Equus Journeys
HORSEBACK TRAVEL & EQUESTRIAN TRADITIONS SINCE 1972

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New Year on Faial Island

AZORES

This New Year, **explore Faial Island on horseback**, a remote and tranquil isle in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Spend 6 days on horseback heading out from your lodge each day to explore lush green meadows, coastal cliffs, tropical forests and beaches, before riding trails through the volcanic, often lunar, landscapes.

Centre based holidays	**8 days (6 days riding)**	**From £1,854**		Open to non-riders


Discover this remote island in the saddle


Set out on a relaxing riding holiday


Stay in beautiful, modern accommodation

ITINERARY

Highlights

- A lovely opportunity to spend the New Year in the Azores
- Enjoy comfortable accommodation in picturesque surroundings
- Enjoy varied landscapes with a combination of volcanoes and coast line trails

Day 1 — 1: Home - Horta - No Riding

Patio Lodge

You will be met at the Horta airport on Faial Island by a member of our team. Outside of June and August we recommend you spend the night before in Lisbon and take the 2.5-hour flight the following day. We can take care of your reservations in Lisbon upon request. You can also fly to Sao Miguel and from there to Horta with SATA/Azores Airlines.

From the airport, you will be taken to your accommodation at Patio Lodge (30 minutes) where you will be based for the rest of your stay, and that evening you will have your first Azorean meal at the lodge.

Please note that the arrival and departure dates are very flexible: contact us with your requirements and we will check availability for you.

Day 2 — 2: Whaling Harbours - 4-5h riding

Patio Lodge

Before your first day in the saddle, you will learn a lot about whales and their history on the island of Faial during the briefing. You will then get to know your horse and your equipment for the week.

The ride starts on gently rising meadow paths and becomes more active with short trots and canters. You reach a whale-watching point. With a little luck and when the sea is calm, riders can see whales and dolphins.

You then make your way back to the lodge along the steep coast, where lunch awaits. In the afternoon, you set out on horseback again to reach two small whaling harbours. If the weather is good, you can even go for a swim!

The horses stay overnight in a small hamlet, while riders are driven back to the lodge.

Day 3 — 3: Lighthouse Trail - 3h riding

Patio Lodge

Today you can learn about the impact of the 1998 earthquake on Faial.
You set out early in the morning trail, which begins along the coast through blue hydrangea hedges, to the island's former lighthouse, which was destroyed in the earthquake.
The nearby village still has a crumbling church that testifies to the power of the earthquake.

Saddlebag picnic for lunch, before continuing the ride. During the afternoon you will witness beautiful views of the other islands. Eventually you will reach the paddock for the night and transfer back to the Ecolodge.

Day 4 — 4: Caldeira of Faial - 6-7h riding

Patio Lodge

Another early start, as you ride today to one of the island's top highlights: Faial's crater, the Caldeira, standing at an altitude of 1,000m. A real challenge for riders and horses. It is likely that you will meet farmers on the way to their cows, and pass Heather trees looking like giant broccoli!

You slowly ride your way up to the crater rim of Faial via switchback tracks – the crater is 400m deep and 2,500m wide and is a fairly impressive sight. Those who would like to extend their stay on Faial Island can descend into the depths of the crater with a nature park guide (please ask us for possible extensions and activities).

After a saddlebag picnic lunch, you ride through the wild and remote landscape of the high mountains. The trail leads you over farm roads down to a small volcano whose inner crater you can reach on foot through a small tunnel – a very special experience! After a full day in the saddle, you arrive at the Jungle Camp in the late afternoon, where the horses stay overnight while riders are taken back to the lodge.

Day 5 — 5: Cabeço Verde Trail - 3 hours riding

Patio Lodge

After breakfast, you will be driven to Horta town. Here you will have time to explore the colourful and cosmopolitan harbour town by yourself. Walk along the sailing harbour, find secluded spots in the town and visit the old whalers factory.

At lunchtime, you will be picked up and taken to a typical Faial island "tasca". Later you will arrive to the Jungle Camp. After preparing the horses, you will ride up to the Green Hill called "Cabeco Verde". From the top of this volcano you can admire spectacular views over an amazing landscape and the volcano of Capelinhos. The way down will allow you to see the vineyards, unique to Faial Island. A wine-growing area which, thanks to the ashes of the last eruption and the special way of growing the grapes, is creating a wonderful homemade wine.

Day 6 — 6 : Capelinhos - 4-5 hours riding

Patio Lodge

Today the trail takes you through a mystical jungle landscape. Enjoy fantastic canters with beautiful ocean views. Extensive vineyards, but also small adegas pave the way.
Via narrow tracks close to the shore, you reach another top highlight of the Azores, the volcano of Capelinhos, that erupted in 1957. Desert-like solitude awaits. Hidden under the buried lighthouse is the modern interpretation center that reports on the volcanism of the Azores and the eruption of the volcano. We combine a saddlebag picnic with a visit to this attraction. Riding over parts of the volcano, we reach the Jungle Camp in the late afternoon. The transfer back to the lodge is already waiting there.

Day 7 — 7: Faja Bay & Canyon Trail - 4-5h riding

Patio Lodge

Today is the last day of your trail riding holiday in the Azores.
Faja Bay is a hidden bay where islanders have been growing wine and fruits for 500 years. On the way, you will pass small "Adegas", wine houses with their vineyards.

After riding through dense jungle you will reach the black lava beach of Faja Bay. A magical, romantic world of its own. Small lava stone houses, well-kept gardens and a wild sea await you.

Afterwards, you will cross the island from the dry south to the green north, enjoying magnificent views over terraced pastures down to the blue ocean. Some nice canters lead to the highest village on the island, Ribeira Funda. A typical Azorean picnic is waiting for the group directly above the 300m deep canyon.

In the afternoon the route takes you along yam fields through a small, wild and romantic valley after 6 days of riding back to the Lodge. A big farewell dinner with wine tasting in the lodge ends a lovely trail riding week.

Day 8 — 8 : Horta - Home - No Riding

After having an early breakfast, you will be transferred to the airport.

You can also continue your trip with an extension to other islands, a hiking trip down the caldeira, or perhaps the chance to swim with dolphins. Please contact us for details.

DATES & PRICES

DEPARTURE	RETURN	PRICE WITHOUT FLIGHTS	STATUS
27/12/2026	03/01/2027	£1,854	Guaranteed departure
27/12/2027	03/01/2028	£2,009	Guaranteed departure

Price details

- International flights 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/double "Lodge room". Other rooming options are available, please contact us.

- Rides are confirmed for a minimum of 1 rider and a usual maximum of 9 riders, plus your guide.

- If you sign up to the ride as a solo rider, you will be charged a single room supplement:
> 2026/2027 - €280/£245/$320

- Reservations made over 90 days in advance benefit from a 10% discount.

- Non-riders are welcome (half-board) at a discounted rate. Please contact us for a detailed quotation.

- Minimum age is 16 yo if accompanied by an adult. Younger rider may be considered after consultation.

- The lodge can also organise multi-day non-riding extensions at the end or start of your holiday: hiking, trips to Pico Islands and more. Please let us know if this is of interest.
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

LOGISTICS

1 horse equipped with saddle and bridle per rider
1 vehicle and driver

INLAND TRANSPORTS

Airport transfers

ACCOMMODATION

Double rooms in guest houses

MEALS

Full board from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on the final day (day 8)
Drinks during picnic lunches and water at dinner time

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT

Saddle bags

Price doesn't include

MEALS

Extra beverages and personal extras

TRANSPORT

International flights

EXTRAS

Tips to the local team
Park, museum and other tourist site fees

INSURANCE

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

Optional

ACCOMMODATION

Single room supplement. See above for more details

EQUESTRIAN INFO

Horses

A herd of gentle and well-schooled pure Lusitanos or Lusitano-Cruzado Portuguese cross horses await you on Faial Isle. They spend the year round out on the prairies and are worked with daily. Their average height is 15.2hh.

Rider weight limit: 95kg/ 15stone/ 209 lbs.

Guide & local team

Victor stumbled across this beautiful little island years ago, and decided to make a life for themselves here. He bought an old Quinta, renovated it beautifully and soon added rooms to the structure. He is German and speak perfect English and Portuguese.

Diogo is native to the Island and has trained in Lisbon. He is a competent horseman and a great lead guide. He's always happy to take you around his island and tell you about its secrets. He speaks Portuguese and English.

Carla will be looking after your meals and make sure you get a taste of the traditional Azorean cuisine.

Several interns complete the team in the summer, helping out at the stables and as back up guides.

Minimum riding ability

MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

You should be able to ride in all paces and in all kinds of terrain. The terrain is quite mountainous due to the volcanic nature of the island and you should have a steady seat, but the ride is not overly technical.

Rider weight limit: 95 kg / 210 lbs / 14.9 st.

PACE

The riding is relaxed with all three paces (walk, trot, canter). Due to the mountainous nature of the terrain, most of the ride is at a walk but faster paces will be had whenever suitable.

TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

Each rider grooms and tacks their own horse and helps the team to distribute water and food to the horses.

TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE

A good level of fitness and endurance is required as you will spend several hours in the saddle each day.

EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

Prestige trail saddles, saddlebags and Australian raincoats.

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 stay in the comfortable Patio Lodge built on the property in 2016. Cosy and inviting to come back to after a day's riding, you will be able to enjoy the accommodation's terrace and garden. The rooms are double or twin. You can also request a single room at an extra charge. In 2020, the Lodge also added a lovely "Tiny House" to their offer, perfect for couples looking for a little more intimacy.

Please note the rooms have no fans or AC in keeping with their sustainable policy.

There is a small fitness centre with a pool.

There is also a cosy cottage perfect for families and groups of friends that can sleep up to 4 (at a supplementary cost). If all accommodation options at the lodge are fully booked at the time of your booking, you will be given the option to stay at a local guesthouse instead.

MEALS

Dinner is typically Azorean cuisine.
Lunchtime is either a picnic or a light lunch in a local bar.

Dietary requests can usually be accommodated if mentioned in advance - please inform your travel advisor upon booking.

CLIMATE

The Azores have a maritime climate with mild temperatures ranging from 16°C (60°F) in winter to a comfortable 26°C (79°F) in summer. The sea is warmed by the Gulf Stream and sea temperature varies from 14℃ to 22℃. On average there is about three to four hours of sunshine a day in winter and seven to eight in summer. Rainfall is distributed around the year, but is heavier and more frequent in winter. Characteristic for the Azores is the wide variety of weather conditions within a short period; a single day can be windy and calm, sunny and showery in any combination! A typical and true remark is that if you don't like the weather, you just have to wait 10 minutes!

TIPS

Tipping is not compulsory but will be very much appreciated if you enjoy the services provided by the team. Tipping is totally at your discretion but we

recommend €50 (€30 for the trail guide and €20 for the lodge team)

PACKING LIST

Please pack carefully and sensibly: the following guide is here to give you an idea of what to bring. This list must be adapted depending on the season and individual needs.

Head
- Helmets are mandatory and you should bring your own.
- Sunhat for when not riding
- Sunglasses
- Buff or bandana

Upper body
- Thermals (long or short sleeved)
- Long sleeved shirts provide protection from the sun and are an extra layer
- T-shirts
- Lightweight fleece or jumper
- Warm fleece or jumper (and a spare in case one gets wet)
- Warm and waterproof jacket - it can rain at any time of year and the evenings can be particularly cold. Australian raincoats can be rented at an additional fee directly to the lodge.

Legs
- 2 Lightweight, comfortable riding trousers or jodhpurs
- Thermals
- Casual trousers for the evenings, such as jeans or tracksuit bottoms
- Waterproof over trousers
- Swimming costume

Hands and Feet
- Comfortable riding boots. We recommend short boots with half chaps but you may wish to take long chaps as an extra layer against inclement weather. We don't recommend taking your favourite long leather boots in case they get damaged
- Waterproof shoes/boots can be useful for abundant dew in the mornings or when it rains
- Trainers and/or hiking shoes for the other activities you may choose to do
- Several pairs of socks
- Gloves - Waterproof gloves can be particularly useful

Other useful items
- Bumbag for carrying your camera and small items whilst riding
- Water bottle
- Ear plugs (for light sleepers)

Medical kit
- Any medication you regularly take
- Sunscreen and lip balm - should be high factor
- Insect repellent, preferably containing deet
- Blister plasters in case of any rubs
- Antiseptic cream, plasters, aspirin, anti-histamine, insect-bite salve etc...
- Spare prescription glasses/contact lenses
- Eye drops
- Imodium or similar anti-diarrhoea medication
- Antiseptic wipes
- Handwash gel

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 (passport, camera, sunscreen, lipbalm 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!
- You should also bring a copy of your passport/insurance in case you lose your documents. You can also save a copy into your mobile phone.

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 .