

—EQUUS— KEY

EQUESTRIAN
VACATIONS

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Which equestrian vacation is right for you? Here are key points to consider when choosing your destination.

Any equestrian vacation, especially one involving long-distance travel, represents a considerable investment of time and money. Here are the key points to consider when choosing your destination.

That's one reason to go with an established tour provider: They have years of experience in the field, they've

checked out the local contractors, they provide references on request, and they will help to negotiate disputes with outfitters. That doesn't mean you can't make your own travel arrangements; there are lots of wonderful destinations out there, and not all make it into the catalogs.

Whatever approach you take, be a smart consumer: Ask lots of questions,



talk to riders who have been there, and get the details in writing before you go. Here are some of the basic elements of an equestrian vacation.

• **Tack and gear:** Western gear is customary on ranches and pack trips in the United States and Canada, but in most other parts of the world, English saddles (or a local equivalent) are the norm. Hard hats, though not always

required, are strongly recommended.

• **Horses:** Foreign tours usually feature the native horses of the region: Arabians in Egypt, Andalusians in Spain, Welsh Cobs in Wales, and so on. Quarter Horses, Appaloosas and mustangs are common on American ranches. English-style instructional programs tend to rely on Thoroughbreds, warmbloods and hunters of various types.

• **Transportation:** In general, you are responsible for getting to and from your “gateway” city. Most vacation packages begin when you arrive at the tour’s starting point. One night’s lodging in a hotel and transfers from the nearest airport may be included, but you’ll need to arrange your own flights.

• **Food and lodging:** Lifestyle (what riders eat and where they sleep)

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS TO ASK POTENTIAL HORSE SITTERS

Once you’ve chosen your vacation, you’ve got one more decision to make: Who will care for your horse during your vacation?

Finding a reliable and knowledgeable horse sitter is crucial for your peace of mind and your horse’s well-being while you’re away.

Each horse’s situation is different and will determine the scope of the horse sitter’s job. But here are some key areas to focus on when evaluating potential sitters, along with ques-

tions to start with when interviewing candidates.

1. Experience and background:

- How long have you been working as a horse sitter?
- What types of horses have you worked with in the past?
- How would you handle emergencies or unexpected challenges with horses?
- Are you trained in basic equine first aid?

2. References and recommendations:

- Can you provide references from previous clients or employers?

- Do you have any formal training or certifications?
- What’s your typical daily routine when caring for horses?

3. Horse handling skills:

- Do you have experience handling horses with behavioral problems or quirks?
- Can you share an example of a challenging horse you’ve worked with and how you addressed the situation?

4. Communication and updates:

- How often will you provide updates on how my horse is doing?
- What is the best way to reach you if I have questions or concerns?

5. Liability and insurance:

- Are you bonded and insured? Can you provide proof of liability insurance that covers accidents or injuries involving my horse or property?

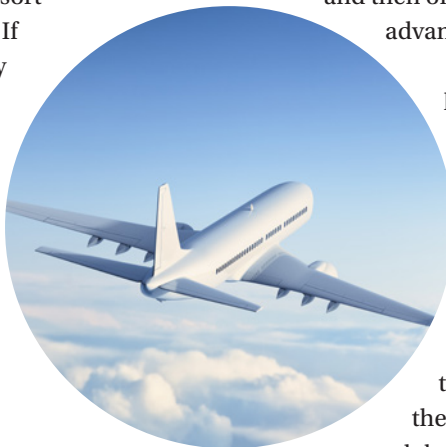


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tends to be the biggest variable of riding vacations. Options run from campfire cooking to simple tents to gourmet dining and deluxe, five-star resort accommodations. If private baths, daily towel changes and the like are important to you, ask about them in advance.

• **Liability and insurance:**

Risk is a factor in any riding trip. You will be asked to sign a waiver when you make your reservation. Accident, liability and health insurance are your responsibility; check with your provider to make sure you are adequately



covered. Personal travel insurance—required by some providers—is a good idea; most companies will refund only a portion of your payment if you cancel, and then only with 30 to 60 days' advance notice.

• **Cost:** Horseback holidays don't come cheap. Prices for trail-riding programs vary according to the time of year, the location, the length of the trip, the sophistication of the accommodations, and the number of riders in the group. Ask the tour operator to provide a detailed itinerary for your trip, specifying which services and activities are included and which are optional or entail additional fees. ■



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