I'm relaxed as a result. After olive groves and the farm's own flock of sheep, we discover a mother cow with her newborn calf. We are absolutely delighted. And then the view of the sea! One top-class panorama follows the next.

Unnoticed by me, Mistral puts her ears up once and Rubi to keep her distance! Anni reacts immediately. I realise that I'm a beginner, not yet sensitive to this kind of horse behaviour. On the way back, Mistral is confident and can't be. Sometimes I even have to push him a little, because he makes himself comfortable behind the others. So Lily and Anni lead the way and I take a leisurely pace behind with Mistral, and we return happily.

And someone is there immediately to enquire about our well-being, check on the horses and help with unsaddling.

A team of professional men and women is at work here. The horses are well broken in, are used according to their character and have a good life. The unrivalled patron is Joan, who has built up this paradise with his sons. I once see him training with a polo pony that can everything from galloping and turning to a daring jump. The two are like a unit

- I was very impressed.

All in all, we can say: These are wonderful days at the finca. Not just an impersonal riding lesson, no, it's the successful togetherness that fascinates me so much. And will I want to continue riding now? Yes!

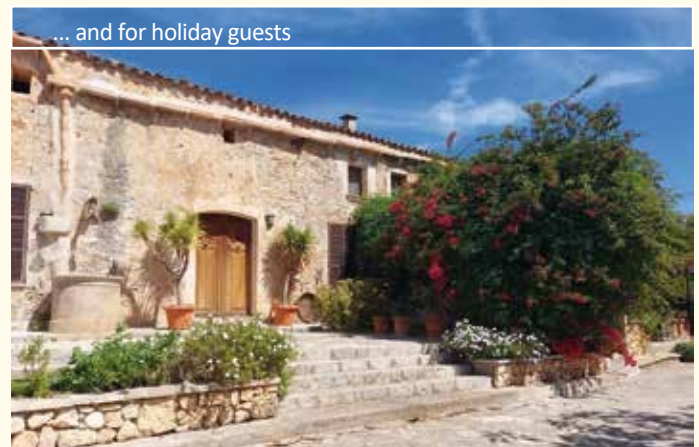
It remains to be mentioned that both the riding centre and the accommodation with the amenities of pool, barbecue area and much more made this trip to Mallorca a valuable experience.

Greetings to Mallorca, I'll be back! Maria Kiefer

The beginners' course including beach riding can be booked at: www.equitour.com/malsta.htm



Feel-good place for horses...



... and for holiday guests



20

THE HEIGHTS

You don't have to travel halfway around the world to find adventure. Switzerland offers an enormous variety of landscapes, delicacies and ways of life.

A full-page background image showing a majestic Swiss mountain range with snow-capped peaks and glaciers under a blue sky with white clouds. In the foreground, a dark brown horse stands on a green alpine pasture, and a person wearing a helmet and outdoor gear is kneeling beside it, possibly adjusting its saddle or bridle. A small, vibrant turquoise lake is visible in the lower right corner of the frame.

Switzerland

Magical mountain world

White mountain peaks, gentle alpine pastures, sophisticated cities and picturesque lakes characterise Switzerland. No wonder the small Alpine country attracts millions of tourists every year.

Switzerland's attractive natural environment is complemented by a worldwide sympathy. Switzerland is consistently in the top ten of the happiest countries. Despite the different cantons, the Swiss have a strong sense of unity. They are cosmopolitan and tolerant and swear by their neutrality and direct democracy. The four official languages are German, French, Italian and Romansh. Most Swiss people speak several national languages plus English. Bern is considered the capital of Switzerland, but in the spirit of equality between the cantons, the Swiss only call the city of the seat of government the Federal City.

Thanks to its high quality of life, Switzerland is a dream destination for holidaymakers and emigrants. The small country offers all sporting activities, intensive nature experiences, relaxing idleness, tasteful culture and, last but not least, culinary delights.

Cow bells ring out on the high alpine pastures and visitors can savour first-class dairy products throughout Switzerland. Swiss cheese and Swiss chocolate in particular enjoy a worldwide reputation.

The flanks of the mountains are ideal for skiing, mountaineering and hiking. If you don't want to climb yourself, hop into the saddle of a well-trained Swiss horse and let yourself be carried to dizzying heights. Equitour offers you the opportunity to ride up to an altitude of 3000 metres. Riding tours of varying length and difficulty lead through the Valais Alps in the French part of Switzerland. The most important mountains rise here: the highest peak in Switzerland at 4634 metres and the spectacular Matterhorn. Visiting these celebrities can easily be combined with a Equitour ride.

Legendary
Matterhorn



Happy Swiss cows



Alpine sleigh ride



Ride through the Valais





Swiss horse traditions



The Freiburger

What Swiss chocolate is to gourmets, the Freiburger is to the Swiss horse world. It stands for solid quality and is THE horse breed of the Swiss. Originally it comes from the Franches-Montagnes plateau, hence the breed abbreviation FM. Apart from the main breeding area of the Swiss Jura, it is now bred throughout the Alps and beyond.

The Freiburger is frugal, friendly, fearless and extremely versatile. He proves his worth when climbing over Alpine passes as well as on hour-long trail rides or in recreational sport. By nature, he is a calm, strong and reliable horse. Some consider him to be a heavy warmblood, others a light cold-blood. There is a consensus all sympathise with the versatile, robust and sure-footed all-rounder.



Where vehicles cannot go, the Swiss military free-range horses for difficult transports, which are reliable partners due to their strength, sure-footedness and willingness to perform.



Pure Power: Freiburger stallion



The perfect riding horse



Freiburger

Mostly brown or chestnut coloured, often spiky-haired, rarely grey or black
Strong, square build Good-natured, strong nerves, willing to perform Resilient riding and draft horse Stock size 150 cm to 160 cm





Einsiedler horse / Swiss

Warmblood Mostly brown, dark brown or chestnut coloured

Good, stable conformation
Ready to perform, balanced character

For use in show jumping, dressage or driving, leisure riding
Stock size: 160 cm to 175 cm

Swiss warmblood and hermit horse

Switzerland is an important equestrian and horse country. The international umbrella organisation for equestrian sport, the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI), is based in Lausanne. It organises major international equestrian and driving competitions, including the World Equestrian Games and the Olympic Games. Switzerland itself also prestigious international equestrian and show jumping competitions, such as the CHI in Geneva at the end of the year. Switzerland even a weekly newspaper for riders, the "Pferdewoche". It provides constant information on all the latest events, results and news from the equestrian sport industry.

The title of oldest stud farm in Europe belongs to the stables of Einsiedeln Abbey in the canton of Schwyz. Einsiedeln horses have been bred here for more than a thousand years. They are descended from the three monastic mare lines Klima, Quarta and Sella. This lineage is the only difference to Swiss warmblood. The breeding goal is the same. Both breeds are bred as sport and leisure horses in accordance with today's requirements.

Einsiedeln horses, the historic stables and the baroque monastery complex can be visited by appointment. Info: www.marstall-einsiedeln.ch/

Race fever in St Moritz



A unique equestrian spectacle takes every year in February in the canton of Graubünden. The frozen lake in the prestigious resort of Sankt Moritz becomes the venue for trotting, galloping and skijoring races. High-calibre thoroughbreds and high society come together for the exclusive "White Turf" event. See and be seen, bet and cheer - that's what it's all.

The finest appetisers, champagne and cocktails in elegant pavilions are just as much a part of White Turf as art, music and entertainment. Despite all the exclusivity, there is no lack of down-to-earth Swiss charm. All horse enthusiasts are equally welcome at the White Turf.



Unique: Skijoring race



EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

Country info
Switzerland



Ride, climb, marvel is the motto of the Riding tours through the Valais Alps and Graubünden. Whether it's a weekend ride, a three-, five-, seven- or ten-day riding tour - the mountain world of the Alps will cast a spell over you. The magic of mountain huts, reliable horses and the Swiss way of life make the tours a treat for body, mind and soul.

Size: 41 291 km²
Population: 8.8 million Federal city: Bern
Language: German, French, Italian, Romansh
Religion: Christianity
Currency: Swiss franc
Climate: Temperate climate, regional differences
Best time to visit: May to September

www.equitour.com/alp005.htm

Travelogue Valais Alpine Ride

MOUNTAINEER

Hiking, winter and water sports - Switzerland offers everything an active holidaymaker could wish for. Mira Kuhnhardt's heart desires only one thing: to explore the Alpine country on horseback.



The starting point of our riding holiday is Roger and Stéphanie's small farm in Sion, a picturesque little town in the French-speaking canton of Valais. The couple give me a warm welcome the evening before the ride. Their farm offers simple but cosy accommodation without internet.

The other riders arrive the next morning and after breakfast we are taken to the starting point of the ten-day riding tour. There we meet riding guide Cora. A tour briefing and the allocation of horses follows. I'm given Fripouille, a smart Freiberg gelding.

We lead the horses for the first ten minutes. This becomes a daily routine. On the first day, there is a lot of uphill riding, some of it quite narrow and stony mountain paths. The horses master the route with flying colours. I'm impressed by the horses' strength and skilfulness. My Fripouille knows his job inside out. We soon become a wonderful team and I feel completely safe on him. Freiberg horses are taught to kick

The climbers are said to have safety, stamina and strong nerves, which we can only confirm. After just three hours, we are already so high that we almost dizzy when we look down. At the lunch picnic, the cheese sandwich with lentil salad, a piece of fruit and a dessert tastes almost like haute cuisine.

We continue uphill through the forest, where the horses can repeatedly quench their thirst at fountains or streams, and we also our bottles with clear spring water. On the first day, we only walk and climb over 1000 metres in altitude. The view of the surrounding mountain peaks is breathtaking. We spend the night in a small mountain hut to which our support vehicle has brought our things.

We eat and sleep in an empty, swept-out cowshed. Roger's family comes round for the evening cheese fondue. The night is quite cold. My sleeping bag is designed for minus five degrees Celsius, but I'm grateful for the extra woollen blanket. Even in summer, winter clothing is a must up here.



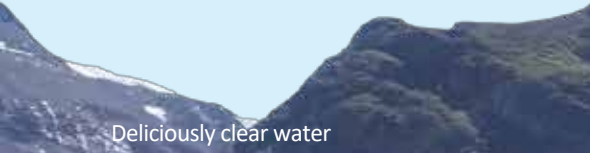
The next morning, we pass the tree line and finally reach the summit cross. We take in the overwhelming mountain panorama in silence before heading downhill again. At times we lead the horses and I slip a few times in my trainers. Trekking or sturdy hiking boots are better suited to this tour. We take a break in a valley and fortify ourselves with quiche and fruit.

The second half of the day we ride a lot in the forest, including trotting and cantering. We go over bridges, through streams, uphill, flat and downhill. The horses do a great job in all terrain. We spend the second night in boxes at a horse farm. After eight hours of riding, a warm shower and a delicious dinner, we sleep soundly.

We set off at around seven the next morning, as this will be our longest day. We ride through the forest for a while, at the end of which a rocky mountain landscape awaits us. The rest of the ride takes us to the Lac de Moiry dam. Unfortunately, it is cold and cloudy today, but the sight of the turquoise-blue lake in the grey-white mountain landscape makes up for it.

Weather. We ride over the dam to a small café where we treat ourselves to hot chocolate. Now we to cross another mountain pass. The landscape becomes more rugged and rocky. To our delight, we spot a few ibex. Finally we reach the highest point of the ride. After savouring the panorama we lead the horses downhill for almost an hour to the next accommodation. That really puts a strain on muscles and joints. You need to a good walker for this ride.

The accommodation consists of a main house and mountain hut-style bungalows. We bridge the time until dinner with a small snack and a soothing hot shower and a walk through the mountain landscape. After dinner, some riders celebrate a little more,



Deliciously clear water

Recreation on the alpine pasture



Descent on foot



while I retire rather exhausted and snuggle up blissfully - and today for once in real bed linen.

The fourth day is the shortest riding day, so we can our time in the morning. We pack our things, get the horses ready and set off. It's the perfect day for a little rest and relaxation. The route today is mostly flat or slightly sloping. We ride through a landscape that reminds me of the heath in summer. There are bright purple flowers everywhere. Eventually we reach a wooded area where we can trot and canter. The horses are still as fresh as on the first day. At a diligent pace, we ride over bridges, along narrow paths and through quaint mountain villages. After four hours, we reach our last hut for the night. We unsaddle the horses and ride bareback to the pastures. We feel transported back to our childhood on the pony farm.

We finish with raclette, served by Roger himself. We listen to traditional music and sample the local schnapps. In the morning we ride towards the ranch. There is a lot of walking today, as it almost all downhill. After the long

Ritten, I find the walking pleasant. During our last lunch break, we are spoiled by bright sunshine in summer temperatures. Once we arrive at the ranch, we unsaddle the horses and take them to their spacious outdoor stables. The horses have earned their rest. They have all contributed to an unforgettable riding holiday.

My Fripouille gets a farewell carrot before he trolls off to his herd. The exertions of the last few days are not noticeable on him. All the horses are in good condition and in perfect health.

I can warmly recommend Roger, Stéphanie and their team as well as the whole riding tour. Thank you very much for this unique adventure in the mountains. We are bid a warm farewell by the whole team, some stay for an extra night, others stock up in the farm's own organic shop, while I set off for my next destination: the Matterhorn! Mira Kuhnhardt www.equitour.com/alp005.htm

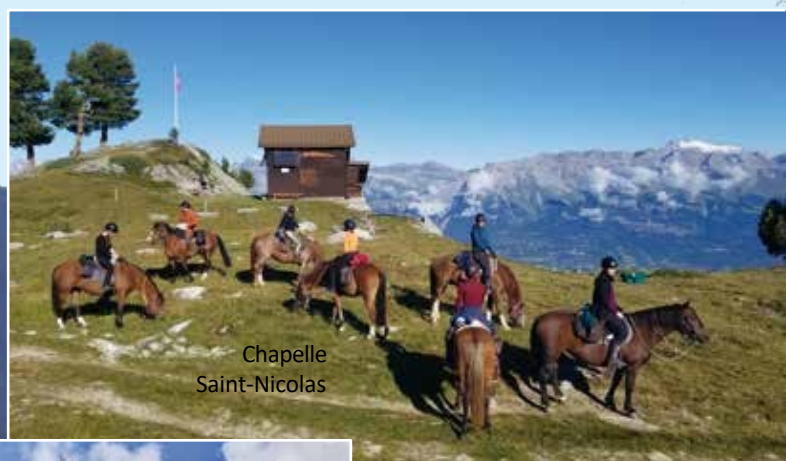
Photos:
private

The turquoise glow of Lac de Moiry

Mountain rider happiness at the summit



Mountain hut
village



Chapelle
Saint-Nicolas



Endurance riding

Extreme sport and holiday challenge



Endless gallop along the French Atlantic coast

Speed and endurance - these are horses' innate abilities to flee from predators and to new grazing grounds. Because of these characteristics, horses have been used by humans for thousands of years for transport and locomotion. Throughout history, equestrian peoples have competed for fame and honour in races and long-distance rides. 800 years ago, the Mongol ruler Genghis Khan created a 1000 kilometre-long postal route, which now used for the longest endurance race in the world, the Mongol Derby.

Endurance riding as an organised equestrian sport became popular in the 1970s. None other than "Mr Equitana", Wolf Kröber, organised the fifty-kilometre ride in Ankum and promoted the equestrian sport at his trade fair.

The Verein Deutscher Distanzreiter und-fahrer e.V. (VDD) was founded in 1976 and organises rules and events. From 25 kilometres for beginners to the Hundertmeiler, which is 160 kilometres in the highest class, there are competitions of various lengths over selected natural routes.

Equitour also began offering organised and certified riding tours in the 1970s. Today, the programme includes challenging riding tours for experienced riders, which are hardly inferior to endurance sports in terms of speed and distance.

And even interested newcomers can try out their fascination for the sport in distance taster courses.

Whether it's a sporting event or a riding trip, both have the idea of animal welfare in common. In the competition, the routes are divided into stages. At each stop, the duration of which is prescribed, there is a vet check, i.e. the horses are for pulse, breathing and lameness. If the vet has any objections, the horse in question is removed from the competition.

This can even happen after the finish line, as the horses are checked again after arrival.

Equitour puts its partners through their paces. Optimal horse husbandryfitness level and health are essential for the riding programmes.

Further information about endurance riding can be found on the websites of the endurance riding associations:

Sporty over
sand and
beach ...



... or through forests and
fields ...



... as in the Allgäu at the German
Master
craftswoman
Sybille Markart-
Bäumer



The fastest EQUITOUR programmes:

Introduction to endurance riding in
the Allgäu
www.equitour.com/algsta.htm

Endurance riding week for beginners
Morocco
www.equitour.com/mmesta.htm

Berber & Oasis Trail Morocco
www.equitour.com/taf008.htm

Arabian Safari Lodge Namibia
www.equitour.com/okasta.htm

Cevennes Trail France
www.equitour.com/loz008.htm

Perigord & Atlantic France
www.equitour.com/ape008.htm

Morvan Nature Park at a gallop
www.equitour.com/mor009.htm

Catalonia at a gallop
www.equitour.com/ext005.htm

Cappadocia sporty:
www.equitour.com/cap008.htm

Cappadocia Endurance Copetition
www.equitour.com/cap009.htm

Devetaki Plateau Bulgaria
www.equitour.com/was008.htm

At the Vet Check



Walking yourself relieves
the horse



Due to their speed and endurance, Arabians are
the most popular breed in endurance races - like
here at the Arabian Safari Lodge in Namibia



"Spains green

The whole of Spain is a dream destination for sun-seeking tourists. In the far north-east lies a magical land that Spain's superlatives in culture, nature and tradition: Catalonia.



Catalonia



Photo:
private

North"



Catalonia

The little big country

The once independent Catalonia in the far north-east is characterised by with its variety of landscapes and its very culture. Like all Spaniards, the Catalans are also addicted to horses.

Many people remember Catalonia's striving for independence. Many Catalans saw their own culture, language and economic strength as reasons to become an autonomous state. Politics aside, everyone agrees that Catalonia's natural and cultural treasures are unique.

The capital city of Barcelona, known as the "capital of modernism", is one of the most visited cities in the world. World-famous artists such as the architect Antoni Gaudí, the painters Salvador Dalí and Pablo Picasso chose Barcelona as a place to live and find inspiration for their artistic work.

The region of Catalonia is divided into four provinces, each centred around the metropolises of Barcelona, Tarragona, Lleida and Girona. The modern cities, but also medieval churches and monasteries and the spectacular nature attract many travellers.

visitors. In addition to the beach and sea, Catalonia is characterised by mighty mountains. The Pyrenees stretch across the north, while the coastline is fronted by coastal mountain ranges, some of which reach as far as the sea.

The unspoilt hinterland in particular offers adventure potential for horse riders and nature lovers. There you will find extensive nature parks such as the Alta Garrotxa volcanic area or the Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici National Park in the Pyrenees. The ecosystems at its different altitudes are home to a wide variety of plants and animals. Catalonia also offers an eventful history, charming villages and medieval sites. Thanks to the excellent Catalan cuisine, there is also plenty to eat and drink.





A unique riding experience on noble Spanish horses between the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean



Castle, mountains, bay - the treasures of the Costa Brava come together in Tossa de Mar



Semi-wild horses graze in almost complete freedom in the heights of the Pyrenees

EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

Seven different offers take you on horseback through Catalonia's most beautiful regions. You will experience culture and medieval heritage, a sporting programme with many gallop routes or star rides on the Costa Brava and its hinterland. An adventure tour takes you to the heights of the Pyrenees, another tour takes you along the Way of St James, and finally you can be a cowgirl at an authentic cattle drive.
<https://www.equitour.com/spain.htm>

Country info Catalonia



Size: 32 108 km²
 Population: 7.7 million Capital: Barcelona
 Language: Catalan, Spanish, Aranese Religion:
 Predominantly Catholic Currency: Euro
 Climate: Mediterranean climate, pre-alpine in the mountains Best time to visit: April to October

Under construction for 142 years, scheduled for completion in 2030, opened 14 years ago and has long been the symbol of Barcelona: the Sagrada Família basilica, built by Antoni Gaudí



Cruzado Iberico

The horses of Catalonia are the Iberian horses: Pura Raza Española, Hispano Arabian, Lusitano. Cruzados, which are crosses of Iberian horses with thoroughbreds, Arabians or Berbers, are also particularly popular in demanding terrain. They combine the quality of PRE and Lusitano with the advantages of the crossbred breeds. The thoroughbred brings nobility and speed, the Arabian gentleness and grace, the Berber sure-footedness and strong nerves.

Cruzados are equally at home on fast, long and mountainous riding tours. Thanks to their strong nerves, sure-footedness and willingness to walk, they guarantee riding pleasure.

Cruzados are real all-rounders and, depending on the type, are also suitable for mass sport, especially for the Doma Vaquera, the dressage of Spanish cattle herders. The fact that Cruzados do not have breeding papers does not bother their fans. However, there is now a studbook in which the crosses are registered under

can be registered under the name Cruzado Iberico, provided they certain criteria such as correct conformation. Like all Spanish horses, they also extremely typey. With all their qualities and the size range from 145 to 170 cm, Cruzados are the perfect partners for the Equitour trails.



Travelogue Costa Brava Trail

Between Beach

Autumn 2021: Four female riders defy the moody autumn weather in November on a brisk ride on the beautiful Costa Brava.



and Pyrenees

*"And they run, wet and wetter... what
dreadful waters...
ah, and a hundred rivers upon me..."*

At times, I feel like Goethe's sorcerer's apprentice as I ride through the hills and plains of Catalonia: the water doesn't just come from below and isn't limited to the rivers and the sea on the ground either. On the first two days of riding, a strong wind heralds a change in the weather. After weeks of drought, it's time to ride in

Catalonia can finally expect rain. At the beginning of November on the Costa Brava Trail, the foothills of the low pressure system aptly named "Blas" reach us, battering the Mediterranean islands with several days of storms and rain.

But first we arrive safely at the beautiful accommodation, around seventy kilometres north of Girona. Just before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, the manor house (masia in Spanish) converted into a charming guest house. The Masias are large stone country houses, and some have been into stylish guest houses and hotels. Our host Anne used to work as a successful architect, she has a knack for style. The seven guest rooms are individually designed, just as lovingly as the lounge and dining room with fireplace. A lot of wood has been used and old pieces of furniture restored. We are thrilled! There is also a pool. From the balcony, we can see the paddocks where the Anglo Arabs and

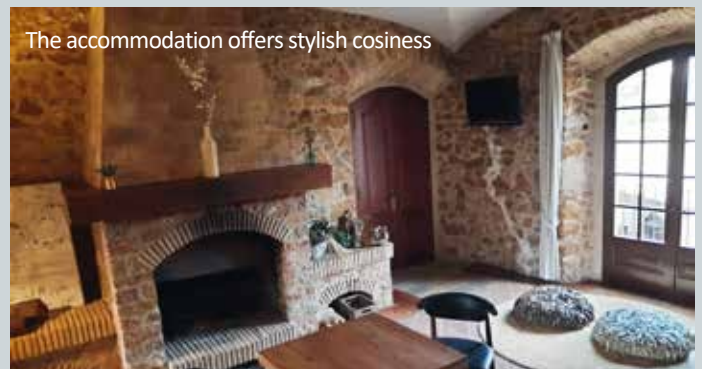
Spanish crosses can be kept robust in small herds of mares and geldings. The year-round mild climate is ideal for this.

Our small riding group consists of two Germans, a Dutch woman and a French woman. They are all very uncomplicated and fit riders, and the horses are also perfectly trained. Nothing stands in the way of a brisk tour. Riding guide Luzzy, like founder Ramon, is addicted to endurance riding, so the pace of the rides in Catalonia quite high. But first we set off into the mountains for two days. With a maximum of 25 kilometres each, the first days are relatively short and rather quiet. Under light cloud cover, we ride across small farmland, through dense oak and pine forests to a pretty four-star hotel on the banks of the Río Fluvià. In between, we stop for picnics and siestas under pine trees and next to fragrant rosemary bushes. The view of the Pyrenees opens up again and again. The high mountain ranges in the background are covered in snow - a fantastic panorama! A good Catalan red wine, several delicious cheeses and typical salamis are must at the picnic. Although I've never been a fan of red wine, I'm impressed by the light Catalan wine, which doesn't cost much more than water here and isn't from any meal.

In the afternoon, we make ourselves comfortable in the lounge before being spoilt in the Michelin-awarded restaurant of the country hotel in the evening. Meanwhile, the horses brave the increasingly strong wind in specially constructed paddocks with lucerne and concentrated feed.



The inviting "Masia"



The accommodation offers stylish cosiness



Picnic in a leafy wood



Autumn atmosphere
on the Río Fluvià

We spend the third night at the riding centre again and are already looking forward to the next day when we head to the beach. When we set off in the morning, the weather is still reasonably favourable. We ride through the hilly landscape with fields and mixed forests down to the plain. Here the route becomes faster and faster over perfect sandy paths through extensive autumnal deciduous forests and finally along the reed-covered banks of the River Ter to its delta. However, we save ourselves the view of the beach. By the time we reach the plain in the morning, Blas brings the forecast rain. Just in time for our lunch break, a strong wind sets in and we set off again in a hurry after half an hour. We trot and gallop the large apple orchards and the idyllic banks of the Terufer as quickly as possible. We are impressed by the horses' willingness to perform, and even after a good forty kilometres of riding, they are hardly tired. The ride resembles an endurance ride, or a riding day from "Catalonia at a gallop", a particularly fast-paced four-day programme for sporty riders. When we finally arrive at the hotel, we are completely soaked. At least I didn't pack any rain trousers for my holiday in Spain, and the softshell jacket is also soaked by the afternoon. Fortunately, the horses are housed under dense pine trees and, unlike in the south of Spain, the hotels in Catalonia have decent heating. The somewhat simpler hotel is known for its excellent paella, which we savour in the evening with the matching white wine.

Later, in view of the wet clothes, we discuss an alternative programme, such as a trip to the beautiful city of Girona. In the morning it looks a little better and we decide to stick to the riding programme. However, we don't want to stop for lunch as more rain is expected.

which then fails to materialise. So today we take it easy on the horses and ride at a leisurely pace, first briefly to the beach, where interesting pointed rocks rise up, and then along the Ter inland again to a picturesque olive grove and vineyards. Now we head up into a nature reserve, an extensive pine forest. When we ride out on the other side at midday, the sun even accompanies us and we enjoy a lovely ride with some trotting and galloping to the coastal town of Escala. The horses are once again stabled in individual paddocks and can rest until the morning. Our driver Albert is waiting for us in a comfortable country hotel, a former mill, with a late but delicious lunch.

The next morning, a highlight of the riding tour awaits us: the eight-kilometre-long sandy beach of Roses. First, we fight our way through horse-belly-deep water at the mouth of a small canal. There is no other access and the rain flooded everything. Due to the unusually stormy sea and the threatening rain clouds hanging inland, we ride along the beach at a walk. Normally there are long gallops here, but we've already had plenty of them. When we want to leave the beach, the horses have another unexpected Kneipp cure, as the sandy path inland resembles a water channel about forty centimetres high. After a happy splash, we follow another river into the hinterland. The rain clouds only touch us on the edge, and at lunchtime the sun briefly peeps through. This time Albert had put up an extra good rain cover between the trees. Finally, we head back into the hills through typical villages to our destination: two large, beautiful paddocks with a view of the Pyrenees. Here the horses enjoy their well-earned rest while we drive back to the riding centre, where we will spend the night twice more.

The following day, the route takes us once again through oak and pine forests, through fields and beautiful villages. We follow the Río Fluvià. Its banks are lined with a maple forest, which shines in bright yellow, just like in Indian summer.

Paths become waterways



The sun is kind to us at the end. We finally enjoy a long lunch break at a ruin in the pine forest.
 At twenty degrees, an hour's siesta is also possible, fantastic! This is exactly how we had imagined it, and it's exactly what you would expect, even in November. The next morning we savour Anne's homemade jams, the good olive oil and fresh orange juice once again, then it's time to say goodbye to our warm hosts and the lovely horses, who only don't end up in the luggage of one or two of our fellow riders due to their awkward size...
 Jessica Kiefer www.equitour.com/stw008.htm

The horses appreciate the abundance of water



Rest in front of old walls

Photos:
private



Delicious:
cheese, sausage
and red wine



November light in Catalonia



Good humour despite bad weather



The smugglers' trail



Following the historic route of the smugglers who once traded goods between Spain and France, riders today find adventure in a completely legal way. Photographer and blogger Yvonne Koall her ride in magical images.

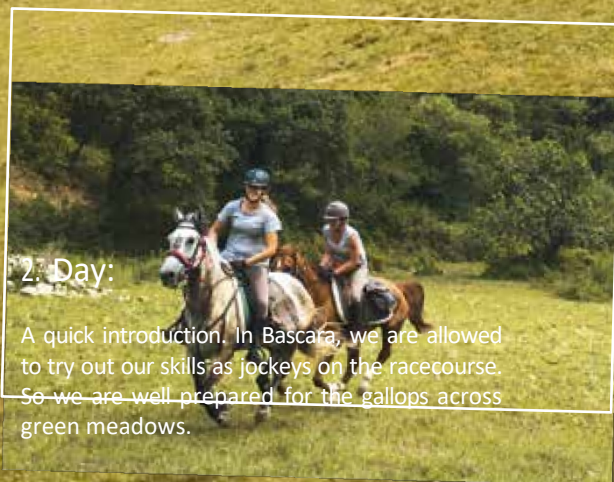
1. Day:

Our group gets on straight away. We meet our guide, the team and the horses at the riding centre.



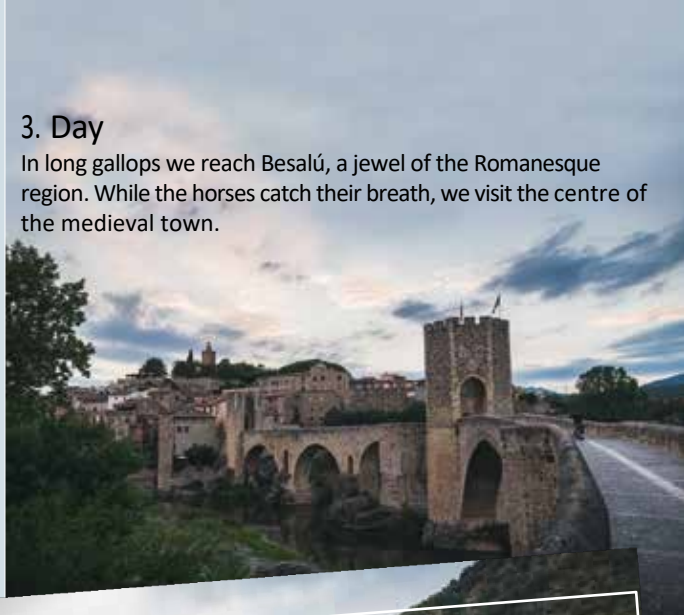
2. Day:

A quick introduction. In Bascara, we are allowed to try out our skills as jockeys on the racecourse. So we are well prepared for the gallops across green meadows.



3. Day

In long gallops we reach Besalú, a jewel of the Romanesque region. While the horses catch their breath, we visit the centre of the medieval town.



4. Day:

We ride over the Sadernes bridge into the Fluvià valley. The historic smugglers' trail begins at its confluence with the Llierca. In the evening we experience the night-time flair of Besalú.



5. Day:

The route climbs steeply to the deserted village of Talaixà. We lead the horses downhill. We reach the mountain village of Beget in the evening. Here we are delighted by old buildings and nouvelle cuisine with local dishes and the best local wine.



Day 7:

Today's highlight: we reach the highest mountain peak of the tour. Cows and wild horses graze here in summer, while eagles circle high in the sky. After days in the wilderness, we look forward to the lively town of Campardon.



There is a great video about the smuggler trail on YouTube:

6. Day:

After breakfast, we ride towards Espinavell, a 16th century smugglers' village near the French border. In our small mountain hotel, we are spoilt with specialities from this family business.



Day 8:

Despite the lingering feeling of happiness, it is hard to say goodbye to the horses and the new friends.



Eldorado for

The country used to be a source of unease.
Today, Colombia welcomes its guests with
abundance, friendliness and fascination.



Colombia



Discoverer



Colombia

Abundance, colours and variety

Mountains, beach, pleasure holiday? Adventure, city break, nature excursion? How should you decide? For everything! Colombia fulfils every wish and also offers unique riding tours.

Colombia may not be the largest country in South America, but it is the most biodiverse. The tropical climate, the different natural areas from the jungle to fertile savannahs and swamps offer the best conditions for an exceptionally rich flora and fauna.

Not only indigenous animals and plants, but increasingly also visitors from North America, Europe and Asia feel at home in this formerly rather disreputable country. Crime and drug trafficking have fallen sharply, but what remains is the coffee, tropical fruit, lush nature and the smiles of the Colombians.

The colonial history can be seen in the style of the haciendas, the villages and the metropolises such as Bogotá, Medellín and Cartagena. Tourists should take their time to get to know the different facets of the country.

The marvellous, as yet uncrowded dream beaches on the Pacific and Caribbean offer relaxation. If you enter the wilderness of the primeval forests, you can hear the bloodcurdling cry of the red howler monkey or the barely less piercing calls of the colourful parakeets and parrots. In fact Colombia is the most bird-rich country in the world with 1800 bird species.

The Paso Fino

Paso Fino

Gaited horse breed

Strong, square build All colours, rarely piebald Sensitive, lively, people-oriented

Resilient riding and draft horse Height 136 cm to 156 cm 44

The Paso Fino is bred in several Latin American countries and in the USA, but originally comes from Colombia. Like most horse breeds on the American continent, it goes back to the Iberian immigrant horses. The relationship with Spanish horses is unmistakable.

The breed's name is derived from its special tölt-like gait, the Paso. It exhibits this in three forms:

1. Classic Fino: strongly collected tölt with fast footfall
2. Paso Corto: moderate forward movement and spatial grip
3. Paso Largo: fastest tölt gait with plenty of scope

The Paso is innate to most breed representatives and offers the rider an extremely comfortable and low-vibration ride. This advantage is complemented by an endearing character.

Paso fans call the special nature of their horses "Brio". The word describes the combination of temperament, energy, gentleness and sublime presence.

Paso Finos are by no means difficult or frightening, which is why trail riders swear by their advantages. Especially in its country of origin, Colombia, the sure-footed, comfortable and manageable Paso is ideal for regions in mountain and jungle areas that are difficult to access.





Tapirs, armadillos, jaguars and pumas, sloths, bears and monkeys roam the depths of the primeval forests. Get out of the wilderness and into the hustle and bustle of life - that's what Colombian cities invite you to do. The spirited Afro-Caribbean culture offers concerts, dance, pop, rock and classical music.

When you of Colombia, you also think of coffee. Coffee thrives excellently in the warm and humid climate of the Andean highlands, and the huge coffee plantations are another highlight for visitors. Coffee lovers do not leave the country without tasting the "Tinto", a mild black coffee with sugar. Equitour combines the highlights of the country with unforgettable riding experiences. Is Colombia dangerous? Well, locals say: "the only risk is that you want to stay here".



Ride through green wilderness



Traditional terracotta art



EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

Combine the rich culture and nature of Colombia with a successful riding experience. that is what the Equitour programmes offer. Three different tours take you through primeval forests, over mountain ranges and through remote villages. On every tour you will be spoilt with coffee, fruit and typical local dishes.

www.equitour.com/columbia.htm

Country info Colombia



Size: 1 142 000 km²
Population: 51 million
Capital: Bogotá Language: Spanish
Religion: Predominantly Roman Catholic
Currency: Colombian peso
Climate: tropical with different climate zones, depending on altitude
Best time to visit: all year round

Great Hacienda

Lush vegetation

Airy hacienda patio

46

Stylish
guest room

Tiptop tack room

Trail



Hacienda hopping
the riding adventure
by Denise Neufeld, as she immerses
herself in the joys of Colombian riding and
life.

It slowly begins to dawn. The first rays of sunlight fight their way through the lush branches of the trees, warming the earth and allowing the cold and damp of the night to rise in the mist. Dark outlines of mighty giant trees and rolling hills on the horizon. It is six o'clock in the morning and the streets are still empty as we leave the metropolis of Bogotá and finally reach Ubaté. This is where the hacienda is located, the starting point of our riding adventure for the next few days.

The hacienda is owned by the family of our host Germán. His business partner Bernado gives us a tour of the estate. The house is over three hundred years old and has its historical charm. Typical of the Spanish colonial era, there is a large patio in the centre of the building, an open courtyard with seating.

The guest rooms are accessed from the patio. The hacienda is now used as a holiday home for the family or guests. The rooms vary in layout and size. All are furnished in the old style with antique furniture and chandeliers. There is also a cosy fireplace room for cold days, an old office room and even a small chapel.

In the kitchen, the most delicious dishes are conjured up over the old wood-fired oven.

In the past, the hacienda was a "chicharia" where chicha was produced. This is a type of South American cider or fermented juice, also known as the "beer" of the Incas or Andes, which is made from different types of fruit and plants depending on the country or region. The estate's former stable has been into a guest room. Only the old saddles on the wall still bear witness to this time. The new stables are about five minutes' walk the hacienda.

After a delicious coffee and some time to relax, we head to the stables. The group consists of English, Belgians, Germans and US-Americans. The paddocks and the new stables are located at the foot of a mountain. The horses are outside all year round, so the boxes are rarely used. The stable building includes a lounge and a neat tack room where different types of saddles can be seen, from classic English saddles to Western and McClellan saddles, side saddles and the typical South American saddles with sheepskin covers.

The forty or so horses are mostly crosses of Criollos, Arabians and Quarter Horses. There are also a few mules in the herd. McClellan-style saddles with double bridles are used for the rides. Each horse has saddlebags and rain ponchos are also provided. Colombia is in the tropical climate zone, so it can rain all year round. In the meantime, the temperatures are pleasantly summery after being quite fresh in the morning. Sun protection is essential, as we are close to the equator and at an altitude of around 2600 metres.

Colombia is divided into different natural areas. The coast offers beautiful beaches and Afro-Caribbean influences. The east is characterised by wet savannahs and rainforest. The west is dominated by the Andes, which run through Colombia in three mountain ranges: the western, central and eastern Cordillera. We ride through the eastern arm of the Cordillera from the province of Cundinamarca to the neighbouring province of Santander.

We do a few short test laps with our horses in the covered riding arena until everyone has fastened their panniers and adjusted their stirrups. Then we set off. We slowly move away from the stables, pass the stable's own llama, which is grazing comfortably lying down, and approach the surrounding hills. We ride through fragrant forests of pine and eucalyptus trees. Occasional cacti line our path, and time and again we have great views of the mountain panorama.

My hard-working Criollo-Arabian mix carries me swiftly and safely over any terrain. Happy and satisfied, we return to the stables after a great first ride. A barbecue - "asado in Spanish - awaits us at the hacienda with huge

Meat quantities. There is delicious beef, chicken thighs and sausages, served with potatoes, a delicious avocado cream and fresh mango juice. The tropical fruits, which expensive to buy in our supermarket, grow in on the trees here. There is always a full fruit basket in the patio that you can help yourself to.

In the afternoon, we visit the neighbouring farm where Paso Finos are bred and trained. This gaited horse breed originated in Colombia, among other places, and the Colombians are really crazy about their Paso Fino! The name refers to both the breed and the special tölt gait. In German, Paso Fino means "fine gait". Competitions are organised all over the country in which riders and horses have to walk almost on the spot on a wooden floor with fast triple steps while cheered on by the audience. The horse with the fastest and purest beat wins. We are allowed to watch one of the employees during training and even ride one of the noble horses ourselves. A great honour and a unique riding experience! The horse rattles over the wooden floor like a sewing machine, while you hardly feel a movement yourself.

In the evening, a typical Colombian dish, ajiaco, awaits. This is a stew with chicken, potatoes, sweetcorn, capers, avocado and a dash of cream. At dinner, we meet Germán, our second host and companion. Together with Bernado, he shows his guests Colombia horseback. Bernado worked as a lawyer until a few years ago, but at some point resigned to devote himself fully to his passion for horses and riding.



48

Over hill and dale





Muli keeps up

The saddles are light and comfortable



Herd with mule



Demonstration of the Paso Fino



Asado - South American barbecue

The next morning, we first ride over a few hills to a village, where we stop at a small shop a few refreshing drinks. The route then continues over hills and through forests. The mule that Germán rides is always a particular delight. He is a real fan of mules as, despite their generally smaller size, they have a lot of stamina and can carry more weight than many horses while still forward diligently. I can see this for myself when Germán gives me the mule and I can see its qualities for myself in a lively gallop. Despite our shorter legs, we can easily keep up with the group.

There is a lot to see on this riding tour - from the aforementioned forests to wide green plains, steep mountain passages and desert-like rocky terrain. We often ride through small villages or stop at historic haciendas, where we are warmly welcomed by our hosts and treated to delicious food.

All the accommodation is charming and each has its own special style. The old buildings have been lovingly restored and furnished. In the mountains, we spend the night in a kind of eco-lodge with

Photos: private

small guest cabins, and once in a modern hotel in the Monasterio de la Candelaria monastery, the oldest Augustinian monastery in Latin America.

The last stage of our ride is the town of Villa de Leyva. With its cobbled streets and white facades, it is considered the most beautiful colonial town in the country. Its huge main square in the town centre has already served as the backdrop for several Hollywood films, such as Zorro.

In addition to the lush nature and variety of landscapes, we learn a lot about the culture and exciting history of Colombia. With this enrichment, it is with a heavy heart that we say goodbye to our friendly guides and our beloved horses.

Denise Neufeld

www.equitour.com/col008.htm



Classical? English? Western?

The different riding styles



Dressage, western, gaited horses - there are many riding styles. How did they come about and which ones are suitable for trail riding?



English

The English riding style includes competition disciplines such as dressage, show jumping and eventing, as well as hunting. Reins, shanks and weight are used to provide constant aids determine gait, speed, collection and direction.

In the light seat, the rider stands in the stirrups, leans slightly forwards and relieves the horse when cantering and jumping. Champions in the English show disciplines are warmbloods and the German Riding Pony.



Western

Western riding originates from the working riding style of American cowboys. It is calm, gentle and relaxed, as the cowboys and their horses have to work together for many hours. The aids are given impulsively, i.e. the horse performs the required lesson until a new signal is given. Quarter Horse, Paint Horse and Appaloosa are associated with Western riding, but other breeds can also be trained accordingly.

Gaited horses

Tölt, Pass, Paso, Rack, Marcha, Foxtrot - these are the special gaits of the gaited horse breeds. These are Icelandic horses from Iceland, Missouri Fox Trotters, Tennessee Walkers, Rocky Mountain Horses, American Saddlebreds from North America, Paso Fino, Paso Peruano, Mangalarga Marchador from South America.

There is no standardised riding style for all gaited horses. Rather, the respective riding style is adapted to the customary riding style in the respective country. For example, gaited horses in the USA are often ridden in Western style. Icelanders, on the other hand, are ridden in the English style, although the rider's weight is shifted slightly backwards due to the special Icelandic saddle in order to promote the desired uprightness when tölt and pass. South American gaited horses are ridden similarly to the Iberian riding style.



Photos: Gabriele Kärcher, private



Iberian

Like western riding, the Iberian riding style originates from the working riding style of the vaqueros, the Spanish cattle herders. Their horses are trained to be highly collected and at the same time to be strong and manoeuvrable. The rider sits low in the saddle and holds the reins in one hand. The other hand is free for the garrocha, a long pole with which the vaquero drives and separates cattle. According to their origin, Iberian horses, i.e. Andalusians and Lusitano, are particularly suitable for this, but also Hispano-Arabians and the "Tres Sangres" popular in Spain, which are crosses of Andalusians, English thoroughbreds and Arabians.



Classical / Baroque

This is the equestrian art of the old masters, which was developed and practised at court. In fact, its origins lie in late medieval war riding. Maximum collection combined with lightness is the order of the day. Difficult dressage movements such as piaffe, passage and pirouette originate classical riding and have found their way into dressage sport. In addition, the most difficult movements, the schools above the ground, belong to the classical riding style. These are the levade, courbette and capriole. For these exercises the Baroque horses: Andalusian, Lusitano, Lipizzaner, Knabstrupper and Friesian.



Working riding style

In countries such as Mongolia or Kyrgyzstan, riding is above all one thing: work. Horses are used for transport or driving and herding livestock. This means hours of riding, speed and dexterity if required, strength, nerve and health. Riders of these peoples do not pay attention to posture, aesthetics or perfection. This is why their riding style sometimes seems rough and takes some getting used to. However, their horses usually live in the greatest possible freedom and are therefore robust and resilient. The bottom line is that they are probably not doing so badly.

Trail riding

Trail riders sit in the saddle like cowboys for hours on end. Continuous leaning on the reins, tension and leg pressure are not useful. As in Western riding, impulse aids are used. The famous author and horse expert Ursula Bruns developed the easy riding style for leisure and trail riders. It is made up of elements from the English and Western repertoires.

The saddle is gentle and relaxed for both two- and four-legged friends. Comfortable western saddles are just as suitable as light English saddles. You can ride with a snaffle, curb bit or bitless. Depending on the destination, holiday riders can also expect typical local saddles and bridles from the Equitour partners. A short briefing is of course always provided.





Romania

Flying high in



Transylvania

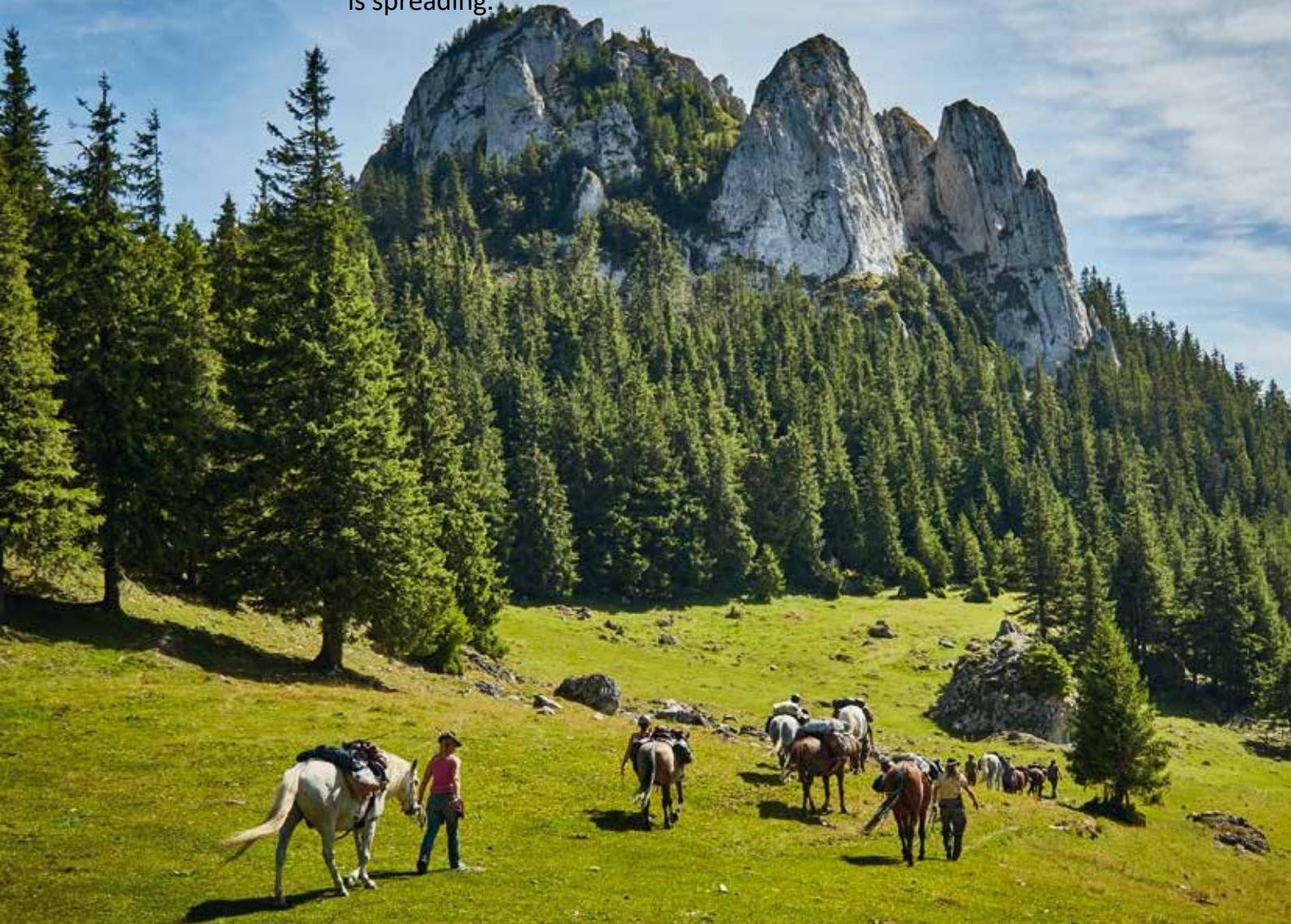
At night, Dracula is up to mischief, wolves howl and bears break through the thicket. Ghosts are said to old castles and the heights of the Carpathian Mountains.
Transylvania is the riding country for the fearless.



Romania

The wild land of Europe

Culture, adventure and a bit of a thrill attract tourists to Romania. The country is still a secret tip, but of its advantages is spreading.



The heart of Romania is the famous Transylvania, also known as Transylvania. The name Transylvania means "beyond the forest", the name Transylvania goes back to the 12th century, when emigrants from Saxony settled here and built seven fortified castles, which gave the region its name.

Romania's nature is diverse and rich in wildlife. The Carpathian Mountains are reminiscent of the Rocky Mountains, the Danube Delta looks like Little Amazonia, the forests resemble those of Canada and the cities epitomise old Europe. This makes Romania an attractive and varied holiday destination.

Transylvania is surrounded by the Carpathian Mountains to the east. The terrifying novel character Count Dracula

is said to have lived here. Dracula's creepy castle is open to today. But only until 6 pm. What goes on at night remains uncertain.

You will also get goosebumps when you meet Romania's brown bears, which, like wolves and lynxes, roam the endless forests. They share their habitat with chamois, badgers, foxes, roe deer, red deer, wild boar, the reintroduced European bison and countless bird species.

People, animals and travellers live without constraints in and with nature. Country life is simple and unfortunately still characterised by poverty. But tourism brings money, people and attention and is therefore a blessing for the country.

Photos: private, mandarinMD / pixabay

Brown bear family



Like years and years ago



The art of cheesemaking



Riders in search of adventure in the right place here, as fast rides and climbing tours on horseback are popular in Romania. Castles and fortresses offer an insight into Romania's history, some of which have fallen into disrepair, others have been lovingly restored. In the cities they serve as museums, in the countryside as guest houses and/or as the homes of noble heirs.

Equitour takes its guests to historic castles as well as into the depths of the forests and the heights of the Carpathian Mountains and conveys the simple charm of Romanian country life. The likelihood of encountering bears is far greater than the danger of meeting Count Dracula.



Bran Castle - the Dracula Castle

EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

Mountains, lakes, forests and Romania's cultural heritage are all covered by the Equitour riding programmes. Whether you spend the night in a royal country estate or in a simple mountain hut - during the day, the reliable horses of our partners to the treasures of Romania. Adventurous riders will get their money's worth on the trail rides.

<https://www.equitour.com/eastern-europe.htm>

Country info Romania



Size: 238 398 km²

Population: 19 million Capital: Bucharest

Language: Romanian, Hungarian

Religion: Predominantly Romanian Orthodox

Currency: Romanian leu

Climate: Temperate. Depending on the region, maritime, continental or Mediterranean

Best time to visit: April to October



Transylvania adventure



Transylvania - the word sends a shiver down the spine of many. Because everyone knows that this is the home of Count Dracula. Adrienne Friedlaender can't let that stop her from visiting the horses, nature and castles of Romania.

"Canter is coming up!" Mátyás rides at the head of our group of eight. And as soon as he shouts the command to canter, his bay horse starts to prance excitedly. The other horses also know the command and need no further prompting. And our horses are off and running. Their hooves fly over the grassland. Fields, forests and the hilly landscape of the Carpathian Mountains stretch as far as the eye can see.

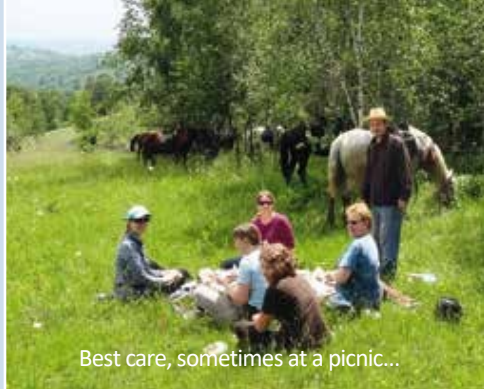
Five riding days and 120 kilometres through Transylvania lie ahead of us. We ride across wildflower meadows and climb hills, cross rushing streams, move uphill and downhill through wide open country.

Our riding adventure begins the day before in Miklósvár. The village of 500 souls is one of the oldest in Transylvania. And it like most villages in this region, seems to have fallen out of time. There is only one tarmac road.

An elderly couple are sitting on a crooked wooden bench in front of their ageing cottage. Their hands in their laps, their faces in the evening sun. They are enjoying the evening, chatting with their neighbour. A horse-drawn cart, heavily laden with hay, rumbles past. An everyday sight. Even today, many farmers still use donkey and horse-drawn carts for field work and family outings.

In front of the restored Kálnoky Castle





Best care, sometimes at a picnic...



... times
luxurious



... but first it's the horses' turn



Canter is coming up

The noble Kálnoky family lived in Miklósvár for eight centuries until the Romanian fascists the grandparents of the current count from the country. Since Count Tibor Kálnoky returned to his ancestral castle in 2004, he and his wife Anna have been busy rebuilding the family estate, restoring the ruined villages and fighting poverty. To finance this, the count's family offers riding training and trail rides. Guests come from all over the world. Hardly anywhere else in Europe is there such boundless freedom for horse and rider. No fences, no gates, only a few predefined paths.

We meet Anna Kálnoky at the Stone Pub in Miklósvár. The 59-year-old countess has a degree in veterinary medicine and has been familiar with horses and riding since childhood. She knows the area and has planned the riding route and overnight accommodation. The horses we set off with the next morning also come from her stables: sure-footed Hutsuls, Shagya Arabians, Arabian crosses and Lipizzaners.

When we registered, we our height, weight and riding skills. Now Gräfin Anna wants to get to know us personally before she selects the right horses. She takes this task very seriously, as is difficult to change horses during the five-day trail.

The next morning, driver Sultan takes us to the stables in Sepsiköröspatak. The horses are already saddled and ready for us. Anna has chosen a 15-year-old elegant and very lively Lipizzaner mare for me.

In the paddock, the experienced horsewoman checks her choice once again. Highly concentrated, she stands in the centre of the arena and watches us with suspicious eyes. The safety of the riders is just as important to her as the well-being of her beloved horses. And she has a good eye for that. My Lipizza mare Alma and I are a harmonious team from the very first round. "In the past, I could never have imagined hiring out my horses," reveals the countess, adding. "But times have changed." Her family and team have been running the riding business for twenty years now.





Freedom for the horses



Fast-paced cross-country gallop



Enchanting Kálnoky Castle



The room of King Charles

maximum of eight riders are accompanied by Mátyás, the oldest rider in the region.

son of Countess Anna and Count Tibor. Sándor Bölöni, who has been working for the Kálnoky family for more than twenty years, is also usually present. He is Mátyás' right-hand man and ensures the safety of horse and rider.

After twenty minutes, Anna gives her OK for the group and leaves the riding arena satisfied. We stow our rain jackets, picnic and water and our personal belongings in the leather saddlebags and ride off. The adventure begins. We will be in the saddle for around five to six hours a day over the next few days.

There are a few things to bear in mind when riding through the Transylvanian wilderness. Once we have left the village behind us and reached the edge of the forest, we gather in a semi-circle around Mátyás. "We will free-roaming horses," warns he. "They sometimes feel threatened by us. They are not wild horses. The farmers take them to the mountains to graze. Then the lead horse is tied to the tree, the rest of the herd runs around freely - and is sometimes quite aggressive." Mátyás isn't finished yet: "We'll also meet flocks of sheep. And every shepherd out here has a lot of herding dogs with them. They not only defend their flocks against bears, but also against people and horses."

No mobile network, no roads, and we haven't seen anyone for hours. Suddenly there is wild barking. A dozen huge, tousle-haired herding dogs leap out of the bushes. The pack barks like there's no tomorrow. No doubt about it: every single one of them would defend the sheep with their lives. Sándor whistles and shouts until the wild pack back.

We calm down and ride into a wooded area. Free-range horses are grazing in a clearing. As soon as they notice us, two young stallions break away from the herd and trot us with their heads held high and their manes flowing. Sándor jumps off his horse, stands between the stallions and the group of riders and vigorously chases the two youngsters away.

The sun has reached its highest point. Lunch break in the oak forest. We loosen the girths, tie up our horses in the shelter of the trees and settle down on a picnic blanket in the shade. Two eagles circle over the clearing and watch as we devour chicken legs and sandwiches with great appetite.

We stretch our tired bones, doze in the sun, chat about the morning's experiences over coffee and tea and listen to Mátyás' stories. Since completing his history degree, he has regularly accompanied the trail rides. His favourite part is the conversations with the guests, to whom he enthusiastically and happily talks about the culture and eventful history of his homeland.

Someone asks about Count Dracula, who is said to have wreaked havoc as a vampire in Transylvania. There were never any vampires here, Mátyás clarifies. But there was a role model for the character in the novel by Irish writer Bram Stoker: Prince Vlad Draculea, who was notorious for his cruelty in the fifteenth century. He burnt down fields, poisoned drinking water and had his victims staked, which is why he was also known as "Tepes", the is "the impaler". Mátyás is not a fan of the Dracula cult. "Our home country has better things to offer.

We reach our destination for the day, Kisbacon, in the late afternoon. Every evening we spend the night in a different place: in typical Transylvanian inns, privately with a hunting family and today in a hikers' hostel in the middle of the forest. The atmosphere is relaxed, like on a school trip. Chattering, we spread out in our rooms, where our luggage is already waiting. Sultan drives it to our accommodation every day.

We receive a warm welcome and delicious food at every location. Here in Kisbacon, we are invited to dinner with a local couple. "Welcome to our home," says "Lady Martha", as Mátyás introduces us to our hostess: A lady in her eighties who is beaming all over her face. "I'm delighted that you've come to our little village."

She adds proudly: "There's nothing better in the whole world." Then she generously pours out a round of homemade pálinka. The traditional sweet fruit brandy is a Hungarian speciality. The locals serve it for every occasion.

There is barely an inch of space left on the lavishly laid table: tomatoes and peppers, home-baked bread, aubergine cream, cabbage rolls, cheese. Everything from their own garden and home-made. After the meal, Martha leads us into a neighbouring room. There is a huge traditional wooden loom. Especially in winter, when there is nothing left to do in the vegetable garden and the snow is piling up outside the front door, she makes pretty blankets, napkins and tea towels that she sells to her guests. As we say goodbye, she proudly hands us a colourful little brochure about her homeland. Erdővidék-Waldland is the title. That's what her homeland is in the vernacular.

Wild mountains, rolling hills and vast forest areas. These are home not only to foxes and wolves, but above all to bears. Over 6000 roam the forests. Transylvania has

the largest brown bear population in Europe. The bears are peace-loving, but can be dangerous, especially if you surprise them.

Transylvania is one of the last unspoilt natural areas in Europe. And this unique wilderness also fascinates King Charles. He has been travelling to Romania regularly since 1989. He usually comes during the summer to find peace and quiet and to take a break. He then hikes through the unique landscape with Count Tibor Kálnoky. The two are distantly related, but above all they share a personal friendship.

In 2009, Charles bought a modest country estate in the dreamy village of Zálánpatak: four small and lovingly renovated cottages, a stable and barn, secluded on the edge of the forest and only accessible via a gravel road. The idyllic guest house offers space for twelve overnight guests. And what makes it special: When the monarch and his entourage are away, all the rooms and even the king's bed are also rented out to guests. So at the end of our ride, we actually have the pleasure of spending the night in the royal estate.

The next day we ride back to Sepsikőröspatak. Sweating but happy, we reach the stables in the early afternoon, where Countess Anna is waiting for us - delighted that riders and horses are back safe and sound. We toast to this and to a great week of riding. With Pálinka, of course.

Sultan drives us back to Zálánpatak. We spend the last night before our departure in the English king's guest house. After dinner, we retire to our rooms. The houses are in darkness. The stars twinkle in the deep black sky. Somewhere in the village, a few dogs are barking. And in the distance? Is that a wolf howling?

Adrienne Friedlaender www.equitour.com/dra007.htm

Photos:
private



From Lake Constance to the Carpathians

Interview with Emigrant Katrin

Katrin Heigle, a native of southern Germany, is 38 years old and lives with her partner Csaba and many animals on a mountain pasture in the Carpathian Mountains. She tells Jessica Kiefer about her exciting life.



Campfire romance

Katrin and Csaba's paradise



Visit to the log cabin



Csaba leads the group



Photos: private

Had you ever thought about emigrating, and how did it come ?
It happened by chance. I was violinist in an orchestra in Germany. As much as I love music, I wanted to do something really "my own". In 2016, I travelled to Romania on horseback through Equitour and met Csaba, who is now my partner. I was immediately enchanted by the Carpathian Mountains with their uniquely beautiful nature and wild unspoiled nature. And, of course, Csaba, his way of life and his approach to horses. So in 2017 I travelled to the Carpathians again, and in 2018 I moved there completely.

How would you describe your current compatriots?

People are more relaxed than in Germany. That has advantages and disadvantages. There is less burnout or depression here. On the other hand, it is more difficult to find reliable employees.

3. is there anything you miss about Germany?

Honestly? The food. Especially the southern German cuisine I grew up with. There are delicious dishes here, but I still look forward to lentils with spaetzle and string sausages every time I visit my parents.

How many horses do you have? Do you have a favourite horse?

We currently have 28 horses, but there are also some pensioners and a few foals that grow up with their mothers in the herd. The horses live on the mountain pasture all year round. We have just under forty hectares of land, so the horses walk down to the spring every day, then to the salt, and from there back to the hay. All this in mountainous terrain. So our horses are always fit, balanced and sure-footed. Like mountain goats. My absolute favourite is our "Paulchen". A unique horse, very dynamic, strong and enduring. I have ridden him many times. Unfortunately, he can no longer be ridden due to osteoarthritis. He is now enjoying his retirement in our meadows.

What makes your concept so special?

Our farm is situated at 1250 metres on the edge of the Hasmas National Park. We live where bears and wolves say goodnight to each other.

We get water from a mountain spring and we have solar panels on the roofs for electricity. Csaba builds the log cabins himself. We fetch the wood for them from the forest on horseback. We do a lot of things ourselves. We have grey farmers who make sure our freezer is always full. And my chickens provide fresh eggs every day. But of course there are also hardships. In winter, the journey to the valley and back is often

not even with the jeep. Then we pick up the weekly shopping with packhorses. Two gas bottles fit into the panniers of our pony Vidam, while his mate Gazsi carries everything else from bread to dog food and salad.

How important are horses to the population?

For many farmers, the horse is the only means of transport. You can still see horse-drawn carts, especially in rural areas. In the countryside, many things are done in the same way as in Germany a hundred years ago. Things are different in modern metropolises like Bucharest. Here you can find Ikea, Kaufland etc. The stark contrast can be seen when an old horse-drawn cart is parked in front of the glittering shopping mall.

What about animal welfare in Romania?

Animal welfare is a difficult topic. However, it cannot be said across the board that animals are worse off here than in Germany. Many farmers keep their cattle on pastures. When we ride across the mountain pastures in summer, we enjoy the happy cows, goats and even pigs.

Sadder are the pictures of chained dogs or some cart horses in questionable condition. The problem is poverty. If the family itself has hardly any money for food, then it can't afford a farrier. Markus Raabe from Equiwent (<https://equiwent.org/rumaenien/>) has been making a great contribution to animal welfare in Romania for many years. He provides people with a job apprenticeships, for example as a farrier.

Do you have any special travel tips for Romania?

The country has a lot to offer, for example the second largest biosphere reserve in Europe in the Danube Delta, a wilderness where you hike and camp without any bans. And of course Romania is a horse-riding country. On our trails, we often don't meet a soul for days on end. You really get away from it all and can switch off from the noise, stress and hectic pace. The people are welcoming and open to tourists. Guests are sometimes invited to a schnapps in a dairy somewhere in the middle of nowhere.

Thank you very much, Katrin!

Katrin and Csaba offer several wilderness rides:

Hasmas National Park Ride: www.equitour.com/has007.htm
On the trail of the bears: www.equitour.com/bae008.htm
Carpathian Adventure Ride: www.equitour.com/kar015.htm

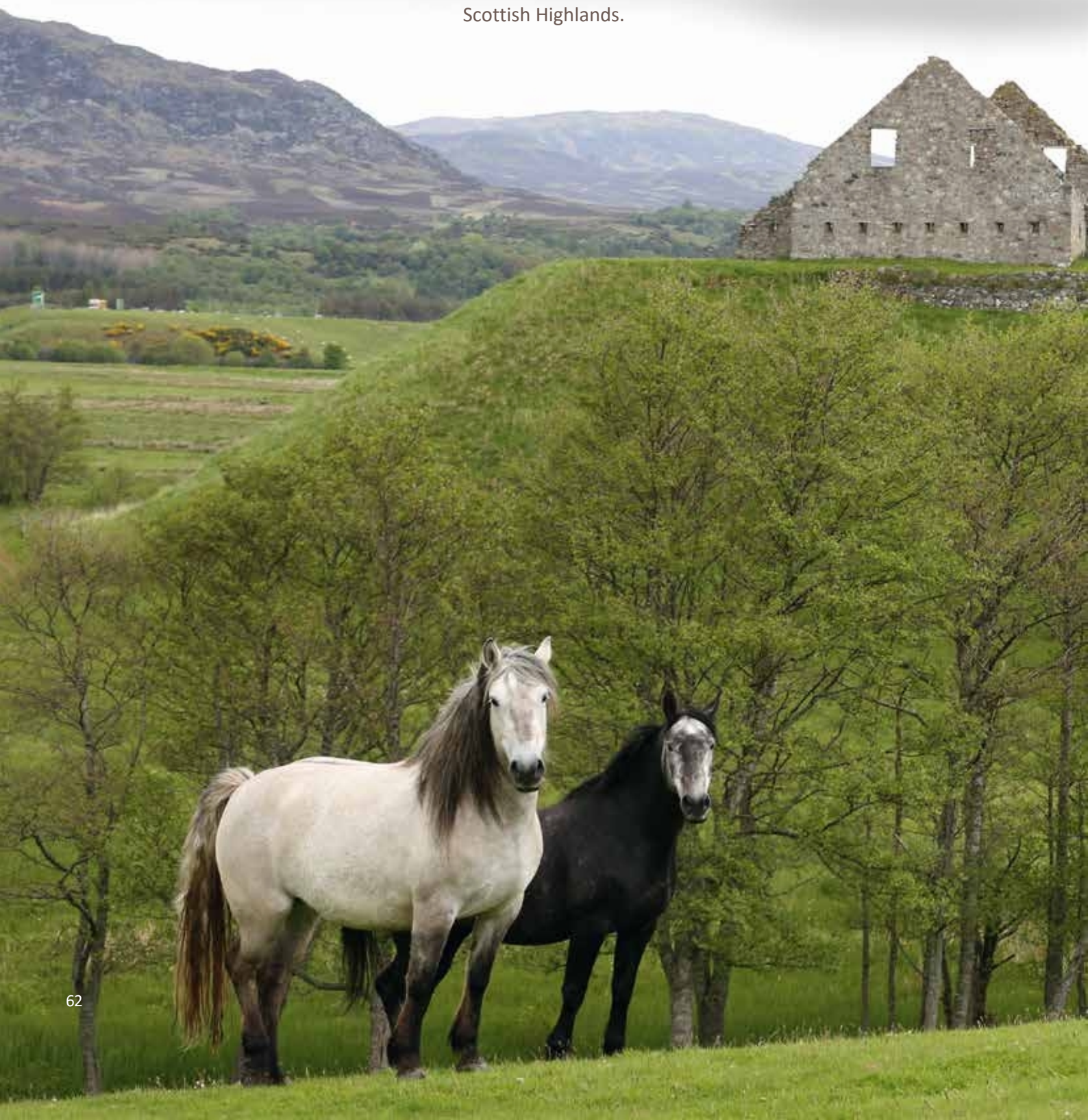
FOLLOW the HORSES

HIGHLANDER

Scotland's original rocks



Photojournalist Gabriele Kärcher encounters people and horses on all continents without bias or judgement. She experiences a touch of eternity in the Scottish Highlands.



The journey to the north of the British Isles seems like a journey back in time. Gloomy villages of grey stone houses seem to have remained unchanged for ages. The people are quaint and grounded. In my search for Scottish originals, I hit the jackpot. Ewan Cameron Ormiston from Newton- more, 85 years old, horse breeding legend, inventor of pony trekking as a sport and breeder of Scottish Highland ponies.

The origins of this breed date to the Ice Age. Throughout its history, the powerful horse has served farmers, burghers and nobility. Even Queen Elizabeth loved and bred the breed at her Scottish summer residence, Balmoral Castle. Cameron knows the Queen personally, as he was in her service when it came to horse breeding.

Cameron is a veteran like his ponies. His family has been breeding ponies and cattle in their homeland, the Scottish Highlands, for 200 years. The old man takes great care of me, cooks me soup and invites me to go for a test ride on the ponies.

his pastures. With a few feed buckets in the back, we rumble off in the rickety Defender. The ponies come trotting up happily when they see the vehicle. They know that Cameron always gives them a few strokes and something to munch on.

Cameron swears by the qualities of the rustic small horse, which is strong enough to carry heavyweights, calm enough to give children and novice riders a sense of security, robust enough to live semi-wild in the rough highlands and athletic enough to trophies in show jumping, dressage and driving. Although Cameron thinks little of Highland ponies in sport. Here, too, efforts are being made to the type finer and lighter through refinement. He agrees with the Queen on this point: she too would not be amused if the typey Highlander were to be "refined" into a standardised sport horse.

Not only the Queen, but also Cameron has since passed away and I hope her legacy remains a reminder to today's Highland pony lovers. lovers a reminder.

Cameron and his "babies"



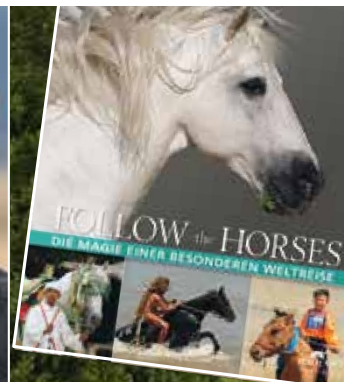
Typey mare with offspring



Photojournalist
Gabriele Kärcher

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160 pages, EUR 29.80
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Pictures, adventures and
insights from my travels:



EQUITOUR FUN FACTS

Interesting facts from the equestrian world to amaze and amuse you

When you go riding with Equitour, you can unforeseeable, unforgettable and unbelievable things in addition to the riding adventure. In this new series, we present aha moments, records and curiosities.



The highest riding tours

This issue takes you up high. But the highest peaks that you climb on horseback with Equitour are in Peru. On the Macchu Picchu Lodge Ride, you will climb a good 4600 metres on horseback on the Andean mountain Salkantay, which is over 6000 metres high.

In the Colca Valley, you can reach an altitude of almost 4500 metres on horseback and even a pass at 4900 metres by car!

On the Independence Ride across the Andes - from Chile to Argentina - you ride up to an altitude of 4500 metres with views of mountain peaks over 6000 metres high!



Big Five and Ugly Five

Africa travellers are looking for the famous "Big Five", i.e. lion, rhino, leopard, buffalo and elephant. You can see them all on the Masai Mara riding safari, although rhinos now very rare.

Evil tongues also speak of the "Ugly Five": these are vulture, hyena, warthog, marabou and wildebeest. But meeting these animals on the safari rides is also a great pleasure. The warthogs in particular may not be beautiful, but they are absolutely adorable and very entertaining!

The most unusual animals

Costa Rica is a wonderland of biodiversity. On the Carara Coastal Trail you can encounter the following rare and unusual species, among others common animals: Agouti, sloth, umbilical pig, also called peccary, Tayra and the extremely rare Jaguarundi.



The funniest animals

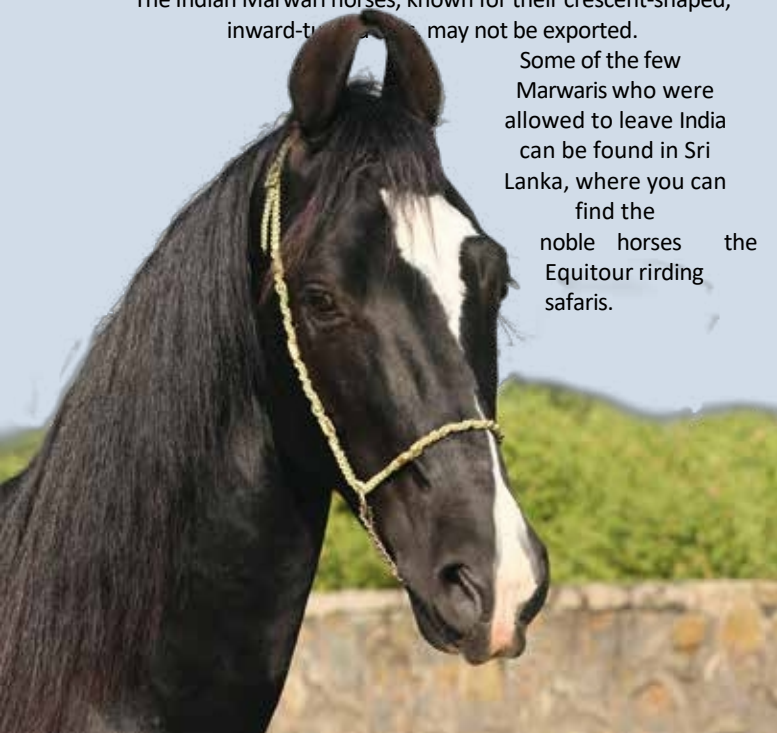
Madagascar is known for its very own wildlife, especially for its cute lemurs. You have the opportunity to meet the extremely trusting Vari, Katta, Aye-Aye and Maki up close the lemur park.



India exclusive

The Indian Marwari horses, known for their crescent-shaped, inward-turned ears, may not be exported.

Some of the few Marwaris who were allowed to leave India can be found in Sri Lanka, where you can find the noble horses the Equitour ridding safaris.



World record

11,125 horses and riders took part in the world's largest horse parade, which it into the Guinness Book of Records. It took place on 9 August 2013 in Mongolia and covered an area of four square kilometres. Mongolia is an absolute horse country anyway. A trail ride through Mongolia definitely belongs on the "to do list" of all equestrian travellers.



Riding and cooking

Good food is an important part of the riding holidays. On some, you can even learn how to prepare typical local dishes. With

of the Guanajuato Nature Expedition in Mexico you can show yourself how to make guacamole and tacos or mix margarita cocktails.

On Crete you can try your hand at tzatziki, moussaka etc. In Umbria, you can take part in the olive harvest and even make your own olive oil.



The adventure rider

Günter Wamser's trail ride across America took him from Patagonia to Alaska, covering around 40,000 kilometres on horseback and setting a record in the process. A presentation about this incredible adventure is highly recommended! If you want to relive this experience, the Equitour wilderness rides from the Andes to Canada are the right programme for you.

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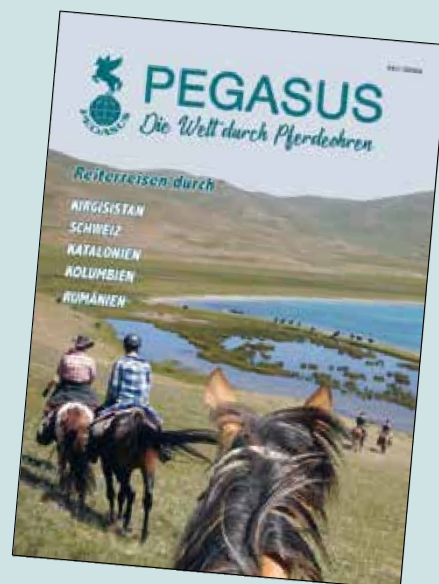
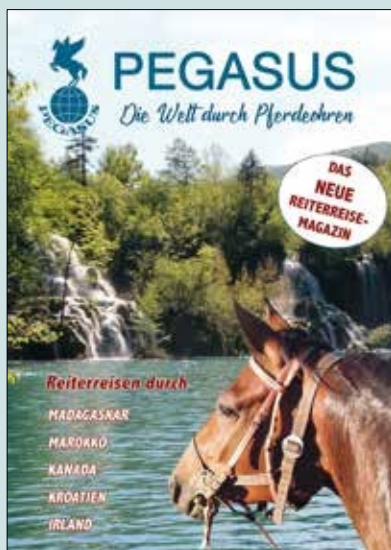
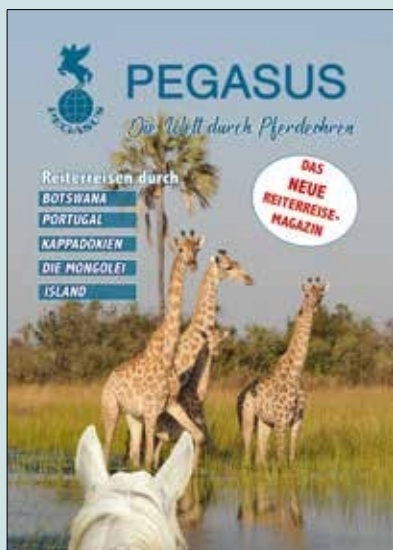
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Get wanderlust and travel tips for your riding adventure!

Images that captivate the eye,

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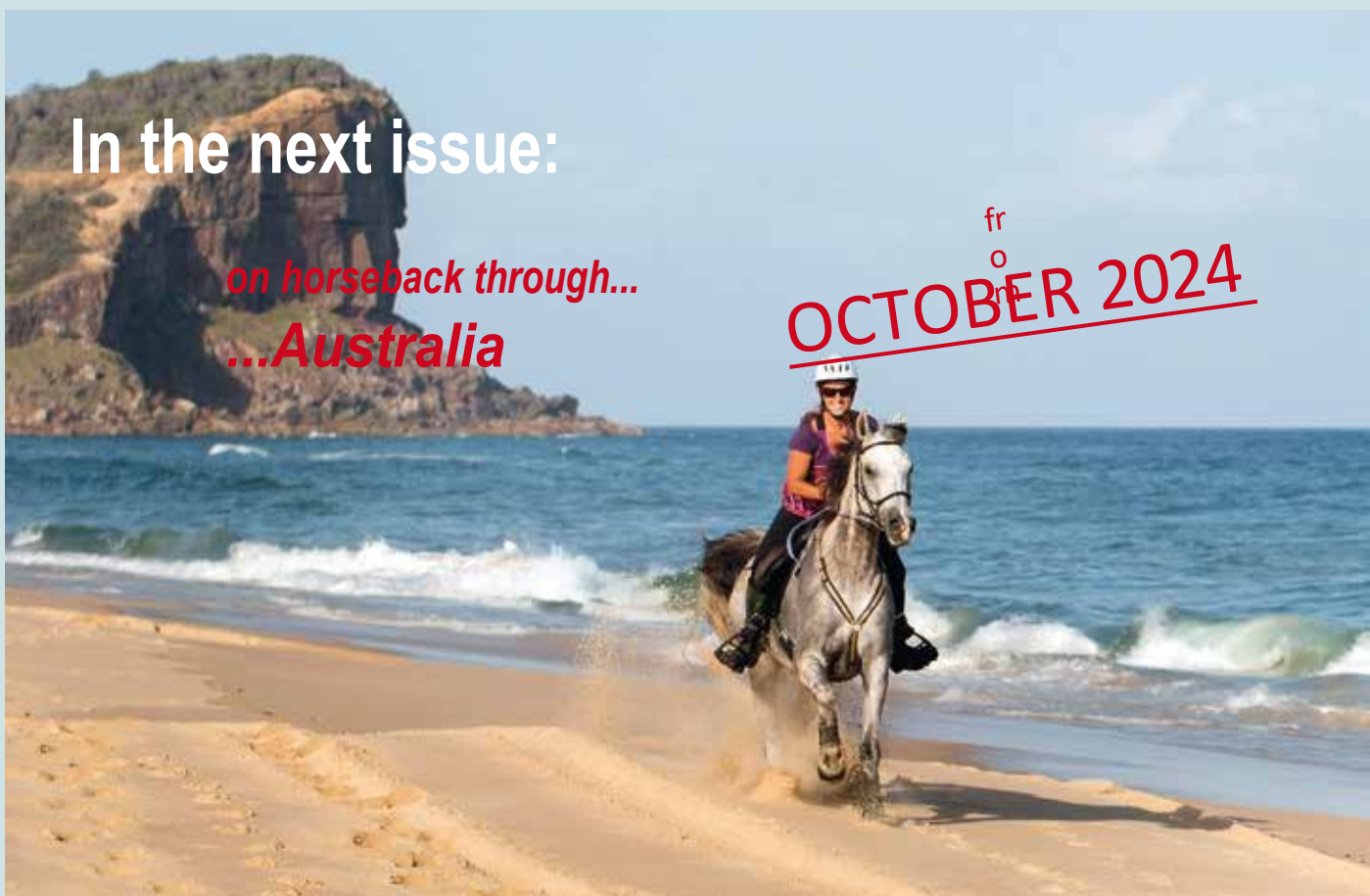
These works contain the lifeblood and lifestyle of the authors.



In the next issue:

on horseback through...
...**Australia**

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Subject to change without notice

...**Zimbabwe**



...**Crete**



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