



Poitou Charentes - The Pilgrim Trail

POITOU - COGNAC COUNTRY

Experience a **trail riding holiday through Poitou** as you travel along the famed pilgrim trail which leads to Santiago de Compostela, in Spain. **Ride, on horseback**, off the beaten track through rolling and lush valley countryside and woodland far from the hustle of busy towns and roads. Discover the rich history of the region as you visit its renowned cultural sites including Messelière Castle and the gravestones of the Mérovingien ages. After a day **spent in the saddle**, relax in charming gites and enjoy local French cuisine.

Trail Riding	 6 days / 4 days riding	 From £795	
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Cantering along bridle paths in Poitou



A group of riders in France



Swimming in Poitou

ITINERARY

Highlights

- Travel ancient paths with a rich history including that of St James' Way, a pilgrimage path with its final destination the shrine at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain
- During your ride, discover the region's many churches, abbeys, medieval villages and castles and view stunning examples of true Roman architecture
- The possibility to swim with your horse, or simply take a dip without your mount
- Spend the night in comfortable and welcoming accommodation
- Enjoy meals prepared from local produce
- Visit a local Baudet donkey farm and meet its occupants!

Day 1 — 1 : UK to LIMOGES OR POITIERS

On your arrival, from 16:00 onwards, you will have a chance to meet the horses and spend a little time exploring the farm.

You can fly from London Stansted to Poitiers and Limoges, and book a transfer through us to reach the farm.

Day 2 — 2 : VALLEY OF THE VIENNE - 5 - 6 hours riding

You will arrive at your point of departure at around 9:00 where you will get to meet your guide over a cup of coffee before meeting your horse.

You will ride out and enjoy a clear and sweeping view of the Vienne Valley where once more you may be riding through fields of wheat, sunflowers or walnut tree plantations. You will often catch a glimpse of local wildlife on these paths; deer, roe deer, hares and buzzards.

Riding on the large granite blocks along the banks of the Vienne river, you will have a view of the Messelière castle from the middle ages and in the village of Moussac you will visit the gravestones from the Mérovingien ages.

In the evening, when the weather is fine you will drink your aperitif on the banks of the Blourde River. The night is spent at a sheep farm.

Day 3 — 3 : RHEAU - USSON - 5 - 6 hours riding

Head out to Rhéau and its beautiful Abbey where you will stop for your picnic.

The bridle paths will offer you fantastic opportunities to trot and canter and will lead you through beautiful countryside used for grazing and agriculture – depending on the season, you may be riding through fields full of wheat sheaves and sunflowers!

In the afternoon, you will ride to the village of Usson with its Roman church before taking a lovely path through the mossy Busseroux woods. Your accommodation is on a farm where Baudet donkeys are bred and you will be able to explore the farm before turning in for the night.

Day 4 — 4 : CASTLE OF MESSELIERE - 5 - 6 hours riding

This morning, ride through vast fields and woods. The bridlepaths will allow for some nice canters along the way. You will ride up to the medieval castle of Messelière before spending the night in an authentic house.

Day 5 — 5 : CHARENTE LIMOUSINE - 5 - 6 hours riding

The old railway road you will ride on this morning will allow for some nice canters. You will stop for your picnic by the Vienne river, before riding out over a 40m high viaduc with a lovely view over the river.

You will head back towards the farm in the late afternoon.

Day 6 — 6 : VALLEY DES CERFS - RETURN TO THE UK

After breakfast, you will say goodbye to your horses and guides and then head home.

If needed, a transfer to Poitiers or Limoges can be arranged.

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.

- Groups are made up of 2 to 6 (max.) international riders

- IMPORTANT : There is a maximum rider weight of 100kg/ 15 ½ st/ 220 lbs. If you weigh more than this and wish to ride, please contact us so we can arrange a suitable mount.

- There is the possibility to spend additional nights the day before or/ and after the ride - £55 per night per person including dinner and breakfast

- Return transfers to Poitiers or Limoges airport are available - €40 per person

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

LOGISTIC

1 support vehicle

1 horse equipped with saddle and bridle per rider

MEALS

Full board from dinner on the first day to breakfast on the last (day 6)

EXTRAS

Tourist entry site fees

Price doesn't include

TRANSPORTS

International flights that we can book for you upon request

EXTRA

Tips to the local team

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

Visas and personal purchase

Optional

ACCOMMODATION

Additional night before and/or before the ride departure - £45

TRANSPORT

Return transfers to Poiter or Limoges airport - £40

EQUESTRIAN INFO

Horses

The stable consists of many breeds of horse: French saddle, Anglo Arabian, Barb-Arabian, Spanish, Quarter horse and different cross breeds. Some of them have been raised and trained with us since birth. The horses are outgoing and are used to living outside, in a group, surrounded by nature. To ensure your comfort, we only use high quality saddles, with rugs and saddlebags.

Minimum riding ability

MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

Riders must be at ease at all 3 paces across varied uneven terrain and be in good physical condition.

PACE

The pace of the ride is varied, with trots and gallops whenever the terrain allows.

TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

You will be asked to participate in the tacking, untacking and feeding of the horses.

TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE

Previous experience of trail riding over several days is a plus, but not obligatory. You must be in good physical condition to get the most out of this road.

There is a maximum rider weight of 100kg/ 15 ½ st/ 220 lbs. If you weigh more than this and wish to ride, please contact us so we can arrange a suitable mount.

EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

Forestier or Prestige trekking saddles.

Saddle bags.

Helmets are mandatory. 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 spend the night in comfortable rural inns and gites.

MEALS

Your midday meals will be either cold or hot picnics (depending on the season) transported and prepared by the support team.

In the evening, you will enjoy dinners in the gites or inns where you are staying. The dinners will be prepared with local, organic produce specific to the region.

Drinks are included: local apple juice, wine from the Poitou and beer from the local team's own brewery.

CLIMATE

Vienne has a climate that is strongly influenced by oceanic fronts. Its proximity to the Atlantic makes for cool summers and mild winters, with the average temperature for the year coming in at around 11.4°C.

In winter, the temperature varies between 1 and 9°C.

In spring, the temperature varies between 3 and 19°C.

In summer, the temperature varies between 11 and 26°C.

In autumn, the temperature varies between 4 and 22°C.

GUIDE AND LOCAL TEAM

Your team is led by Anne. A Dutch English-speaking horse-riding guide, she arrived in France several years ago where, coupled with her passion for horses, she found the ideal region to create her own equestrian farm and guiding business. In the middle of the beautiful Poitou Charente countryside, she will share with you both her enthusiasm and knowledge of the region and of her horses.

The farm's second guide, Sacha, was chosen by Anne. She is young, skilled and dynamic and for the past 2 years has been leading enjoyable and energetic rides.

TIPS

In France, it is customary to tip - usually this is by rounding up the price. 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

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 bum bag 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.

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>

Health

UK Citizens: A UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) gives you the right to access state-provided healthcare during a temporary stay in the European Union (EU).

<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/>

It's important to take out appropriate travel insurance for your needs. A GHIC is not an alternative to travel insurance and you should have both before you travel. It does not cover all health-related costs, for example, medical repatriation, ongoing medical treatment and non-urgent treatment.

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.