Dressage training at its finest!

I had big plans for this week: I wanted to learn as much as possible through intensive lessons and improve my riding skills. My seat and my subtle aids definitely needed improvement, and I wanted to ride well-trained Lusitanos and get a feel for dressage lessons. So I set off from Basel to Lisbon, where I met my driver Henrique right at the airport. I was greeted by wonderful spring temperatures and it was warm and sunny. During the drive, Henrique told me about the history of Lisbon and its surroundings, and the time flew by. Just 30 minutes later, we reached the farm gate and a small horse world in a wonderful idyll opened up before us. Henrique briefly showed me my room. It was a newly renovated room with a bathroom, functional and comfortably furnished.

Immediately afterwards, I was welcomed for lunch and got to know my fellow riders: an American woman and a Swedish woman who had been living in London for a long time.
The head riding instructor, Georges Malleroni, also sat at the table and enjoyed chatting with his guests. The atmosphere at the farm was friendly, and I immediately felt welcome and at home. The facility consists of an indoor riding arena, three large outdoor paddocks for the horses, a large ring where the horses are occasionally let out to run, a large riding arena, a pool and some nice seating areas. It's the perfect place to relax and enjoy some time to yourself. Approximately 18 school horses live in the stables, along with a few private horses that are being trained or are for sale. All horses are well cared for and are looked after and monitored around the clock.

Horses that are not currently being used for lessons are lunged or ridden. Every horse gets plenty of exercise. All the horses seem very content, friendly and well-balanced.
That same afternoon, I was to have my first riding lesson with Georges Malleroni and was given Xisano, a handsome Lusitano. I familiarised myself with him in the riding hall and was allowed to
I tried out my first lessons, such as shoulder-in and leg-yielding, and proved myself in all three gaits. The lessons were very intensive, I was corrected constantly and lots of things were explained to me – just as I had imagined! Georges is the head riding instructor. He was born in France and has been teaching at Alcainca for more than 30 years. Other excellent

riding instructors are Paulo, who has been teaching at Alcainca for more than 25 years, and Renato. He has been part of the team for several years.

After my first riding lesson, I look forward to a warm shower and dinner with the others. In the evenings, we usually had fish, and meat at lunchtime. The food was always delicious, and Lena, the chef, always made us laugh with her charm. There was a cheerful, convivial and relaxed atmosphere among us. We enjoyed the delicious dessert and ended the evening with a glass of fine wine.

Over the next few days, I was to have riding lessons in the morning and afternoon. I was allowed to try out different horses and added to my knowledge and skills with a few more lessons: we practised half-pass, haunches-in, flying changes at a canter, passage and Spanish walk. It cost me a lot

It took a lot of effort and concentration to implement all the aids correctly. After a while, however, I understood how to use which weight aids and when, and how I could change the horse's shoulder. Despite the great effort involved, it was incredibly fun. My riding instructor Paulo, who I had from the second day onwards, was strict and repeated lessons until I knew how it worked and could implement it on my horse. This helped me a lot to understand the lessons and to use my aids more effectively. Both Georges and Paulo give their all in every lesson – they want the lessons to work and you to get a good feel for riding. The lessons were extremely informative and I felt like I was improving a little with each lesson.

When I wasn't sitting on a horse, I tried to help groom the horses, watched the "masters" riding or relaxed in the sun with a good book.

It reminded me a little of my early childhood days – when I still had time to groom and care for horses all day long and spend time with them.

On the penultimate day of my week, we practised galloping for a while and, for the first time in my life, I had the feeling for several moments that I could control the tempo of the gallop just by my seat. I hoped that I would be able to do the same at home

my own horse at home. I was thrilled with the personal riding progress I had already made in this one week and was very sad when, after a week, it was already time to say goodbye to the great horses, the excellent riding instructors, the delicious food and the funny chef Lena. I will definitely try to come back next year!

Angelika Kaiser, February 2019

Link to the programme:
https://www.equitour.com/alcsta.htm