






Sands of Al Ula

SAUDI ARABIA

This **point-to-point trail ride is the first of its kind in Saudi Arabia**, where Arabian horses are revered, and equestrian tourism still in its infancy. This sporty ride, created by Equus' owner Christophe, invites you to explore the **plateau and wadis of the Nkhlah nature reserve**. In the evening, a celestial field of stars reveals the desert's best secrets to your group of intrepid riders. Come and experience with us a unique **riding adventure in the footsteps of the Nabataeans**, on an itinerary exclusive to Equus Journeys and our sister company, Cheval d'Aventure.

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| Exploration Rides |  11 days (7 days riding) - |  From £0 |  |
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ITINERARY

Highlights

- 7 days riding and 6 nights sleeping under the stars in a country that was only recent open to tourism: Saudi Arabia. This route is the first of its kind, designed and explored on foot and on horseback by Christophe Leservoisier, owner of Equus Journeys.
- Discover the oasis of Al Ula, a caravan stopover on the incense and myrrh route that linked Petra to the Hedjaz: the open-air library of Jabal Ikmah, the remains of the capital of the Dadan kingdom, and of course the Nabataean city of Hegra (Al-Hijr) and its 138 monumental rock tombs.
- Ride proud Arabian horses, the pride of Saudi breeders.
- This itinerary is exclusive to Equus Journeys and our sister company Cheval d'Aventure.

The first departure of this ride is advertised as "exploratory". It will be guided by Christophe Leservoisier and Nicolas Guillo.

Day 1 — HOME - JEDDAH - MEDINA

Same-day flight to Medina. Please note that flights are not included but can be booked on request. Transfer to the hotel for a short night before your early morning transfer the following day.

Day 2 — MEDINA -AL ULA

Departure around 9:00 am - a scenic 3h30 - 4h00 drive to the Al Ula oasis. Lunch on the way or in Al Ula. In the afternoon, there will be a visit to the city of Dadan and the site of Jabal Ikmah. Dinner and overnight in the Al Ula valley.

Day 3 — AL MOGHEIRA - WADI NKHLAH - 30 km - 5-6 hrs riding

The day starts with a ride briefing by your guide. After being matched with your horse for the week, you will head due east up the Wadi Nkhlah to the

village of Umm al Wahab, a simple village of a few outdated houses, a small date palm plantation, a small mosque and camel parks. You will ride through wide landscapes, making the most of the good sandy ground to enjoy your first active trots and canters. The camp is set up in the middle of a group of shady acacia trees. Overnight in tents.

Day 4 — OUM AL WAHAB - AL TAFDAH - 24 km - 4-5 hrs riding

Today, you leave the village via the Arkakia dam, continuing your ascent of the Wadi Nkhlah, which then splits into several canyons. The landscape becomes more mountainous, more mineral and harsh, dotted with beautiful acacia trees providing welcome shade for your lunch break. You finally leave Wadi Nkhlah behind via a small path heading east. The sand suddenly turns red ochre and the landscape opens up. Overnight at camp near Moteb.

Day 5 — AL TAFDAH - SHEFA - 32 km - 5-6hrs riding

Another day in the saddle in the Saudi desert - today provides beautiful, varied landscapes, including some scattered gardens and small palm plantations, camels that indicate the presence of water nearby. Through a maze of canyons, dominated by phantasmagorical boulders, you reach the Mogheirah wadi, ideally suited to a faster pace. Finally a small canyon (the Wadi of the Leopard) leads you to a secret pass opening onto the Shefa plateau, a vast plain where you stay for two nights. Lunch at camp and a short siesta before setting off again on horseback for a lovely loop designed for lively gallops. Overnight at Shefa camp.

Day 6 — SHEFA PLATEAU - 32 km - 5-6hrs riding

Get back in the saddle under the beautiful early morning light, ready for a pacey ride across the Shefa plateau. The route takes you south of the camp, where you will likely encounter wild donkeys! Today is a day of wide open spaces and freedom. Picnic lunch on the way. Return to Shefa camp at the end of the day for another night under the stars.

Day 7 — SHEFA - ALRKAKYAH - 29 km - 5-6hrs riding

Leave camp today via the Leopard wadi, then follow the Mogheira wadi. You will ride through a collapsed spring (where water still flows), then into a large cirque of blond sand and strange rock formations. Picnic lunch on the way. Follow the track to Alrkakayh, where several wadis converge. Herders have built enclosures for their camels there. Set up camp for the evening and spend another night under a myriad stars.

Day 8 — ALRKAKYAH - MOGHEIRAH DUNES - 27 km - 5-6 hrs riding

A relaxed day with a good mix of walking and trotting through lunar landscapes opening up before you to the west. Picnic on the way. Then, leaving the trail for the last hour of riding, you return to your camp for a well-deserved rest. Overnight at camp.

Day 9 — DUNES OF MOGHEIRAH - MOGHEIRAH - AL-ULA - 26 km - 5-6 hours riding

Early morning departure on the slopes of the massif, crossing the Mogheirah dunes due north towards the village of Mogheirah. Picnic on the way. After staying goodbye to the horses and local team, transfer and overnight in Al Ula. It is possible to depart tonight from Al Ula airport.

Day 10 — AL ULA - HEGRA - EUROPE

Morning visit of Hegra. Depending on your flight route (from Tabuk, Medina or Al Ula), lunch in Wadi Ashar (not included). Overnight flight to Europe.

Day 11 — HOME

Arrive home today, depending on your flight plan.

DATES & PRICES

We are currently updating our dates and prices they will be online soon. If you want details of this holiday, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Price details

No departure for this destination. Please contact our travel advisers for more information.

- Flights or transportation to your destination (international/domestic) are not included, but can be booked on request - please contact us for rates.

- Rates are per person, based on two riders sharing a twin or double room/tent during the ride.

- Groups are composed of a minimum of 6 riders and a maximum of 10 international riders, plus guides (English/French speaking).
- Please note: the ride will also confirm for 4 riders on payment of a supplement of c. €400/£350/\$460 per person. Once the group has reached 6 people, we will remove this supplement from your invoice and refund you if you have already paid it.
- If you sign up to the ride as a solo rider and there are no other riders likely to share your room, you will be charged a single room supplement of approx. €210/\$185/\$230 (in 2024: €170/£150/\$190). You will then be reimbursed if a sharer is found for you at a later date.
- Not included - entry fees to Dadan and Jabak Ikmah (around SAR 60) and Hegra (around SAR 95). This will be invoiced based on the current exchange fee at the time of booking.
- Meals on arrival/departure in Alula, Hegra are not included - please factor in around €20/£15/\$25 per person.
- Accompanied minors are welcome from 16 yo, provided they match the riding requirements.

- Rider weight limit: 85 kilos, 187 lbs, 13.3 st. This is a strict limit as the horses are small and the terrain is demanding / Heavier riders please contact us. Please Note

The itinerary may be modified at anytime for security reasons, meteorological or events beyond our control such as blocked roads, rivers in flood, drought, strikes and local holidays. Equus Journeys, our local partners and their local guides will always strive to find the best solution and will alter the itinerary as needed.

The names of the hotels and accommodation are given for information only and depending on availability, they may be modified without notice and replaced by another of a similar standard.

Price includes

SUPPORT TEAM

1 English-speaking horse guide

LOGISTICS

1 vehicle and driver

1 cook

1 support vehicle

INLAND TRANSPORT

Airport transfers as outlined above

ACCOMMODATION

Nights at camp: 3-man tents for two riders, mattress provided

Hotel standard *** or guesthouse accommodation, on a sharing basis

MEALS

Full board from dinner on day 2 to breakfast on day 10

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT

Saddle bags

First aid kit

Price doesn't include

MEALS

Beverages and personal extras

Lunch on days 2 and 10

TRANSPORT

Local airport fees

Visa fees

International flights

EXTRAS

Tips to the local team

Small group supplement - see above for the details

Park, museum and other site entry fees

INSURANCE

Cancellation and travel insurance are not included in the above listed price. Please note that insurance is mandatory. We recommend taking out an insurance policy as soon as your trip is booked to cover you in case of cancellation

EQUESTRIAN INFO

Horses

A small herd of local Arabians and Arabian crosses. They are forward going, sure-footed and have fantastic stamina. They usually range from 14.1hh to 15.2hh.

Guide & local team

The guides- An English-speaking equestrian guide for the duration of your stay. One or two assistant guides.

Local team:- One or two drivers, depending on the size of the group, to drive the minibus or 4X4 logistic vehicle

- During the trek and depending on the number of participants, a cook and assistant cook.

Training: With Saudi Arabia opening up to adventure and equestrian tourism in 2019, Christophe Leservoisier (owner of Equus Journeys) made a commitment to the Royal Commission* to provide training in the equestrian tourism. That's why you may be surprised at the size of our local team.

*The Royal Commission for Al-'Ula was established in July 2017 to preserve and develop the 2,000-year-old archaeological and historical site of Al Ula, located in northwest Saudi Arabia.

Minimum riding ability

MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

You need to be a strong intermediate or competent rider and able to control your horse at all paces in open spaces. You should be able to canter in forward seat and be balanced with good hands.

Rider weight limit: 85 kilos, 187 lbs, 13.3 st. This is a strict limit as the horses are small and thin.

PACE

You need to be physically fit for long hours in the saddle in the sun. This is a challenging ride with long canters. Climate is usually warm and dry during the day, but the nights can be very cold (zero or below)

It is important that you can keep up with the group and maintain the same speed as your guide. The ground is varied to include deep sand, hard sand and rocks - it is trickier than it looks and your guide will know the best path to take.

In case of intense heat, horses and riders will benefit from a longer lunch break to avoid riding during the hottest hours of the day.

TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

You will be expected to assist with grooming, tacking up and untacking your horse each day whilst out on the trail.

TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE

The pace varies depending on the terrain. There are plenty of opportunities for long trots and canters when the terrain is suitable. There are also long stretches of walking when the ground is soft sand or rocky. Canters are in single files and gallops are done individually.

Riders who do not ride regularly must get back in the saddle before booking this ride.

Saudi Arabia opened up to non-religious tourism in September 2019 - the tourism industry is not fully developed yet. We have launched training programs for our local teams. English is little spoken. Your guide will speak English and the first exploratory rides will be led by international guides.

EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

English tack

Small saddlebags provided.

We recommend our riders to wear a helmet to the correct standard and you should bring your own to ensure a proper fit.

TRAVEL INFO

COMFORT

- In Medina: a simple three-star hotel (local standards), double or twin en-suite rooms and WiFi available.

- In Al-'Ula: simple desert inn or fully equipped campsite (large tents, shared showers and toilets).

- In the desert: desert camp. We three-person tents for two guests sharing. Mattresses are provided but please make sure to bring your own sleeping bag. There is a mess tent for the group. No toilets (see "hygiene" below).

NB: Tents are set up and taken down by our local team, and you are not expected to contribute to camp chores.

Hygiene at camp

For those nights spent in tents, it is possible to wash with very little water - please remember that water is a rare resource in Saudi Arabia. If possible, bring a small basin, a natural sponge and biodegradable soap. Water will be provided by our local team (maximum 3 liters per person/day).

It's common practice to use baby wipes, but under no circumstances should they be thrown away. Garbage cans will be provided by the team for this purpose.

During the day, it is best to burn toilet paper to leave no rubbish behind (remember to bring a lighter).

MEALS

- Out of town: meals in a local restaurant (picnics at lunchtime on some riding days); breakfast and evening meals at your accommodation or in a local restaurant to discover Saudi specialities.

- In the desert: breakfast, lunch and dinner prepared by the cook(s). Copious and varied, they are made from local ingredients (meat bought in local villages); lunch is normally a hearty picnic or a cold meal.

For breakfast: unleavened Arabic bread called khobz, jam, tea, coffee, spreadable cheese, hummus, hard-boiled eggs, a mixture of spices, sesame and thyme (speciality called zaatar), omelette.

Lunch/picnic: salad, hummus, vegetables (cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, onions), tuna, hard-boiled egg, cheese (spreadable), bread, cookies, apples, oranges, juice. On some days, your guide can cook traditional dishes during the break.

For dinner: soup or hot meal with meat, rice or potatoes and simmered seasonal vegetables. The evening meal is also an opportunity to sample typical Saudi dishes.

Drinks: hot drinks are provided during the ride (tea, coffee). Water is delivered by our local teams directly to the camp site in large returnable bottles of mineral water, so you can fill your water bottles as much as you like every day (it is nevertheless imperative to bring your own water bottle).

CLIMATE

The best time to travel is from October to March

October and November are an excellent time to ride in Al Ula: the weather is generally fine and temperatures mild, cooling off as the weeks go by.

December and January: cooler, temperatures remain pleasant during the day, but the nights are cold. Showers are possible.

February and March: the temperature begins to ease, the days are pleasant, but the nights can be cool.

TIPS

It's customary to tip local teams. You can expect to pay around €50/€70 on average for the whole team, depending on their number.

PACKING LIST

Your choice of clothing should be adapted to cultural, religious and traditional contexts (it's imperative to keep your shoulders and knees covered to respect the local population).

Head

- Equus Journeys strongly recommend that you wear a riding helmet and that you take your own to ensure a correct fit.

- Sunhat for when not riding
- Sunglasses - with a cord attached so they don't fly off when riding
- Buff or bandana

Upper body

- Long sleeved shirts provide protection from the sun and dust
- T-shirts
- Fleece, jumper or jacket - the evenings can be cold, especially from November to early March.
- Waterproof jacket - from November to early March the rains can be difficult to foresee and it's better to be prepared. Layering is key to cope with the fluctuations in temperature between day and night
- Casual clothes for the evening

Legs

- Lightweight, comfortable riding trousers or jodhpurs - we recommend riding in them at home before taking them on holiday to ensure they don't rub
- Shorts for lazy lunchtimes
- Casual clothes for the evening

Hands and Feet

- Comfortable riding boots. We recommend short boots with half chaps as long chaps/long boots can get very hot.
- Sandals, flip-flops or trainers for moving around the camp
- Gloves - your hands are particularly exposed to the sun whilst riding

Nightwear

- Thermals are a good option for sleeping in, or a t-shirt and shorts for warmer nights
- A woolly hat when camping (desert nights can be cold)
- Sleeping bag - we recommend a comfort factor of 2-5c (Oct and March-April) and minus 5 from November to March. We also recommend taking a silk or fleece liner for an extra layer

Other useful items

- Swimsuit
- Towel. Camping towels will pack lighter and dry more easily
- Water bottle (1.5 litre or two x 1 litre)
- Hand sanitiser
- Wet wipes (showers aren't possible)
- Camera and high capacity memory card. Spare battery
- Bumbag for carrying your camera and small items whilst riding
- Headtorch or small torch for moving around camp at night
- Toilet paper, a lighter to burn it and small plastic bags for taking rubbish away

Medical kit

- Sunscreen and lip balm - must be high factor
- Insect repellent
- Any medication you regularly take
- Blister plasters in case of any rubs
- Antiseptic cream, plasters, aspirin, anti-histamine, insect-bite salve etc...
- Rehydration sachets (dioralyte or similar)
- Spare prescription glasses/contact lenses
- Ear plugs, particularly if you are a light sleeper

Our Recommendations

- Please don't take a hard sided suitcase. Your luggage should be soft sided and you should pack it into two bags if it weighs more than 15kg so it's easier for the team to transport between camps
- Take a second, smaller bag to pack things you may need during the day such as a book or sunscreen then you can easily access it during the long lunch break
- We recommend travelling in your riding boots and carrying your hat and some riding clothes in your hand luggage - then if your luggage goes astray you are still able to ride!
- Carry a copy of your passport and insurance documents with you

1. **Travel light.** It's a little known fact, but the lighter you pack, the better for the environment as heavy bags will produce higher emissions (when flying a plane or driving a car!).
2. **Reduce plastic waste.** Take part in reducing the impact of plastic bottles and single-use items: In adventure tourism, an estimated 6.8 million single-use plastic water bottles are used every year, weighing approximately 77 tonnes. Most of these end up in landfill sites, causing harm to the earth and polluting the oceans. This plastic takes centuries to decompose and poses dangers to human health, livestock, and wildlife. Only 9% of the world's plastic is recycled. We are actively collaborating with our local partners to minimize or eliminate the use of plastic bottles and single-use items, such as disposable plastic cups, glasses, cutlery, plates, glass lids, straws, stirring sticks, plastic bags, and paper napkins, in the logistics of our horse riding holidays. We all have a role to play in adopting this approach, especially when it comes to packing for your international horseback adventure. Consider eco-friendly water bottles, soaps, and solid shampoo (to avoid plastic containers). Don't forget to bring along your favourite reusable water bottle, a mug, and durable cutlery for nights spent camping or during your flight.
3. **Preserve nature.** Always take your rubbish with you during the ride and recycle them. Leave all the flowers or plants as you found them, and never get too close when observing wildlife. Make sure to use eco-friendly products such as body wash or laundry detergent (if camping) to protect both your skin and the environment.
4. **Choose your experiences carefully.** Respect animal life by not participating in any activities that abuse wild animals (shows, elephant rides, etc.).
5. **Support local populations.** Buy local handicrafts, be respectful of customs, and learn about the culture of local communities.
6. **Share!** Raise awareness among your family and friends about sustainable tourism.

For more information please [see this page](#)