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Saddle Up: Your Ultimate Guide To Your Horse Riding Adventure

Summary

Welcome to Your Next Great Adventure!	4
STEP 1: Still unsure why you should go on a horse riding holiday ? 10 excellent reasons to book a horse riding holiday.	5
5 reasons why this year should be the year you book your first horse riding holiday	5
1 – To finally take this solo trip you’ve been dreaming about	6
2 – To learn how to ride in a dream setting	6
3 – To experience truly multi-faceted trips	6
4 – To go on a budget trip without compromising on luxury	6
5 – To discover new destinations in a different way	6
... And 5 more good reasons to book as a solo traveler	7
STEP 2: What To Expect: A Horse & Hound Journalist Testimonial	9
A Mediterranean Mission	9
STEP 3: Don’t know where to start?	
We help you pick the perfect riding holiday just for you.	13
10 Questions to help you pick the perfect horseback riding holiday for YOU	13
1 – What is your main goal for your horse riding holidays?	13
2 – What is your riding level?	14
3 – Where do you want to go?	14
4 – Which climate and time of the year?	14
5 – How long do you want to go?	14
6 – Traveling solo, or with family or friends?	15
7 – Multi-day trail or residential stay?	15
8 – Which level of adventure or comfort are you after?	16
9 – Only horseback trail riding or other activities too?	16
10 – What is your budget?	16
How to Assess your Riding Level?	16
STEP 4: Where to Go When?	19
The Best Destinations Month By Month	19
January – March	19
April – May	20
July – September	21
October – December	22
5 Unique Horse Riding Holidays You Haven’t Heard Of	23
Midnight Sun Rides in Iceland	23
Royal Expeditions in Rajasthan, India	24
Coffee Plantation Rides in Colombia	25

Desert Odyssey in Jordan	26
Coastal Canters in Mozambique	27
STEP 5: Prepare Body and Mind for your Horse Riding Adventure	28
How to Prepare Body and Mind for your Horse Riding Holiday	28
Rider Confidence: Our Top Tips	32
STEP 6: How to Pack & Travel like a Pro	34
Travel Tips for Equestrian GlobeTrotters	34
Riding equipment	34
Transfers	35
Financial Security	35
Insurance	35
Horse Welfare	35
Holidays with children	36
Non-riders	36
Travelling Alone	36
How To Pack For Your Horse Riding Holiday	37
General Tips	37
Riding equipment	37
Clothing	38
Extras	39
STEP 7: Discover Our Most Popular Riding Holidays	40
Europe	40
Brigands Trail, Tuscany	40
Camargue Beaches & Mountains Trail	41
Sierra de Gredos, Spain	42
Alentejo Beach Trail, Portugal	43
Americas	44
Canadian Rockies Lodge Trail, Canada	44
Drowsy Water Ranch, USA	45
Avenue of the Volcanoes, Ecuador	46
Africa	47
Ancient Adventures, Egypt	47
African Explorer, South Africa & Botswana	48
Rest of the world	49
Cappadocia Guesthouse Trail, Turkey	49
New Zealand Pack Trip, New Zealand	50
Contact Us	51

Welcome to Your Next Great Adventure!

Dear Equestrian Enthusiast and Adventure Seeker,

If you've ever dreamed of galloping across vast landscapes with the wind in your hair and a sense of freedom in your heart, but don't know where to start, then our exclusive guide to selecting the horse riding adventure of your life is just for you. Inside this PDF, you'll find a comprehensive guide to decide which riding holiday is right for you, which destinations are best when, tailored advice for riders of all levels to prepare for a horse riding holiday, and insider tips to make your travels even more special.

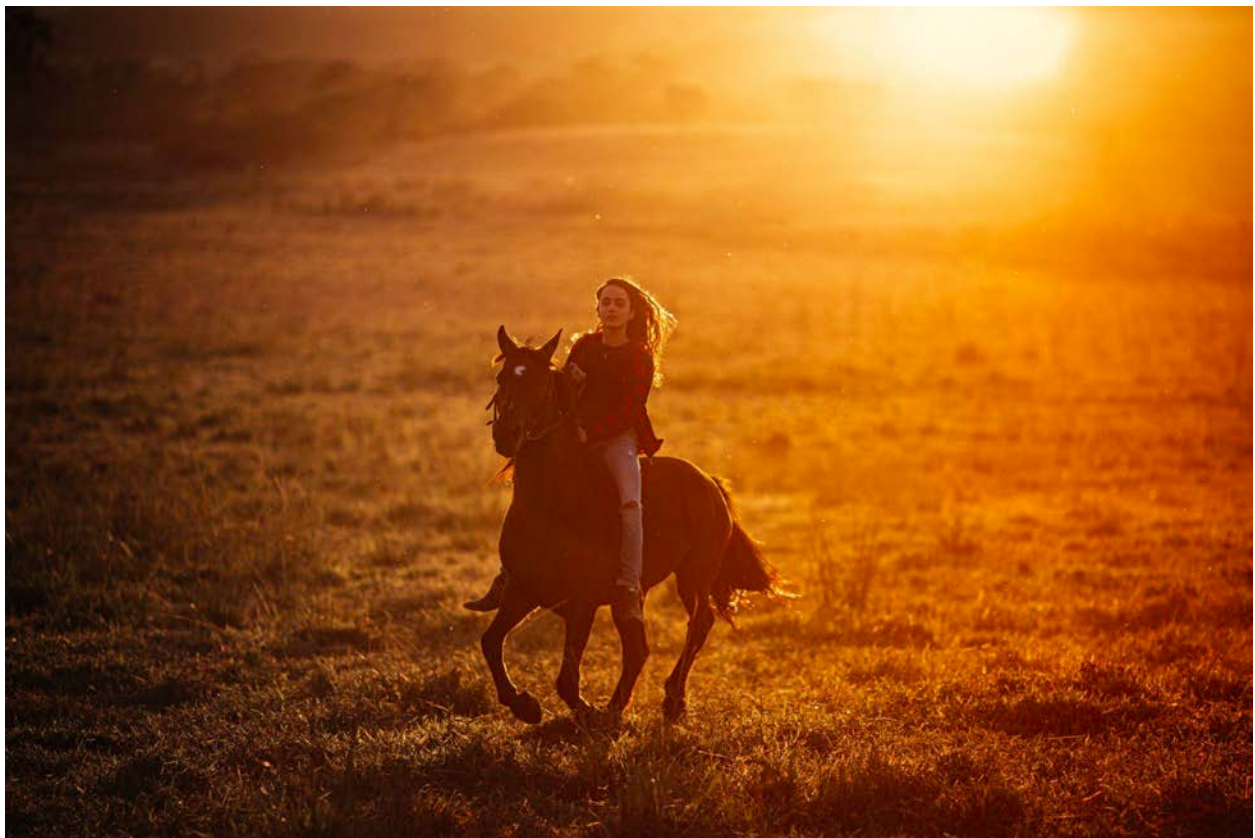
Join our community of horse riding enthusiasts by [signing up for our newsletter](#), and let us lead you to the paths less traveled—where the beauty of nature meets the thrill of horseback riding.



STEP 1: Still unsure why you should go on a horse riding holiday ? 10 excellent reasons to book a horse riding holiday.

5 reasons why this year should be the year you book your first horse riding holiday

You may have been thinking about it for a while, let's make this year the one when you make your dream come true and set off on your first multi-day trail or horse riding holiday, living your passion to the fullest in a new destination!



Wherever you're at in your horse riding journey, **read on for 5 good reasons to finally book your dream holiday now.**

1 – To finally take this solo trip you've been dreaming about

What better way to travel than to set off on an unforgettable trip to an exciting destination where you'll meet new people through a passion that connects you... Solo traveling is on the rise and if you have never tried it yet,

make 2023 the year you'll make this dream come true! Switch off from the rest of the world with a trip on the Estancia Beach Trail in Uruguay, channeling your inner Gaucho: ride on deserted beaches or practice your cattle driving skills before an excellent evening of food and wine – a true undiscovered gem in the heart of Latin America!

2 – To learn how to ride in a dream setting

Learning to ride in the warmth and beauty of the Andalusian heat sure beats a soggy 30 minutes walking around a wet arena in Kent....trips from 4 to 8 days are available and the riding itinerary is totally flexible and can be adapted to suit guests from beginners onwards – making it ideal for groups of mixed abilities and families. It all happens from a traditional Hacienda with a fabulous pool overlooking the olive groves and a local chef who rustles up delicious Spanish food using ingredients grown on site.

3 – To experience truly multi-faceted trips

You ride but your family doesn't? Or maybe you want to do more than just ride on your holiday? Look no further than the ranches of the United States. One ranch, found deep in Montana, has 520 acres of playground in a National Forest. As well as riding for all levels there are e-bikes, archery lessons, clay pigeon shooting, trout fishing and even the opportunity to follow a mule train for overnight stays in a mountain lodge. With 8 days there will be enough time to do it all.

4 – To go on a budget trip without compromising on luxury

Luxury on a budget? No problem... a short break in a Tuscan Castle should do it. Spend your mornings meandering through the most breathtaking countryside on a beautiful horse chosen to match your ability before spending the afternoon around the pool or taking advantage of the Wellness Centre onsite providing holistic and ayurvedic treatments.

5 – To discover new destinations in a different way

You will see things on a horse that you would not experience on foot (well you would, but it would take you rather longer). Traditional countries that are popular for riding holidays include Iceland, Portugal, France and Spain but newer destinations are on the rise. The Leopard Safari in North West India is a once in a lifetime trip as well as the Volcanoes Trail in Ecuador – or head to the world's best beach riding in Mozambique. Closer to home Albania, Bosnia and Bulgaria are high on the list for new experiences.



... And 5 more good reasons to book as a solo traveler

Don't let the fact that none of your friends can ride stop you!

Wherever you're at in your horse riding journey, read on for 5 good reasons to travel solo and realize your dream.

1 – Enjoy the all-inclusive life

Horse-riding trips tend to be all-inclusive affairs. All you need to do is get yourself to the airport and you will be met on arrival and taken care of until being dropped back at the airport on the final day. You won't need to navigate foreign taxis, bus timetables or metros alone as you'll be collected from arrivals and transported directly to your hotel. This really takes the pressure off as you can relax as soon as you set foot on the plane!

2 – Meet like-minded people

You'll meet like-minded people – you will soon join a group of individuals, all with a passion for horses and travelling. You will all be riders and you will have all chosen the same trip, giving a basis of shared interest that makes socialising easy and relaxed.

3 – Make new friends for life

Riding together is a great bonding experience as you get to know your fellow travellers along the trail. There is always lots to talk about over the dinner table after a day in the saddle. Riders often remain in touch and continue to travel together afterwards.

4 – No single supplements

Many trails offer to waive the single supplement if you are willing to share with another rider. As most of the time is spent exploring on horseback you tend to not spend that much time in your room and often, the trail works out that being willing to share means you end up with your own room anyway at no extra cost.

5 – Become the adventurous rider you've always wanted to be

No matter which trip you chose, heading off on a solo trip always feels adventurous. You'll be stepping out of your comfort zone, to a place you have never been before, meeting new people that will leave lasting memories. So our message is to go for it; travelling alone is an exciting and rewarding experience especially if it's on horseback!



STEP 2: What To Expect: A *Horse & Hound* Journalist Testimonial

This article originally appeared in the 5th January 2023 issue of *Horse & Hound Magazine* and was written by Carol Phillips, who participated in our Blue Coast Trail in Turkey. Read on to discover her travel journal!

A Mediterranean Mission

Rocky riverbeds, thunderstorms and slap-up picnics are all part of the adventure, finds Carol Phillips as she saddles up the Arabian "GeeGee" for a trail-riding holiday in the Turkish Mediterranean.

As I lay in my sleeping bag, listening to a thunderstorm raging outside my bell tent and felt the fine rain falling on me inside, I did momentarily ponder my life choices.

When the chance to go on a trail-riding holiday in Turkey, plus a weekend riding in Wales, came up earlier in the year courtesy of riding holiday agents SaddleTravel, I jumped at the chance. I had not been to Turkey before, but I envisaged riding along beaches in beautiful sunshine, cantering through the forests and swimming in the sea.

The implications of the fact we were going to be camping for several nights in late November and had been warned to wear short riding boots with thick grippy rubber soles, rather than traditional smooth-soled riding boots as these were not going to be suitable for the terrain we were going to be traversing, didn't fully register at that stage.

Fast forward a few weeks, and there I was, wild camping in a forest in Turkey with my fellow intrepid adventurers. Having flown from Heathrow to Istanbul to Dalaman, on the first evening we enjoyed a generous traditional Turkish meal, accompanied by live music in a restaurant on the banks of the beautiful Lake Köyceğiz with our guide Nico Guillo, the owner and manager of Kapadokya Ranch in Cappadocia. Born in France, Nico is a horseman with extensive experience of crossing countries, having ridden across Afghanistan, among other places. Having been based in the centre of Turkey for more than 20 years, he is fluent in French, English and Turkish. All of Nico's mounts were either full or part-bred Arabian. During our trail, he rode a beautiful grey stallion, who was incredibly well behaved, including while being tethered overnight (albeit at a small distance) alongside the mares and geldings we were riding.



After spending our first night in a local guesthouse, we met up with our mounts early on day two. I was introduced to my partner for the week, GeeGee, a small but mighty chestnut mare, who proved more than up to the challenges that lay ahead of us. Despite her advancing years, every morning she stepped out with gusto, eyes bright, ears pricked, taking in everything around us. She was as sure-footed as a mountain goat, always eager to be up with the action, but polite enough to take rear file within the group of eight when asked.

The horses wore Western-style saddles adapted to Nico's preferred design, with generously sized saddlebags that allowed us to wear multiple layers in the morning then shed them as temperatures rose, or to carry a waterproof coat to put on when needed.

Once we had prepared our horses, we headed out on foot for the first 10 to 15 minutes to allow them to warm up, before checking our girths and mounting up. We followed this pattern at the start of each ride, then repeated it in reverse later to allow the horses time to warm up before and cool down after their exertions. It also helped us riders to walk off any stiffness that had built up from the long hours in the saddle.

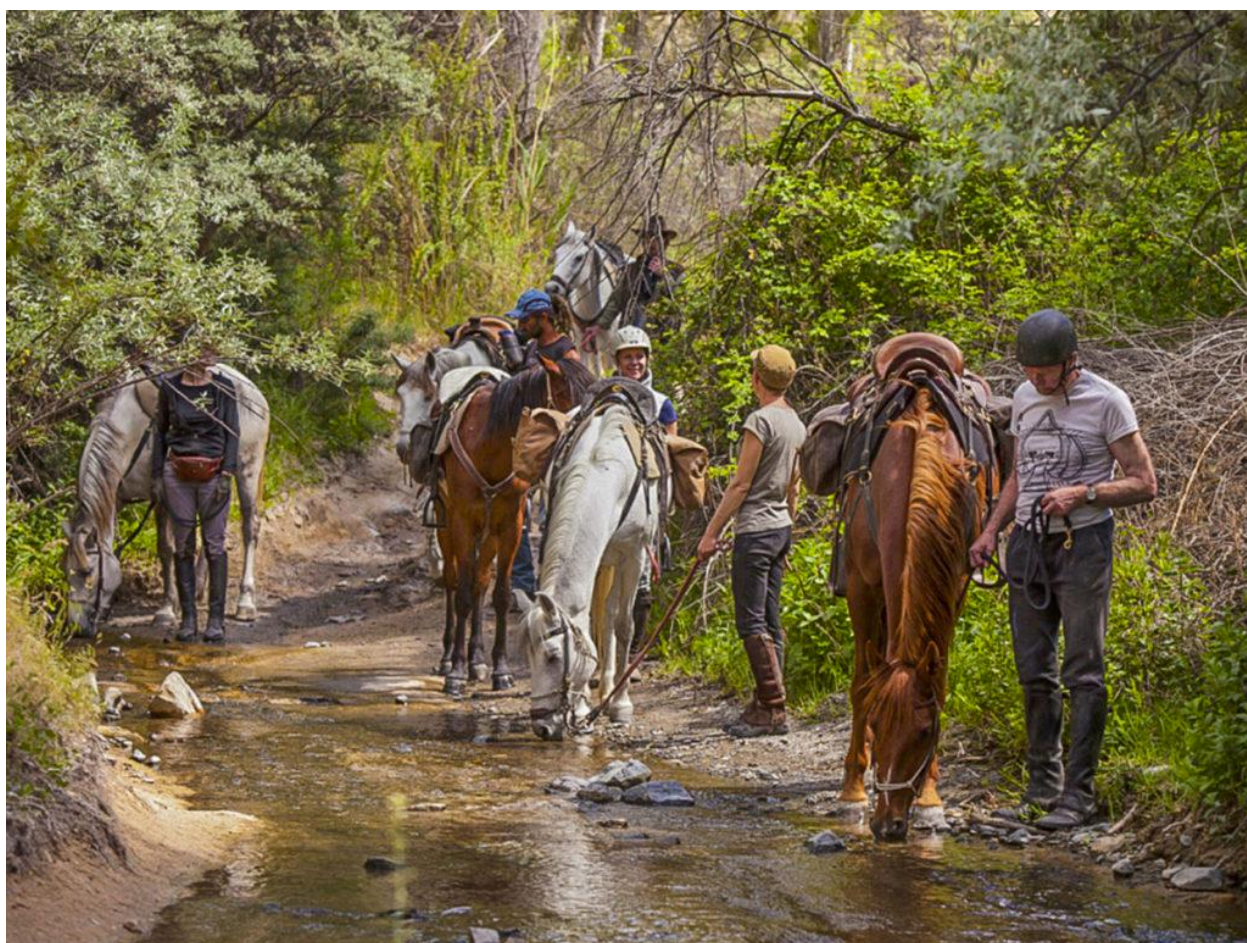
Most of the riding was at a fast walk, or a forward but consistent rolling canter, with an occasional trot. As riders, we were expected to remain on the ball at all times, so we could pick up canter or return to walk without advance warning as and when a change of pace was required.

On the first riding day, we were introduced to the eye-opening, beautiful terrain we would be covering, which ranged from wide, hard, stone and dirt tracks to rocky, dry, riverbeds, fording rivers and negotiating steep and narrow hiking trails with sheer drops alongside. Anyone with a fear of heights would be strongly recommended to keep their eyes front and centre, but to do so would mean you'd miss out on the incredible views, of which there were plenty.

Given a loose rein, the horses were incredibly skilled at negotiating the tricky, often very rocky terrain with little or no assistance from their riders. Each day, the challenging route required us to dismount and trek on foot, leading our equine partners for periods, while there were times when part of me would have preferred to do so, rather than continuing mounted. In fact, the horses were more than up to the task and my confidence in their ability grew as the week progressed. It felt like we were rarely riding on the flat, with hills being the constant order of the day.

We typically rode for around three hours in the morning, followed by a break of an hour or slightly more for lunch, then another three hours on the trail before reaching our destination for the night.

During the week, we also rode on the beach, through the sea and crossed a deep river, through which some of the horses had to swim a few strides, while we removed our boots and socks and tied them around our neck to keep them dry-all great fun while pushing our comfort boundaries, giving a real sense of achievement to each ride.



The initial plan had been to spend four nights camping along the route, which took us from the north of Lake Köyceğiz down to Dalyan, over the mountains to Gökbel, then on to the beach near Dalaman airport before

heading across more mountains to a sheltered coastline, where we enjoyed a lovely swim in the sea, before heading to our final destination in Göcek.

However, the storm on the first night, combined with other inclement weather warnings, meant alternative accommodation had to be found for us at short notice while the tents dried out, so we only camped once at the start of the week then again at the end of the week. I was grateful the team managed to find us dry places to sleep, even if some of the accommodation was basic. And it was lovely to spend a night under the stars at the end of the week – with very little light pollution, it really was a beautiful spectacle.

The inclement weather at the start of the week curtailed our daytime activities for a couple of days, as we urgently needed to get to the ferry to cross the Dalyan river before a storm arrived that could prevent it from running. This meant we bypassed a beach ride that would usually form part of the route. Typically the horses would stand on the open deck of the car ferry for the short journey, but the wet weather made it slippery, so they were loaded in pairs into a horse trailer and made the journey in this way instead.

Once the horses were all safely on the correct side of the river, we enjoyed lunch at a local restaurant before heading out on a boat ride on the lagoon. We briefly visited the beach as the forecast storm hit, before heading back to base. The plan had been to stop off and visit the Roman ruins, but as the rain lashed down, the group agreed to give it a miss. We returned to the restaurant that evening to enjoy a fresh fish supper sourced from the lagoon.

Happily, the weather improved as the week progressed, so we enjoyed visiting Turtle Beach, which is home to a sanctuary where we saw injured turtles recovering before they return to the sea, rode in some beautiful Mediterranean weather and took the chance to swim in the calm, warm sea before lunch on the final day – which was much more what I had been expecting.

Ah yes, lunch. It would be remiss of me not to wax lyrical about the delicious fresh food provided by Nico's excellent crew. A clever set-up of Land Rover support vehicles meant that freshly cooked food could be provided in any location, so we enjoyed breakfast in the forest, lunch at the foot of a waterfall and on the beach, plus evening meals in the open air. We were kept well-fuelled for the active nature of this holiday and it all tasted great.

My verdict? This is an ideal riding holiday for competent riders who also enjoy camping and hiking. *Anyone considering it should be happy hiking up (or down) steep, narrow, rocky paths for half an hour or more at a time with a horse in tow – this is more of a challenge than it sounds. On the final afternoon, the trail was so challenging that we sent the horses ahead loose, so we could climb at our own pace and not get in their way. The horses made light work of the job, while many of us were left gasping for breath, but reaching the top felt like a real achievement.*

STEP 3: Don't know where to start?

We help you pick the perfect riding holiday just for you.

10 Questions to help you pick the perfect horseback riding holiday for YOU

That's it, you've decided to book your next trip, and it's going to be a horseback riding holiday! You're ready to experience a multi-day trip in the saddle, riding several hours a day, connecting with your horse and discovering new horizons from horseback.



But before you dive head first, here are **10 questions to ask yourself** to choose the best format and destination and make sure you'll go on a trip that matches all your dreams:

1 – What is your main goal for your horse riding holidays?

What is your main motivation to go and spend several days in the saddle, away from home? Are you looking to improve your technique or resistance? To combine your passion for horses and the joy of discovering new places? To meet new people who share the same passion? Identifying what is your main motivation will enable you to pick a format and destination that fulfills your main objective!

2 – What is your riding level?

Some destinations welcome all levels, from beginners to advanced, while others cater to riders who already feel comfortable in the saddle. Be realistic about your riding level and in doubt, reach out to the organiser to check what the required level is. Nothing wrong with going for a fast-paced trail to challenge yourself, but to enjoy your riding holiday to the fullest, pick an excursion where you will feel confident and in control throughout the full trail.

3 – Where do you want to go?

Somewhere nearby or a faraway destination? Easily reachable or wild and remote? Would you like to combine your riding holiday with new cultural and touristic discoveries or rather focus on your riding adventure in nature? SaddleTravel offers riding holidays in more than 30 different countries, with various formats: some of them very nature-oriented, others combining time in the saddle and touristic activities. Some destinations even merge the two and offer horseback cultural tours and visits!

4 – Which climate and time of the year?

If you have a busy schedule with little flexibility on dates, then ask yourself which kind of climate you are after for your next holiday: for instance if you plan on going on a trip during winter time but you're actually dreaming of sunny, warm weather, then pick a destination in the southern hemisphere; if you're dreaming of a winter wonderland adventure, European or American destinations will offer just what you need.

5 – How long do you want to go?

If you want to fully switch off from your daily life, go for a longer trip of over a week. However if you're a bit pressed with time but still would like to experience a once-in-a-lifetime trip, you can choose from our shorter stays: trips that last less than a week or just over a long weekend, from 4 to 5 days.



6 – Traveling solo, or with family or friends?

Do you dream of a solo trip with quality me-time to truly focus on your riding, or to meet new people who share the same passion? Some of our destinations are perfect for solo travelers. If on the contrary you're traveling with your family or friends, then take into account everyone's riding level and experience to find a destination that will please everyone. Some destinations also welcome non-riding guests so that groups or couples can enjoy beautiful holidays together.

7 – Multi-day trail or residential stay?

If you're opting for a long trail, you'll be riding several days in a row and sleep in a different place every night. Usually your luggage follows in a support car but in some cases you may have to travel light, with your essentials in saddlebags. If you prefer to enjoy the comfort of coming back to the same accommodation every night, choose a residential stay: the hacks are star-shaped around the hotel and some destinations even combine the two formats, to enjoy the best of both worlds!

8 – Which level of adventure or comfort are you after?

Are you seeking a true adventure to get out of your comfort zone, or are you more into relaxing in a comfortable accommodation while riding everyday? If you're feeling adventurous, go for a multi-day trail with camping: you'll spend incredible moments under the stars with your two- and four-legged travel friends. If for you, holiday rhymes with luxury, go for a residential stay in an accommodation that offers additional services like a swimming pool, spa, massages, etc. to complement perfectly long days in the saddle!

9 – Only horseback trail riding or other activities too?

Some destinations focus on pure trail riding in nature, but if you would like to take advantage of your holiday to improve your technique in flatwork or jumping, choose a host that also offers riding lessons or intensive programmes so that you can combine the joy of hacking and riding lessons. Some destinations, for instance the American ranches, offer many other activities such as fishing, shooting, cycling or hiking.

10 – What is your budget?

At [SaddleTravel.com](https://www.saddletravel.com) you can find horseback riding holidays for every budget. Ranging from £550 all inclusive for a week of trail riding in Morocco, to luxurious holidays such as a horse riding safari in Kenya or Botswana, you'll be spoilt with choice and are sure to find a horse riding holiday that matches your dreams and your budget.

How to Assess your Riding Level?

6 tips to assess your riding level for your next horse riding holidays

You're considering booking a horse riding holiday with SaddleTravel.com, how exciting! Before you do so, it's important to assess your riding level to ensure that you choose the holiday that's right for you so that you have the best time in and out of the saddle. Riding a horse in a new environment and terrain can be challenging, so it's essential to be honest about your ability level to avoid any mishap.



Here are six tips to help you assess your horse riding level before booking your next horse riding holiday:

1. Evaluate your experience level

If you're new to horse riding, it's essential to gain some experience and confidence before booking a horse riding holiday. Make sure you're comfortable riding at all gaits (walk, trot, and canter) and have experience riding on varied terrain.

2. Be honest about your riding ability

It's crucial to assess your riding ability realistically. Can you mount and dismount with ease and without assistance? Do you maintain proper posture and balance while riding? Do you have good control over the horse's movements?

3. Consider your physical fitness level

Horse riding can be physically demanding, especially on a holiday that involves long hours in the saddle, several days in a row. Evaluate your overall fitness level to ensure that you possess the stamina and endurance to handle the physical activity required.

4. Research the horse riding holiday

Research the type of riding that the holiday involves and the terrain that you'll be riding on. Will the main gait be walk, or does the holiday involve a lot of fast canter and gallop? Some holidays may require a higher level of experience or fitness than others, and at SaddleTravel.com we have a wide range of destinations and trails to suit your level.

5. Consult with a professional

If you're unsure of your riding level, it's a good idea to consult with a professional. A qualified instructor or trainer can evaluate your riding ability and offer guidance on how to improve.

6. Ask us!

If you have any doubts about your ability level, don't hesitate to ask us for advice. We will be able to provide you with information about the level of experience required for the holiday you're interested in and will offer guidance on whether it's suitable for your level of riding ability. Knowing your riding ability will also enable us to match you with the perfect horse for your level so that you can ride with full confidence into your next horse riding holiday!

By considering these factors, you can assess your horse riding level and make an informed decision about booking your next horse riding holiday. Remember, safety should always be the top priority when horse riding, so be honest about your abilities and take the necessary steps to prepare for the holiday. A horse riding holiday can be a fantastic experience, so choose a holiday that's right for your ability level to make the most of your time in the saddle.

Contact us at trails@saddletravel.com or by phone or WhatsApp on 0044 1497 888 228.

STEP 4: Where to Go When?

The Best Destinations Month By Month

For any regular visitors to our website the sheer range of choice can be overwhelming. How to pick between quaffing [Champagne](#) in France and visiting glaciers in [Iceland](#)? Or whipping down the beaches of [South Africa](#) or wildlife spotting in [Botswana](#)? Sometimes what narrows down the choice of trips comes down to simple dates; when you can set time aside and get away.

Use our guide below to help you plan the best time to visit a few of our most special destinations:

January – March



If your priority is to get away as soon as possible in the first quarter of the year, from January until March, **Latin America** is worth investigating. With good weather all year round, there are plenty of opportunities to embrace your adventurous side, from playing polo or crossing the Andes in [Argentina](#) to wild swimming in [Costa Rica](#) or scaling volcanoes in [Ecuador](#)!

April – May



As we move into spring, the months of April, May and June are the perfect time to visit **Spain**. From our popular hacienda in Andalucia to the coastal hills of Galicia, [Spain](#) offers some of the best beach riding in the world. Spring in Spain offers beautiful sunshine and pleasant heat without the humidity that you can get in the height of summer – perfect for a spring trip with the advantage of cheap and plentiful flights from the UK.

July – September



For all serious riding holiday aficionados there can only be one destination for summer: [Kenya](#) to witness one of the most spectacular natural events in the world, the Great Migration.

The Maasai Mara wildebeest migration crosses from Tanzania to Kenya during the late summer and this is something that can only be truly appreciated by witnessing it first hand and of course on horseback!

For another type of sublime open spaces and riding adventures, discover our North American trips: explore the untouched Banff National Park on horseback in [Canada](#) or stay at a working cattle ranch in the [United States](#) where you can also try out plenty of other outdoor activities such as hiking, biking, shooting, or even rodeo watching!

October – December



As we approach the end of the year there is still time to fit in one last jaunt before the festive season begins. During October, November and December experienced riders can gallop past the pyramids and float lazily down the river Nile in [Egypt](#); the perfect antidote to the busy upcoming Christmas season.

If you prefer to fully embrace the cold season, then head to [Iceland](#) for unforgettable memories under the Northern Lights, learning how to ride gentle Icelandic ponies and their unique and comfortable gait, the tölt.

5 Unique Horse Riding Holidays You Haven't Heard Of

Many equestrians dream of combining their passion for riding with their love of travel. But while there are many well-known destinations for horseback vacations, let's venture off the beaten path. Dive into these five lesser-known, yet extraordinary, horse riding holidays around the world.

Midnight Sun Rides in Iceland



Overview: Ride the Icelandic horse, known for its fifth gait, the tölt, under the magical Midnight Sun in the land of fire and ice.

Highlight: Venture through geothermal valleys, past cascading waterfalls, and on the black sand beaches, all under a sun that never sets.

Best Time to Go: June to August.

Discover all our Iceland horse riding holidays [here](#).

Royal Expeditions in Rajasthan, India



Overview: Embrace the royal spirit of Rajasthan, the land of kings and palaces, by riding through its historic cities and vast deserts.

Highlight: Relive history as you pass majestic forts, ancient temples, and traditional villages, all while experiencing the opulence of Rajasthani hospitality.

Best Time to Go: October to March.

Check out our horse riding safari in India [here](#).

Coffee Plantation Rides in Colombia



Overview: Explore the lush coffee plantations of Colombia, learning about the coffee-making process while on horseback.

Highlight: Sip on freshly brewed coffee, right where it's grown, after a day of riding through the verdant hills and valleys.

Best Time to Go: December to March.

Go on a unique horse riding holiday in Colombia [here](#)!

Desert Odyssey in Jordan



Overview: Ride through the dramatic desert landscapes of Wadi Rum, also known as the Valley of the Moon, followed by a journey to the ancient city of Petra.

Highlight: Camp under a canopy of stars in the desert and discover Petra's iconic Rose-Red city, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Best Time to Go: March to May or September to November.

Ride through the Wadi Rum desert in [a unique horse riding holiday in Jordan](#).

Coastal Canters in Mozambique



Overview: Revel in the beauty of Mozambique’s untouched beaches, riding along the Indian Ocean’s coast and exploring quaint fishing villages.

Highlight: Experience the thrill of a beach gallop at sunset, with the waves at your side and the wind in your hair.

Best Time to Go: May to November.

Let’s go explore [the Mozambique beaches](#) on horseback!

The world is vast, and its equine adventures are plentiful. Whether you’re a seasoned rider or a novice, these unique horse riding holidays offer a perfect blend of culture, nature, and exhilarating equestrian experiences. So saddle up, and let the world be your riding arena!

Dreaming of your next horse riding adventure? Check out our exclusive packages for these destinations and more, and let us make your equestrian travel dreams come true!

STEP 5: Prepare Body and Mind for your Horse Riding Adventure

How to Prepare Body and Mind for your Horse Riding Holiday

Congratulations, you just booked your next horse riding holiday, an exciting trail where you will be several days in a row on horseback. Departure is approaching fast! Today we share with you some simple advice to physically (and mentally!) prepare for your upcoming trail ride so that you can enjoy it to the fullest.



What does “riding fitness” mean?

Physical fitness simply means the ability to carry out and sustain a physical activity by mobilising motivation, concentration and physical ability.

For anyone practicing a sport, whatever the sport, their level or their goals, physical fitness is an important parameter as the body needs to be prepared to sustain the effort in order to reach the expected objective.

On a horse riding trail, the main goal being to be in the saddle for 4 to 7 hours a day without being in pain at the end of the day, and to be able to happily get back into the saddle the next day – which is not always a piece of cake! Keep reading to know about the 3 types of preparation you can do ahead of your holiday to be in your top shape and have the best time of your life.

How to work on stamina / endurance

Work on your endurance to enjoy exhilarating gallops out in the open. In order to improve your riding fitness, working on endurance is key. That way you won't be out of breath during short but intense bursts of effort such as cantering or galloping. All the more, you'll be able to hold on longer and enjoy the ride throughout the whole duration of the trail.

Here are a few very simple tips you can follow a few weeks before you depart to work on your endurance:

- Take the stairs instead of the lift
- If you're commuting to work, get off the bus or the tube one station early and walk to your destination
- Go for a run, cycle or swim, and vary the pace
- Go on regular walks or hikes
- Cycle to your destinations instead of taking the car or public transports – and it's good for the planet too!
- If you can, go ride in a horse riding center to get back into the saddle before your trail
- If you can, go on longer hacks in the countryside, riding for over an hour.

And don't forget to do some stretching before and after these physical efforts for a faster and smoother recovery! Keep reading below for the other 2 types of physical and mental prep that will make you a healthy and happy trail rider.

Strength training

Strength train for a better, relaxed posture for these long hours in the saddle. As riders know, being both toned and relaxed are key when horse riding. That is why strength training is essential for riders.



But strength training does not have to rhyme with stuffy gyms and intimidating machines. You can easily strength train from the comfort of your home, without any equipment, using body weight exercises only. You will very quickly see progress by training regularly with just a few simple moves – the ideal frequency being 2 to 3 times a week. There are many strength training exercises and routines out there, but some moves are more suited to complement and support horse riding.

We have selected some here for you, and you can also find some specific horse riding-targeted strength training routines online:

- Core and abs strength training: simple exercises like holding a plank over 30 seconds, lie down leg lifts, slow bicycle crunches.
- Back strength training: holding bridge pose, superman holds, swimmers.
- Quads strength: squats, holding a chair pose with your back against the wall.
- Glutes strength: squats, dynamic bridge pose.
- Arms strength: regular push ups, triceps push ups.
- Hip flexors: in a table top posture, straighten one leg back then bringing the knee in to the chest; open and circling the knee out to the side; “dead bug” move lying on the back.

Thanks to these exercises and without even realising it, you will get more toned, stronger and you will find yourself being more relaxed in the saddle.

There is still one more thing you can do ahead of your horse riding holiday – read on to find out!

Preparing your mind and relaxing mentally

Breathing exercises and meditation help you better connect with your horse. Learn or re-learn how to breathe, slowing down the breath and focusing on yourself and on your body sensations. This is great for you and for your horse! You will be more relaxed in the saddle, your posture will naturally improve and riding will feel less tiring on the body.

If you can, take some yoga or stretching classes (in person or at home watching videos online) to work on your mobility and flexibility, which will greatly help with your posture in the saddle and with recovery after riding. This will also give you plenty of ideas for great stretches you can do at home and on the trail to help with muscle and joint recovery every day.

All of the above activities will prepare your body and mind for the long, sustained effort that is a horse riding trail, and you will feel physically and mentally more comfortable.



As you are more relaxed and mentally available, you'll be able to enjoy the beauty of the incredible landscapes you will be riding through even more!

Rider Confidence: Our Top Tips

All riders, no matter their level of experience, can be hit by an attack of nerves when riding. On a riding holiday you are riding an unfamiliar horse in unfamiliar terrain and with a guide you do not yet know.

Read on to find our top tips to banish those riding nerves for good so you can get on with the most important task: enjoying your holiday! As you are more relaxed and mentally available, you'll be able to enjoy the beauty of the incredible landscapes you will be riding through even more!



How To Take Control Of Your Nerves

1. Trust your hosts: Be reassured that the horses you ride on a riding holiday are almost all incredibly experienced and relaxed trail horses, used to many different riders and very used to the terrain you will be covering. Your holiday hosts will be aware of your preferences regarding the type of horse you like to ride so you will not be paired with a young or untrained horse (unless that is what you requested!).

2. Breathe: take a big breath in and sigh as you breathe out, do it a couple of times and then normal size breaths in, but continue to sigh as you breathe out. Your horse may also respond to the outward sigh as a signal that all is calm, panic over.

3. Count your breath: breathe in one, out two, in three, out four, etc. until you reach 10 and then you start over again at one. This focuses your attention elsewhere and helps you to control your breathing rate; the slower your breathing, the more calm you will feel. You can also distract your mind by singing or humming under your breath.

4. Relaxing body & mind: Complete a mental scan of your body to release tense muscles and promote relaxation. This is a hypnotherapy technique that is really effective.

- Face and jaw are relaxed
- Shoulders away from ears
- Ribcage relaxed and not lifted and tense
- Elbows heavy and hands soft
- Legs relaxed and heavy
- Feet, toes and ankles, relaxed and flexible.

5. Positive visualization: many riders, once they start to feel nervous start visualising things going badly . This negative visualization is sometimes totally subconscious and you might not even realise you're doing it. Try to use positive visualization instead; imagine having a fantastic time, feeling confident and having the experience of a lifetime, usually this is exactly what will happen!

6. It's good to talk: if you are still feeling anxious speak to your guide, none of the guides will want anyone to be feeling insecure on their trail and sometimes speaking with someone who knows your horse well can make all the difference.

STEP 6: How to Pack & Travel like a Pro

Travel Tips for Equestrian GlobeTrotters

Get the most out of your riding holiday, whether it's your first or fiftieth!



Riding equipment

While riding hats are available at many stables, for your own comfort we strongly advise you to bring your own, most airlines will allow you to travel with the riding hat attached to the outside of your hand luggage, handily saving space in your suitcase and helping you identify your fellow trail riders en route! Footwear is also important, wear a closed shoe or boot preferably with a small heel. Trainers or wellies are not usually acceptable or comfortable. Before going on the ride we provide you with a comprehensive packing list tailored to that trail.

Riding Health

The most common health concern from guests on a riding holiday are sunburn. Do not underestimate the strength of the sun when you are outside for 8 hours a day. Even in relatively cooler climates such as Iceland you should protect your face, hands and forearms with a high factor sun cream.

Transfers

Most of the horse riding holidays include airport transfers (or they are available for an extra cost.) One of the best parts of any horse riding holiday is that once you get yourself to the airport all logistics, travel arrangements and decisions are taken care of by the guides. Sit back as you are collected from the airport and whisked off to the start of the trail with no effort necessary.

Financial Security

The cost of all our trails are the same as if you'd booked direct, but with the extra security, firstly that the holiday has been inspected by one of our travel agents and secondly, that your money is safe with a UK-based company.



Insurance

Travel insurance is mandatory for all guests travelling abroad on our riding holidays. We can recommend a list of travel insurance providers that we have personally used but there are many options. It's important to check that your insurance covers horse-riding as an activity and covers cancellation in case you find yourself unable to go on the trip.

Horse Welfare

The condition of horses in tourism is a huge issue and horse welfare is an essential part of our inspection process when choosing rides for our website. When travelling, if you only ride horses in an acceptable condition, you'll be voting with your money for an improvement in the condition of all horses. Things to look out for are normal

demeanor and behaviour, well fitting equipment, no visible wounds and in good condition (fit and neither underweight nor overweight.)



Holidays with children

A small number of our holidays are suitable for children although most are only for adults. Based stays work better for families as they can usually offer a bespoke riding programme. We recommend all the US ranches as well as our Andalusian Hacienda and Castle in Tuscany who welcome families with children, a fantastic getaway for adventurous families.

Non-riders

Many of our holidays are suitable for bringing along a non-rider. Some lay on other activities such as walking, fishing, biking or swimming while others organise meals and accommodation and non-riders are welcome to make their own plans during the riding time. Non-riders are always offered a reduced cost on the full price.

Travelling Alone

The majority of guests booking a riding holiday are solo travellers and all our holidays are ideal for people travelling on their own. You will ride with like minded people, able to be as sociable as you want to be.

How To Pack For Your Horse Riding Holiday

Horse-riding holidays require a unique approach to packing regardless of the destination. There are not many trips where you are likely to be off the beaten track, outside for much of the day, travelling through diverse scenery in changeable weather conditions.

General Tips

Many horse-riding essentials are undeniably bulky (hat, boots and lets not even start on a body protector) when trying to cram them into the standard size suitcase.

The biggest space-saving tip is to ride in short boots (riding, hiking, walking boots) and wear them through the airport, saving precious space in your bag.

Pack in advance! Part of the stress of packing is due to the urgency involved. Packing a few days before you go allows you time to remember things you've forgotten.

Check the weather at your destination and the packing list we will have sent you. If you are doing a trail which includes camping you'll usually need to bring some extras. There is nothing worse than arriving at your destination and realising you were meant to pack a sleeping bag!

To save space, pack your riding equipment, toiletries and electrical items first and clothes (that can be squashed down) on top. You can save a lot of space by rolling your clothes.

Riding equipment

- ☐ Short riding/hiking boots and half chaps take up the least space if you wear the boots through the airport
- ☐ Riding hat: if worried about space, check if you can borrow one at your destination.
- ☐ Gloves: even in hot weather these are useful to protect your fingers from blisters from the reins. Waterproof ones are great if expecting wet weather.
- ☐ Jodhpurs/riding tights: Lightweight riding tights can be good in hot climates and waterproof jodhpurs are great in changeable weather. At the US ranches many people ride in jeans. Bring several pairs as you will likely be riding for 5 or 6 days depending on the trip.



Clothing

- ☐ In hot climates it is much more comfortable to ride in tops designed for exercise/running (H&M Sport have a great and affordable collection) rather than cotton t-shirts which can be unbearably hot.
- ☐ For all trips it's a good idea to bring a couple of long-sleeved shirts to protect your arms either from the sun or wind.
- ☐ In changeable weather conditions, pack a base layer (we like merino wool as it's thin and packs down small while being warm and cosy) and a mid layer (fleece or woollen sweatshirts/jumpers). Bring a few and add extra layers until you reach your desired warmth. Bear in mind you will get warmer as you ride.
- ☐ Sport socks are great for preventing rubbing and blisters from riding boots especially if you are not used to riding all day.
- ☐ Waterproof jacket. Special care should be taken to ensure your jacket is completely waterproof. Showerproof and water resistant are unfortunately not the same thing.
- ☐ Casual clothes for evening. Don't be the person forced to spend their evenings in jodhpurs and boots because they forgot to pack trainers/sandals/casual wear!
- ☐ Swimwear – depending on the trail there may be opportunities to swim or a pool at some hotels or even an unexpected waterfall on the trail so it's usually a good idea to pack something to swim in.



Extras

- ☐ Travel adaptor and charger – With most people using their phone as their camera a travel adaptor and charger is essential and can be difficult to pick up in more remote locations.
- ☐ Headphones – For listening to radio/music when on the plane or in the evenings if you are room-sharing.
- ☐ Book/Kindle – Using a Kindle is a fantastic space saver.
- ☐ Local currency – Always try to carry a small amount in local currency ready for any impromptu stop-offs at bars or cafes.
- ☐ Power bank – An extremely useful piece of kit if staying in remote regions without electricity or when camping.
- ☐ Torch – Essential when camping and useful if sharing a room and you need to find something in the middle of the night!
- ☐ Snacks – Not an essential but a couple of cereal bars can make all the difference if a day's riding stretches on longer than anticipated.
- ☐ Reusable water bottle that will fit in a saddlebag.
- ☐ And of course.... a sense of adventure!

STEP 7: Discover Our Most Popular Riding Holidays

All ready to go on your horse riding holiday but just need some extra inspiration?

You will find here some of our most popular trails on each continent, that our riders have been enjoying and loving since the beginning of SaddleTravel.com - and for even more inspiration, visit our [Holiday Finder](#) on our website.

Europe

Brigands Trail, Tuscany



8 days / 7 nights / 5 riding days.

Closest airport: Any Rome airport, Italy.

Riding level: All riding abilities are catered for and your stay will be tailored to your specific requirements. Beginner and novice riders will be offered a mix of tuition and easy trail rides, more experienced riders can enjoy a full day trail ride as well as lessons and half day rides.

Explore the charm of Tuscany, crossing vast, unspoiled territory without restrictions. Riding alongside lakes through unchanged villages, admire the castles, palaces and archeological sites that dot this region. Your Italian guides at this family run castle will lead you along some of the hidden trails used by the “Brigands” (outlaws) to escape 200 years ago.

The castle offers a perfect location for an authentic country holiday in the south of Tuscany, where you can explore the picturesque neighbouring historic towns of Orvieto, Sorano, Pitigliano and Bolsena.

Short on time? Take a look at the [Tuscany Short Break](#).

[Camargue Beaches & Mountains Trail](#)



7 days / 6 nights / 5 days riding.

Closest airport: Marseille Airport or Aix-en-Provence train station, France.

Riding level: Intermediate and experienced riders.

Discover the beauty of the south of France with this expedition through the natural parks of the Luberon, the Alpilles and Camargue. Start your trip in the heart of the aromatic region of Provence and ride through the most beautiful lavender fields of France before reaching the marshes and beaches of Camargue.

[Sierra de Gredos, Spain](#)



7 days / 6 nights / 5 days riding.

Closest airport: Madrid, Spain.

Riding level: Suitable for intermediate to experienced riders, meaning you should be happy and confident cantering a horse in open spaces.

Sit back and enjoy the incredible panoramic views...

Ride the ancient paths of the Gredos Mountains on this true trail ride across central Spain. Travel west following the Tormes river valley, through breathtaking landscapes which differ each day – from medieval villages full of history, to the tops of rocky mountains, to stunning valleys. An unmissable adventure!

[Alentejo Beach Trail, Portugal](#)



8 days / 7 nights / 6 days riding.

Closest airport: Lisbon, Portugal.

Riding level: Suitable for novice and intermediate riders who are happy at walk, trot and canter. Riders must be able to mount and dismount from the ground unaided.

Discover the beauty of Portugal's Atlantic coast on this varied trail, beginning in the lush and green coastal mountains of Grandola before reaching the deserted beaches and lagoons of the Alentejo region. Beautiful, well behaved, Lusitano horses await with comfortable hotels and swimming pools for evening relaxation. A fantastic holiday in the sun for intermediate riders onwards.

Americas

Canadian Rockies Lodge Trail, Canada



6 days / 5 nights / 5 days riding.

Closest airport: Calgary, Canada.

Riding level: No previous experience is necessary for this ride, guides are happy to teach beginners the basics that they will need for the trip.

Travel high into the wild mountains and valleys of the Canadian Rockies on this adventurous pack trip in the Banff National Park. This is a pack trip where you'll travel from lodge to lodge with towering snow-capped mountains on three sides. Ideal for all levels of rider, however a good head for heights is necessary, the trail takes you up to over 8,000 ft for some truly spectacular views. A trail for adventurous riders who want to explore the wild-life filled mountains off the beaten track.

[Drowsy Water Ranch, USA](#)



7 days / 6 nights / 6 days riding.

Closest airport: Denver, USA.

Riding level: The ranch can cater for all levels of rider and all age groups.

For over 90 years this 600 acre family guest ranch has provided authentic western ranch holidays for all levels of rider. Nestled in its own private mountain valley in Colorado, the ranch promises an exciting week under the backdrop of big mountains and starry skies. Explore the vast Colorado backcountry on one of the Quarter horses crossing creeks, passing hot springs and climbing through the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The ranch suits adults and children alike and is considered a fantastic family destination where guests of any age and ability can enjoy ranch life, adult only weeks are also offered.

Avenue of the Volcanoes, Ecuador



10 days / 9 nights / 8 days riding.

Closest airport: Quito, Ecuador.

Riding level: This trail is for intermediate riders confident at walk, trot and canter on varied and sometimes very steep terrain.

A unique adventure in the spectacular Ecuadorian high Andes. This trail takes you through the heart of Ecuador's Avenue of the Volcanoes, just 45 minutes south of the historic colonial city of Quito. The perfect trail for riders looking for an adventure in comfort, the traditional hospitality with a touch of luxury at this hacienda is second to none. Running for over a decade, this trail was understandably voted one of the top horse treks in the world by CNN.

Africa

Ancient Adventures, Egypt



8 days / 7 nights / 6 days riding.

Closest airport: Cairo, Egypt.

Riding level: Riders should be comfortable with the basics of riding (in control at the walk, trot, and canter).

This week-long tour will show you the best of Cairo and Luxor with a combination of riding and sight-seeing. Highlights will include a ride at the Pyramids of Giza, desert camping with your horses, a sunset dinner on the Nile and a visit to the Karnak and Luxor Temples. Ride forward-going horses through the desert and take in the incredible sights of this ancient land.

[African Explorer, South Africa & Botswana](#)



8 days / 7 nights / 6 days riding.

Closest airport: Johannesburg, South Africa.

Riding level: As riders will be riding amongst wild game, this holiday is for experienced, confident and calm riders with a sense of adventure.

The African Explorer takes you to two countries in one trip beginning on a private game reserve in a region of sour mixed bushveld in the north-western region of South Africa where you'll ride across an area of approximately 21,000 acres, with excellent game viewing, wonderful sandy tracks to canter along and beautiful blue dams to swim in with your horse. Transfer to Botswana to ride among the ancient landscape of rock formations, and open plains dotted with giant Baobab trees. This place feels very wild and your guide will choose the best riding routes across the reserve. Accommodation in beautiful lodges and safari camps.

Rest of the world

Cappadocia Guesthouse Trail, Turkey



8 days / 7 nights / 6 days riding.

Closest airport: Kayseri, Turkey

Riding level: Strong intermediate and experienced riders only. Riders must be able to tack up their horses and mount and dismount from the ground unaided.

This wonderful, active riding adventure takes you right into the heart of Cappadocia national park. The unique moon-like landscape with its geological wonders of fairy chimneys, lush green canyons and vast high plateaux will take your breath away. Visit the famous underground cave villages full of history and experience the second to none Anatolian hospitality.

New Zealand Pack Trip, New Zealand



8 days / 7 nights / 6 days riding.

Closest airport: Christchurch, New Zealand.

Riding level: Riders from novice to experienced level, with good physical condition to ride long hours (6 to 9 hours per day).

Join the longest pack trip in New Zealand in the heart of the South Island, on this trail riding expedition. Cross some of the largest rivers in New Zealand, (some taking up to an hour to cross). The surefooted, steadfast horses travel alongside free-running pack horses and make sure that riders are in safe hands. A real adventure for intrepid and adventurous travellers.

Camping in shearers huts and under canvas adds to the magic of this ride, on some nights there is no electricity or running water, and every night meals are cooked around an open fire. A good bottle of New Zealand wine is never far away.

Contact Us

By email: trails@saddletravel.com

By phone: 0044 1497 888 228

By WhatsApp: 0044 1497 888 228

Address:

Saddletravel.com

5 Brayford Square

London E1 0SG

United Kingdom

NC: 05411320

Website: <https://saddletravel.com>



SADDLETRAVEL.COM

