Equus Journeys
HORSEBACK TRAVEL & EQUESTRIAN TRADITIONS SINCE 1972

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Riding the Red Isle

MADAGASCAR

Ride through Madagascar on horseback and experience the rich diversity and beauty of the Malagasy countryside. From the hills and plains of Antananarivo, ride trails on strong, docile horses across Madagascar, trails taking you through the volcanic region of Itasy, past natural geysers and the Lily River falls and through the rice fields whose lush green colour weaves through the Island's red laterite earth. **In the saddle in Madagascar** , you will be the main event when entering the local towns and villages and you will have a chance to learn more about the country's people, culture - and lemurs!

Trail Riding	**9 days / 7 days riding**	**From £2,535**	


Meet the locals and learn about their culture on this riding holiday


This riding holiday will take you through the Malagasy countryside!


Crossing a river on horseback in Madagascar

ITINERARY

Highlights

- Wild camp across this magnificent island and spend time getting to know the way of life here and spend time soaking in the atmosphere in the country's more out-of-the-way areas
- Ride through a large variety of landscapes including the volcanic surrounds of Lake Itasy, pass crater lakes, climb hills and volcanic peaks up steep and craggy paths as well as through Eucalyptus and tropical forests
- Enjoy varied days and activities, both in and out of the saddle. Visit cascading waterfalls, take a dip in the geysers, visit the Marmite du Diable and explore the local markets
- Ride through the intriguing and colourful terraced rice growing cultures
- Discover and interact with a variety of lemur species, unique to the island, on a private lemur reserve
- A range of extensions to this trip are available - riding Route Nationale no. 7 or the Isalo massif, exploring Tsingy du Bermaraha National Park - a UNESCO heritage site, the island of Sainte Marie or Nosy Be... Just get in touch and let us know what you are interested in doing!

Day 1 — 1 : ARRIVAL IN ANTANANARIVO

On your arrival into Antananarivo airport, you will be met by your guide from the local team and taken to your hotel close to the airport to settle in for the evening.

Flights are not included but we can assist with this on request.

Day 2 — 2 : ANTANANARIVO - FAKA RANCH - 1-2 HOURS RIDING

After breakfast, you will be taken into the city and have a chance find your bearings in your new environment before heading out west. You will visit the

Lemur Park where you will get to see the animals that Madagascar is best known for and that are seen as the symbol for the island; Madagascar is home to around 60 species and sub-species of lemur.

You will have you lunch on the road, starting to get into the swing of the island's way of life, as you travel to Faka Ranch and arrive mid-afternoon. On the ranch, you will meet the horses before having your first traditional Madagascan dinner and then turning in for the night in your accommodation on the ranch's grounds.

Day 3 — 3 - FAKA RANCH - ANTAMBAHOAKA - 6 hrs riding

After breakfast, you will head out in the saddle to start your adventure through the unique Madagascan high plateaus - you will cross the open Sakay plain until you reach the river of the same name. You will stop for your picnic lunch in the town of Babetville, founded by Reunionese families who immigrated to Madagascar in the 50s.

Arrive at the camp in the late afternoon and enjoy a sunset typical of this region. Downstream of the Lily River, enjoy dinner under the stars of the Southern Hemisphere. Dinner and overnight in bivouac (camp).

Day 4 — 4 : ANTAMBAHOAKA - SOAVINANDRIANA - 5-6 hours riding

After your first night under the stars on the riverbanks, you will be greeted with a hearty breakfast before riding out to ford the Lily River and take the black volcanic rock paths shadowed by the impressive Kasigie volcano. Taking trails past crater lakes, you will ride down to the beautiful Mananasy Lake to stop for lunch.

The river's banks offer a glimpse of the local life, with groups of zebu, led by the children that herd them, coming to drink in amongst the colourful laundry drying along the riverside.

After your lunch, you will ride up towards Soavinandriana, where the paths can be both steep and rocky. Riding through the town and its market, your horses and presence are likely to draw some curious looks! Reach the pasture where you will leave your horses for the night.

Overnight a camp (please note the camp is located at an altitude of 1650m).

Day 5 — 5 : SOAVINANDRIANA - MANAZARY - 5-6 hours riding

A fantastic day in the saddle awaits you! After leaving the village of Ampefy, you will ride through the regions vital rice fields and climb up through the growing terraces along narrow paths. Once you reach the summit, you will have a breathtaking 360° panorama of the Ankarata mountain chain as well as of Lake Itasy. A 1km wade through shallow waters, leading your horse, will see you reach the remains of an ancient highway that rounds the Lake Itasy to the east.

In the afternoon, your horses will meander their way along this route that travels the length of the lake. You will pass through lush countryside and encounter groups of chattering children, who will watch you with a mixture of uncertainty and curiosity, but always with a ready smile and joyful shouts! After having climbed the steps of the lively Manazary market on horseback, you will reach your camping ground for the evening on the banks of the magnificent Amparihikely Lake. Aperitif in hand and another stunning Madagscan sunset on the horizon, you will watch the fisherman in their traditional dugout canoe out working on the lake.

Overnight at camp.

Day 6 — 6 : MANAZARY - AMPEFY - 4-5 hours riding

During the day's ride, you will make your way right up to the lake whose banks you have been following. Along a beautiful riding path on the north bank, after 4 hours in the saddle, you will reach your lunch stop.

In the afternoon, the horses get a little rest before you explore the village and make your way to the Îlot de la Vierge - a Christian shrine jutting out into the lake. You will then return to the village of Ampefy and settle in to your room at a local guesthouse before enjoying a lively evening in the company of a local folklore group. You will have your evening meal and spend the night at the guesthouse.

Day 7 — 7 : AMPEFY - GEYSERS - 4-5 hours riding

Setting out in the saddle, you will ride through volcanic mountain passes leaving you with the impression of truly being in the middle of nowhere. You will ride trails overlooking the Lily Valley until you reach its famous waterfall that send plumes of water over a 25 metre drop. Here, you will likely find yourself the object of a hoard of children selling souvenirs and volcanic pumice stones.

Leaving the thundering falls in your wake, you will once more ride out through the mountain passes to reach the region's geysers. Here, you will stop and enjoy the relaxing and therapeutic quality of the natural thermal springs and bathe in a pool known for its iron-rich waters.

Overnight at camp.

Day 8 — 8 : ANDRANOMENABE - RETURN TO TANA - 3-4 hrs riding

In the arid heat of the Central West, discover the magnificent Lake Andranomenabe, where wild ducks (red-billed teals or teal ducks) bask safely from predators. Enjoy a sublime gallop around the lake. Take in views of the vast Ifanja rice plain, with more than 3,000 hectares of cultivated rice fields. Say goodbye to your horses and return by road to Antananarivo in the afternoon. Settle in for a well-earned rest at the guesthouse. (3-hour drive)

Day 9 — 9 : FREE DAY IN TANA - DEPARTURE

Today, you will enjoy some free time and a free day to explore the capital city of Antananarivo, often simple called Tana. Here, you will have a chance to visit the city's craft market, be immersed in the fragrance of the local Madagascan vanilla, try the rum and discover the local ambiance and maybe chat to a few locals!
You will then be taken to the airport to catch your flight back home.

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 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 1 riders and a maximum of 8 international riders, plus guides.

- 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 €350/$410/£310. You will then be reimbursed if a sharer is found for you at a later date.

- An extra night at the guesthouse at the start or end of the trail can be arranged on request - €100/£85/$110.00 per person sharing including meals and transfer.

- Ride departures are possible on all dates between mid-April and mid-October with 1 or more riders. Ask us for more details.

- Rider weight limit: 90 kg / 14,2 stones / 198 lbs.
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

A riding guide and expedition leader who speaks Malagasy, English and French

LOGISTICS

1 groom per 3 horses
1 horse equipped with saddle and bridle per rider
1 assistant cook
1 cook
1 vehicle and driver and camp aid

INLAND TRANSPORT

Minibus organised for all transfers mentioned within the itinerary
Return transfers from the airport

ACCOMMODATION

3-man tents for 2 people sharing - foam mattresses provided
Hotel - rooms for 2-3 people with a private bathroom

MEALS

Full-board from breakfast on day 2 to breakfast on the last day

Price doesn't include

MEALS

Beverages and personal extras

INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT

Visa fee
International flights that we can book for you upon request

EXTRAS

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

EQUESTRIAN INFO

Horses

You will be riding geldings and stallions from local farms, and also from Mauritius and South Africa. These large horses are all in excellent condition, docile, patient and are well adapted to long days riding. Some are reformed from the race track and so can be a little bit more difficult to handle, but you will be matched with a horse suited to your level.

Guide & local team

Your guide will be local to the area and Malagasy, French and English speaking.

Minimum riding ability

MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

This ride is suited to experienced and seasoned riders, at ease in the saddle at all three paces outdoors on varied and uneven terrain. Certain of the horses are livelier than others and best ridden by experienced riders, however the herds also include mounts that are perfectly suited for riders of a more intermediate level.

Rider weight limit: 85 kilos, 187 lbs, 13.3 st.

PACE

The base pace of the ride is a walking pace, the terrain will regularly allow for long stretches of trotting as well as some unforgettable gallops. You will experience some long very rhythmic stages.

TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

A team of grooms take care of the horses throughout the ride. They will also tack and untack your horses at the beginning and end of each day's ride, however if you wish to work alongside them in caring for the horses, you are more than welcome!

TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE

In order to get the most out of this expedition, you need to be in good all-round physical condition. The hours in the saddle can be long and you can be asked to dismount and lead your horse in hand over sometimes steep terrain. Riders who are not currently riding fit must get back in the saddle before the ride and ensure they are appropriately fit for this ride.

The temperature during the day can reach highs of up to 30°c in May and November, so you must be prepared to ride in hotter weather than perhaps you are used to all whilst spending long days in the saddle.

Previous experience of a ride over several days is a plus but is not obligatory. On embarking on this adventure to Madagascar, you will meet people from a different culture with a different mindset to your own, you must be ready to accept and respect any differences you encounter.

EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

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

TRAVEL INFO

COMFORT

Your nights camping will be spent in 3-man tents shared between 2 riders. A shower and toilet tent will also be set up for the camp.
You will spend 2 nights in bed and breakfast style accommodation - a room for 2-4 people with a private bathroom.
For your remaining nights, you will stay in 2* standard hotels in double rooms with private bathrooms.

MEALS

Your meals will be had around a camp fire in comfortable chairs. During your lunchtime picnics and dinners, you will enjoy varied and quality Madagascan cuisine.

CLIMATE

The area surrounding Antananarivo has a high altitude tropical climate. Although Madagascar is situated in an intertropical zone, the yearly average temperature is moderated by the effects of the altitude. The climate is marked by its cool and dry winters, from May to October, and mild, rainy summers, from November to April. During the cooler seasons, the temperature rarely falls below 10 °C and in the hot season, it rarely tops 30 °C.

Frosts are rare but not completely unheard of; during June, the morning temperature can drop to 1°C. Days when the sun doesn't make an appearance are equally as rare - less than ten sunless days per year!

TIPS

Tipping is customary in Madagascar, especially within the tourism industry. Any tip you leave will be split between the porters at the airport and in your accommodation, your waiters/the grooms, drivers and camp helpers, the cook and their assistant.

An acceptable tip would be around 20000 Ariary (£5.70 - £8) each day for the driver and for the guide. For the porters, waiters/ waitresses and other staff 2000 to 100000 Ariary (80p - £4) per worker. These amounts are just a suggestion and any tips left are at your own 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. 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 under the African heat)
- 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
- 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
- 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 favourite leather boots in case they get damaged
- Lightweight shoes or trainers for the evenings
- Several pairs of socks
- Gloves - your hands are particularly exposed to the sun, wind or rain whilst riding

Nightwear
- Tents, sleeping bags and mattresses are provided. We recommend you bring a sleeping bag liner.

Other useful items
- Travel bag 60-80 litres (hold luggage)
- Travel bag 25-30 litres (cabin bag)
- 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
- 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 - our recommendations
Make sure any allergies (to medication or otherwise) and clearly stated in your medical kit. A group pharmacy will also be provided.
- 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

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.
- 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!

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)
- If you wish to travel 'light' and wash your clothes throughout the ride, please bring with you laundry detergent that is biodegradable
- All waste that could be considered toxic (batteries, aerosols, batteries, empty cream tubes, film) needs to be kept with you and transported back to the UK, where recycling is done well and efficiently. Avoid, wherever possible, to bring with you unnecessary packaging

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 .