

Gauchos, pampas and ocean

URUGUAY

Join traditional gauchos on this **trail ride** through the nature reserves of Uruguay. You ride in the beautiful coastal province of the "Rocha", a protected area and world biosphere reserve. On this active riding holiday you spend your days exploring trails past emerald lagoons and onto deserted beaches for exhilarating canters. As an added bonus, you will enjoy a day working alongside gauchos at a traditional **cattle estancia**, adding a lovely cultural experience to this trail riding holiday.

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| Trail Riding |  9 days / 8 riding |  From £3,900 |  |
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ITINERARY

Highlights

- Experience Uruguayan gaucho culture and stay in traditional estancias
- Variety of landscapes, from the grazing pampas on the estancias, to swamplands, coastal forests, sand dunes and beaches
- More than 400 species of birds (flamingoes, herons, snow geese, black swans etc) plus the chance to see sealions and dolphins
- Exhilarating canters on pristine beaches

Private rides can be arranged for groups of two or more between late February and April and from October to mid December.

Day 1 — 1: Europe - Montevideo - No riding

There are no direct flights from the UK to Montevideo. You can either fly via a European hub city such as Madrid, or fly to Buenos Aires and either fly or take a ferry across the estuary to Montevideo.

You will be met upon arrival at Carrasco International Airport. Today is set aside to relax and explore the coastal city of Montevideo. We will stay at the residential neighbourhood of Carrasco from where we will enjoy an afternoon tour including lunch at the port market. Overnight at Hotel Cottage.

Note: Tonight's dinner is not included.

Day 2 — 2: Montevideo – La Coronilla - 4h road transfer - 3-4h riding

 Parque Oceanico hotel

After breakfast you will transfer to the Province of Rocha arguably the most beautiful province in Uruguay with pristine beaches, emerald shores and a great network of lagoons. You will arrive to Hotel Parque Oceanico where we will enjoy a traditional Sunday asado. After lunch, you will be driven to a

local estancia to meet our horses and enjoy a wonderful ride along the estancia fields.
Return to the accommodation where you will enjoy a well-deserved dinner.

Day 3 — 3: Barra del Chuy Beach - 3-4 hrs riding

 Parque Oceanico hotel

After breakfast, you will be driven to the horses to begin our adventure! Today you will enjoy a 3-4 hour ride towards the coast! Stop to enjoy a picnic lunch at midday followed by a swim in the ocean or a pleasant “siesta”. During the afternoon, a fast-pace ride along the wonderful, isolated ocean beach of ‘Barra Chuy’, awaits you! Here you can enjoy a long, exhilarating canter. Eventually, you will reach your beachside hotel where you will enjoy some cocktails.


Day 4 — 4: Santa Teresa National Park - 6 hrs riding

 Chacras de Laguna Negra hotel

Today you ride south alternating beaches, sand dunes, pine forests and coastal hills from where you might be lucky enough to see dolphins feeding before arriving at the immense Santa Teresa National Park. The centre piece of the park is a fort started in 1762 by the Portuguese to defend the edge of their territories then completed by the Spaniards who took it by assault just a year later. This was just the start of a succession of conquering, losing and reconquering the fort; it was not until 1825 that the newly forming ‘Uruguay’ finally captured and held the fort. The fort is surrounded by 3,000 hectares of forest containing over 2 million trees, most from other parts of the world.

After a picnic lunch you ride along the forest trails and down to the beach where you'll pass a shipwreck buried in the sand, one of many along this treacherous coast; indeed, Cabo Polonio (where you ride later in the week) is named after a Spanish galleon that sank just off the point. Luckily ‘Beagle’ with Charles Darwin aboard did not succumb to this fate and Darwin spent quite some time in Uruguay collecting species and most likely starting to formulate his theories of evolution. Continue riding along the coast towards the lovely town of Punta del Diablo.

Day 5 — 5: Punta Del Diablo – Don Bosco - 6hrs riding


 DON BOSCO Hotel

After breakfast, you will go on a short ride to meet the horses. Today you will ride across amazing untouched landscape of Palm groves including various ecosystems that offer the opportunity to experience the diverse flora and fauna of the area.

After a picnic lunch, you arrive to the shores of the Laguna Negra by sunset just on time to go up the Cerro de la Virgen for an incredible view. This region is home to one of the largest fresh water wildlife reserves in the country. In the evening, you will enjoy a traditional asado dinner with the gauchos.

Overnight at Don Bosco where the accommodation is simple but the landscape is amazing.

Day 6 — 6: Don Bosco – Valizas - 5hrs riding

 Posada Valizas hotel

After breakfast, your ride continues across the palm forests towards the coast. You will stop on the way for lunch before continuing your ride along the beach towards the small town of Valizas.

You will arrive at a typical “Rancho Valicero” built as a summer home and turned into a small local bed & breakfast.

Tonight you will have dinner at a local restaurant before returning to the overnight accommodation.

Note: Alternate accommodation at a hotel may be available on request

Day 7 — 7: Cabo Polonio - 5hrs riding

 Estancia ANASTASIO

Today your day begins with a morning walk to the Valizas stream where you will cross on a boat to meet the horses on the other side of the shore. UNESCO has declared this area a Biosphere Natural Reserve. You will ride to Cabo Polonio, a charming fishing village to which people can only get to by horse, walking or on SUV trucks.

As you ride, it is almost as if you are right in the middle of the Sahara.

On arrival, you will enjoy lunch at La Perla Seaside restaurant and visit the lighthouse and the sea lions reserve that make up one of the largest populations of seals in the world. Depending on the time of year, you may be able to spot a migrating whale.

If you wish, at this point you may swim at the beach before getting back on the horse to begin your ride towards the entrance of the village to meet the van that will drive you to your next destination close to Jose Ignacio.

Dinner and overnight at Estancia Anastasio.

Day 8 — 8: Working Estancia - 5hrs riding



Today enjoy a morning ride across the estancia fields helping the gauchos to herd the cattle, vaccinate or do the daily chores of the day. Afterwards, you will go on a kayak tour of the Anastasio stream and a typical picnic lunch of local “chivitos”. In the afternoon, you will ride to the beach and enjoy views of the ocean and the lagoon.

Tonight’s dinner will be served under the stars.

Day 9 — 9: Jose Ignacio – Montevideo

After breakfast, you will ride to Jose Ignacio where we will enjoy lunch before heading back to Montevideo. In the afternoon visit Punta Del Este and surrounding area where we will say our farewells. Transfer back to Montevideo arriving by 6:30 pm.

If leaving tonight please make sure to book a flight leaving after 7:30 pm.

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 during the ride.

- The group is composed of a minimum of 4 riders with a maximum of 8 riders plus English speaking guide

- Please note: the ride will also confirm for 2-3 riders on payment of a supplement of c. \$1525/£1215/€1400 per person. Once the group has reached 4 people, we will remove this supplement from your invoice and refund you if you have already paid it.

- Transfers are included. On the last day of the ride, arrival to Montevideo is usually scheduled around 6:30pm. This means that riders leaving on the same day should not book flights earlier than 7:30 pm.

- 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. \$595/£515/€590 or \$630/£500/€5585 in 2024. You will then be reimbursed if a sharer is found for you at a later date. Single rooms are limited on this trip to a maximum of 3 per ride, which means they will be allocated on a first served, first come basis. Please note that single rooms at Valizas have shared bathrooms.

- Rider weight limit is 95kg / 210 lbs / 15 st. If you weigh more than 95kg then it may be possible to join the ride on payment of a supplement of c. \$440/£365/€420 so that a second horse can be provided for you

- Private groups of 4+ riders can request private dates from October to late April - 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

1 local horse guide

LOGISTIC

1 horse equipped with saddle and bridle per rider

1 support vehicle

INLAND TRANSPORTS

Private bus

Airport transfers

ACCOMMODATION

Double room in hotel standard 3/4*

Nights in haciendas

MEALS

Full board during the ride

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT

First aid kit

EXTRA

Visit of Montevideo

Price doesn't include

MEALS

Beverages and personal extras

Free meals in Montevideo

TRANSPORTS

International flights

Airport local fees

Private transfer from and to Airport - if you arrive outside of suggested times

EXTRA

Tips to local team

Small group supplement. For price list see above in prices details

INSURANCE

Cancellation and travel insurances are not included. Please note that insurance is mandatory. We recommend to take out an insurance policy as soon as your travel is booked in case of cancellation.

Optional

ACCOMMODATION

Single room supplement

EQUESTRIAN INFO

Horses

You ride Criollo horses which have been bred and raised on the estancia's for working cattle. They are robust, independent and generous natured. You will ride a number of different horses during the week as each estancia has its own herd. The horses are the local Uruguayan Criollo breed and criollo cross: ideally suited to the terrain. Criollo is the horse breed in Uruguay, Argentina and the south of Brazil. The breed was developed from horses that were brought from Spain in the 17th century and then bred in this region. Criollo is a strong horse with an excellent walk and good character.

Saddles are traditional and consist of a basic frame with a sheepskin on top for comfort. The horses respond to neck-reining.

Guide & local team

Since 2000, our partner Paola has been working with the best partners to create their unique rides, working with locals and charming inns, small boutique hotels and estancias. Your guiding team will be made up of English-speaking, knowledgeable guides.

Minimum riding ability

MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

You must be capable and comfortable in all paces. There are horses suitable for experienced riders and also gentle horses for more nervous riders.

Rider weight limit: 95 kgs. Heavier riders can join the ride if they are willing to pay a supplement (that will allow your guide to bring a second horse for you)

PACE

The pace is mixed to include canters and occasional gallops, but there will also be long stretches of walk. When working with cattle the pace is usually slow, but the rides along the beaches and on grassy stretches can be faster.

TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

You will be asked to help tack and untack, groom the horses, etc.

TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE

During the ride every effort will be made to maintain the same set of horses throughout the whole tour. The intention is that then a rider can build a bond with their horse and enjoy not only the landscape and ride but also the company of their horse! The group will also be accompanied by one or more additional horses in case a change is needed.

This is a vehicle-supported ride.

EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

Saddles used are 'western' type with a sheep skin. The horses respond to neck reining (western 'one-hand riding'). Help will be given in adjusting to this tack which is very suitable for long days in the saddle.

TRAVEL INFO

COMFORT

During the trail you stay in working estancias which have been converted into comfortable guesthouses. Some are luxurious whereas others are more homely, but all are typical of the area. Some of the estancias have pools and/or saunas. Some of the nights are spent in small seaside hotels of good standards.

The first night is spent in a hotel in double, twin or triple rooms with private bathrooms.

MEALS

After a full day in the saddle, you will be greeted by fully prepared meals that reflect the local cuisine. All meals are prepared with natural and fresh regional products. The local red meat, fish and wine are highly recommended, but vegetarians can easily be catered for with advance notice.

Alcoholic drinks are available but payable locally.

Please be careful with the water and always make sure it is drinkable.

CLIMATE

The weather in Uruguay is variable, but you can expect somewhat warm spring and autumn temperatures, although we might also get some cool days (especially early in the morning or at night) and perhaps some rainy days too. The average temperature at this time of year is 65 F, average lows are 54 F, and average highs are 74 F.

TIPS

While tipping rests entirely at your discretion, it is customary to leave a tip of around 10%.

PACKING LIST

Head

- A riding helmet is compulsory and we recommend that you take your own to ensure a correct fit. Helmet makers (GPA, HKM, LAS Helmets, Lamicell, Troxel, Equithème) now offer horse-riding helmets that are ventilated, strong, light and comfortable. You also have the option of buying protective shells to go under your hats (Ranch & Rider, Lexington Safety Products) or western hat helmets (Troxel).
- Sunhat (indispensable)
- Sunglasses with high protection lenses - with a cord attached so they don't fly off when riding
- Buff or bandana for protecting your neck and face from the sun, wind or rain

Upper body

- Thermal underwear (t-shirts with long or short sleeves)
- T-shirts in cotton and long-sleeved shirts (to protect against the sun) or t-shirts made from rapid-dry material
- 1 lightweight fleece or jumper
- 1 lightweight waterproof jacket made from Gore-Tex or a similar material that is waterproof and breathable

Legs

- 2 pairs of lightweight, comfortable riding trousers or jodhpurs - we recommend riding in them at home before taking them on holiday to ensure they don't rub
- 1 change of riding trousers or jeans
- A swimming costume and a towel
- Non-irritant cotton or synthetic underwear

Hands and Feet

- 1 pair of comfortable riding or walking boots. We recommend short boots with half-chaps specifically for riding. We don't recommend taking your favorite leather boots in case they get damaged
- 1 pair of lightweight shoes or trainers for the evenings
- Several pairs of warm socks
- Gloves - your hands are particularly exposed to the sun whilst riding

Other useful items

- Water bottle (1.5 liters or 2 equivalent) better 2 bottles of 0.5l
- Headtorch or small torch for moving around at night - bring spare batteries and bulbs
- Toiletries
- Protein or cereal bars for the longer stretches of riding
- Swiss army knife or equivalent (in checking-in luggage!!)
- Small plastic bags for your rubbish
- Ear plugs (may be useful)
- Camera and high capacity memory card. Spare battery
- A pair of binoculars

Medical kit

Make sure any allergies (to medication or otherwise) and clearly stated in your medical kit

- Any medication you regularly take
- Painkillers
- Imodium or similar anti-diarrhea medication
- Vitamin C tablets
- Sunscreen and lip balm - should be high factor
- Insect repellent
- Eye drops
- Hydrating/soothing cream
- Plasters
- Blister plasters in case of any rubs
- Antiseptic cream, plasters, aspirin, anti-histamine, insect-bite salve etc..
- 10cm wide bandage
- Spare prescription glasses/contact lenses
- Re-hydration sachets
- Antiseptic wipes
- Handwash gel

Our Recommendations

- Backpacks cannot be worn whilst riding. We recommend a small bum bag or a coat with pockets so that you can carry small items with you during the day (camera, sunscreen, lip balm etc)
- 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!

- We recommend taking a copy of your passport and insurance documents with you in case you lose your originals

- Hand luggage mustn't contain any sharp objects (knives, scissors, nail file or nail scissors, etc.) and the quantity of liquid allowed per passenger is limited to 100ml per container. Check with the airline for their imposed weight limits for hand/ hold luggage.

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](#) .