



EDITORIAL 2/2024

# EQUITOUR

*The world through horses' ears*

***Riding holidays through***

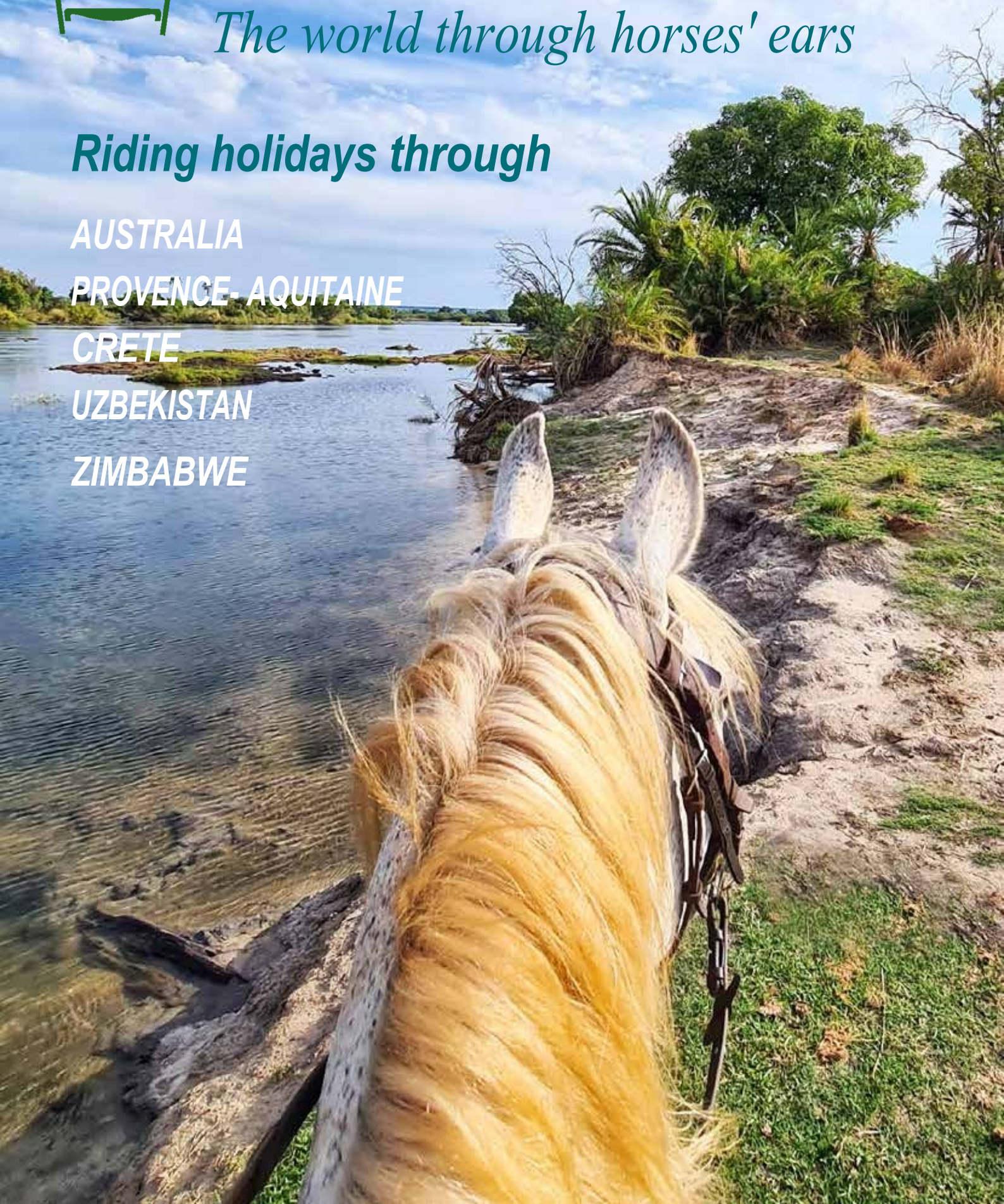
**AUSTRALIA**

**PROVENCE- AQUITAINE**

**CRETE**

**UZBEKISTAN**

**ZIMBABWE**





Not an hour is wasted that is  
spent in the saddle

*Winston Churchill*











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The long journey home



Naomi touring horse



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# EQUITOUR

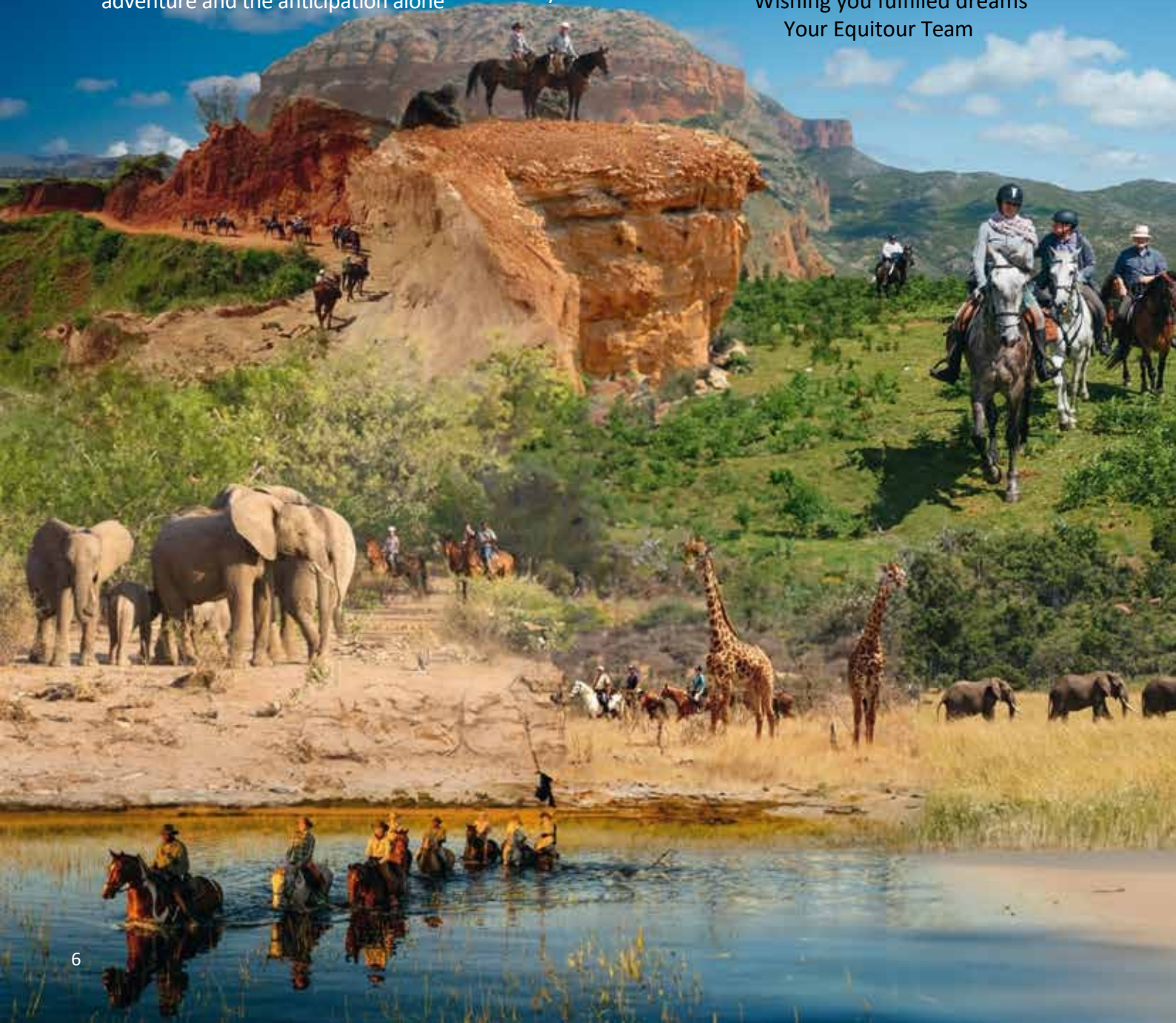
## Riding Holidays

# The whole world on horseback

Dear ,

Countries and landscapes of all kinds await you in the new issue. The long journey to Australia is rewarded with varied rides and chilled-out people. Exotic culture and unspoilt nature will enchant you in Uzbekistan. In Zimbabwe, you will ride on safari, experience African big game up close and personal and the natural power of the famous Victoria Falls. If you don't want to go quite so far away, you will find your equestrian paradise in the south of France or on Crete. Book your personalised riding adventure and the anticipation alone will make you feel exhilarated.

Wishing you fulfilled dreams  
Your Equitour Team





# EQUITOUR on the web

## Always up to date - everything at a click:

Photos:  
private

### Travelogues

Press reports and testimonials from all over the world from Equitour product managers and customers. You can find the reports on the website under the respective programme or under "Info".  
[www.equitour.com/community.htm](http://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 constantly discovering new riding holidays for you all over the world, from Mallorca to Georgia.  
[www.equitour.com/new.htm](http://www.equitour.com/new.htm)

### Premium travel

"Once in a " is the motto of the selected Equitour riding programmes that you should not miss out on! From the Horse Drive to the riding safari in the Masai Mara...  
[www.equitour.com/premium.htm](http://www.equitour.com/premium.htm)

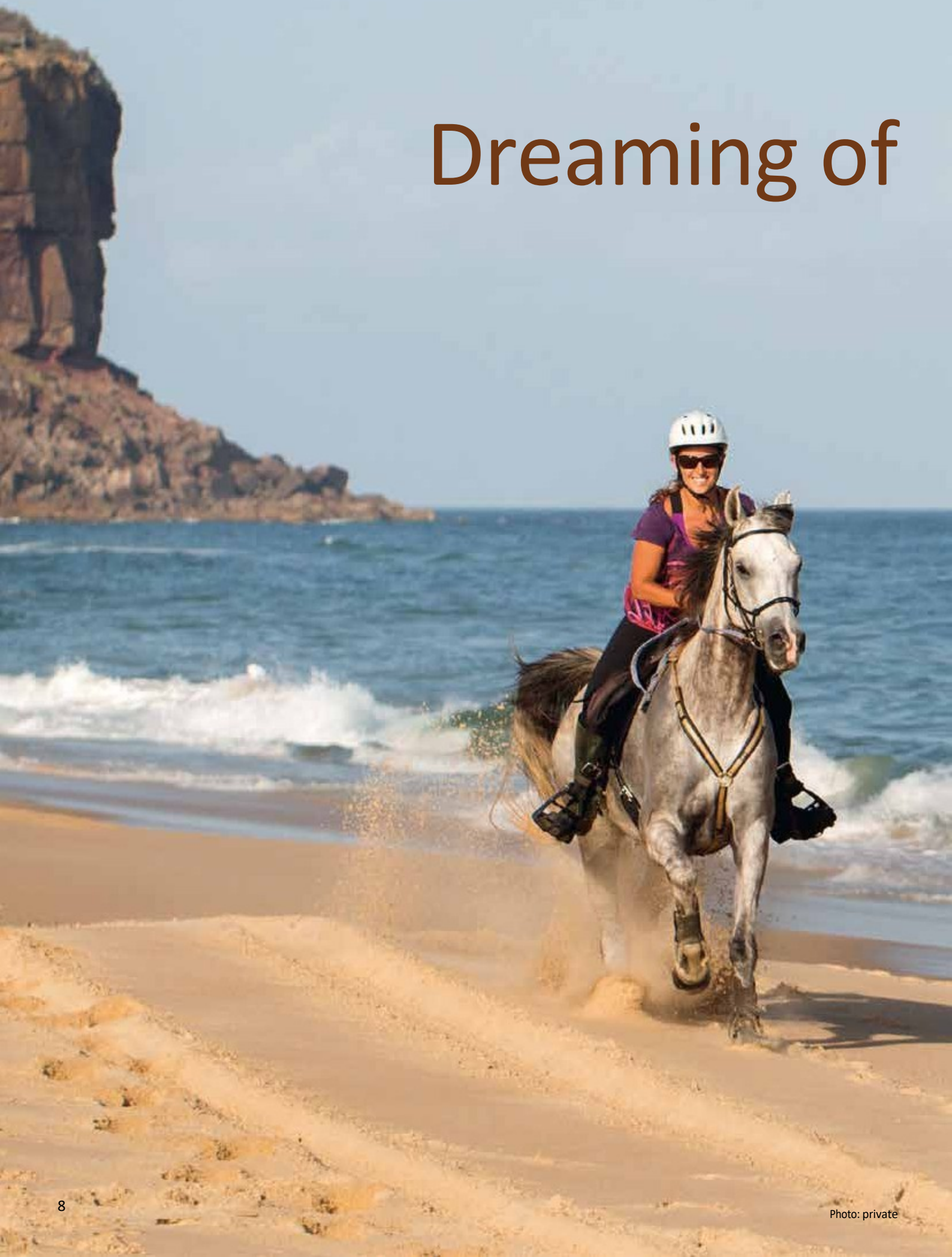
### Newsletter

Stay up to date with our monthly newsletter: New trips, trade fair appearances, last minute, specials, prize games and much more.  
Scan QR code to register





# Dreaming of





# Australia



## Down Under

Australia! The very word elicits a sigh from many. The continent at the other end of the world is known awakening longings and fulfilling dreams.





# Travelogue Australia:

## Comboyne plateau and

Beach, mountains, rainforest and outback  
- Julia Wies discovers the faces of  
Australia on star rides in New South  
Wales.

South of Port Macquarie, I turn inland and reach the farm a quarter of an hour later. The hostess Kathy and her dogs greet me warmly, and I immediately feel welcome here! I am impressed: a short path leads the stables, horses graze in the pastures, green lawns in front of a beautiful farmhouse with a terrace, Water lily pond and pool. The house offers sweeping views of the plain and the nearby Comboyne mountain. The house has a beautiful living room with a sitting area, dining area and the rooms leading off. After a tour of the house and farm, I have dinner with a glass of wine before relaxing bed.

Fun in the river



"Flight" over the beach





# Beach ride

This morning starts with a delicious breakfast: yoghurt, muesli, fresh fruit, toast, cheese, jam, Nutella and the Vegemite, a salty, spicy spread so popular in Australia, are ready and waiting alongside juice, tea and coffee. Then it's finally time for the horses: While a small group of "pensioners" enjoy their life in the pasture, we go to the riding horses. I am given the thoroughbred Arabian Jimmy, a beautiful grey horse with a fantastic gallop. We saddle the horses and ride off towards the rainforest.

Wider paths alternate with winding tracks. At the beginning, we follow an old railway line, parts of which still preserved. Huge trees, impressive plants and termite mounds that look like stranded UFOs form the backdrop for today's ride. A relaxed walking phase to warm up is followed by trotting and wonderfully long cantering sections. The Arabian horses are just as happy as their riders!

During the lunch break, we the saddlebag picnic we brought with us. The dense canopy of the forest protects us from the light drizzle.

As we ride on through the forest, our eyes the treetops - unfortunately in vain - for koalas. A few gallops later, after about five and a half hours, we reach the "Vinery" - our riding destination today.

Max, the helping neighbour (and a neighbour in Australia can be someone who lives tens of kilometres away) is already waiting for us. The horses are looked after and given hay and relaxation while we get a taste of Australian wines and some cheese. An enjoyable end to this fantastic ride. Well rested, we load the horses and return to the farm by car. We have dinner today in a typical Australian pub, where burgers are just one of the specialities.



In the outback



Visit to the winery, under a magnificently blossoming rosewood tree



In the middle of the  
Australian rainforest



For the beach ride on the second day, it's time to get up a little earlier and load the horses, as we are travelling just under forty minutes towards the beach - only a short journey for our hosts. We saddle the horses, mount up and after a few minutes of riding we reach a real dream beach.

Seven kilometres of the finest sand, crystal-clear sea and hardly a person in sight. That's no wonder, because there are so many beaches in Australia that they rarely crowd. The ground is firm, and after a bit of trotting we let the wind carry us in long gallops around noses. At the end of the beach, we meet some swimmers and surfers who are presumably coming from the nearby campsite.

Here our horses get a well-deserved break and we riders fortify ourselves with a saddlebag picnic. On the advice of Kathy Lee looking for kangaroos, sometimes you see some

at the campsite, but unfortunately they are hiding today. Surrounded by blue skies and glittering sea, we walk back along the seven kilometres of beach, again with extended gallops on eager horses. To top it all off, a group of dolphins appear next to us and accompany us for the last stretch. This is the perfect day! The horses are unsaddled and loaded, we riders have a coffee, then we head back towards the farm. On the way, we stop at a pelican spot and watch the majestic birds.





A delicious lunch of salad, olives, bread and cheese awaits us at the farm, and in the afternoon I relax by the pool and on the terrace.

Unfortunately, after this short stay of just four days, it's time me to say goodbye again. I would have loved to have stayed the whole week and done the rides in the surrounding area and on the Comboyne Plateau, from where you have an all-round panoramic view, but another holiday programme awaits me. In the evening, while enjoying a sundowner on the terrace, I spot a wallaby that is happily mating with the horses. We are served a dinner of Thai curry and rice and round off evening with a good glass of wine.

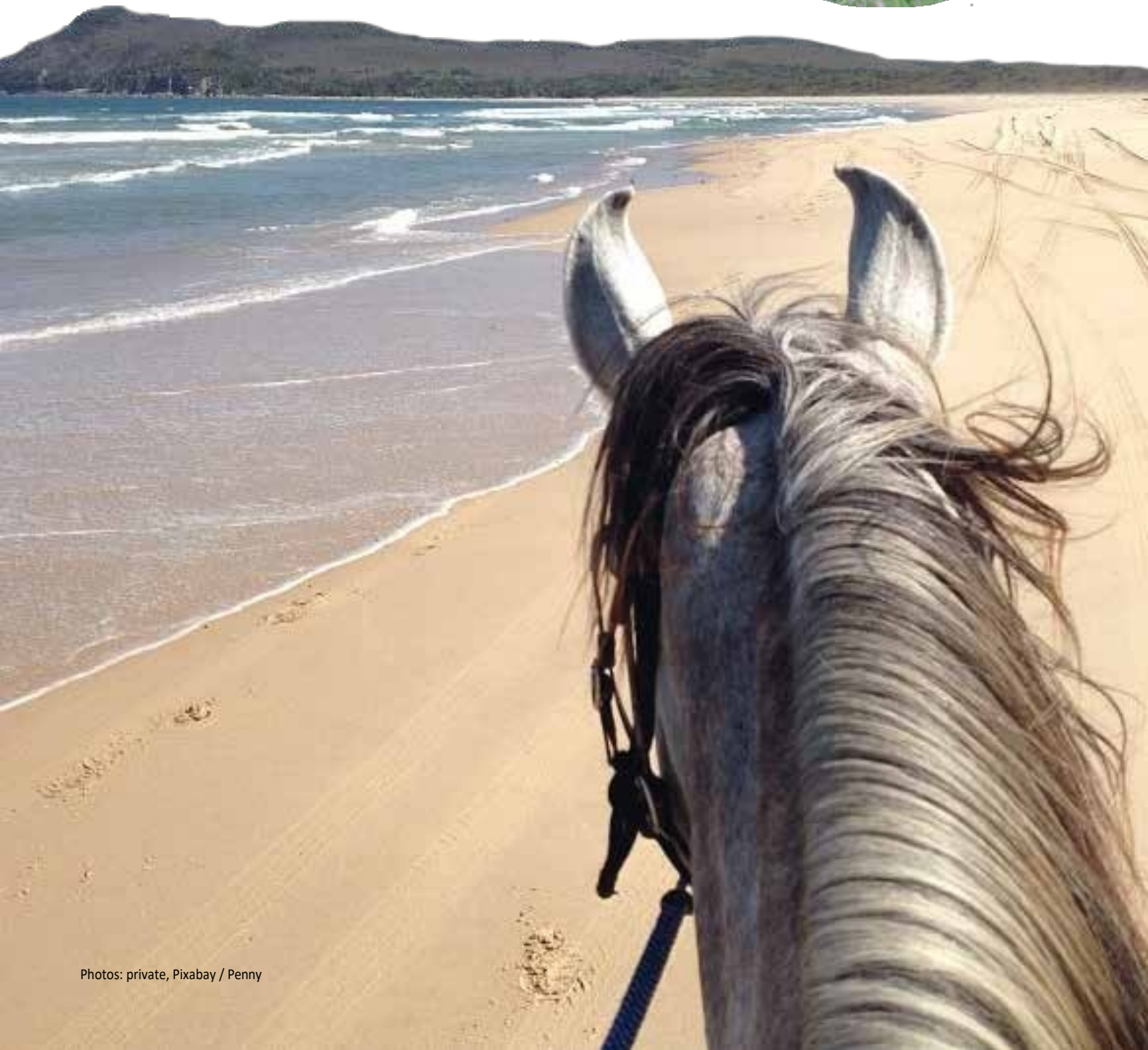
Kathy offers a familiar programme and, with her warmth and her rideable Arabians, is a must for advanced riders Down Under. The next morning comes all too quickly, and then it's time say goodbye for good: With the I hire a car and drive to Sydney, which four to five hours away, a stone's throw for Australians.

Thank you Jimmy for the great rides, thank you Kathy for your hospitality and your incredible

Energy and organisation - I will miss you!

Julia Wies

[www.equitour.com/it-aurt01.htm](http://www.equitour.com/it-aurt01.htm)





# Australia

## The time-out paradise

Sabbatical year, dream holiday, emigration destination - Australia is a place of longing and a lifelong dream that is worth the long journey.

Modern metropolises, endless expanses, unique flora and fauna - these are just some of the facets of Down Under. Anyone arriving here is immediately captivated by the relaxed joie de vivre of the "Aussies". One reason for this is certainly the small population - at just 26 million, the fifth continent has fewer inhabitants than megacities such as Tokyo or Shanghai. However, the population is mainly concentrated in the coastal regions, especially in the south-east. But even in the major metropolises of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, visitors are greeted by the friendly serenity of the Aussies.

Once you leave the metropolitan regions, you quickly reach wild, open country. Australia has the most national parks in the world, more than 500 in total. They serve to protect the environment and nature, which is a top priority in Australia, but also to preserve the Aboriginal culture, whose history is preserved in rock and cave paintings and who use the parks for spiritual ceremonies.

One of the most famous protected areas is the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park with the unique Uluru island mountain, also as Ayers Rock. The natural monument is located in the centre of the continent and has great spiritual significance for the indigenous people. The largest park is Kakadu National Park in Northern Territory. Mountains, rainforests and wetlands are home to an enormous variety of species. You can see giant saltwater crocodiles, several species of kangaroo and 280 species of bird. Australia's highest mountain, the 2228 metre high Mount Kosciuszko, is part of the Snowy Mountains, which are located in the Kosciuszko National Park and represent Australia's winter sports region.

Riding, discovering, enjoying - you should definitely make time for Australia - and not just because of the long journey. If you want to combine your stay in Australia with a riding holiday, you can explore the beaches and forests on star rides with Equitour on the Comboyne Plateau.

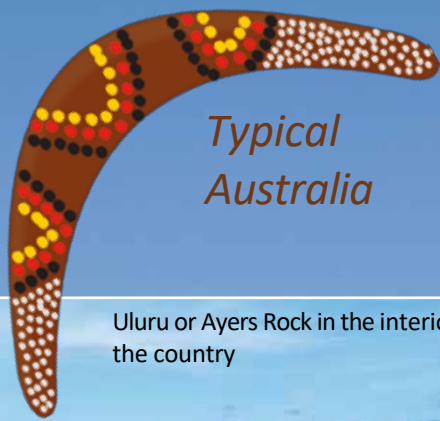
In the Australian rainforest



Bizarre coastal landscape

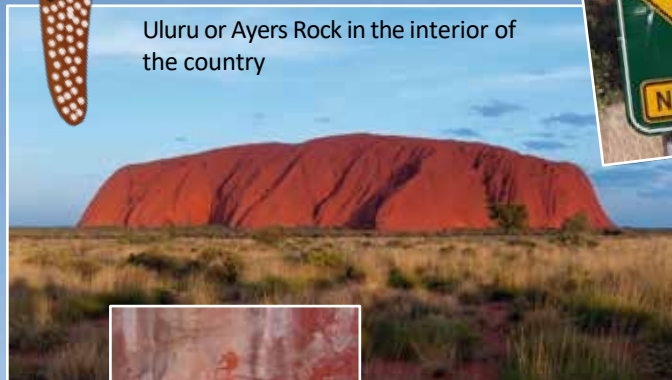






*Typical  
Australia*

Uluru or Ayers Rock in the interior of  
the country



Rock drawing of the  
Aborigines



Jumping kangaroo

Cuddly koala



Salt water crocodile in Kakadu National Park



Sydney's landmark: the Opera House



## EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

If you want to combine your stay in Australia with a riding holiday, you can explore the beaches and forests with Equitour on the Comboyne Plateau on star rides, which take all year round in the temperate climate zone in New South Wales. Sydney, Australia's most beautiful and most visited city, is also located in New South Wales. A visit there is always worthwhile.

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

## Country info Australia



Size: 7 688 287 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 25.8 million

Capital: Canberra Language:  
English

Religion: Predominantly Christian

Currency: Australian dollar

Climate: From tropical in the north to temperate in  
the south

Best time to visit: All year round



# Equestrian Australia

Although horses first came Down Under with the Europeans, they found the purest paradise here with vast steppes and hardly any threatening predators. Today, it is impossible to imagine the fifth continent without horse breeding and equestrian sport. The country has established its own very successful horse breeding programme. Descendants of feral working horses roam the deserted areas, but not to the delight of conservationists, as horses are displacing indigenous wild animals.

Visitors with an affinity for horses nevertheless enjoy the sight of the wild herds.

This is Australia an inexhaustible holiday destination for riders and horse lovers.



## Australian Stockhorse



"A Breed for every Need" is what Aussies call the Australian Stockhorse. This means "a breed for every need". Stock horses - similar to the American Quarter Horses - were to work the cattle herds.

They have just as much cow sense, but are perhaps even more versatile, because the Australian Stockhorse is the breed for the entire range of equestrian sports in Australia. Dressage, show jumping, eventing, racing, polo and the working disciplines - stockhorses excel in all areas. They are just as popular as leisure and trail horses. "A Breed for every Need."

## Polocrosse

A fast-paced team game played on horseback. The term is a combination of polo and lacrosse. Polocrosse originates from Australia. The sport is still relatively unknown, although it already widespread throughout the world.



## Off into nature

Every type of equestrian sport can be found in Australia, both competitively and recreationally. Riding in endless expanses and through exotic natural landscapes gladdens the hearts of true adventure riders more than anything else.





## Waler



The name goes back to the origin of New South Wales. Basically, they are all Whalers, as this is where the ancestors of all Australian horses reached the continent. These included thoroughbreds, Arabians, African Cape horses, Shires and Clydesdales. They gave rise to Australia's powerful working horse, the Waler. The breed became famous as a cavalry horse during the First World War. Thousands of Whalers were shipped to Egypt and Turkey, where their courage, endurance and frugality proved their worth in the hot desert climate. Legends have grown up around these brave horses. Today, Waler horses are reliable sport, leisure and work horses.

## Brumby



Up to one million wild horses live in Australia, more than in any other country. Most of them live in the Northern Territory. In the more densely populated south-east, the wild herds are rather unwelcome.

The origin of the term "Brumby" is not certain. An early settler, Sergeant James Brumby, set horses free and could be the namesake. However, the Aboriginal word "baroomby" for "wild" could also be the origin. Today, Brumby generally stands for a wild man. This can also be a daring person.

## Tom Curtain - Horse trainer and entertainer

What the cowboy is in America, the stockman is in Australia. And Tom Curtain from the small town of Katherine is just such a man. Tom not only specialises in horses, but also cattle, goats and dogs. In his show, he demonstrates the gentle training of horses, the training of cattle dogs and cattle herding. With his stallion "Acres of Ra" and a group of Brahman cattle, he demonstrates "campdrafting", Australian cutting. Camp means field, draft means to pull out. The bay puts his ears back and doesn't let a calf past.

Tom's dogs drive the herd together and in any direction Tom wishes. They know no fear. Thanks to their speed, they can dodge angry cows - and pinch their legs the next moment.

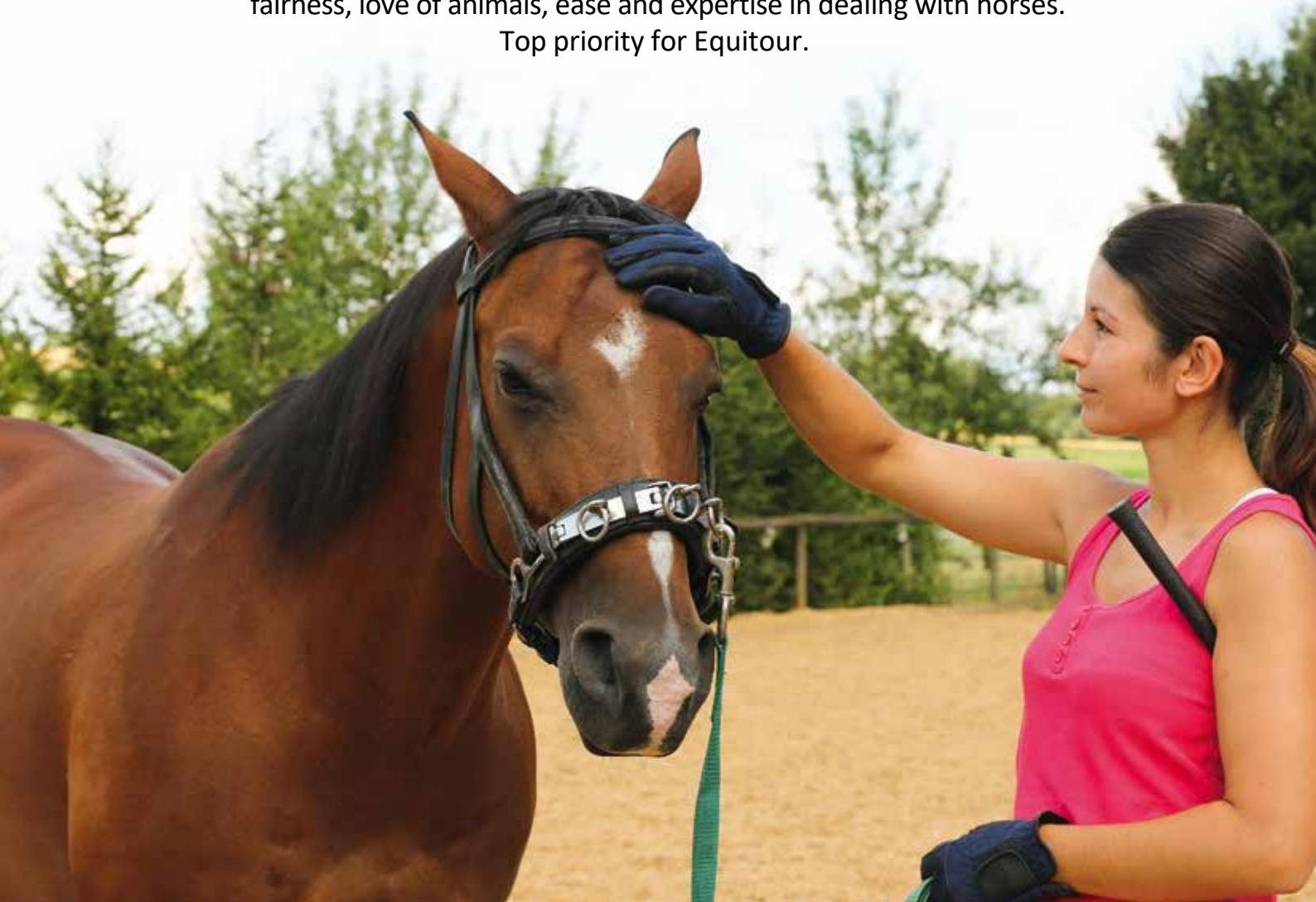
Tom's love is not just for animals, but also for music. At the end of his performance, Curtain picks up his guitar, sits on "Ra" and belts out country hits at full gallop.





# What is horsemanship?

Horsemanship - a word that cannot be translated. The term combines fairness, love of animals, ease and expertise in dealing with horses. Top priority for Equitour.



Training a horse with pressure and coercion leads to frustration and failure on both sides. Only those who have the inner attitude of genuine horsemanship can be truly happy with their horse. First and foremost, this means understanding the nature of the horse and the individual character of each horse. Before one's own wishes and demands come into play, true horse lovers work for the satisfaction of the horse in terms of husbandry, utilisation and training.

The term natural horsemanship stands for gentle and species-appropriate training. This type of training is based on natural behaviour in a herd. What distinguishes high-ranking horses from low-ranking horses? High-ranking horses are able to move lower-ranking horses. Not so much through dominance, but above all through trust and respect. Young and lower-ranking animals feel safe and secure in the presence of the lead mare and lead stallion and accept their leadership role in return.

Trust and respect are also the basis of natural horsemanship. A good trainer takes on the role of herd leader.

His goal also is to move the horse. He studies communication between horses and is guided by posture, facial expressions and behaviour in the herd. He meets the young horse without fear, steadfast, friendly and non-violent like a leader. If the young horse reacts with disinterest, avoidance or resistance, he exerts well-dosed pressure until the young horse turns to him attentively and reacts to his signals. If the horse shows the desired reaction, it is rewarded, and the most natural reward is a break. The lead stallion does the same. If a young horse rebels, it is usually to exert pressure on the youngster simply by being present. If the youngster complies, he is left alone and the stress is reduced. Praise in the form of stroking or friendly words does not occur in nature, but can be very beneficial in human-horse communication.

There is more to horsemanship than horse training. Keeping horses in a species-appropriate manner makes a decisive contribution to successful and enjoyable togetherness. Only a horse that can live relaxed and content according to its nature is also relaxed and content in the presence of humans. Horses that spend twenty hours or more a day alone in a box,



not only have to release pent-up kinetic energy before work, they also tend to be "peepy" as they have to process the many visual and acoustic stimuli outside their own four walls. Humans have to work much harder to gain the horse's co-operation. This can lead to frustration, disappointment, failure and, last but not least, fear on both sides. Quite apart from this, horses that spend a lot of time outside in the fresh air, exercise and changing sensory impressions, are physically and mentally healthier.

Even if the idea of horsemanship comes from the USA, it is like the different riding styles: The decisive factor is the implementation. So you can learn something all over the world

and meet great horse people. Even if the handling sometimes rough at first glance, it is often more natural and clearer for the horses, so that they are happier. Treats and bandages are not necessary. The nature of horses must be respected, humanising them is not species-appropriate

You can learn about horsemanship not only on the US ranches, but actually on all good riding holidays, because if you want to be successful for many years, you have to be a good horseman. However, several holiday programmes also offer special horsemanship courses that promote ease of interaction.

That is also  
horsemanship:  
Let horses be horses

Communication through body language, perfectly demonstrated at the equestrian hotel Tarifa



Trust and respect: the basis of Natural Horsemanship, and the guiding principle in horse handling at the riding centre in Sardinia



## EQUITOUR Horsemanship programmes:



Switzerland, Graubünden  
Horsemanship with Paint Horses  
[www.equitour.com/pacsta.htm](http://www.equitour.com/pacsta.htm)

Sardinia, Costa Smeralda  
[www.equitour.com/samsta.htm](http://www.equitour.com/samsta.htm)

Spain, Tarifa equestrian hotel  
[www.equitour.com/tarsta.htm](http://www.equitour.com/tarsta.htm)

Spain, Cabo de Gata  
[www.equitour.com/nevsta.htm](http://www.equitour.com/nevsta.htm)

Ireland, County Galway  
[www.equitour.com/srcsta.htm](http://www.equitour.com/srcsta.htm)

Horsemanship comes from the USA and is practised on many ranches that breed horses. Guests can watch and learn during horse training.





# Living like God

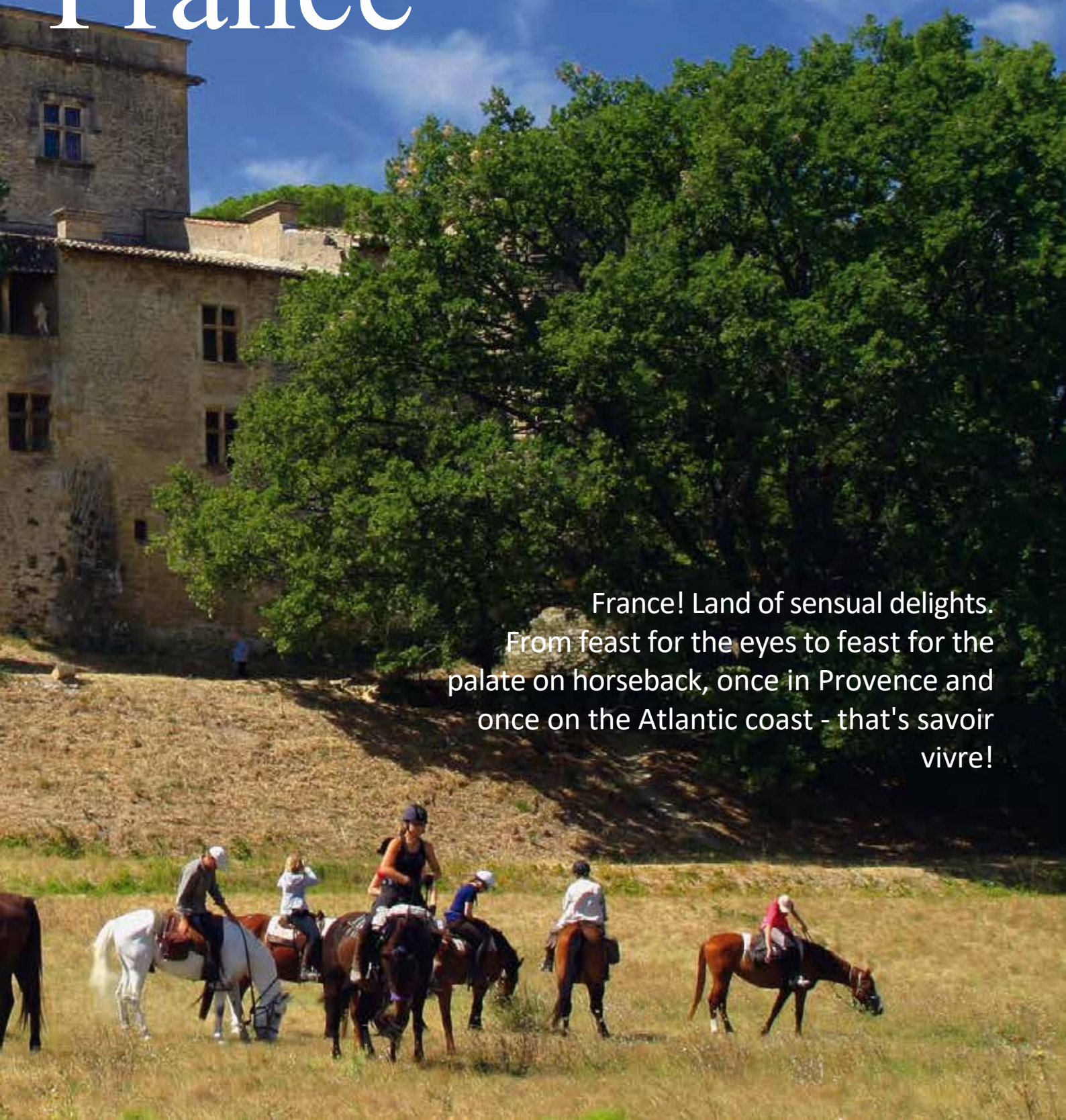




# Provence and Aquitaine in the south of France



France! Land of sensual delights.  
From feast for the eyes to feast for the  
palate on horseback, once in Provence and  
once on the Atlantic coast - that's savoir  
vivre!





## Travelogue Provence

# Riding tour to the lavender blossom

To the precious memories, Julia Frey records the enchanting sensory impressions of her riding tour through Provence in her diary.



Gorse - a bright contrast to lavender

*Sunday, 23.06.*

A great start to the day - sunshine, a steel-blue sky and a delicious brunch - living like God in France! The day before our riding adventure, my friend Simone and I get a taste of southern flair in Aix-en-Provence. In the evening, farm owner Didier picks us up and takes us to the riding centre in Lauris. The farm is surrounded by extensive vineyards and horse paddocks with a view of the Luberon mountains. We get to know our fellow riders and the team over an aperitif at the bar. Paul, Fifi and Bamboleo will accompany us. Paul is a certified riding guide, Fifi drives the support vehicle and Bamboleo is Paul's two-month-old puppy. At dinner, we will be able to savour French delicacies: Tomato mozzarella, lamb steak, cheese platter and the finest chocolate cake with vanilla sauce.



French delicacies





View from the Plateau de Claparèdes



*Monday, 24.06.*

After the French breakfast, we fetch the horses from the paddock. I am assigned a beautiful Hispano-Arabian mare called Gypsy. She proves to be as sure-footed as a mountain goat with a friendly character and Arabian temperament. The powerful mistral wind makes both two- and four-legged friends a little nervous at first, but everyone quickly calms down and we ride through a wild and romantic gorge lined with white limestone cliffs and bright yellow broom. The route climbs steeply through dense holm oak forests to the Claparèdes plateau. After the climb, we enjoy the fantastic view over the Luberon. Fifi brings cheese, quiche and steaks, wine, coffee and dessert for lunch - we will hardly lose any weight on this tour. The horses are fed with concentrated feed and manage the three-hour afternoon stage with ease. We reach the tour's namesake - lavender fields in purple bloom.

An inviting gîte de charme - as holiday homes with special charm are called - is our destination for the night: a natural stone house from the 17th century, nestled against the rock face like a swallow's nest. After a magnificent evening meal, we retire to our stylish rooms.



Colorado de Rustrel -  
the Provençal Wild West

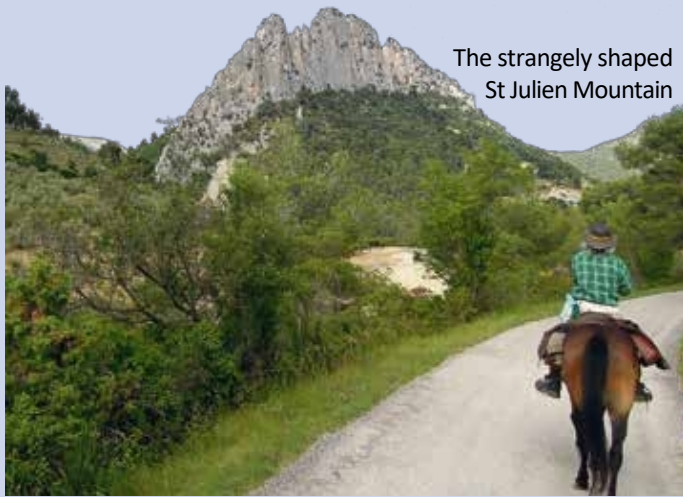
*Tuesday, 25.06.*

Departure around ten o'clock. The three-and-a-half-hour morning ride takes us along narrow paths through dense undergrowth - for the riders, it's a case of pulling in their heads and knees. We ride through the picturesque village of Saignon, where we water our horses at the village fountain. Passing lush flowering gardens, we ride downhill through small alleyways and old cobbled Roman roads into the valley of Apt. Our horses then clamber steeply up the Vaucluse mountain through fragrant pine and pine forests. A panoramic path leads us along the slope above the Colorado de Rustrel: time and again, the gorse bushes a view of the ochre-coloured canyon and the mountain village of Caseneuve.

After lunch, a path leads us gently down into the valley. The picture-book village of Simiane la Rotonde with its medieval fortress lies ahead of us. Our destination for the day is the Arabian stud farm "La Fontaine", which offers first-class accommodation for both us and our horses. While we enjoy another sumptuous evening meal, the horses munch on first-class hay in their corrals.







The strangely shaped  
St Julien Mountain



Enchanting: the scent and sight of lavender



Delicacies from Fifi's vehicle



Typical Provence: the rustic stone houses



In front of the Sainte Sixte chapel near  
Eygalières 24



*Wednesday, 26.06.*

In the morning, we visit the picturesque mountain village of Simiane la Rotonde. The medieval stone houses, the church and the castle take us back in time. Back at the stud farm, we saddle up our horses and ride back to Simiane la Rotonde across flower meadows and fields. The sound of hooves echoes through the narrow lanes. Finally we reach shimmering reddish forest paths on which we trot and canter. We ride through more lavender fields to the Albion plateau. In the afternoon we ride again through lavender fields and picturesque chestnut forests with beautiful canter paths to St. Trinit, where we reach our accommodation - again in an equestrian centre.

After a refreshing dip in the pool, an aperitif and a hot shower, dinner is served in the rustic walls of the country estate. Unnoticed, little Bamboleo steals my flip-flops from under the table.

*Thursday, 27.06.*

Sunshine and no wind, absolute peace and quiet, interrupted only by the chirping of crickets. After breakfast, a visit to Sault, another old village, is on the programme. The "capital of lavender" enchants with its narrow alleyways, old plane trees, in the shade of which men play the popular game of pétanque, and panoramic views over the surrounding lavender fields. You can buy all kinds of lavender products here: Lavender honey, scented sachets, lavender soap, oil, lotion, tea, sweets, etc. On the way back to the stud farm, the vehicle smells like an entire lavender field. We ride for two hours in the morning until we stop for a picnic lunch in the forest. After the break, we ride to Aurel, another picturesque mountain village. We lead our horses through the steep village streets.

A lush splendour of flowers accompanies us as we ride on: red poppies, blue cornflowers, daisies and more. Colourful butterflies buzz around the floral splendour. Then the path becomes steeper and more adventurous. Passing a gorge with a ruined castle, the trail leads through the forest and over the mountains. The mountain villages visited so far are surpassed by Montbrun-les-Bains, which is considered one of the most beautiful villages in France. After a further climb, we reach our hostel, situated in a secluded spot in the mountains and with the most beautiful paddock I have ever seen - although the horses are less impressed by the panorama - they prefer to graze on the lush grass.

*Friday, 28.06.*

The morning is exceptionally cool and cloudy. We lead the horses a while, past a large herd of sheep and goats, before climbing up and riding to the other side of the mountain. The panorama there is fantastic: Mont Ventoux - the giant of Provence. We approached the almost 2000 metre high mountain in circles. Now it before us like a wall. Through the wild and romantic shrub landscape of the Garigue with the typical herbs of Provence such as thyme, sage, lavender and rosemary, as well as dense oak forests, we follow stony paths steeply uphill and downhill through the Luberon mountains. Snake eagles circle above us. The horses' fitness and sure-footedness are impressively demonstrated today. We cross two more charming mountain villages, Savoillans and the picturesque Brantes. Over a mountain ridge we reach a secluded valley and follow the path, always with a view of Mont Ventoux. Fifi is waiting for us with a picnic lunch in a cosy spot with a view of a mountain chapel and the Ventoux massif. We quench our thirst with

cold beer and fortify ourselves with delicacies for the rest of this long, challenging day in the saddle and on foot. In the afternoon, the last riding stage takes us once again through spectacular scenery, past a mountain monastery and through the village of Plaisians to the mighty rocky ridge of La Nible, whose rugged, curved shape is reminiscent of an armoured dinosaur back. In the small town of Buis-les-Baronies, we head for a large car park and the horses one last time. Then our horses are loaded and taken back to the riding centre. We riders follow in the minibus. What a pleasure it is to bring the horses back to their home paddock.

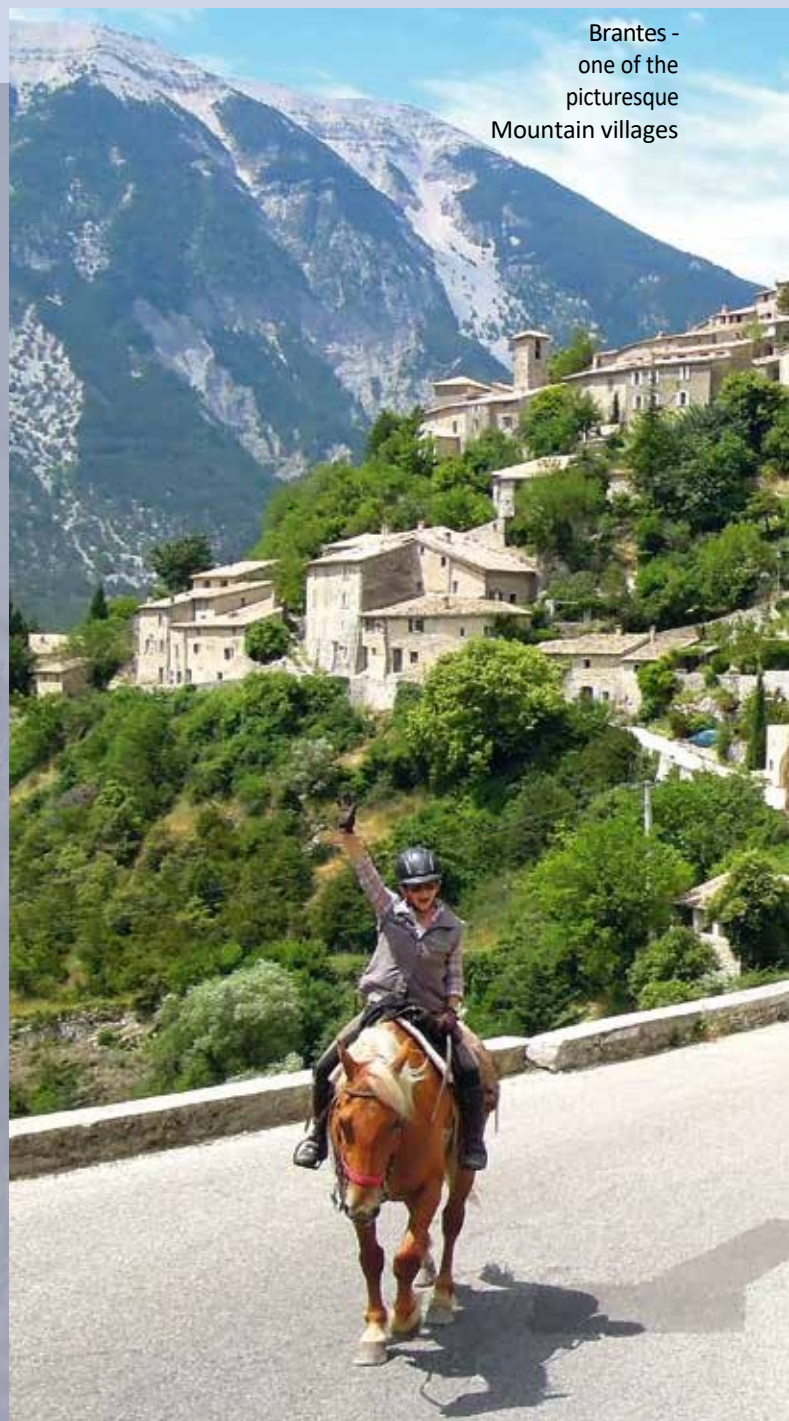
*Saturday, 29.06.*

After breakfast, it's time say goodbye. With lavender in our luggage and colourful impressions of this riding adventure, we set off on our journey home. It was certainly not our last riding tour in Provence!

Julia

Frey

[www.equitour.com/pro007.htm](http://www.equitour.com/pro007.htm)



Brantes -  
one of the  
picturesque  
Mountain villages



Travelogue Aquitaine

# Equestrian paradise on the Atlantic coast



As an experienced rider, Jessica Kiefer accompanies her niece, who is a beginner, to a farm on the French Atlantic coast, where riding enthusiasts of all levels get their money's worth.

If you just want to relax or let your horse carry you for a walk, you've come to the wrong place. Good, sporty riding is the order of the day, and a lot is demanded of horses and riders. The focus is on qualified riding lessons. The lesson lasts two hours and is held either in the riding arena or in the field. Riding instructor Michel is not easy to please, but everyone is guaranteed to learn something new. Guests can relax with a massage, yoga or in the pool.

The journey from Bordeaux airport to the riding centre takes around two hours. We pass through the Landes de Gascogne nature park, which is characterised by extensive pine forests and a few lakes. Once we arrive at the farm, we check into our room by the pool, then it's time to get to know all the guests. Groups are divided up according to riding experience and requirements. There is a beginners' course, a course for young people who have booked jumping lessons and beach rides and are also learning English. There is also a beginners' group and an intermediate group. The latter primarily go off-road, but here too, riders hone their riding skills.

Out of consideration for my fourteen-year-old niece, I first ride in the beginners' course. It's very interesting after thirty years of riding experience. watching the first exercises in the arena in the morning, I head out into the countryside in the afternoon. Right from the start, the emphasis on the riders' independence. The horses are taken from a herd in a huge paddock and then prepared independently. Balance at the trot is practised on the very first ride. The riding instructor explains clearly what is and lets each individual trot past the group, stop, ride on, etc. The horses trot lightly and are ridden in a light seat. The horses are absolutely reliable. Each of the horses, from beginners to trail horses, can be ridden independently. There is no cantering in the group. I also enjoy the special rides with numerous exercises. I ride various French trotters, which quite big but great to ride. We enjoy the beautiful countryside with flowering heather, pine trees and soft sandy paths - perfect riding terrain.





Lessons in correct riding...



... and in show jumping



Photos: Frank Molina,  
private

Cosy rest for two- and four-legged friends



Ride through pine forests



Feel-good accommodation



After three days of accompanying the beginners' rides in the pine forest, I the youngsters and intermediates on the beach ride on the fourth day.

The horses are loaded and after a twenty-minute ride we reach a car park in the pine forest. From here we ride towards the Atlantic. I have the fourth horse for today, a French trotter like the previous ones. His name Fun doesn't promise too much: the large-framed bay gelding is a keen rider, but still easy to control. Everyone enjoys the brisk gallops across the sandy beach until return to the car park via a narrow, winding forest path.

The next day I take a break and watch the beginners, who are really challenged on the riding arena in two times two hours. They fetch their horses from the paddock themselves and saddle them up. With a little help, everything fits and everyone sits on their horses, but not everyone on the right one! One rider has got the wrong one, namely a much younger horse called Fevrier. He is bursting with power and is actually a trail horse, not a beginner's horse. There is a lot of laughter, but Michel orders the rider on the wrong horse to ride the nine-year-old. It works surprisingly well and the rider keeps the gelding until the end. My niece is also allowed to ride a younger, rather littler chestnut, which she quickly to her heart.

Together with the intermediate riders, the beginners finish with a day's ride to the beach, where they their first gallop on the beach. It takes them about two hours to reach the equestrian beach through the idyllic pine forest and sandy dunes. We advanced riders take the trailer again and use the time we have gained for a few lively beach gallops. At lunchtime we take the minibus to the pick-up point.

We stop at a picnic area on the riverbank, where the beginners take a break. We corral the horses and enjoy a delicious picnic with cheese, baguette, spread, cake and plenty of sunshine. The weather on the Atlantic is pleasant even in midsummer, usually only around 25 degrees, and in winter the location particularly good for intensive training, with an average temperature of 15 degrees Celsius.

Riding takes centre stage all week, and I'm very pleased with my niece's progress. She is also delighted with our holiday. I feel a bit like I used to at the pony farm, only the horses and riders are a lot bigger and the accommodation in the charming guest house offers a lot more amenities. We don't make much use of the pool and table tennis table, as the days are filled with eating, sleeping and riding. The youngsters are particularly challenged as, in addition to twice-daily riding training with Michel, they also have twice-daily English lessons with André, who is in no way inferior to Michel. But at least when they are riding they are clearly having fun, especially at the beach canter. The intermediates with the flexible riding week have a little more time to enjoy the pool and massages. On the day of departure, we take the farm's own e-bikes to the beach again - a great way to round off the day with a swim, collecting shells and lunch in the beach bar. The delicious French cuisine with salads, cheese platters, gratin, regional wine and delicious desserts from tarts to chocolate mousse is worth mentioning.

Conclusion: An all-round successful summer holiday with friendly people and lovely horses.

Jessica Kiefer

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





# South of France

## Between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean

South-east or south-west? Instead of choosing between the southern coastal regions of Provence and Aquitaine, you should definitely visit both provinces.

### Provence

The foothills of the Alps descend from the north-east to the south-west. The western side of Provence is lowland. The climate, the sea, the mountains, the cuisine, the wine, the history and the people - the treasures of Provence are inexhaustible. The danger of such a concentration of temptations is mass tourism - and there is a lot of it in many places in the region, especially along the coast with its famous resorts of Nice, Cannes and Saint Tropez. Things much quieter in the hinterland, in Haute Provence.

Depending on the season, the vibrant colours of the lavender fields, the broom bushes, the red poppies and the deep blue sky immerse the country in a symphony of colours that inspired Cézanne and van Gogh to create their most beautiful paintings. The scenery emphasises the charm of historic mountain villages with houses and streets dating back to Roman times and picturesque mountain villages.

Equitour takes riding enthusiasts to the most beautiful places in Provence. They ride along lonely mountain trails in the Luberon, climb up into Haute Provence and pass quaint mountain villages. Or you can take advantage of the lavender blossom season to ride across fragrant purple fields. There are also beach rides, and horse lovers love to visit the white horses and black bulls of the Camargue, while pink flamingos glide over their heads.

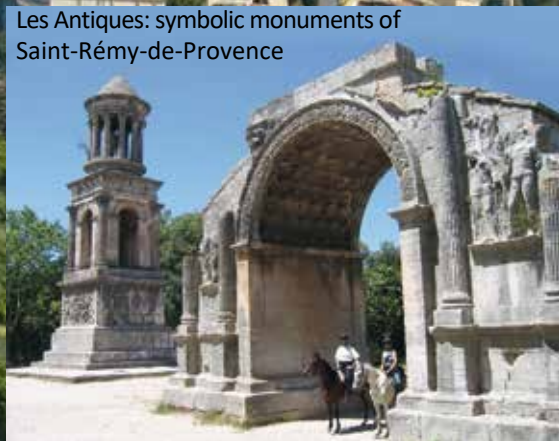
High-flyers on the beach of the Camargue



At dizzying heights in Haute-Provence



Les Antiques: symbolic monuments of Saint-Rémy-de-Provence





## Aquitaine

France's most south-westerly province is located between the Atlantic Ocean and the Pyrenees, offering every conceivable activity and relaxation on the beach and in the mountains, as well as historical and culinary highlights. Aquitaine borders Spa in the south. The Basque Country stretches across this border, which also characterises the people and culture in the French part. "I've been to France several times, but nowhere have I received such a friendly welcome from the French as in the Basque Country," enthuses a participant in the Pyrenees and Beach Trail from the Equitour programme about this region.

As the name of this programme suggests, the region extends as far as the Middle Pyrenees, which makes it even more attractive to tourists. You don't have to choose between the beach and the mountains.

Here you can have both. Of particular interest to riders is the forty kilometres of beach, which partly undeveloped for tourism but accessible to riders. Ideal conditions for long, undisturbed beach rides at any pace.

The Landes de Gascogne Nature Park with its river courses and sun-drenched pine and heath forests can be crossed on foot, by bike, by canoe and, of course, on horseback.

In the south-west of France, Equitour riding adventures for all tastes. Beaches, mountains, forests or even the well-kept The many riding centres are the backdrop for varied rides to suit every taste. In addition to the riding programme, visits to medieval towns, old castles, fine restaurants and fine sandy beaches make for lasting memories.

The whole of France is known for its culinary delights. The southern regions have specialities to offer. Famous dishes such as rata touille and bouillabaisse come from Provence. Nouvelle-Aquitaine is known for its Limousin dishes, fish and seafood, its abundance of fruit and vegetables and the famous Bordeaux red wine - the basis of the Bordelaise sauce.



## EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

Equitour customers can go on tour in Provence for five to twelve days. You will experience dream beaches, the mountains of the Luberon and the lavender blossom in spring. In the Camargue, you will see the famous grey horses and experience beach gallops.

The Atlantic coast offers even more of the latter. Here, Equitour offers riding programmes from the coast to the Pyrenees.

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



551 695 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 68 million Capital: Paris

Language: French

Religion: Predominantly Christianity

Currency: Euro

Climate: Mild winters in the south, hot and dry summers Best time to visit: All year round. Lavender blossom: Mid-June to mid-August



# TREC Sport

## Trail riding competition

If you were to turn a challenging trail ride into a competition, what would horse and rider have to be able to do? Well, like a good touring horse, they would have to be able to master all types of terrain, i.e. not just beautiful bridle paths, but also water crossings, mountain trails and bridges. They would have to find the right route - independently of apps and the internet - and they would have to be able to negotiate the occasional jump, and there would also have to be absolute trust between rider and horse. Without thorough training and cross-country experience, nothing would work.



Brave through the water





This competition actually exists. It is called TREC and originally comes from France. TREC stands for Techniques de Randonnée Equestre de Compétition, which translates as Trail Riding Techniques Competition.

The TREC test consists of three parts: an orientation ride, a rideability test and a cross-country test, which are held on two consecutive days. Riders can compete individually or in groups.

## DAY 1

### 1. Orienteering ride:

Using a map, stopwatch and compass, the participants have to cover a cross-country route of between 20 and 45 kilometres. Along the way, checkpoints monitor the riders' route and speed. It is not the fastest rider who gets the best score, but the one who comes closest to the ideal time. That's why the riders have to have an eye on their time along the way.

## DAY 2

### 2. Rideability test:

A topsy-turvy world! The participants have to cover a marked course of 150 metres as slowly as possible at a canter and as quickly as possible at a walk. This is where the dressage element comes into play.

Orientation with map and compass



### 3. Cross-country test

An off-road course of 2.5 to 5 kilometres in length is with natural obstacles and skill challenges. There are elements from the western trail, such as opening and closing the gate or the bridge. There are also water crossings, ditches, inclines and jumps over a hedge or a tree trunk. The standstill should not be underestimated, where the horse must stand still for 10 seconds. The rider is not allowed to intervene and must place the reins on the horse's neck.

All three tests must be completed with the same horse, which is examined by a vet several times in between. A TREC horse must be at least 6 years old and in good health. Otherwise, the sport is open to any breed. Size does not matter, as speed or high jumps are not important. All horses have the same chance. Obstacles such as "low hanging branches" are tackled on height at the withers. Riders may participate from the age of 16.

The TREC sport was created in France over thirty years ago with the aim of training and qualifying professional trail riding guides. Perhaps this is precisely why trail riding is so popular in France.

Part of the rideability test:  
Slow canter



Lesson "Low hanging branches"



Known from the western trail: the gate



Not so easy: standing still for ten seconds



Further information about Trec Sport can be found on the websites of the Trec Riding Associations:





# Island of





Crete



Photo: Yvonne Koall /  
yisway.de

# the Gods

Not only Greek gods, but also horsemen move in heavenly spheres  
when they climb Crete's mountains and a true paradise is  
revealed before them.





# Travelogue Crete

## Mountains, sea



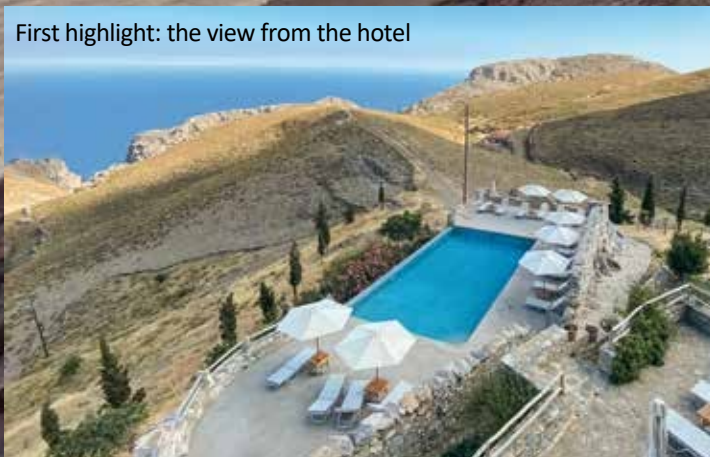
The magic of an ancient culture, comfortable accommodation, spectacular landscapes and lovable horses frame Jessica Kiefer's riding and pleasure week on Crete.

I am excited to be travelling to Crete with a friend, where we are enjoying a riding and gourmet holiday in a beautiful resort in the picturesque Asterousia Mountains. Our hosts Marcos and Popi have restored the huts of a small village and created a little holiday paradise. They spoil us with home-made specialities and the obligatory raki in the hotel's own restaurant. It is already dark when we arrive, so we can only enjoy the breathtaking view of the pool, the mountains and the deep blue sea the next morning.

A gusty wind is whistling around our ears and Marcos recommends that we take the planned trip to Tripiti Gorge by jeep rather than on horseback. So he takes us and two other guests down to the spectacular gorge, whose walls rise up to three hundred metres vertically. We cross the gorge on foot and arrive at an idyllic bay with fine black pebbles and crystal-clear, pleasantly warm water. After a refreshing dip in the water and a tasty After lunch at the beach bar, we head back to the hotel our first ride in the afternoon.

I am assigned a handsome chestnut called Kerapnos, which means "lightning". His pretty head and big eyes reveal his Arabian ancestry. Our riding guide Lea comes from Germany, so there are no language problems. But it is still stormy, which makes conversations difficult. Fortunately, the horses don't let themselves be disturbed and carry us along. fearlessly to the chapel, a good hour away. We are fascinated by the changing We enjoy the views over the rugged mountain and coastal landscape and are still delighted when we arrive back at the stable, somewhat dishevelled but safe and sound.

First highlight: the view from the hotel





# and myths



Even Kerapnos likes the view





Unfortunately, the weather forecast for the following day is no better. Marcos suggests that we drive to one of the Minoan archaeological sites. After all, Crete is the island of the gods and is known for its ancient history. The island was inhabited from around 3000 BC and the Minoans, named after the mythical king Minos, cultivated a highly developed culture, built palaces and water pipes, had one of the first courts and used their own script for legal texts. The Minoan inscriptions can be found in caves and ruins.

In the afternoon, we explore the resort grounds, which for kilometres down to the coast. Hundreds of sheep and goats are scattered around the farm, as well as around 60 chickens, three pigs, three small Cretan cows and a few cats. The small "guard dog" is more likely to be found on the sofa at the hotel reception. Fortunately, there are practically no predators on the island, so even the chickens are safe without a dog. Sometimes they spend the night with the horses, which are housed in boxes and an open stable with a large run. After the tour, we spend the time until dinner by the pool, where the wind is bearable.

The next morning there is only a gentle breeze. With the sun shining brightly, nothing stands in the way of an extended day's ride. The pace is rather calm with short trotting and cantering sections. As we ride over the first hilltop, our gaze falls on the vast Messara plain: wide open country with endless olive groves lies before us, behind which rises Crete's highest mountain, the almost 2500 metre high Psiloritis, whose summit is still covered in snow. Wide mountain paths lead along the mountain massif and across green pastures, where we find hundreds of goats and sheep. We take a break at a small chapel and eat our picnic in the shade of the olive trees. Crete's numerous chapels are not closed and occasionally serve as a shelter and overnight stop for hikers. In wide serpentine, the  
Ride on to the foot of Mount Kofinas. Here we take a break at another chapel with a marvellous view. Kofinas, which slopes steeply down towards the sea, is the perfect habitat for eagles and other birds. We return to the farm in the evening and fortify ourselves with a sumptuous dinner.

The next stop on the programme is actually a two-day ride to the monastery of Koudoumas, where even today Monks live and work here. As our fellow riders are reluctant to take on the challenging hike, we make up for the ride to Tripiti Gorge. There is a lot of downhill riding, sometimes gentle, sometimes a little steeper. Goats and sheep are our constant companions, peering over at us from the rocks and slopes. A whole flock of vultures circles above us. We take a short break at a magical place with the ruins of a Minoan village and enjoy the solitude and silence.

Finally, we reach the Tripiti gorge again. Of course, we like crossing it on horseback even better. A sumptuous lunch of rice, fish and stuffed vine leaves awaits us at the beach restaurant. On the way home, Marcos puts in some marvellous trotting and cantering stretches. The horses also enjoy it and are fresh and lively, despite the heat and inclines. We reach the stables at dusk, delighted with the long, marvellous riding day.

On the last day, we visit the monastery of Koudoumas by jeep. A fat, bearded monk in a black robe opens the door to the large chapel, which is decorated with golden chandeliers and ornate biblical wall and ceiling paintings. Around 15 monks and numerous animals live here. Simple multi-bed rooms are for overnight guests. A short footpath leads to a huge cave directly above the cliffs. Even

A small chapel has been built in the cave. I start to feel like I'm on a pilgrimage. The monks produce honey and salt, which they sell in the shop, and they also sell something goes into our luggage. We set off on foot on the hiking trail from the monastery to a coastal village. The path leads through partly rocky terrain with gnarled trees. We pass numerous caves where the first islanders and hermits lived. Today, sheep and goats use the caves as shelter. The path is challenging and it takes us around two hours to walk the four kilometres. The yellow and purple flowering arums and callas along the way are striking. When we arrive in the village, we meet Marcos, who brought delicious snacks for us in the support vehicle.

Between peaks in the snow and the endless Messara plain

Rest at the chapel





After a refreshment stop with a view of the sea, we head back to the farm. We saddle the horses for a short farewell ride. As not everyone is riding, I have the opportunity to try out the bay Sifis, an eighty per cent Cretan horse.

There are around 500 of them on the island. They are small, hardy horses that can go through a pass and are very comfortable and sure-footed. Even the Minoans had ponies. Sifis is a lovable and cuddly fellow, and the Sunset tour along narrow goat paths with a view over the rugged coastline is fun.

Then it's time to say goodbye to our beloved horses, because dinner is waiting. We savour moussaka, tzatziki, Greek wine and raki one last time. We fall into bed late. The next day we have to get up early because our fellow rider is flying back at midday. The rest of us are spontaneously invited by Marcos on a short sightseeing tour to Heraklion, including gyros and a drink in the middle of the lively city centre. A week with friendly people, adorable animals and in secluded nature. In addition, the beautiful accommodation and the delicious food - simply divine! Big praise to Marcos, Popi and Lea, who has already internalised the welcoming nature of the Greeks and is very careful and patient with people and animals. Our every wish was fulfilled!

Jessica Kiefer

[www.equitour.com/tgc007.htm](http://www.equitour.com/tgc007.htm)



Ride into the sky



Frequent companions



Spectacular: on horseback through the Tripiti Gorge





# Crete

## Sunny island steeped in history



Crete - the birthplace of Greek mythology, the birthplace of Zeus, the father of the gods, and the first advanced civilisation. In addition to evidence of the past, the island also harbours unique natural treasures.

Zeus was the ruler of thunder and lightning, but above all of the sky, and he gave Crete its most beautiful blue colour. With around 300 days of sunshine, the largest of the Greek islands is a true paradise that exceeds all expectations of its visitors. The sun, beach and sea convey a feeling of the Caribbean, while the mountains and gorges hikers, climbers and cyclists. Caves, monasteries and ancient sites attract culture vultures.

The first traces of human inhabitants actually date back 130,000 years. Around four to five thousand years ago, the first European civilisation emerged here with the Minoan Empire. This was followed by the Mycenaeans, Hellenes, Romans, Byzantines and Muslims. Crete became part of the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire before it was finally united with Greece at the beginning of the 20th century.

The different cultures and religions have left their mark the island's diversity today. Monasteries and countless chapels the importance of the Christian and Orthodox religions. One of the most important sights are the ruins of the palace of Knossos south of the city of Iraklio. The palace was built by the Minoans and combines history and mythology. Due to its labyrinthine architecture, the basement of the building is believed to be the labyrinth in which the monster Minotaur, who was half man and half bull, was held captive by King Minos.

Crete is a true Eldorado for delving into the past. For example, you can visit the Psychro cave, where, according to myth, Zeus was born. The beautiful princess Europa, after whom our continent was named, is said to have been brought to Crete by Zeus. Whether it an abduction or a seduction is a matter of .

While monsters, murder and manslaughter were the order of the day in the old legends, the present looks much friendlier. The hospitality of the Cretans is proverbial and can be seen in romantic coastal towns, rustic mountain villages and modern cities with Mediterranean flair.

Nature also has practically everything to offer: Caves, gorges, mountains, vast plains and over 1000 kilometres of coastline, some of which rugged and rocky, others a bathing paradise with miles of beaches or idyllic bays. Crete is just as inviting for a relaxed beach holiday as it is for active holidaymakers who want to go climbing, diving, hiking or cycling. And what is true for these types of adventurers is even more true for riders: Crete is the place-to-be for riders' dreams come true. Equitour takes its customers to the south of the island, to the picturesque Asterousia Mountains. In the comfortable hotel complex, you can your gaze wander over the summit of Mount Kofina to the rugged coastline over breakfast. Like the gods once did, you are close to heaven!



## EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

Crete is a Equitour destination in Greece. Mountains, dream beaches and ancient sites are part of the riding programme. Along the way, you will gain an insight into the ancient civilisation and the modern way of life, including culinary delights. A feel-good programme in a comfortable, family-run hotel complex in a rustic mountain village makes your stay perfect. Non-riders also get their money's worth. [www.equitour.com/tgc007.htm](http://www.equitour.com/tgc007.htm)

### Country info Crete



Size: 8261 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 624 408

Main town: Heraklion

Language: Modern Greek

Religion: Greek Orthodox Currency:

Euro

Climate: Mediterranean climate

Best time to visit: April to October

As if painted: the coast of Crete



The Koudoumas Monastery



Hike between sea and rocks



Myth and reality: the palace of Knossos





# Naomi touring horse

## The unicum of Crete

In our new series, we present the stars of our riding programmes. Perfectly trained for their work as training and trail horses, they are often real heartbreakers and many guests find it difficult to say goodbye to them.

difficult. Let's start with Naomi from Crete, who only found her way to Marcos at our partner company in Crete came.

After a year in Athens, Naomi was sold on to a man from Crete, and so she came to the neighbourhood of Chania when she was about five years old. She was probably the first and still the only American Standardbred on Crete. However, the buyer and his family were not familiar with horses and Naomi lived there more like a dog.

Two years later it was sold near Heraklion.

It was there that Marcos saw her for the first time and was fascinated by the sensitive black mare. The special breed and the good

He was not interested in her pedigree. If she had stayed in the USA, she might have run as a trotting horse, for which

Naomi is an American Standardbred and was sold from the USA to Cyprus. The buyer had purchased her because of her good pedigree, but without knowing her personally. She was then to be brought to Cyprus as a three-year-old, but the buyer could no longer be found at the time. Instead, his brother, who lived in Thessaloniki, took over the mare. However, it was difficult to keep a horse in the city, so Naomi went to a friend who had a stable in Athens.



## Naomi at Equitour

Marcos the first horse rides for guests in 2013/14. His resort has been with Equitour since 2019. Naomi and her colleagues take guests on longer rides or two-day rides in the mountainous terrain. When there are no weekly guests, the horses enjoy plenty of free time. The jet-black Naomi sometimes poses for wedding photos or pleases a hotel guest who is on a horse for the first time. Despite her age, Naomi works tirelessly, as Jessica Kiefer from Equitour was able to for herself. An impressive horse, the elegant black lady!



the Standardbreds are bred. Or she would have used as a broodmare. And so the Greek odyssey came to an end. Marcos bought the mare and brought her to his farm in Thalori. He had only recently fulfilled his lifelong dream and set up a small animal and horse paradise, where he turned his passion for horses and animals into a profession: On his farm, he brings guests close to animals and horses in particular.

When Naomi came to Marcos, she was already seven years old and had no riding training apart from a few basics. Marcos began to work with her and gain her trust. Because of her changeable history, Naomi was a nervous, insecure horse. Construction machinery and cars in particular caused her to panic, and Marcos initially had a hard time riding her. It was only after two years of riding her exclusively for him that she could also be used as a guest horse.

Naomi is now 20 years old and one of the strongest, most reliable and patient horses thanks to Marco's endless patience and calmness. Naomi was one of Marcos' first horses. Today she lives with nine other horses in a

beautiful, airy open stable with a huge run. The stable can be divided into stalls and runs as required, so that foals, mares, stallions and geldings always get enough exercise in their group. Whether on the road or at the farm - you can always feel the deep bond between Marcos and Naomi.

Photos:  
private

Naomi - today a popular and reliable touring horse for guests



Marco's farm - an extensive animal and horse paradise



### American Standardbred

The breed belongs to the gaited horse family and has been bred in the USA since the 19th century as a trotting and pace horse. The Standardbred is now also a popular leisure and endurance trail riding horse.

Size: 150 to 165 cm height Character: Courageous, persevering, willing

to perform

Conformation: Muscular, long-legged, otherwise

inconsistent Suitability: Trotting and pass races, leisure riding

and driving Speciality: Passing and sometimes tölt disposition





Mountains, steppes, deserts and oases symbolise the natural diversity of Uzbekistan. Cities such as Tashkent and Smarkand symbolise the ancient culture. Horses are part of both faces of the country.



# Uzbekistan



## LIKE 1000 YEARS AGO





# Travelogue Uzbekistan

## IN THE SADDLE ALONG THE

What drives a person to a distant, foreign country like Uzbekistan? Dr Carola Leitner lets herself be enchanted by its treasures on horseback.

Horse transport in Uzbek



Well padded: the saddle typical of the country



Test of courage 1: the bridge that inspires little confidence



Test of courage 2: Ride through light brown floods





# SILK ROAD

The small lorry backs up onto the slope at the edge of the village of Kumushkan and comes to a jolting halt in front of it. The five bridled and saddled horses on the lorry bed struggle to keep their balance, but they are too close together to fall over anyway. On the lowered tailboard, which acts as a bridge to the embankment, the stallions the transporter one after the other. Once the horses been unloaded, the panniers filled and all the preparations made, Donyjor gives a brief introduction. The boss's most important instruction is: "Keep your distance!" Shortly afterwards we ride off towards the snow-capped mountains of the mighty Chimgan range.

The 13-day trail along the old Silk Road starts in the mountains near Tashkent and continues with new horses on the edge of the hilly Kysylkum desert. There are also There is a cultural programme with city tours, mosques and madrasas, i.e. Koran schools, visits to bazaars, teahouses and a ceramics factory. But back to the ride: our trek consists of ten stallions, six guests and four employees. In addition to Donyjor, we are accompanied by the translator Alisher and the two guides Babur and Barat: Barat also works as a cook, Babur is responsible for the horses. Chef Donyjor worked as a guide for twenty years before up his own travel company.

The tension is palpable at the start, but the stallions are easy to handle and know how to behave - so we riders relax too. Towards the end of the first day of riding, guides look for a suitable place to cross a river and realise that it's going to be tricky. The dirty brown water is deep in places and the current is strong. Fortunately, there is a bridge, but it proves to be uninviting. The temporary solution

consists of rusty and rattling iron plates that would probably give many German horses palpitations. The thin, bent railing is missing in one place, holes in the plates are marked by large stones or even stuffed. Babur leads his horse over the bridge unperturbed, and we follow him in amazement. When we cross the same river again later, the guides choose the path through the water. My black Merlin hesitates briefly, but after a gentle push on his legs, he bravely fights his way through the light brown waters, which almost his belly. Relieved, we reach our camp.

When we take down the tents the next morning, there are a few of the horses that were staked at night, dozing in the meadow. After breakfast, Donyjor explains the day's route. The announced mountain stage is truly not for the faint-hearted. As we cross a steep slope, Babur's horse struggles with the panniers. The guide braces himself in the left stirrup to compensate for the uneven load on the black horse. Horses and guides are fearless and do some hard labour. While picnicking under the trees, we admire the snow-covered 3309 metre-high Great Chimgan. The peace and quiet is disturbed by a military helicopter, which us that the borders with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan close. When we reach our campsite in the afternoon, we enjoy the last rays of sunshine after an ice-cold dip in the mountain stream while the guides dig a hole, light a fire and prepare Uzbek plov, a rice stew with meat, carrots and garlic, in a cast-iron cauldron. We dine on a bed spread out in the meadow, on which nuts and sultanas are served alongside the national dish, Cucumber and tomato salad and bread are waiting for us. After we've emptied the first bottle of vodka we brought with us, we dance to MC Hammer's "Can't touch this" under the starry sky in the middle of nowhere ...



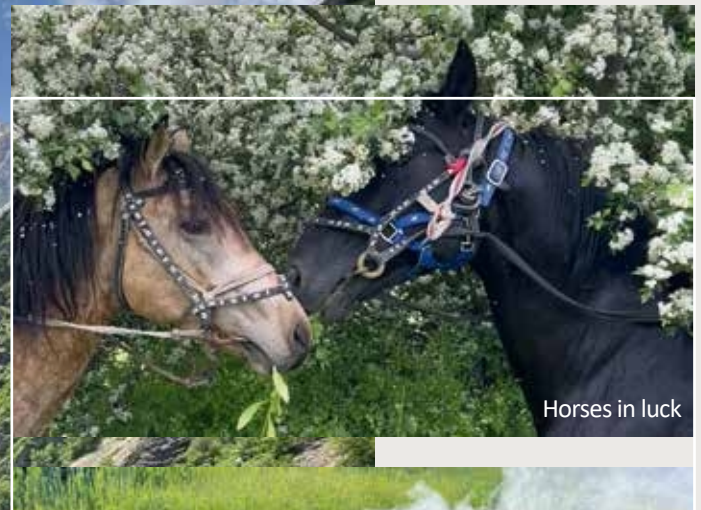


The third day of riding takes us through the village of Chimgan. After a stretch of tarmac, we ride over sandy roads, meadows and narrow paths up into the mountains, where we are rewarded with a view of the Chorvoq reservoir, which was created when a rock dam was built. We pass through a sea of hawthorn trees, from whose low-hanging branches hundreds of small flowers shower down on us like confetti. My forward-moving stallion Merlin - a purebred Karabai according to Donyjor - turns out to be a stroke of luck. The Uzbek Karabai breed is over 2000 years old and has been used time and again to improve other breeds, but has also been refined by crossbreeding with Arabian and English thoroughbreds. Whether there still racehorse genes in Merlin, Unfortunately, it is impossible to find out due to the terrain. However, one thing is certain: the stallion with a silky-soft coat is friendly, eager to get down to business and also easy to handle with the other horses - given sufficient distance. control. Stallion manners, as we know them in our part of the world, are rarely displayed by the animals, but they show heroic courage and a big heart when it to negotiating rough terrain.

master. The thin red cotton band woven into the tail and bridle is not a warning against a "thug", but is intended to the animal from the evil eye. This seems to be particularly important for Merlin, who has one black and one light blue eye, as this anomaly worries people, as Donyjor explains. Many things are different in Uzbekistan: some of the horses don't have their own names, but are named after their owners. A missing corner in a horse's ear is not the result of a fight, but an owner's mark. The saddles take some getting used to visually, but are surprisingly comfortable. This may be due to the saddles mounted on the wooden or metal frame. of the saddle. Some of the layers are more reminiscent of baby blankets in terms of the pattern with little bears.

During the penultimate night in the tent, it starts to rain so heavily that Donyjor has to change the programme. "The path to Gulkam Gorge is too in the ground conditions," he explains. We dismantle the camp and set off with the horses to Babur's house, who invites our colourful group to join him.

In front of us the mountains of the Chimgan range



Horses in luck



Barat's natural cuisine



Uzbek specialties





Once there, we lie down in a pink-coloured room around a flat table on kurpachas, the typical quilted mattresses of the country, and watch old Russian They watch fairy tale films, drink tea and eat bread with jam, chocolate cream and honey. The country has a long tradition of hospitality, as the saying goes: every guest is sent by God.

The next day we ride to the Gulkam Gorge and after a picnic continue to the village of Yangi Korgan, where we leave the horses at Babur and Barat and return to Tashkent. After a short journey on the Afrosiyob high-speed train, we reach the legendary Samarkand.

"Everything I have heard about the beauty of this city is true - except that it is even more beautiful than I imagined ...", Alexander the Great is said to have said about the city he conquered 328 BC. We admire the Registan, is lined with impressive buildings and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site for good reason. The next day we visit the impressive tomb city of Shohizinda, which deserves the title "majolica open-air museum" due to its fabulous decorations. We also visit Gur Emir, the tomb of the ruler Amir Timur, known in Europe as Tamerlan, is visited. Today, the Uzbeks honour Timur Lenk as a hero. The fact that Lenk means "the lame" is often concealed by the city guides, as it does not fit in at all with the cult status of the conqueror.

Visit to the Registan in Samarkand



In Porasht, where the second part of the journey begins, the horses are allocated after lunch with homemade mantis, dumplings filled with meat. At my request, guide Nodir gives me a quiet stallion on which I can take photos. I'm still a little envious of Tina from Vienna, who hit the jackpot with her horse: Mischka is almost unstoppable and is later called "The flying carpet".

The next morning I switch from the dun to a faster grey horse, with which I now gallop along at front. Nodir dashes across the plain on his big chestnut, gallops up and down slopes - and we cheering behind. Once we arrive at the Muhammad Ali guesthouse in Mojurum, we take a walk in the afternoon to a 2,500-year-old Oriental tree of life of overwhelming dimensions. After dinner, fellow rider Nadine and returns a little later to great applause, dressed in a traditional red wedding dress. Muchlisa, the Hausa's six-year-old daughter, also wears traditional costume and dances for us to an Uzbek folk song. The next morning, during breakfast together, Donyjor announces a three-hour ride to the village of Sentob for the last day of riding. Mishka and Tina set a hell of a pace, so that we the route in about an hour. When we arrive in Sentob, Donyjor, who clearly enjoying the gallops, says with a grin: "That's a record distance ...!"

Dr Carola Leitner  
[www.equitour.com/sei014.htm](http://www.equitour.com/sei014.htm)





# Uzbekistan

## The pearl of Central Asia

Characterised by the heyday of the old Silk Road, Uzbekistan's cities are magnificent and modern. The contrast to the unspoilt nature is the special attraction of this Central Asian country.



Geographically, the country is dominated by vast deserts and steppes. They dominate the western and central parts of Uzbekistan. In the east lies the green, fertile Ferghana Valley, framed by the peaks of the Tien Shan Mountains in the north and the Alai Mountains in the south. Around twenty per cent of the population live in this green basin. This is where Uzbekistan's most important product is : Cotton, which the Uzbeks call their "white gold". Mulberry plantations also provide the silk spinner with ideal living conditions and the Uzbeks with the opportunity to produce silk. Both products, cotton and silk, were already important commodities at the time of the old Silk Road. The trade route, which stretched total of 6400 kilometres from China to the Mediterranean, once ran through almost the entire country. Many branches led to neighbouring areas such as India and Persia. Under the national hero Timur, allegedly a descendant of Genghis Khan, Uzbekistan at times stretched from Afghanistan to Delhi.

Cities such as Samarkand and Bukhara blossomed into important trading centres thanks to their location on the Silk Road. In addition to goods, knowledge and religions were also disseminated. The Koranic schools in Samarkand were an important centre of education in their day, teaching not only religion, but also mathematics, science, literature and philosophy.

Due to the lively trade along the Silk Road, there was a constant exchange of knowledge and different cultures. Education is still very important today,

In Uzbekistan, eleven years of schooling are compulsory, and schooling begins for four-year-olds.

Islam spread to Asia and is still the most important religion in Uzbekistan today, and the magnificent Islamic architecture with temples, mosques and mausoleums is one of today's tourist highlights. It is the fairytale cities that attract the most tourists to the country.

But nature lovers and active travellers will also find

their happiness. The spectacular mountain landscapes offer opportunities for hiking, climbing, rafting and winter sports. Local guides are advisable, as the remote regions still little developed. Horse lovers and touring riders are best advised to join the Equitour horse riding holidays, then you will miss neither the cultural nor the natural highlights Uzbekistan.



Choir Minor, a gate building in Bukhara



The Kalon Minaret, landmark of Bukhara





On adventurous paths



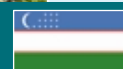
The green Ferghana Valley



## EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

Stations along the ancient Silk Roads are the destinations of the riding tour in Uzbekistan. It offers adventure and culture, challenging rides with tent camps in the mountains, fast gallops in the hilly Kysylkum Desert and visits to historic cities such as Samarkand and Bukhara. For experienced trekking riders only.  
[www.equitour.com/sei014.htm](http://www.equitour.com/sei014.htm)

## Country info Uzbekistan



Size: 448 900 km<sup>2</sup>  
Population: 37 million  
Capital: Tashkent  
Language: Uzbek Religion:  
Predominantly Islam  
Currency: So'm  
Climate: Temperate steppe or desert climate  
Best time to visit: April to October



# Pioneers in Uzbekistan

Test ride by Jessica Kiefer and Marjolein Käppel,  
the daring fellow rider

As soon as we arrive in Uzbekistan, we are greeted by the national television. "What was your purpose in to Uzbekistan?" asks the reporter. "I want to find out more about the culture along the historic Silk Road and about life today. In my experience, a country can be experienced authentically on horseback." I want it to be the most authentic journey I ever made...



On the magnificent Achal Tekkiner



Artful wooden inlays

Welcome to Noah's Ark, I think to myself as we finally our destination after ten hours in the saddle: A large area enclosed by a wall, where a shepherd spends the summer with his animals. Around sixty sheep, a riding horse, two young stallions, two donkeys, a cow with two cheeky calves and a large flock of birds - they all populate the huge green meadow with a stream. And in the middle of it all: My girlfriend and I with our guide and translator as well as our four riding horses. In Uzbekistan there are always stallions, which to our great astonishment are now simply pegged out in the meadow between the free-range animals. First, the curious calves and their mother come to greet us. They are particularly interested in our equipment and provisions, which they try to get hold of behind our backs. After we After we have successfully fended them off and gathered in front of the tents for dinner, the two young stallions curiously approach our riding horses. They sniff and grunt before going off to graze again. Impressed by the composure of our horses, we polish off the food we have brought with us.

We eat and soon retire to our tents. Noah's Ark provides the nightly entertainment of bleating, neighing, snorting and mooing, and at dawn the birds join in with the chirping.

The next day, we find in an ancient Russian jeep of the "indestructible" type, which takes us back to the valley from the idyllic mountain pasture in two hours. The reason for the jeep journey was my girlfriend's stomach cramps, which unfortunately it impossible to continue on horseback. The little

The confidence-inspiring, smelly vehicle downhill over the bumpy track and through stony streams. The accelerator pedal has been replaced by a large metal spoon, but the far more important brake pedal still seems to be intact. To avoid breathing in the dust from the track, I dig out my Covid 19 face mask. A restless night on a hard bed in a yurt with noisy tourists outside the door doesn't bring any rest, especially as my stomach starts to rebel.



In Nurota, a former residence of Alexander the Great, we stand out among the local tourists, posing for pictures and answering questions that mostly relate to our country of origin, age and salary. Such questions are only asked in the cities, where people are already used to seeing female tourists. In the villages, men abide by the Islamic ban on hands with women, looking them in the face or even questions.

We are particularly fascinated by the desert city of Bukhara, which is much smaller than Samarkand. If you could imagine without the cars, it would be the perfect backdrop for a historical film. The cosy old town is car-free anyway, so we stroll from one artist's shop to the next. One of the highlights for me is that I get to ride a beautiful Achal Tekkiner stallion through the centre of the city. Unfortunately, the stallion is in old-fashioned stables with no access to pasture. The saddle also fits poorly and his hooves are too long. The horses are otherwise healthy and lively, but I'd rather not go sightseeing on horseback.

The first riding section is also cancelled. Three beautiful stallions are ready for us here too, with shiny coats, alert eyes and in the best feeding condition. Unfortunately the treatment by the owner is unfair and rude, and the two-day ride consists of two hours of riding per day, whereby we spend almost two hours waiting in the blazing sun on both days. Still - the mountains, the river valley full of walnuts and the overnight stay by the river are beautiful. But the combination of two hours of driving, two hours of waiting and two hours of riding per day is a bit too much. pretty arduous. In terms of riding, all that is the middle section through the steppe and into Noah's Ark, but by no means with ten hours in the saddle in a single day.

Due to the upset stomach, which is still bothering me in impressive Samarkand, and the many problems, I am quite frustrated at the end of the journey. The country is extremely exciting, but is it possible to organise a proper horse riding trip here? Probably not, the time doesn't seem ripe yet.

But when I already given up, we are introduced to Donyjor on the last evening in Samarkand. This is the turning point. Donyjor has organised the steppe ride and the city tours on behalf of our hostess and offers to provide the whole package through his travel agency in Samarkand. We agree, and the trip now starts with a longer trail ride through the green mountains in the east, where there are good horses and guides, and is accompanied throughout by Donyjor and/or his staff. The very first horse riding trip through Uzbekistan is ready!

Unfortunately, we never saw the TV report about two unsuspecting tourists shuffling through a riding hall in Tashkent on tired school horses in forty-degree heat and then riding through the mountains of Uzbekistan on beautiful stallions, if it was ever broadcast on Uzbek national television at all. If anyone has seen it by chance, please let us know! However, this very special journey will probably remain in our memories forever.  
Jessica Kiefer

Photos: Jessica Kiefer, Marjolein Käppel



We visit the historic city of Bukhara on horseback...



Market visit on horseback



A short rest for the tireless horses



The best part: Riding into the mountains



# The long journey home

A riding tour in the Pyrenees has consequences for Swiss riders Heidi Feldmann and René Ruis. Heidi buys her touring horse and René accompanies her on the long journey home. They tell Equitour about their adventure.



*How did the idea for the ride come about? Was it your first trail ride together?*

We got to know each other at the Italian cowboys, the Butteri. We then explored various countries on horseback as a photographer couple. Later, we wanted to explore the world with our own horses, but we didn't have a second horse. René accompanied me on my riding tours on foot or by bike until the day I fell in love with my touring horse, the PRE gelding Quito. I persuaded the owner to sell Quito to us and we planned the big adventure: to ride 1800 kilometres through the wilderness home to the Zurich Oberland with Quito and our horse Spirit.

*How much can you plan in advance for a project like this? And were the plans realisable?*

We wanted to cross areas that were as unspoilt as possible and find routes and overnight accommodation as spontaneously as possible. We had a tent, kitchen and portable fences with us and were therefore independent. We sometimes reached our limits on the way, We had to turn back in the Cévennes due to the amount of snow and for the Ardèche.

*Are there already plans for more long trail rides?*

The next big trail ride we are planning is to Portugal. A good friend has emigrated there and we want to visit her on her quinta. The area through Asturias and the pilgrimage route from Portugal to Spain really appeals to us. We would need about twelve months to do this. We are working on making this financially possible.

*Do you have any special tips for enthusiastic imitators? A dose of positive naivety and trust in the horses and people. Have a goal in mind and don't plan too much so that you can react spontaneously to events.*

*On our riding holidays, we attach great importance to getting in touch with the locals. What was it like for you? When you are travelling on horseback, people immediately trust you and are open and curious. We met people who invited us in or took us in overnight.*

Once a car driver stopped and offered us his vineyard for the night. Others wrote to us later to say that we had encouraged them to go on their own adventure.

*An adventure like this certainly not only bonds the two-legged friends, but also the four-legged ones. How do you think your horses liked being out and about all the time?*

The trip brought us closer together, and Quito and Spirit began to trust each other completely in difficult situations. For example, when we had to cross a suspension bridge or make our way through heavy traffic. During the rest days they became rather grumpy and wanted to keep going. We think the hiking rhythm made them more balanced.

*Were there any situations in which you would have liked to have cancelled? We had difficult weather during our trip. We wanted to ride from spring to spring and then had to deal with mistral, constant rain and snow.*

In the beginning, we had to deal with nightly outbursts from our



horses. There was a moment when Heidi wanted to abandon the journey after the umpteenth outburst. But we persevered. Fortunately, the horses were never injured. Later, the mistral calmed down and the horses stayed in the paddock.

*What were the highlights, the best experiences?*

One highlight was crossing the Grand Canyon of France, the Cirque de Navacelles. On the way, vultures circled above us and a herd of horses accompanied us. Many said that it would not be to cross with horses. But it went better than expected, and when we arrived at the bottom, we looked happily at the 300 metre high ledge from which we had ridden down. Our horses also managed the ascent on the other side with ease. The encounters with people were unforgettable. An elderly gentleman stopped his car

and offered us bread, cheese and fruit. Then he apologised. He still apologised for not having any wine for us.

*Are there things you would do differently next time?*

We were able to expand our trail riding experience enormously and are proud of what our two Spanish horses have achieved. The new guiding principles were: no concentrated feed in the evening, always camp close to the pasture so that the horses understand that their herd is complete and always have a spare battery for their mobile phones to have power for navigation.

And finally, we want to ride in even more remote regions to get even closer to nature and people, because for us, happiness on earth is on horseback.

*Heidi Feldmann and René Ruis*

*Instagram: #abenteuerauf8hufen*

Nothing can stop René and Spirit



Heidi and Quito on the Grialetsch Pass



Better than any hotel



At the picturesque Lai da Palpuegna



Refreshment at the fountain





# AFRICA'S WILD

Zimbabwe offers up-close wildlife encounters and breathtaking forces of nature. Horse ears make the sight even more exhilarating.



# Zimbabwe



# HEART





Travelogue Zimbabwe

# ZAMBEZI RIDING SAFARI



At the tender age of 43, Sandra Fencel fulfils a childhood dream: to observe the "Big Five" in Africa from horseback.

I fly to the wild country in southern Africa with my best friend. From the airport, we are taken to a small lodge for the first night. "Ursulas Homestead". We receive a friendly welcome and are served excellent food before going to bed early in our individual bungalows. It will be a short night, as it quickly gets hot, so we are picked up at five o'clock and taken to the horses. On the journey to the horses, the rhythmic gospel music and the cheerful driver lift my morning mood. Our riding guide at "Alison's Pferdehof" welcomes us with a beaming smile and gets us ready for the first ride with coffee, biscuits, fruit and orange syrup.



Eye to eye with the wild horse relatives





There are only two of us and we are accompanied by two guides. One rides in front, the second behind us. Our horses are obedient, fearless, sure-footed and great to ride. To fall in love with! We experience our first excitement when a herd of buffalo appears. But we feel safe, because both our guides and the horses seem to special senses. They hear every sound, no matter how quiet, and know when danger is imminent and when it is not. The guides are experienced trackers and tell exciting stories, for example when we pass the skeleton of a baby elephant. Its mother still comes here regularly to mourn her dead child. Sad, but also fascinating, how empathetic animals can be. Later, our guide finds a wire trap and explains that all the staff at Alison's horse farm the anti-poaching initiative. They either take the traps they find along the way with them or report them.

We ride through a varied landscape, through dense undergrowth and sometimes over bumpy paths. We take a break halfway through and fortify ourselves with fruit, snacks, sweets and plenty of water. Our guides instruct us on the correct behaviour in the presence of various wild animals. We ride on through the bush and reach our lodge again after four hours. The temperatures are rising and we decide to refresh ourselves and relax by the pool. Our lodge borders the Zambezi National Park and we can see a waterhole from the garden where wild animals come to drink all the time. We are chatting with the gardener "Hope" when we are picked up for the jeep safari. After a short drive, we see a group of impala. Our guide that the impalas are also known as "Bush McDonald's". On the one hand,



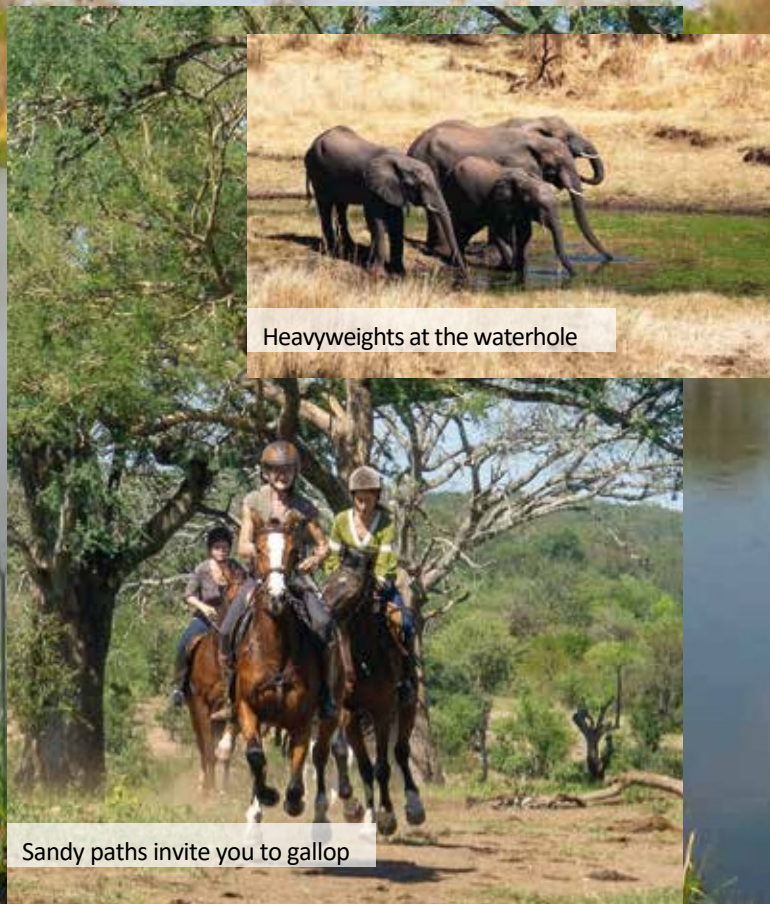
Not without danger: Cape buffalo

because they have a fur pattern in the shape of an M on their rump, but also because they are as widespread as McDonald's branches. We marvel at their elegant leaps and drive on to a riverbed where a large herd is gathering.



cape buffalo. These mighty animals can weigh up to 900 kilos and are not without danger. We can hardly tear ourselves away from the sight, but our guide promises, that there is more to see. He is right: an older giraffe bull crosses our path at a leisurely pace. Here and there he plucks a few leaves from the

treetops before disappearing back into the bush. The sight of the first giraffe makes my heart leap for joy. And it's not even one of the Big Five - that's elephant, rhino, buffalo, lion and leopard. Shortly afterwards we see one of them: a huge white rhino. It is happily munching on leaves in the bush about two hundred metres away.



Heavyweights at the waterhole

Sandy paths invite you to gallop





It's getting dark and time for our bush dinner. Our guide serves cocktails, appetisers and delicious African snacks at a lake. We can hear hippos grunting in the distance. Before we know it, it's pitch black and we're off on a night safari. Our guide uses a giant red light to the sides of the road alternately to the right and left. I can hardly imagine seeing anything interesting here, but the spotlight hits one of the rarest animals in Africa: a serval - a small, shy species of cat of prey. As we drive on, we see a galagos, also known as a bush baby. My friend and I beaming with joy. We have already seen so many animals on the first day.

The next day also starts at five o'clock in the morning. We meet the farm owner, Alison, who comes from Sweden. She gives me a new horse, an Arabian mare. "She comes from the racecourse and isn't that experienced yet," says Alison and adds but you can ride her". I like the horse. keep her for the rest of the week. The grey mare is lively, fine and ultra-fast, but still easy to handle. Just my kind of horse!

Over the next few days, we encounter elephants, various species of ape, vultures, warthogs, wildebeest, aardvarks, ground squirrels, porcupines, kudus, different species of birds and herons and, of course, impalas at every turn - just like McDonald's.

We watch the comings and goings at the waterhole. I am

close to tears with happiness. Rarely have I felt such inner stillness and peace as in this moment. Like in a theatre performance, one "show" another. After the giraffe come the impalas, after the impalas the kudus and warthogs, and just before sunset we are treated to a special performance by the gang of monkeys, which makes us both laugh out loud.

The next day, we head to a new hotel, the Elephant Lodge. up to its name, orphaned elephants that otherwise die in the wild are raised here. The mothers are often killed by poachers, as the ivory still finds illegal buyers. The elephants in the reserve are friendly and people-orientated, and we are even allowed to feed them. We also visit the local rescue centre, where injured animals nursed back to health and in most cases released back into the wild.

After spending the night at the elephant camp, we set off early towards our next accommodation - The Old Drift. In addition to a jeep tour, another highlight awaits us here: a boat trip. We see elephants and hippos, and I get my cameras rolling. I also take in alligators, various antelopes and various seabirds. With finger food and cocktails, we watch the sunset on the boat before enjoying a delicious dinner at the hotel and falling gratefully into bed.



Luxurious: the lodges on the riding safari



Safari on the river



The Warthog family comes to visit



Hippo: a real loudmouth



Our magnificent journey ends at the "Pioneer's Lodge" in Victoria Falls. As the name, we are close to the legendary waterfalls. From the lodge, our guide takes us to a gorge below the Victoria Falls Bridge. We hike through the gorge and climb what feels like 1000 steps. The effort is made up for by the fantastic view. In the afternoon, we stock up on souvenirs at a local market.

The next day is once again characterised by the famous Victoria Falls. Early in the morning we visit the Victoria Falls National Park. The sight of the thundering masses of water, the spray and the glowing rainbows bring tears of happiness to my eyes. Only after the excursion do we have a well-earned breakfast at our lodge. But that's not enough of the waterfalls. In the afternoon, we have the opportunity to marvel at this gigantic natural spectacle from the air - on board a helicopter. An unforgettable experience!

Our riding trip was overwhelming and full of great experiences. The special vibrancy of the African continent and the hospitable people will remain deep in our hearts.

Sandra Fencel

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

[www.equitour.com/it-zmrt07.htm](http://www.equitour.com/it-zmrt07.htm)



At the Elephant Rescue Centre

Roaring force of nature: Victoria Falls



Mutual amazement





# Zimbabwe

## Wild animals, roaring waters

"Mosi-oa-Tunya" - the "smoke that thunders" - is what locals call the world-famous Victoria Falls. They are the most famous, but by no means the only worthwhile destination in Zimbabwe.

The Victoria Falls unfold their full splendour at the end of the rainy season in March and April. The Zambezi has swollen into a mighty river and plunges over a width of 1.7 kilometres with an unimaginable ten thousand cubic metres of water per second, or ten million litres over a hundred metres. The spray from the waterfall alone creates a dense

Rainforest. Visitors get well soaked as they their way to the sixteen viewpoints on the edge of the gorge, but the view rewards them

plentiful.

Without a doubt, a visit to the country without the Victoria Falls is hardly conceivable. But Zimbabwe has

has even more to offer. Safaris to Africa's Big Five, luxury and relaxation in comfortable

Lodges, adventure and extreme sports on the water or in the mountains and of course

Hikes on foot or on horseback through a varied landscape Landscapes.

60

Eleven national parks provide an insight into the diversity and nature of the country. The Victoria Falls National Park and the Zambezi National Park are located in the far west. The Zambezi National Park is home to the Big Five and all other African wildlife such as zebras, wildebeests, antelopes, hippos, hyenas, cheetahs, giraffes and much . The Equitour rides lead mainly through this park and offer the best opportunities for up-close wildlife sightings. Wildlife can also be found in the highlands in the far east, albeit in lower densities.

The attraction of Nyanga National Park is the alpine landscape with mountain peaks up to 2600 metres high. Hikers can discover Stone Age relics such as stone castles, paths and ditches. Those who love adventure fly over the Victoria Falls in a helicopter or raft down the rapids of the Zambezi. For the ultimate thrill, you can experience four seconds of pure adrenalin on the world's deepest bungee jump. If you want to take the plunge, you can plunge 111 metres from the Victoria Falls bridge into the Batoka Gorge - well secured, of course.

The Equitour riding programme combines safari, waterfalls, boat and jeep tours with varied rides through Africa's wilderness. The warm, good-humoured hosts will introduce you to the rhythm of Africa.

### EQUITOUR RIDING PROGRAMME

The riding safari in Zimbabwe leads through the Zambezi National Park, over hilly Kalahari sand dunes to the Mopane Woodland, the cool shady forest along the Zambezi. Riders should saddle fit, non-riders experience the wilderness by jeep or boat. The famous Victoria Falls are visited on foot or by helicopter. [www.equitour.com/it-zmrt07.htm](http://www.equitour.com/it-zmrt07.htm)

### Country Info Zimbabwe



Size: 390 700 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 15.2 million Capital: Harare

Language: Mainly English, Shona, Ndebele Religion: Mostly Christian

Currency: US Dollar

Climate: Subtropical to tropical

Best time to visit: All year round





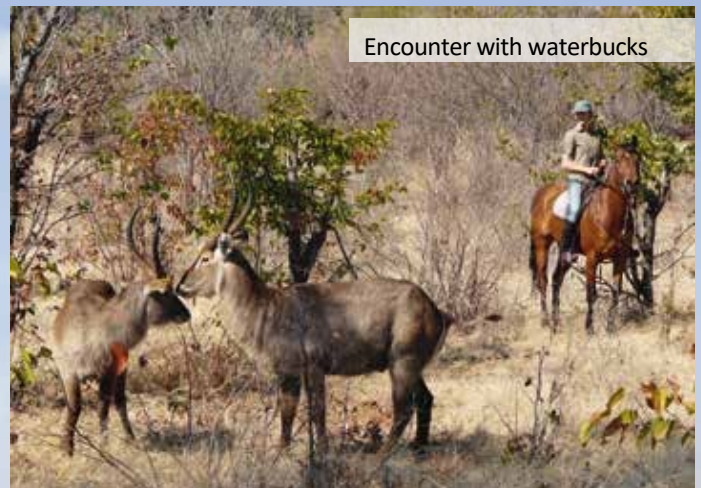
Breathtaking views



Watch out, zebra crossing!



The baobab or baobab tree



Encounter with waterbucks





# FOLLOW the HORSES

## Chiloé

## Che, Chilotes and Cimarrones



Photojournalist Gabriele Kärcher encounters  
people and their lives without bias or  
judgement.

Horses on all continents. In Chile, chance determines their route.

In Temuco, I meet two travellers from Chiloé. Pedro tells me about the cimarrones - the wild horses that live there. Pamela is Huilliche. Her people belong to the Mapuche ethnic group, the indigenous people of southern South America. "Che" stands for man, "Mapu" for earth. They therefore call themselves people of the earth. Huilliche, on the other hand, are the people of the south. Pamela me to accompany her to her home island of Chiloé. Bingo! Two chance encounters take me to a magical island that I had never heard of before.

had never heard of. Pamela a few days to show me the people and animals on her island. She introduces me to a huaso, the Chilean cowboy, who demonstrates his skills in traditional dress.

Wild ponies are said to live on the east coast near Cucao. As soon as we get there, a small group of horses comes trotting towards us. A rider drives them in the direction of his corrals. No wild horses, then. But he gives us a tip on where to find the cimarrones, the wild ponies.

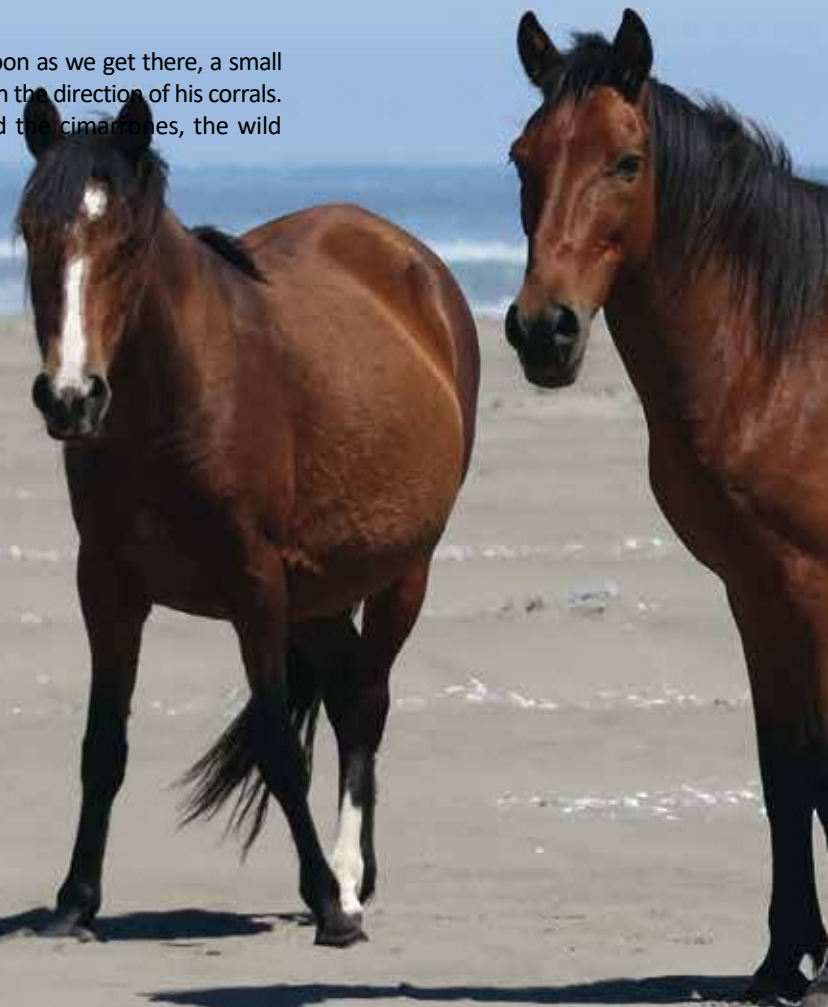
live horses. They probably like to hang on the beach at this time of year. We trudge through the sand against the fresh wind. Shivering, I admire some hardy bathing holidaymakers who venture into the foaming surf despite the cold. It doesn't take long a group of small brown horses appears behind the dunes. They slowly approach, plucking at the marram grass here and there. They us appraising glances, but are hardly bothered by us.

Whether wild or in human hands, the Chilote ponies, i.e. the horses of Chiloé, are descendants of the Spanish horses that entered the country a good five hundred years ago. Isolated on the island, they remained purebred for over two centuries. It was not until the 19th that Chileans brought their criollos to Chiloé. Many horse owners crossed their ponies with the larger, more elegant Criollos, but the wild Chilotes remained largely unmixed.

The Mapuche understood horses and became feared equestrian warriors. The wars are over, the indigenous people have lost almost everything, but not their pride, their hope and their love of horses.



Cimarron - the South American mustang





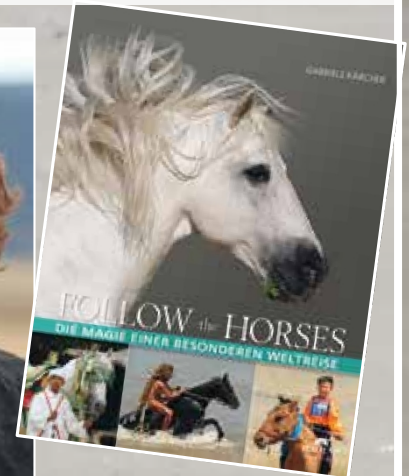
Huilliche with tamed cimarron



Huaso, the Chilean cowboy



Not only brilliant horse photographs from all over the world, but also touching words of wisdom will accompany you through the coming year with the new large-format calendar by Gabriele Kärcher. Info / Order: [www.sorrel.de](http://www.sorrel.de)



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# EQUITOUR FUN & FACTS

## Worth knowing to marvel and smile at

Anyone who takes part in an Equitour riding tour has something to tell. In addition to what is planned, surprises, insights and new experiences are certain. Equitour presents amazing and interesting facts from the equestrian world on this page.



### Records of the horse world

#### Shire horses - the greatest

The English Shire Horse is the largest horse breed in the world in terms of height. On average, the long-legged cold-blooded horses are "only" 1.70 to 1.80 metres tall, but there are animals over 2 metres high. The largest horse in the world was the Shire Horse "Sampson". He was 2.19 metres tall and weighed 1524 kg. He lived around 1850, a long ago, and his measurements were never . After he had reached such dimensions, he was renamed "Mammoth".



#### Quarter Horse - the largest breed

The American Quarter Horse is the largest horse breed, not in terms of body size, but in terms of numbers. There are over five million worldwide, and several countries outside the USA have their own breeding associations. The Quarter Horse popularised western riding, turning cowboy work into a riding style for sport and leisure.

Quarter horses are still for cattle drives on American cattle ranches today.

Immerse yourself in the origins of western riding as cowboys and cowgirls.



### To neigh!



Pretty clever!

The standing mane of the horse uses a Mongolian trail horse during a break from riding.

"Is that your horse?"

"Sometimes!"

"What do you mean sometimes?"

"Quite simply, when the horse is freshly groomed, it belongs to my wife. When it's time for a ride, it's my daughter's and when it needs cleaning and the stable needs mucking out, it's mine!"

\*\*\*

A horse and a donkey get into an argument about which of them should be valued more highly. The horse is proud of its past. The donkey, however, is proud of its future and replies: "Technology will overtake the horse, but there will always donkeys!"



## Born hikers

You often hear that horses are greedy. This is unfair, because continuous feed intake is in the nature of horses. This is the only way they can gain enough energy from the low-energy plant-based diet. In the pasture, they combine grazing with constant forward movement. In wild, they spend around fifteen hours eating and moving forwards. They are therefore born hikers, and trail riding, where they easily cover 25 kilometres a day, is the riding style that best suits the nature of the horse.



## World Equestrian Exhibition

Horse lovers should the date in March 2025 in bold in their diaries. From 6 to 12 March, the world's largest equestrian trade fair, EQUITANA, will open its doors.

gates. The big meeting of the equestrian world fascinates with spectacular show programmes, instructive demonstrations, top-class sport, horse breeds from all over the world, experts from every specialist area and, last but not least, a huge market with everything a rider's heart desires. Horse fans can shop to their heart's content, learn, marvel and meet like-minded people, because one thing unites all those present: a love of horses.

**EQUITANA 2025**  
**06 - 12 March 2025**  
**Essen Exhibition Centre**  
[www.equitana.com](http://www.equitana.com)

EQUITANA – Aus Liebe zum Pferd



## 40 years of the Edition Boisselle horse calendar

"1984. Ibn Akhtal stands in the last evening light in the paddock of the Egyptian state stud El Zahraa. He radiates everything I dreamed of in an Arabian horse: grace, beauty, wildness and charisma." (Gabriele Boisselle)

Ibn Akhtal



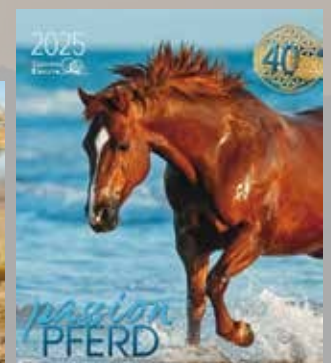
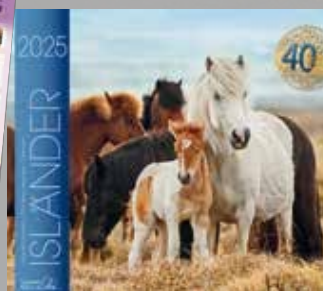
In the same year, Gabriele Boisselle launches her calendar edition. "Fascination", the calendar with the most beautiful Arabian photographs, is a classic that lost none of its magic to this day.

Other themes and breeds complement the edition, for example the photogenic Friesian and Haflinger breeds. In the 2025 anniversary collection, horse lovers can between ten different calendars.

Info and illustrations

[www.boisselle-shop.de/pferdekalender-2025](http://www.boisselle-shop.de/pferdekalender-2025)

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Imprint:  
**EQUITOUR**  
The world through horses' ears

© 2024  
3rd year, issue 2

Customer magazine of the  
Equitour Riding holidays - EQUITOUR AG

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

Responsible:  
Diethard Franz Editing  
and layout:  
Gabriele Kärcher / [www.sorrel.de](http://www.sorrel.de) All  
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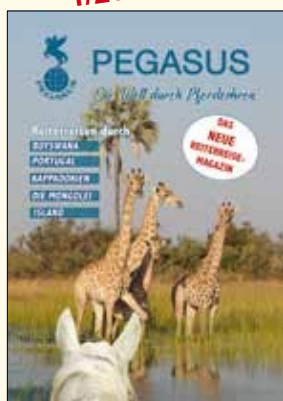
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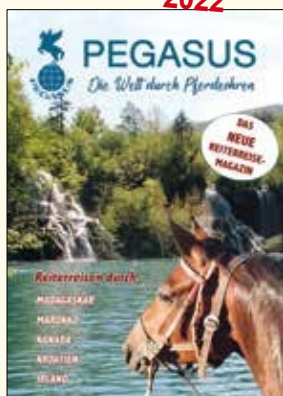
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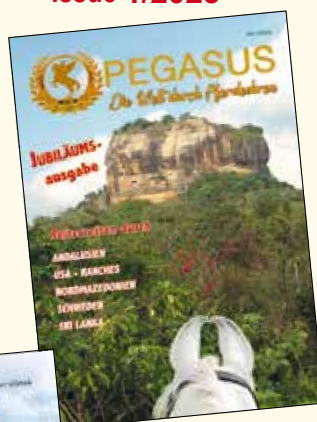
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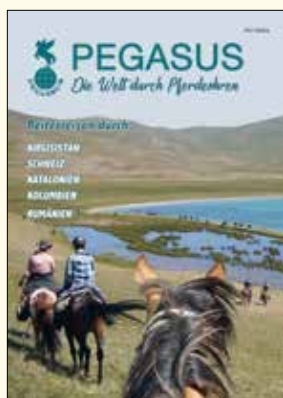
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*on horseback through...*  
*...the Balearic Islands*



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*...Argentina*



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