



# Equus Journeys

HORSEBACK TRAVEL & EQUESTRIAN TRADITIONS SINCE 1972

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Last updated 04/02/2026

## Ancient Mountain Trails

### ALBANIA

On this **trail ride** in the mountains of Albania, follow medieval caravan pathways and plunge into the fascinating Albanian culture and architecture. After days spent riding through mountains in the south of the country, you stay with local families that will welcome you into their homes with a warm smile. This is the ideal **horseback holiday** if you are looking to combine beautiful scenery and the great outdoors, with cultural encounters, and great riding opportunities.

Trail Riding	 8 days (6 riding)	 From £1,211	
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Ancient Mountains of Albania



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### ITINERARY

### Highlights

- Follow ancient caravan routes between Gjirokastër and the Zagoria and Pogon regions in southern Albania.
- Discover traditional stone villages, UNESCO-listed Ottoman architecture and remote Orthodox monasteries.
- Ride sure-footed Tarpan x Arabian horses - hardy and ideal for the mountainous terrain!
- Enjoy authentic Albanian hospitality in local family homes.

### Day 1 — 1 : ARRIVE IN TIRANA - GJIROKASTRA

Your flight to Tirana should ideally land in the morning, and in any case no later than 14:00 to allow time for the transfer and a visit of Gjirokastra with your guides. From the airport the transfer will be by mini-van or off-road car and will take around 3-4 hours (250km).

Quick tip: you can also fly to Corfu and catch the ferry to Saranda, where you will be picked-up. The ferry times can be unpredictable due to local conditions and we advise you arrive a day early.

Your hotel is a short walk from the historical centre of Gjirokastra: you will have the opportunity to visit the town and old Bazaar before dinner. Riders can also visit Enver Hoxha's house, Gjirokastra castle, the church of the Old Bazaar, the mosque of the Baazar and Skenduli house: this is a good glimpse of the traditional life as it is in Gjirokastra!

Dinner will be served at a traditional restaurant, accompanied by your guides. This is a good time to discuss your riding abilities and learn more about the trip before the start of your riding adventure in the morning.

Day 2 : Gjirokastra - Gjirokastra - Pogon - Zagoria - Gjirokastra

## Day 2 — 2 : Gjirokastra - Santa Triada - Karjan - 4-5 hrs riding

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After breakfast at the hotel, you will head to the stables (30 min drive) meet your horse for the week. The first leg of your trail ride takes you through the Albanian countryside, combining rolling hills and valleys, with the occasional stream and River Drino, the “Tree of Life” river. It is the most important water basin in the area and part of ancient pagan beliefs. On your way you will come across the ruins of Santa Triada castle, rebuilt between 1809-1810, standing as a strategic point to control all the caravan itineraries. You will stop for a well-deserved lunch break in the scenic Shen Toder village. After approximately 1,5h riding you will reach the traditional medieval village of Karjan. Take a moment to enjoy the churches and old roman bridge, before having a lovely traditional dinner a local family house where you will spend the night. Your guides will head back to Gjirokaster for the evening - it is up to you to make sure the horses are fed and watered in the evening, and again in the morning.

## Day 3 — 3 : Cajupi - Labova - Nderan - 6 hours riding

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After breakfast you ride further north to the village of Labova and the valley of Cajupi. Your trail follows the ancient merchant stone road of Zhapa with its beautiful panoramas, taking in the fantastic views over the hills and valleys. Take a break in Labova, famous for its wonderful Church that you will have the opportunity to visit. The next leg of your ride will take you through the mountains: discover its vegetation including mountain tea, oregano, wild rose and other endemic plants like digitalis or 'Dig-Dag' as it is known locally. You follow the mountain path to the valley of Cajupi where you halt for a picnic under the trees. After a nice gallop through Cajupi valley, the trail follows the medieval Caravan pathway with its famous bandit hideout 'Hija e Mallkuar' or 'The Cursed Shadow'.

Depending on the condition of the road under construction in this segment, the guides may choose to take an alternative itinerary based on the situation. The new route may require mandatory walking on foot, on a sloped terrain, for up to 20 minutes.

Today's final destination is the village of Nderan, placed in the heart of Zagoria region. You will stay with a Vllah linguistic minority family for two nights. You can learn about the local traditions and lifestyle, and even accompany the family during the milking process and dinner preparation, if you wish.

## Day 4 — 4 : Lliar - Hoshteva - Koncka - Nivan - 5-6 hours riding

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Wake up in the countryside, with the perspective of a lovely traditional breakfast waiting for you. You will need the fuel to face today's varied terrain combining hard cliffs, rivers, woods and rolling hills. You will continue riding to the most important horse pathway of the XVII and XVIII century that used to connect the biggest commercial centres in Southern Albania. You will stop for a short break at the water spring of Lliar, before you tackle a challenging downhill route. Your afternoon ride will be punctuated by Byzantine churches and monasteries. You spend the night at the farmer's house again.

Please note: depending on the road situation, an alternative route may also be taken during the day. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.)

## Day 5 — 5 : Pogoni - Hllomo - Polican - 4-5 hours riding

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After a tasty country breakfast you ride through a mountain valley, perfectly suited for gallops, passing small remote farms, wild cliffs and many historical monuments off the beaten track. It is like travelling back in time: you will be passing many Byzantine cult monuments, ancient ruins and mythical natural wonders. In the afternoon, after 6 hours of riding, you will reach the centre of the Pogon region and the mountain village of Polican, populated by a Greek minority - you are less than 10 km from the Greek border. In this village you have the chance to explore monuments dated back to the medieval period. Later in the evening you will enjoy local gastronomic delights with Greek flavours.

## Day 6 — 6 : Polican - Lohova - 5 hours riding

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This morning, the trail leads you through demanding but beautiful mountain scenery. Lunch will be at the Church of Labova of the Cross - the oldest church in Albania! Your guide will tell you more about its history. Later in the afternoon you ride to Lohova, a small town nestled at the foot of the Bureto Mountain. The archaeological evidence indicates a very ancient settlement, that reached its zenith in the 17th-century when it became an important commercial crossroads. Overnight in a local family house with delicious local food.

## Day 7 — 7 : Antigonea National Park - Suha - Gjirokastra - 3-4 hours riding

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This morning will begin with breakfast in the garden whilst enjoying wonderful views over the valley. Before you begin the ride, enjoy a guided walk through the town. You then set out on horseback through rolling hills, forests and fortified villages to reach the Antigonea National Park. After a relaxing break to enjoy the Park, a short ride brings you back to the stables.

The entire afternoon will be at your leisure, providing time to make preparations for your departure, explore local museums, or indulge in some souvenir shopping. Your farewell dinner will take place in a small restaurant in the old Bazaar. Later in the evening you can have a drink in a popular bar before heading back to your hotel for the night.

## Day 8 — 8 : Gjirokastra - Departure from Tirana

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After breakfast at the hotel you will be transferred back to the airport of Tirana. Your flight should depart in the afternoon.

If flying out of Corfu please add an extra day to ensure you have time to make the ferry crossing.

DATES & PRICES

DEPARTURE	RETURN	PRICE WITHOUT FLIGHTS	STATUS
28/02/2026	07/03/2026	£1,211	Open
07/03/2026	14/03/2026	£1,211	Guaranteed departure
14/03/2026	21/03/2026	£1,211	Guaranteed departure
21/03/2026	28/03/2026	£1,211	Guaranteed departure
28/03/2026	04/04/2026	£1,211	Full
04/04/2026	11/04/2026	£1,211	Full
11/04/2026	18/04/2026	£1,211	Full
09/05/2026	16/05/2026	£1,211	Full
23/05/2026	30/05/2026	£1,211	Full
06/06/2026	13/06/2026	£1,211	Guaranteed departure
20/06/2026	27/06/2026	£1,211	Guaranteed departure
04/07/2026	11/07/2026	£1,211	Guaranteed departure
08/08/2026	15/08/2026	£1,211	Guaranteed departure
22/08/2026	29/08/2026	£1,211	Full
05/09/2026	12/09/2026	£1,211	Guaranteed departure
19/09/2026	26/09/2026	£1,211	Guaranteed departure
24/10/2026	31/10/2026	£1,211	Guaranteed departure
31/10/2026	07/11/2026	£1,211	Full
07/11/2026	14/11/2026	£1,211	Full
14/11/2026	21/11/2026	£1,211	Guaranteed departure
21/11/2026	28/11/2026	£1,211	Open
28/11/2026	05/12/2026	£1,211	Open

Price details

- Flights to your destination are not included. We can look into the best flight options for you upon request.
- Rates are per person and based on sharing a room (up to 4 beds) in the homes of local hosts.
- Groups are made up of 3-12 riders, with one or two English-speaking guides.
- Please note: the ride will also confirm for 2 riders on payment of a supplement of c. €178/£150/\$195 in 2026. Once the group has reached 3 people, we will remove this supplement from your invoice and refund you if you have already paid it.
- It is not possible to guarantee single rooms during the trail. However, you can guarantee a single room for your first and last nights, spent in hotels, for a €30 supplement per night (2026), payable locally in Euros.

- Return transfers are not included and will be invoiced:

> Tirana airport to Gjirokastra: €90/£80/\$100 return per person, 225 km, 3-4 hours. Flights that fit the normal transfer's schedule should be planned to arrive no later than 14:30 pm and departures after 1pm.

If your flights do not match these transfers, a private transfer can be organised from Tirana airport:

- 1 rider: €140/£120/\$160 one way

- 2 riders: €70/£65/\$80 one way

- 3+ riders: €55/£50/\$65 one way

We cannot organise transfers from the city centre. There is a bus every hour starting from the centre of Tirana (behind the opera palace) to the airport, or you can take a taxi.

> Saranda Port to Gjirokastra: €50/£45/\$60 return per person, 64km, 1 hour. Transfers departing from Saranda no later than 15:00. If flying in and out of Corfu, please allow one extra day as ferry schedules can be unpredictable due to local conditions.

- Children from 12yo are welcome on the trail, provided they have reasonable levels of fitness, sufficient riding ability and are accompanied by an adult. 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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1 English-speaking horse guide

### LOGISTICS

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1 horse equipped with saddle and bridle per rider

1 support vehicle

### ACCOMMODATION

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Room in local home on D2, 3, 4, 5 and 6

Room in a standard hotel on D1 and D7

### MEALS

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Full board from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 8

## Price doesn't include

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### TRANSPORT

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Return airport transfers, invoiced before you go - see above for details

International flights

### EXTRAS

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Tips to the local team

Entry fees to the museums in Gjirokastra

Park, museum and other site entry fees - we recommend bringing some small change as donations to the local churches you will visit during the trail

Visa (if necessary) and personal purchase

Small group supplement - see above for the details

### 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

## Optional

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### ACCOMMODATION

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Single room supplement - only applicable on the first and last nights.

## EQUESTRIAN INFO

### Horses

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The horses are a local breed of Tarpan and Arabian horses. They are small but robust, and perfectly suited to the rocky terrain. There are 23 horses in total - steady, brave and sure-footed, they make ideal equine companions.

### Guide & local team

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Aurel and Kristina are specialised in mountainous trail rides. Their objective is to offer a trail combining culture, history, nature, and always in the respect of the horses. They love their country and its history.

All trails are accompanied by a lead guide and a back up guide. They speak English, Italian and Greek.

### Minimum riding ability

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#### MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

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You need to be at least an intermediate rider, capable of riding a sensible horse at all paces in the outdoors and over demanding terrain. A previous experience of a long trail ride is an advantage but not mandatory.

Rider weight limit: 90 kilos / 14,1 st / 198 lbs. This is a strict limit as the horses are small and the terrain is demanding.

#### PACE

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The pace is varied to include trots, canters and possible gallops in the valleys. Some of the riding is across varied terrain so you need to be secure in the saddle. There are a few steep climbs and you must be able to balance yourself well in the saddle and have a good head for heights. The horses are sure-footed, make sure to trust their judgement!

#### TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

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You will be asked to help look after the horses in the morning, at lunch time and dinner time. Please note that the horses stay in paddocks near your guesthouses while the guides go back to the stables for the night, which means you will be asked to feed the horses in the evening and morning.

You can help groom and tack up although this is not mandatory.

#### TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE

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You should have previous experience riding outdoors on trails and be confident riding in open spaces. You need to be fit enough for this trail. On some occasions you will be asked to dismount and lead your horse on foot over steep hills and rocky terrain. Some paths are close to the cliffs, please be advised of this should you be known to suffer from vertigo.

The terrain is quite rugged and stony - the horses are well trained, sure-footed and quite used to navigating terrain that would be tricky for most European/Western horses.

#### EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

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English saddles and bridles.

Personal saddlebags are welcome if riders would like to bring their own. Small saddlebags are provided by the team but just for food and water.

Helmets are mandatory and you should bring your own.

## TRAVEL INFO

### COMFORT

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You will stay in modest homestay accommodation with locals, except for the first and last nights that are spent in hotels.

Hotel: double or triple ensuite rooms. Wifi is available.

Guesthouses/Home stays: twin rooms (sometimes triple, or quadruple), shared bathrooms. Your hosts don't necessarily speak English but a little bit of raki and sign language go a long way!

Very limited internet access/signal during the trail.

## MEALS

The local gastronomy is delicious and varied. During the ride, you will enjoy freshly prepared meals that will give you a sample of the Albanian gastronomy.

Hearty country breakfast with local dairy products, honey, pancakes; pies and cakes, eggs, milk, tea and coffee.

Picnic lunches. In the morning you prepare your own lunch according to your taste (bread, cheese, vegetables, eggs...). On some days you will bring your picnic in the saddlebags and on another it will be brought to you by the back up vehicle. On some occasions you may have your lunch at a local small restaurant/cafe.

Dinner is a hot meal prepared by your hosts (veal, pork, chicken, goat or fish), with local wines and raki.

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

## CLIMATE

This ride takes place in southern Albania which is around 5 degrees warmer than the rest of the country. You will experience different types of weather on the trail; from cooler mountainous air to a warmer climate down on the coast.

The best time to visit Albania is the months of April, May, June and September, with lovely warm weather. July and August are dry and temperatures can be extremely hot, from 25 to 45°C! In October, November and March, there is a chance of rain and temperatures average 10-15°C, with April starting to get warmer.

## TIPS

Tips are left to your discretion and are not mandatory. We recommend around €40/£35 per rider for the week, to be divided between the team. The local currency is the Lek, but Euro is widely accepted. Don't bring too much money as this trip is fully inclusive.

## 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

- Helmet
- Sunglasses - with a cord attached so they don't fly off when riding
- Buff or bandana

### Upper body

- Long sleeved shirts provide protection from the sun or branches 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 outside July and August and the evenings can be cooler.

### Legs

- 2 Lightweight, comfortable riding trousers or jodhpurs
- Casual trousers for the evenings, such as jeans or tracksuit bottoms
- Bathing suit and towel

### Hands and Feet

- Comfortable riding boots. We recommend good hiking boots with half chaps. There might be some walking over steep trails so we don't recommend taking your favourite long leather boots in case they get damaged, and normal riding boots with a smooth sole can be slippery when walking on foot.
- Trainers or equivalent light shoes for the evenings

- 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
- Swiss army knife (or equivalent)
- 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 ( 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!
- We recommend taking a copy of your passport and insurance documents with you in case you lose your originals
- Take a second, smaller bag to pack things you may need during the day such as a book or suncream then you can easily access it during the long lunch break
- You can bring pictures of your family and small gifts for your host family if you like.

## **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](#) .