



# EQUUS Journeys

HORSEBACK TRAVEL & EQUESTRIAN TRADITIONS SINCE 1972

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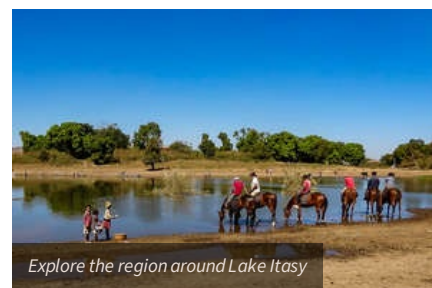
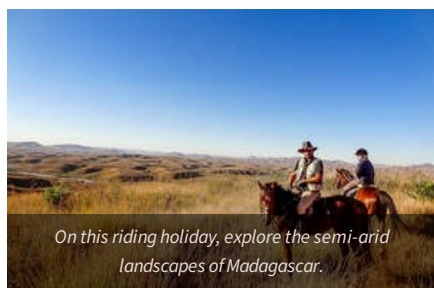
Last updated 21/05/2025

# Ride from the highground to Madagascar's East Coast

## MADAGASCAR

On a **horseback ride through Madagascar** discover the many different facets to this spectacular island. Explore the volcanic region around Lake Itasy, relax in the geysers and ride narrow paths up through the terraced rice fields. **In the saddle, ride across Madagascar** from the high altitude plains past crater lakes, through subtropical forests and semi-arid desert to the East Coast, where the lush green scenery gives way to the blue of the Indian Ocean breaking over long stretches of gallop-worthy beaches. Discover a country with a rich culture and unique wildlife, including a visit to meet the famed lemurs!

Trail Riding	 16 days / 11 days riding	 From £3,151	
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## ITINERARY

### Highlights

- Discover the beauties of the east coast and the Pangalanes Canal as you gallop across beaches on the Indian Ocean's shore
- 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 then ride across semi-arid land as well as through Eucalyptus and tropical forests
- Experience the warm atmosphere and varied emotions that will greet you as you pass through villages dotted through the countryside where the locals will, due to the relatively recent introduction of horses to their island, still find you something of a curiosity!
- Discover and interact with a variety of lemur species, unique to the island, on a private lemur reserve

### Day 1 — 1 : ARRIVE IN ANTANANARIVO

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

Please note that flights are not included but can be booked 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 your 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

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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.

You will continue your ride through lush fields along the river banks until you reach camp where you leave the horses for the night. Overnight at Faka Ranch or at camp depending on local conditions.

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

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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

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A fantastic day in the saddle awaits you! After leaving the village of Ampefy, you will ride through the region's 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 Madagascan 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

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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

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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 sends 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. After an aperitif around the crackling campfire, you will enjoy another delicious traditional Malagasy meal before retiring to your tent for the night under the clear night sky.

Overnight at camp.

## Day 8 — 8 : ANDRANOMENABE - DEVIL'S MELTING POT - TANA - 5/6 hours riding

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A change of landscape and a day spent riding under the heat of this semi-arid region of Madagascar will lead you to discover the magnificent Andranomenabe Lake. It is here that flocks of wild ducks, pink beaks and teals, bask out of the reach of predators. You will enjoy a superb gallop around the lake during which you will have a glorious view of the rice growing plains of Ifanja an area of over 3000 hectares of fertile land. Discover the Marmite du Diable (The Devil's Melting Pot) - a true curiosity of the River Mazy, the bed of which has marked its way through the surrounding black rock.

Overnight in a guesthouse.

## Day 9 — 9 : ANTANANARIVO - ANDASIBE - No riding

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You will take the road east (3 hours by car) and after a hearty dinner at Moramanga, you will check in to the Feon'ny Ala Hotel (or similar) on the edge dense forest. Here, you will have a chance to interact the lemurs at the Vakona Lodge reserve and/ or visit the village community of Andasibe.

Overnight at the hotel.

## Day 10 — 10 : ANDASIBE - PANGALANE - AMBILA - 3 hours riding

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After a good night's sleep, you will be driven to meet the horses that will be waiting for you at Brickaville, a town found at the end of Route Nationale n° 2. The route slaloms its way, in stages, down the cliff sides leading towards the east coast of the island. You will have your lunch at Brickaville before getting back in the saddle and heading out along a back path to reach the ferry crossing the Pangalanes Canal. Here, the view across the Indian Ocean will no doubt top the list of the most memorable parts of your ride.

You will experience a true adrenaline rush as you cross the open iron railway arch bridge consisting of 2 rails and no parapet, 20 metres above the canal waters. The crossing is well worth it, as on the other side you will find the stunning Ambila beaches, bathed in blue Indian Ocean waves, right at your feet. You will spend the night wild camping against the unforgettable backdrop of the shores of the ocean at Ambila.

Overnight at camp.

## Day 11 — 11 : AMBILA - 4-5 hours riding

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The day's ride will expose you to another side of the Madagascan landscape as you ride through the sand dunes between the Canal and the Ocean, crossing an idyllic lagoon, on horseback, and riding through lush subtropical forest along sublime riding trails. Following unforgettable gallops towards the Rianala River estuary and the Indian Ocean, Andovoranto - with the air of being at the ends of the earth - will be waiting to welcome you.

Before having lunch in the restaurant Les Cocotiers, you will have a chance to take in the view (and maybe a few photos!) of this magical spot where the ocean and gentle waters of the river meet. If time allows, the more courageous riders may be tempted to take a swim with their horses in the placid waters of the Pangalanes Canal lagoon; here and there, the gushing water from the thermal springs will bubble up to warm your legs and offer a veritable 'natural spa treatment'.

You will wild camp once more at Ambila.

## Day 12 — 12 : AMBILA - VAVONY - AMBILA - 5-6 hours riding

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Today, you will ride north, along a seemingly never-ending, picturesque path flanked by forest and well-suited to a fast pace. Enjoy the temperate heat as you ride the tracks from Tana-Côte-Est station to the beach. On your arrival at Vavony, a fishing village on the banks of Rasoabe Lake, water spirits allowing, you will gallop along the riverbanks through the shallow's foam and spray. You will return to the village of Ambila riding across the beach to a late lunch before enjoying a range of activities in the sand - jumping the wooden canoes, riding into the waves, swimming and vegging out!

Overnight in a hotel.

## Day 13 — 13 : AMBILA - 4-5 HOURS RIDING

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You get back to Vavony from Lake Rasoabe to find the horses later in the morning. You ride back to Ambila, following the coastline. In the afternoon, enjoy an excursion in a traditional pirogue to discover the beautiful Pangalanes Canal differently. When you get closer to the stables, you're in for a chance to swim with the horses. In the afternoon, you are greeted by the local children as you head back to Camp.

Dinner and camping at Ambila.

## Day 14 — 14 : AMBILA - BRICKAVILLE - 3 hours riding / 6-7h transfer

After breakfast, your ride will start with you once more crossing the Pangalanes Canal. The horses will push forward, energised by the past 4 days spent in the sea air. You will enjoy a fast-paced and varied ride and make the most of your last gallops through this unique and beautiful countryside.

You will say your goodbyes to the horses and be driven to Antananarivo, having lunch en route (3h drive). You will spend the night in a comfortable guesthouse in Antananarivo.

## Day 15 — 15 : ANTANANARIVO

Today, you will enjoy some free time and a free day to explore the capital city of Antananarivo, often simply called Tana. Here, you will have a chance to visit the city's craft market, be immersed in the fragrance of the local Madagascar vanilla, try the rum and discover the local ambiance and maybe chat to a few locals!

## Day 16 — 16: DEPARTURE

Departure from Tana.

### DATES & PRICES

DEPARTURE	RETURN	PRICE WITHOUT FLIGHTS	STATUS
24/05/2025	08/06/2025	£3,151	Open
21/06/2025	06/07/2025	£3,151	Open
12/07/2025	27/07/2025	£3,151	Guaranteed departure
09/08/2025	24/08/2025	£3,151	Open
06/09/2025	21/09/2025	£3,151	Open
13/09/2025	28/09/2025	£3,151	Open
20/09/2025	05/10/2025	£3,151	Open

## Price details

- 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 2 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 approx. €530/\$560/£460. 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

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### SUPPORT TEAM

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

### LOGISTICS

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1 groom for every 3 horses

1 horse equipped with saddle and bridle per rider

1 cook

1 assistant cook

1 vehicle, driver and camp attendant

### INLAND TRANSPORT

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Minibus organised for all transfers mentioned within the itinerary

Return airport transfers

### ACCOMMODATION

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3-man tents for 2 people sharing - foam mattresses provided

Hotel - rooms for 2-3 people with a private bathroom

### MEALS

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Full-board during the ride

## Price doesn't include

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### MEALS

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Beverages and personal extras

Meals in Tana

### INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT

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International flights

Visa fees

### EXTRAS

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Tips to the local team

### INSURANCE

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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

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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. They are 1,40 cm to 1,70 cm high.

## Guide & local team

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

## Minimum riding ability

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### MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

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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: 90 kg / 14,2 stones / 198 lbs.

## **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

Saddle bags 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**

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 (£4 - £6) each day for the driver and for the guide. For the porters, waiters/ waitresses and other staff 2000 to 10000 Ariary (£0.5 - £3) 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.

### 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

- 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

#### General information

- The airline allows only one bag to be checked-in per passenger. Make sure it weighs no more than the specified weight limit; if it exceeds this weight, you will have to pay excess luggage fees at check-in
- 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.
- 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

#### 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.

## 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](#) .