

ARK & TENT



Uniting people & animals...through travel

info@arkandtent.com[Home](#)[Articles Index](#)[Travel Articles](#)[World Beat](#)[Helping Hands](#)[Pet Projects](#)[Field Notes](#)[Trips & Tours](#)[Reader's Corner](#)[Newsletter](#)[About Us](#)**HORSE WHISPERS*****Shhh...These Horseback Rides Are Still Relatively Unknown*****By Erin Caslavka**

Let's face it: as travelers, we're always looking for that undiscovered 'secret spot' no one else has yet to find - or, at the least, that very few have found.

That same sense of secrecy applies to finding hidden spots for horseback rides - somewhere relatively untrammelled, where the whisper of the wind through the trees might be the only sound you'll hear, and the steady clop-clop of your horse seems in perfect harmony with the natural wonders that surround you.

If you want to see what the world looks like from the back of a horse (instead of from the inside of a car, tour bus, or even on foot for that matter), why not consider a visit to any of the following off-the-motorized-track destinations? We guarantee you can pretty much count on a unique perspective from any of the following equine adventures.

Patagonia, Argentina

If you've ever longed to have an entire valley - with running streams and majestic mountains - all to yourself, look no further than the "Pioneer Estancias Ride." The 9-day trip will take you from the Estancia Huechahue in San Martin de los Andes, into basalt canyons where ibis and plovers dwell. From there, you'll cross over the top of Chenque Hill, where you'll stop to admire the views of the Andes behind you and Patagonia before you. At Estancia Cerro de los Pinos, you'll pass before the Lanin Volcano and cross the Chimehuin River, where herds of red deer, guanaco, and South American rhea can be seen. For the last portion of the trip, you'll stay at Estancia Collon - located in a vast area of meadows and rolling hills. Gauchos are on hand to show you the ropes of Argentina's famous cattle trade, and then it's back again to the estancia at Huechahue.

www.hiddentrails.com

Provence, France

Discover the landscapes that inspired painters such as Cezanne in the heart of Provence, a county in France. Beginning with an introductory aperitif in the French



farm house you'll call home for a week, you'll then be led on a series of day rides. The rolling hills of the Luberon Mountain range are yours to explore, riding in canyons filled with the herbs of Provence: thyme, rosemary, wild lavender and sage. This trip also combines daily horseback rides with cultural opportunities, such as optional two-hour, formal French lessons, and scheduled

excursions to such places as a truffle and wine house, and the art studio of Cezanne. Cooking lessons in traditional French-country fare round out the total immersion package.

www.equestrianvacations.com

Bishop, California

If you've ever wanted to observe untamed, wild mustangs in their natural environment, the Inyo National Forest is one place you can do just that. Take a step back in time as you explore the Truman Meadow Area and spend four days watching the free-roaming herds that live there. Your days in the saddle will be followed with relaxing evenings spent watching the sun set as you eat meals prepared over an open fire. Every night experienced guides and guest speakers lead informational discussions on the history, social behavior and unpredictable future of the mustangs.

All rides begin at the base camp, about 30 miles from Mono Lake. Each day you'll head in a different direction, and focus on different aspects of the surrounding countryside: from its geology, to water and seasonal changes, to plant and animal life on the horse range. All the while you'll be surrounded by blue-hued mountains, forested hills, and green meadows.



www.frontierpacktrain.com

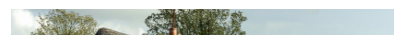
Los Angeles, California

City dwellers don't often have the chance to get out and commune with nature - especially if the city you dwell in happens to be busy Los Angeles. But tucked away inside the calm confines of Griffith Park (nestled in between Hollywood and what locals call "the Valley"), there's a stable that offers night rides through the Hollywood Hills. The Friday and Saturday evening rides start with a 90-minute trail ride from the park and up into the hills. At the crest, you're rewarded with a panoramic view of the valley below - to which you will then descend. Arriving at a Mexican restaurant, you'll tie your faithful steed up just outside and enjoy a meal at the restaurant. After everyone's finished with dinner, you'll remount and ride back to the stables through the cover of night. Seeing stars (the celestial kind, not the celluloid) from atop a horse makes this a pretty unique way to experience LA.

www.griffithparkhorserental.com

The Isle of Wight, England

If you really want to get away from it all, and you just happen to have your own horse, The Old Dairy (phone: 44 01983-811418



)is welcoming travelers and their equine companions. Located on the outskirts of Ryde, the recently upgraded building you'll be bedding down in is set amidst 70 acres and features a vaulted ceiling with exposed beams, wooden floors, and a handmade oak kitchen. Nearby woodlands provide the riding locations with windswept beaches just around the corner. Livery is available at Smallbrook Farm, which is located on the 400-year-old property's grounds.



www.visitsoutheastengland.com

Botswana & South Africa

Anyone who's ever dreamed of Africa has undoubtedly pictured vast herds of wild animals roaming grassy plains, giraffes nibbling at tree branches high above the ground, and hippos lazing alongside lush riverbanks. But have you ever pictured experiencing Africa's wildlife via horseback? In their "Big Five Riding Safari," one tour company is offering riders the chance to experience two completely different African riding experiences: one in Botswana, the other in South Africa.



Half of the rides in this riding safari take place on the Dinaka Reserve in South Africa, with the other half in Botswana's Mashatu Game Reserve. Riders will be able to see hippo, giraffe, rhino, water buffalo and zebras - with the additional opportunity to view animals such as elephants, lions and cheetahs.

Because the terrain is naturally "wild," this particular trip is best for riders with at least a modicum of experience as alot of the riding takes place along the banks of the Limpopo Rivers, and the pace is fast while in the saddle. With jumps, river crossings and steep riverbanks to navigate, those seeking a more engaging riding experience won't be disappointed.



www.aardvarksafaris.com

Photo credits: iStockphoto.com; Erin Caslavka

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