EQuus Journeys
HORSEBACK TRAVEL & EQUESTRIAN TRADITIONS SINCE 1972

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Forgotten palaces in Shekhawati Christmas ride

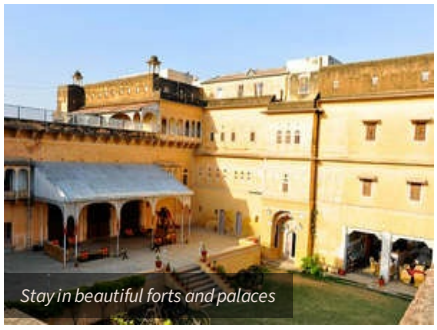
INDIA RAJASTHAN

A wonderful **horseback trail ride** travelling through the ancient kingdoms of Shekhawati, one of India's historically rich regions. This **horse riding holiday** follows in the footsteps of those who travelled the Silk Route: mounted upon beautiful Marwari horses whilst being guided by accomplished horseman "Bonnie Singh".

Trail Riding	14 days / 9 days riding	From £4,031	


Experienced guides accompany your trail ride


Riding across varied terrain in beautiful Rajasthan


Stay in beautiful forts and palaces

ITINERARY

Highlights

- Ride one of the most beautiful horses in the world, the spirited Marwaris of Rajasthan
- Stay at Dundlod Fort, the ancestoral home of your guide Bonnie Singh who is the heir of a large rajput family
- Enjoy the extravagent royal and colonial feel staying at palaces and strongholds, frozen in time
- Experience true rural Indian life riding through small villages on horseback
- Ride through rich and varied landscapes with a wide range of bird life
- Arrive on horseback into the villages of salesman and the strongholds of maharajas
- Stay at Dundlod Fort, Vivanna Heritage Haveli, Malji Ka Kamra and Alsisar Fort, capturing the legends of the past.
- Visit the pink city of Jaipur and the stronghold of Amber Fort

Day 1 — 1: ARRIVE IN DELHI - No riding

Jaypee Vasant Continental

Fly to Delhi (flights are not included but can be booked upon request).

You will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. Those arriving in the morning can spend the afternoon sightseeing in Delhi with a guide. Rooms will be available from 12:00 noon at the Vasant Continental (or similar).

Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

Day 2 — 2: DELHI - DUNDLOD - No riding

Dundlod Fort

You will be driven from Delhi to Dundlod today (approx. a 7-hour drive). and finally arrive at Dundlod fort, a building which has been beautifully maintained and is complete with all modern comforts.

The fort, built in around 1750, is home to a majestic banquet hall and charming bedrooms. The impressive Diwan Khana (Audience Hall) is furnished with Louis XIV furniture.

Dundlod Fort is in the heart of the Shekhawati region, surrounded by a moat, and is testament to both Mogul and Rajputana architecture.

Dinner and overnight in the fort.

Day 3 — 3: DUNDLOD - Approx. 5 hours riding

Dundlod Fort

It's your first ride today. You will meet the horses and head out on horseback to explore some of the villages and temples surrounding Dundlod. This semi-desert ground is soft and sandy and allows for plenty of opportunity for some good gallops! In the afternoon, you will visit the Frescoed Havelis (mansions) of Dundlod.

Dinner and overnight at the fort.

Day 4 — 4: DUNDLOD - CHURI - Approx. 5 hours riding

After breakfast, ride to Churi Ajitgarh (about 20 kms in the saddle). The ride to Churi takes you across villages, farmlands and some quaint farmers' dwellings. The terrain is soft and sandy and ideal for riding.

Arrive at Churi and transfer to Vivaana Culture Hotel which at one time used to be a Haveli (a merchant's mansion) with beautiful frescoes. No other region in India or perhaps, even in the world, has such a large concentration of high quality frescoes as the region of Shekhawati. Today, this region is commonly called the Open Air Art Gallery of Rajasthan.

Overnight at Vivaana Culture Hotel.

Day 5 — 5: CHURI - THIMOLI - Approx. 5 hours riding

Camp

On Christmas morning you will ride to a luxurious camp, passing through villages and farmlands dotted with Khejri trees. The terrain is quite flat except for the sand dunes which keep coming up now and then. In Thimoli you will stay at a tented camp. Christmas festivities in the evening.

Overnight at camp.

Day 6 — 6: THIMOLI - RAMGARH - Approx. 5 hours riding

Ride to Ramgarh, riding over soft sandy tracks, through rural farm lands and Indian villages. There are good chances of seeing some wildlife in the form of the Nilgai antelope (which is the biggest antelope in India) and the graceful Chinkara gazelle.Overnight at Heritage .Vedaaranya Heaveli - standing tall and well-preserved in the beautiful heritage town of Ramgarh Shekhawati, home to the only Veda temple in the world and where history comes alive in the form of vibrant colours, art and architecture.

Overnight at Heritage Vedaaranya Heaveli.

Day 7 — 7: RAMGARH - DEPALSAR - Approx. 5 hours riding

Camp

Today, you will ride across a varied terrain, through quaint villages, farmland and over sand dunes to reach a tented camp in Depalsar. You will see plenty of chinkara deers and Nilgai antilopes.

Dinner and overnight at camp.

Day 8 — 8: RATANSHAHAR - CHURU - Approx. 5 hours riding

The ride today is again through desert country – still rather devoid of major developments. The pace of the ride is fast, as on the previous days, and you will enjoy some good canters. You'll finally arrive in Churu and leave the horses outside the old town as you drive to the Heritage Malji Ka Kamra hotel.

The hotel is a meticulously restored 1920 Shekhawati Haveli with colonial pillared architecture, Italian art-deco influences, mughal arches and handmade fresco paintings. Malji Ka Kamra is family-run, personalized and authentic to take you back to the era of Marwari traders and live their stories.

Overnight at Malji Ka Kamra hotel.

Day 9 — 9: CHURU - GHANGHU - Approx. 5 hours riding

Camp

Today's ride to Ghanghu will take you through small villages, across open land and past farmers' dwellings. At times you may have to ride over sand dunes and there is a good chance of encountering more of the local wildlife - Chinkara gazelle, the Nilgai antelope and maybe also the endangered Blackbuck antelope. In the afternoon you'll arrive at your campsite.

Overnight at camp.

Day 10 — 10: GHANGHU - ALSISAR - 3-5 hours riding

After breakfast, you'll head to Alsisar. You'll ride over sand dunes, passing small hamlets and farmland. There'll be more chances to see the Nilgai and the Chinkara gazelle and if lucky, the endangered Blackbuck Antelope.

Today's is a shorter ride so you'll arrive in Alsisar early with plenty of time to relax at the hotel. The place has been tastefully renovated to maximise guest comfort -- you can swim in the pool and/or book a massage, ideal for resting and relaxing after spending time in the saddle.

Dinner and overnight at Hotel Alsisar Mahal.

Day 11 — 11: ALSISAR - 3-5 hours riding

This morning you will ride around the village of Alsisar and see the water reservoir created to bring water to the desert area from Punjab.

In the evening you'll enjoy a sun downer at the dunes before New Year's celebrations.

Overnight at Hotel Alsisar Mahal in Alsisar.

Day 12 — 12: ALSISAR - JAIPUR - No riding

After an early breakfast, you will be driven to Jaipur (c. 4h drive) where you will be taken to your hotel. Lunch is to your own account today.

You will spend the afternoon sightseeing in Jaipur. The "Pink City of India", founded in the 1728, is enclosed by city walls and surrounded by hills crowned with forts.

In the City Palace, you will find a museum containing rare manuscripts, paintings and an armory. You will also have the chance to see the Jantar Mantar observatory with a sundial 90ft high - built in the 17th century by Jai Singh, a keen astronomer.

You may also visit the Ram Niwas Palace Gardens museum founded in 1876 and home to a large collection of antiques. You will also see the palace of winds, a uniquely designed Jaipur landmark made of pink sandstone.

Overnight at Hotel Alsisar Haveli in Jaipur (or similar hotel).

Day 13 — 13: JAIPUR - DELHI - No riding

Jaypee Vasant Continental

This morning, you will go to see the majestic ancient Amber fort / palace which looks out across the lake at the entrance to a rocky mountain grove.

This palace is a fine example of Rajput architecture built in the 17th century. You will also spot Jaigarh fort, crowning the summit of a peak. Then it's an afternoon drive to Delhi (approx. 4-hour drive). Lunch is to your own account today.

Overnight in Delhi (Hotel Vasant Continental or similar) or transfer to airport for your flight home.

Day 14 — 14: DEPARTURE

After breakfast, you will be transferred to the airport in time for your flight home – usually an overnight flight. Check out from the hotel is at 12 noon.

DATES & PRICES

DEPARTURE	RETURN	PRICE WITHOUT FLIGHTS	STATUS
21/12/2026	03/01/2027	£4,031	Open
21/12/2027	03/01/2028	£4,516	Open

Price details

- International flights are not included but can be booked upon request.

- Groups are composed of a minimum of 8 riders and a maximum of 14 international riders.

- Rates are per person, based on two riders sharing a twin or double room.

- To guarantee your own room there is a single supplement of $1220 / £930 / €1060. If you sign up to the ride as a solo rider and you are willing to share, but there are no other riders likely to share your room, you will be charged 50% of the single supplement. This will be waived once a sharer is found.

- Airport transfers are included to and from Delhi.

- Non-riders are welcome and a special jeep itinerary can be arranged. Please contact us for more information.

- A visa is required to enter India and is your responsibility.
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 support vehicle for logistics
1 horse equipped with saddle and bridle per rider
1 team in charge of the horses

INLAND TRANSPORTS

Airport transfers from Delhi
All land transfers in an air-conditioned van

ACCOMODATION

2 person tents with beds, comfortable mattress and bedding supplied
Double room in hotel or palace in the countryside with private bathroom

MEALS

Full board from the breakfast D2 to the diner D13 except the lunches in Dehli and Jaipur
1 bottle of mineral water per day during the ride. Guests can purchase additional water if they wish.

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT

Saddle bags
First aid kit

EXTRA

Monument entrance fees in Delhi and Jaipur and elephant ride at Amber Fort in Jaipur.

Price doesn't include

MEALS

Meals in Dehli and Jaipur
Beverages and personal extras

TRANSPORTS

International flights to Delhi
Visa fees

EXTRAS

Tips to local team
Camera fees, laundry or personal extras

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

Optional

ACCOMMODATION

Single room and tent supplement

EQUESTRIAN INFO

Horses

An excellent selection of responsive and energetic Marwari horses home bred by your guide Bonnie Singh of Dundlod Fort. The Marwari has been used throughout history as a cavalry horse and is comfortable, forward going and wonderfully spirited . The Marwari's extraordinary beauty, arched ears and fiery look adds to their charm.

Guide & local team

The Marwari horses come from the stables of expert horseman Kanwar Raghuvendra Singh at Dundlod Castle. Known as Bonnie, he is a warm and considerate host and has set up the largest Marwari stud farm in India and has established a breed improvement programme. Bonnie is assisted by an army of helpers who support him both on horseback and on the ground.

Minimum riding ability

MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

You need to be a competent rider, capable and in control in all paces in open spaces. You must be able to rise to the trot and canter in a forward seat.

Weight limit: 14 stones (89 kgs) (196 lbs)

PACE

There are long periods of walking, some fast and regular trots and numerous canters when the terrain allows it.

TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

A team of grooms will feed, care for and saddle your horses. You can help with untacking if you wish, but this is not expected.

TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE

You need to be tough and physically fit for long hours in the saddle and fast paces. Having previous experience of a trail ride of several days would be an advantage but it is not compulsory. Guests who do not ride regularly are requested to get fit prior to the ride. It is of particular importance to ensure you are comfortable and balanced when riding at speed across rough and open spaces.

Visiting a new country offers the opportunity to meet other cultures with different mentalities, therefore it is important to accept these differences and

respect the local way of life.

EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

The tack is English style Indian Army saddlery. It is not particularly comfortable especially after a long days riding - we therefore recommend a seat saver be taken with you and the grooms will happily put it in place. The team can also provide seat savers if you do not have your own (limited number available).

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

During your ride, you will stay in different types of accommodation.

Nights in hotels: hotel nights will be in twin bedded rooms with a private bathroom. Hotels are of a high standard. They are often previous palaces converted into hotels, retaining much of their original charm.

Nights at camp: safari style camp with large spacious tents. Each tent has two made up beds with comfortable mattresses. Separate toilets and showers are set up, with hot water available in the morning and evening.

Enjoy sumptuous meals, carefully prepared, freshly cooked and delicately spiced.

MEALS

Hotels: On most hotel nights a choice of meals will be available, with wine and spirits also available. Breakfast will be a choice of various fruits, cereals, toast and some cooked items too.
Camping :A help yourself breakfast of toast and cereals with eggs cooked to order if you wish. You have a hot lunch and then another hot meal in the evening around the camp fire. The food is varied and tasty Indian cuisine.

Contrary to popular belief, all Hindus are not vegetarians and strict vegetarianism is limited to the south. However, you are unlikely to be served beef steak as the cow is sacred. You can expect to eat either goat or chicken.
Water:
Take care and do not drink water unless it out of a bottle. It is better to buy mineral water when staying in the towns. The water you will be offered along the trail will be treated.
There will be limited alcohol to purchase and a variety of soft drinks.

CLIMATE

Rajasthan has a hot dry climate. The monsoon is from June to September during which it is particularly hot. Rain outside the monsoon months is unlikely. The rides are scheduled for the cooler months and at this time the maximum temperature would be around 24°C during the day. Please be mindful that evenings can be cool (c. 5°C) and you should bring a warm sweater and be prepared for a chilly morning just in case there is a snow fall in the Himalayas as the temperature does drop suddenly at times. When camping, the nights can be cold are felt much more and you are advised to bring warm clothes for sleeping.

TIPS

Tipping is popular in India and it is customary to tip not only your team (guide, cook etc) but also staff in hotels and restaurants.

After the ride, guest usually collect the money in an envelope and hand it over to either your guide Bonnie or Sunayana (his assistant) with the instructions to divide it among the whole team – grooms, camp cook and staff, jeep drivers etc… Budget for c. £40-50 per person in total.

At the hotels, tipping is absolutely discretionary. The bell boys at the hotel handling the baggage do expect a small tip. If you are happy with their services, they may give them around Rupees 50 to 100 – but again, it is absolutely discretionary.

Be careful not to tip too much - being overly generous can affect the general standard of living and destabilise the local economy. If children earn more money than their fathers by begging or asking for money for photos then this can create major distortions within the family.

PACKING LIST

Please pack in accordance with local religious and traditional cultures - it is important to keep your shoulders and knees covered when meeting local populations. Please do not wear shorts or strappy tops in towns and villages. You will also require some smart casual clothes for your hotel nights.

Head
- Equus Journeys strongly recommend that you wear a riding helmet and that you take your own to ensure a correct fit. There are many lightweight options available nowadays
- Sunhat for when not riding
- Sunglasses - with a cord attached so they don't fly off when riding
- Wooly hat
- Buff or Bandana to protect against sand, sun and dust

Upper body
- Long sleeved shirts provide protection from the sun and are an extra layer
- T-shirts
- Lightweight fleece or jumper
- A light waterproof jacket

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
- Casual trousers for the evenings.
- Swimsuit to enjoy the swimming pool of the hotels

Hands and Feet
- Comfortable riding boots. We recommend short boots with half chaps. We don't recommend taking your favourite long leather boots in case they get damaged
- Trainers or equivalent light shoes for the evenings
- Socks
- Gloves - your hands are particularly exposed to the sun

Our Recommendations
- Please don't take a hard sided suitcase. Your luggage should be soft sided with a capacity of about 80 litres. We recommend taking a backpack or similar.
- Backpacks cannot be worn whilst riding. MAX LOAD is 15kg.
- We recommend a small bumbag or a coat with pockets so that you can carry small items with you during the day (camera, sunscreen, lipbalm etc) and whilst riding.
- 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.
- Tall riders may benefit from taking a pair of long stirrup leathers with them (the local stirrups are adjustable but are sometimes limited in length)

Other useful items
- Towels - camping ones will both dry and pack more easily
- Small backpack 25-30 liters
- 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 - bring spare batteries and bulbs
- Water bottle (2 litres or 2 x 1 litre)
- Swiss army knife
- Wet Wipes or equivalent (for when washing facilities aren't available)
- Toilet paper and a lighter to burn it with
- Small plastic bags for rubbish
- Ear plugs (for light sleepers)

In your hold luggage
- Any liquids, such as shampoo, moisturiser, deodorant unless they are less than 100ml and all bottles can fit in a small, clear, plastic ziplock bag. We recommend biodegradable washing products where possible.
- Swiss army knife (or equivalent)

In your hand luggage
- Any valuables, such as your camera, ipod, ipad etc.
- Travelling in your riding boots and carrying your hat and some riding clothes is highly recommended - then if your luggage goes astray you are still able to ride!

Medical kit
- Any medication you regularly take

- Sunscreen and lip balm - should be high factor
- Insect repellent, preferably containing deet
- Blister plasters in case of any rubs
- Antiseptic cream, plasters, aspirin, anti-histamine, insect-bite salve etc...
- Spare prescription glasses/contact lenses
- Eye drops
- Imodium or similar anti-diarrhoea medication
- Re-hydration sachets
- Water purification tablets
- Antiseptic wipes
- Handwash gel

Miscellaneous
- We recommend taking a copy of your passport and insurance documents with you in case you lose your originals
- Please take your rubbish home with you. There are no recycling facilities in Rajasthan, so take your used batteries, aerosols etc back home and dispose of them appropriately. Try to leave excess packaging material at home before travelling
- You may wish to take some photographs or postcards of your home with you to show your hosts. You may also wish to take some crayons, colouring books etc for the children
- If you prefer travelling in a "light way" please choose a biodegradable soap or washing powder/liquid.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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 your favorite reusable bottle with you. Avoid single-use bags, cups, or straws.
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 .