



Massif Central - Haute Loire & the Ardèche

AUVERGNE - ARDECHE

This **horseback ride through the Haute Loire, in France**, will allow you to discover a wild untouched countryside of volcanic plateaus and towering gorges. From the formidable riverside Lavoûte chateau, you will take stunning trails, mountain passes and **ride to the majestic peaks of the Haute Loire**, Mont Mézenc and Mont Gerbier des Joncs, the source of the Loire. **Ride challenging ascents**, explore lush valleys and woodland and **gallop across the beautiful French countryside**.

Trail Riding	 8 days / 6 days riding	 From £1,025	
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ITINERARY

Highlights

- Ride through stunning lush countryside and woodland far from civilisation
- Enjoy the wide wild open spaces of the Vivarais mountains on the border between Haute Loire and Haute Ardèche - ride along the Mézenc plateau (1754m) and the slopes of Mont Gerbier de Jonc (1551m)
- Explore countryside that is a haven for beautiful flora, blue gentiane, anemones, arnica, as well as the home to spectacular birds of prey
- Discover the oldest chateaus in the Loire - middle-aged, strategically placed fortress built out the volcanic rock of the river banks
- Ride along scenic paths and passes and gallop along plateaus and riverside trails
- Enjoy hearty picnics made from local produce

Day 1 — 1 : UK - LE PUY EN VELAY - SAINT PAULIEN

On your arrival, you will be met either at Puy en Velay airfield (flights from Paris Orly on certain dates) or at Puy en Velay train station, ideally on the train arriving at 5.17pm; you will then be driven to the horse farm. If you hire a car, you are welcome to arrive at the farm any time after 4pm.

Once on the farm, you will meet the rest of the team and the horses. You will have dinner at the farmhouse B&B with your guide.

Day 2 — 2 : SAINT PAULIEN - LAVOUTE SUR LOIRE - MEYGAL - 6 hours riding (approx.)

After dinner, you will ride out towards the Loire gorges - at the foot of which stands, on a rocky outcrop on a curve of the meandering river, the elegant and proud Lavoûte-Polignac chateau. It was here that in the past the passage through the valley was controlled from fortified chateaus and control points. The lush gorge floor remains a point of untouched natural beauty in the region.

Leaving the Loire gorges, you will ride through the 'l'Emblavez', sown wheat fields, past small agricultural villages and along the 'Galoche', a former steam-engine train line that is now a hiking and riding trail through the French countryside. You will stop for your picnic lunch in this picturesque scenery.

In the afternoon, back in the saddle, listen to the stones under your horse's hooves, they and your guide will tell you a little of the areas history. Your B&B for the evening awaits you at the edge Meygal forest.

Day 3 — 3 : MEYGAL - BIGORRE - MOUDEYRES - 6 hours riding (approx.)

Set of on horse back on the trails across the dormant Testavoire volcano, at 1436m, before slowly riding down through the traditional stone town of Boussoulet; here hides a beautiful small church with a surprising interior. You will stop for your picnic lunch with the 'Tortue', a rocky flat topped peak, on the horizon.

In the afternoon, you will take the steep climb up Bigorre which is far from being relaxing but the stunning views make the challenge worth it. Riding the trails through the Aubepin Valley, you will maybe catch a glimpse of the hovering flight of the eagles native to this region. Your hotel for the evening is in the small thatched-roofed village of Moudeyres.

Day 4 — 4 : MOUDEYRES - MONT MEZENC - MONT GERBIER DE JONC - 6 hours riding (approx.)

You will have an early morning start as you ride the Croix de Peccata pass to cross the Mont Mezenc, a magnificent dormant volcano at 1753m above sea level. You will enjoy fantastic views clear across to the Alps and the Puy mountain range. Riding along the Croix de Boutières pass and its cirque with exceptional panorama, and marmots, you will reach the fresh water at Montouse where you will stop for your picnic lunch.

Your afternoon ride will see you approach the immense silhouette of Mont Gerbier des Joncs on the horizon. Once there, you are at the source of the Loire. A long descent will take you to your hotel, a dip in a clear mountain lake, a hearty French dinner, and a relaxing and cosy hotel room.

Day 5 — 5 : MONT GERBIER DE JONC - ARLEMPDES - 6 hours riding (approx.)

Heading out from Mont Gerbier des Joncs, you will ride along the headwaters of the Loire and follow the small paths through these streams. You will cross many a small valley and peak and an idyllic bridge, forgotten by mankind and yet still standing since Roman times. Out here in this beautiful tranquil countryside by the Loire's source, joined only by the birds above you, you will stop for your picnic lunch.

Your afternoon's ride will take you towards Arlempdes and its chateau, seemingly built out from the rocky ground and looking out over the river. This impressive stone sentinel was constructed in the 15th century atop columns of volcanic rock, 100 metres above the rushing Loire, from where it guarded this often bitterly disputed pass through the mountains.

At Arlempdes, you will spend the night at a hotel on the banks of the river and enjoy some fine French cuisine.

Day 6 — 6 : ARLEMPDES - CASCADE DE LA BAUME - VELAY PLATEAU - 6 hours riding (approx.)

You will ride an athletic stage taken along the towpaths that follow the length of the Loire. After fording the river and heading towards Maison du Pendu, you will climb up to the commune of Le Brignon, famed for its green lentils and Vellavia beer, on the vast Velay Plateau. Leaving the plateau's open land behind, you will take a pass running past the Cascades de la Baume, a scenic tumbling waterfall, where at the foot you will stop for your picnic lunch.

The afternoon's ride will unfold with long gallops taking you towards your B&B for the evening.

Day 7 — 7 : VELAY PLATEAU - SAINT PAULIEN - 6 hours riding (approx.)

The day's ride will take you on a trail between the Velay plateau and the forest edges. All of a sudden, the path you have ridden over the past 5 days will come clearly into view with just a glance back behind you. Your picnic lunch will be had under the woodland canopy.

In the afternoon, a keen-eyed rider will be able to spot Mont-Bar, an extinct volcano, with its wooded slopes and, hiding in its crater, a lush peak bog and nature reserve.

A final gallop will bring St Paulien back into view; when you reach the farm, you will get settled into your room and enjoy a final relaxing meal with the team.

Day 8 — 8 : SAINT PAULIEN - LE PUY EN VELAY

After breakfast, you will set out on your return journey to the UK. Either you will be driven to the airfield or train station or you will set off in your hire car when you're packed and ready to go.

DATES & PRICES

DEPARTURE	RETURN	PRICE WITHOUT FLIGHTS	PRICE INCLUDING FLIGHTS	STATUS
22/05/2021	29/05/2021	£1,025		Open
10/07/2021	17/07/2021	£1,025		Open
24/07/2021	31/07/2021	£1,025		Open
21/08/2021	28/08/2021	£1,025		Open

Price details

- Flights to your destination (international/domestic) are not included, but can be booked on request - please contact us for rates. You will need to make your own way to the Puy en Velay train station or airfield.

- Rates are per person, based on two or three riders sharing a twin or triple room. Single rooms are not available on this trail ride.

- Transfers are included to/from Puy en Velay.

- Groups are composed of a minimum of 4 international riders and a maximum of 10 riders, plus guides.

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 tour leader

LOGISTICS

1 horse equipped with saddle and bridle per rider

1 support vehicle

INLAND TRANSPORT

Return transfers from the Puy en Velay train station or airfield

ACCOMMODATION

Rooms in B&Bs or small hotels. 2-4 people per room (double rooms for couples)

MEALS

Full board from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on the final day (day 8)

Wine and water at meals

Price doesn't include

MEALS

Beverages and personal extras

TRANSPORT

International flights or train tickets

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

This herd of trail-riding horses is mainly made up of Appaloosas and Quarter-Horse crosses. They are well trained and docile yet energetic. They have been perfectly trained and are used to riding in the Haute-Loire, they are comfortable riding independently from one another and their paces are elevated.

Minimum riding ability

MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

For this ride, you need to be at ease in the saddle and confident riding outdoors, for several hours at a time, at all paces and across uneven terrain.

There is a maximum rider weight of 90kg/ 14st 2lbs/ 198 lbs. Heavier riders please contact us.

PACE

The base pace of the ride is a walking pace because of the uneven ground. However, you will enjoy (often heady!) trots and gallops whenever the terrain allows.

TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

You will be responsible for grooming, tacking and un-tacking your horse. You will also feed and water them in the morning and evening.

TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE

The majority of this trip takes place in the lower mountainous regions of the Haute-Loire, riders need to be in good physical condition. Previous experience of trail riding holidays is a plus but is not necessary.

Helmets are MANDATORY.

Children from the age of 12, accompanied by their parents, are welcome to join this trip.

EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

Western riding tack.

Saddlebags are 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

You will stay in small country hotels or B&Bs in rooms for 2-3 people with private bathrooms.

MEALS

Your meals will consist of picnic lunches carried in your saddlebags, and in the evening, you will enjoy hearty dinners made from local produce.

CLIMATE

The Haute-Loire's climate is affected by its proximity to the Atlantic ocean and the mountains that surround it. In general, the region is altogether dry, but it has very long winters paired with short summers.

A Mediterranean front makes itself felt in the south and southeast of the region with sometimes considerable rainfall. High in the mountain plateaus, it is usually cold and in the summer they are subject to storms. The oceanic influence also leads to brisk changes between snowfall and long mild spells brought in by the warmer maritime front. The Mediterranean influence also brings with it strong winds in the south and southeast as well as sudden rain storms and cold snaps in the mountains. However, when the southerly winds die down, especially in the summer and autumn, the region benefits from

long periods of beautiful hot dry weather.

In winter, temperatures vary between 10 and -3°C.

In spring, temperatures vary between 2 and 22°C.

In summer, temperatures vary between 10 and 28°C.

In autumn, temperatures vary between 3 and 22°C.

GUIDE AND LOCAL TEAM

Your ride will be led by Daniel, who has been organising and leading horse riding trips for the past 20 years. Having been born in the Haute-Loire, he is extremely knowledgeable about and proud of the area you will be riding through. A trip leader with the TREC qualification and a desire to show you the best that his region of France has to offer. Daniel gets by pretty well in English and has even invested in the latest translate-as-you-speak device to provide the best tour possible!

TIPS

In France it is customary to tip - usually this is by rounding up the price when you are satisfied with the service in a restaurant. You may wish to leave a tip with the guide who can split it amongst all members of the team - this is not obligatory and is entirely at your discretion.

PACKING LIST

The information provided is general and should be adapted to the season in which you are travelling, specifically concerning the necessity of Goretex waterproofs.

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.
- Sunhat for when not riding
- Sunglasses - 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
- Warm hat for cold evenings/days

Upper body

- Thermals in case of cold weather
- Long sleeved shirts provide protection from the sun or extra warmth
- T-shirts
- Lightweight fleece or jumper
- Waterproof jacket (made from Goretex or equivalent) and/ or (depending on the season) a waterproof vest that covers you thighs. No ponchos!!

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
- Waterproof over trousers (made from Goretex or equivalent), especially if you don't have a long waterproof coat
- Casual clothes for the evenings (jeans or walking trousers)
- A swimming costume may be useful for impromptu dips in the lake
- Non-irritant cotton or synthetic underwear

Hands and Feet

- Comfortable riding boots. We recommend short boots with half chaps but you may wish to take long chaps. We don't recommend taking your favourite long leather boots in case they get damaged
- Lightweight shoes or trainers for the evenings
- Several pairs of warm socks
- Gloves - your hands are particularly exposed to the sun, wind or rain whilst riding

Our Recommendations

- Backpacks cannot be worn whilst riding. We recommend a small bumbag or a coat with pockets so that you can carry small items with you during the day (camera, sunscreen, lip balm etc)
- A soothing cream may be useful to treat areas irritated by long hours in the saddle
- 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!

Other useful items

- Water bottle (1.5 litres or 2 equivalent)
- 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
- Toilet paper and a lighter to burn it after use
- 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

General information

- The airline allows only one bag to be checked-in per passenger. Make sure it weighs no more than 20kg; if it exceeds this weight, you will have to pay excess luggage fees at check-in
- Hand luggage is limited to 7kg (measuring 56 cm x 45 cm x 25 cm), it 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.

In your hold luggage

- Any liquids, such as shampoo, moisturiser, deodorant over 100 ml and all bottles can be decanted into small, clear, plastic Ziplock bags. We recommend biodegradable washing products where possible.
- We recommend taking a copy of your passport and insurance documents with you in case you lose your originals
- In your hand luggage carry any valuables, such as your camera, ipod, ipad etc.

VISA & HEALTH

Formalities

UK citizens - other nationalities please contact us:

Visas

If you hold a British Citizen passport, you don't need a visa to enter France. The rules on travel will stay the same until 31 December 2020.

Visas from 1 January 2021

The rules for travelling or working in Europe will change from 1 January 2021:

- you will be able to travel to countries in the Schengen area for up to 90 days in any 180-day period without a visa as a tourist, to visit family or friends, to attend business meetings, cultural or sports events, or for short-term studies or training
- if you are travelling to France and other Schengen countries without a visa, make sure your whole visit is within the limit. Visits to Schengen countries within the previous 180 days before you travel would count towards the 90-day limit
- the 90-day limit for visa-free travel will begin on 1 January 2021. Any days you stay in France or other Schengen countries before 1 January 2021 will not count towards the 90-day limit.

At border control for France, you may need to:

- show a return or onward ticket
- show you have enough money for your stay, and
- use separate lanes from EU, EEA and Swiss citizens when queueing
- Your passport may be stamped on entry and exit.

Passport validity

The rules on travel will stay the same until 31 December 2020.

Your passport should be valid for the proposed duration of your stay; you don't need any additional period of validity on your passport beyond this.

Passport validity from 1 January 2021

From 1 January 2021, you must have at least 6 months left on an adult or child passport to travel to most countries in Europe (not including Ireland).

If you renewed your current passport before the previous one expired, extra months may have been added to its expiry date. Any extra months on your passport over 10 years may not count towards the 6 months needed.

Check your passport is valid for travel before you book your trip. You will need to renew your passport before travelling if you do not have enough time left on your passport.

For up-to-date information please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/france/entry-requirements>

Insurance

It is a condition of your booking with Equus Journeys that you have travel insurance which covers you for the riding activities to be undertaken. Your travel insurance should cover you for medical expenses and repatriation. Your guides will require your travel insurance details before they allow you to ride and may refuse to let you ride if you cannot provide them. You should take your insurance documents with you.