Equus Journeys
HORSEBACK TRAVEL & EQUESTRIAN TRADITIONS SINCE 1972

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Last updated 21/11/2026

Expedition in the Rocha

URUGUAY

On this **trail ride**, discover the hidden beauty of the Uruguayan lands and embrace the cultural traditions of the **Gauchos**. Ride across the most natural and beautifully diverse landscapes, exploring trails through grassy wetlands or enjoying gallops across endless beaches. Uncover the history of this magnificent country by stepping away from typical tourist hotspots. This **riding holiday** is perfectly suited to the more adventurous riders as you head back to basics and camp out under the stars.

Trail Riding	**8 days / 8 riding**	**From £2,548**	


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ITINERARY

Highlights

- Discover the culture of the Uruguayan Gauchos
- Enjoy a ride on beautifully bred Criollo horses.
- Explore a variety of landscapes, from the grazing pampas on the estancias, to swamplands, coastal forests, sand dunes and beaches.
- Spot more than 400 species of birds (flamingos, herons, snow geese, black swans etc) plus the chance to see sea lions and dolphins.
- Experience exhilarating canters on pristine beaches.
- Possibility of extending your stay with two extra days of riding to Punta del Diablo and Santa Teresa Fortress. Please contact us.

Day 1 — 1: MONTEVIDEO - BARRA DE VALIZAS - 3 hours riding

International flight to Montevideo. (Flights are not included but can be booked upon request). You may want to arrive a day earlier and stay in a hotel overnight (also not included in the price).

Early this morning, you will need to make your way to the Tres Cruces bus terminal, where you will take the public bus (leaving at 07:00am) to Barra de Valizas (approx. a 4-hour drive).

On the road, you will be able to see the first of the large meadows where herds of cattle graze on the pasture lands, guided by gauchos on horseback. A member of the local team will pick you up from the bus station in Valizas and take you to the Los Chaja Ecolodge.

Here, you will meet the team and horses and enjoy your first lunch together. Then you will set up your saddlebags and head out on your first ride through the woods to a Hidden Lagoon where you can enjoy a refreshing swim! Return on horseback to Los Chajá along the Atlantic coast, enjoying a first long canter.

Dinner and overnight at Los Chajá Ecolodge.

Day 2 — 2: CABO POLONIO - VALIZAS SAND DUNES - 5 hours riding

The horse ride starts with taking the horses across the mouth of Valizas' river. Depending on the tide, you may be able to ride or may have to load the horses on the boat! Then it's a full day ride that takes you through a fascinating dune system, now a national park, to Cabo Polonio - a fishing village turned 'low key' beach resort. The village is only accessible through these shifting sand dunes making the village a fascinating outpost. After visiting the ancient lighthouse and watching part of the biggest sea lion's colony in America, you'll have lunch at a typical local restaurant, with fresh fish and typical local seafood on the menu. Then it's a horseback ride back to Valizas via pine forests. At the end of today's adventure, if the weather conditions allow it, you'll have the opportunity to swim with the horses!

Dinner and overnight at Los Chajá Ecolodge.

Day 3 — 3: OMBU FOREST - WETLANDS - 6 hours riding

Rocha camp

After breakfast watching the South American screamers (Chauna torcuata), and the many different storks, egrets, and ibis you can spot from the lodge, you'll start early in the morning with a ride towards the Castillos Lagoon wetlands. You'll cross pasture lands and ancient Estancias towards the Castillos Lagoon, the second biggest lagoon in Uruguay, central part of the IBA 20 (Important Bird and Biodiversity Area). This area is home of more than 270 different species of resident and migrating irds, such as the South American screamer, Rhea americana, Flamingos and the beautiful Black neck swan.

You ride through the unique Ombú forest, a botanical very strange formation that surrounds the shore of the lagoon. You will likely spot colourful birds such as Pink egret (Platalea ajaja) and native mammals as capibaras (Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris) and armadillos (Dasypus novemcinctus). Your first camping site is in Barra Grande, a private biodiversity reserve.

Dinner and camping at Barra Grande.

Day 4 — 4: EAST WETLANDS - HIGHLANDS - 6 hours riding

Rocha camp

A vastly different landscape is waiting today. You'll start early in the morning, riding into a somewhat arid and rocky landscape.

At midday you'll stop for a picnic lunch, where your criollo's saddles are fundamental part of the well-deserved siesta! In the afternoon you'll arrive at El Mirador in Cerro de los Rocha. This is a private reserve with a beautiful viewpoint where you can take in the scenery and get a glimpse of the trail! Your camping site is in middle of the native sierras forest, full of bird life and unspoiled nature. Millions of stars and the sounds of nature are the perfect setting.

Dinner and camping at El Mirador.

Day 5 — 5: DON BOSCO - BLACK LAGOON - 5-6 hours riding

Rocha camp

Today's riding is one of the most fascinating days in the saddle, heading toward the coast and leaving the highlands behind. You will spot several different species of woodpeckers, colorful churrinches and noisy bandurrias - just some of the most characteristic birds you can see on the way. In the afternoon you'll arrive at Don Bosco, a Salesian congregation. You will find your camping spot for the night, on the shores of the Black Lagoon shore, just under the Cerro de la Virgen with its beautiful Higuerones forest (the biggest Ficus native tree in Uruguay)

Dinner and camping at Don Bosco.

(Please note that guest house accommodation is also available tonight if preferred instead of camping, please see dates and prices).

Day 6 — 6: CERRO DE LA VIRGEN - HIGUERONES FOREST - 2 hours riding

After breakfast, you'll get ready for a half-day ride. You'll visit the Cerro de la Virgen, an amazing 360 lookout point and the highest in the area! You will also visit the forest of Higuerones, enormous and ancient epiphyte plants with huge roots. You'll return to the campsite for lunch. In the afternoon there is time to rest, enjoy the peace of the Lagoon and recharge your batteries for the next days! Swimming in the lagoon, trekking and birdwatching are just some of the activities you can enjoy here.

Dinner and camping at Don Bosco.

(Please note that guest house accommodation is also available tonight if preferred instead of camping, please see dates and prices).

Day 7 — 7: PALM TREE FOREST - ESTANCIA - BLACK LAGOON'S WETLANDS - 5 hours riding

Rocha camp

In the morning, you'll start riding through the estancia, crossing wetlands and the palm tree forest so characteristic of this area. This is a special day to see to see wild capybaras, but you need to be very quiet and pay special attention to the guide's instructions

You'll find a special spot for a picnic in middle of the wetlands. This is a place with a lot of local history, and you guide will be sharing anecdotes with you. You'll continue riding toward the Atlantic coast, reaching your camp site Los Moros just next to the Atlantic coast.

Dinner and camping at Los Moros.

Day 8 — 8: PUNTA DEL DIABLO - MONTEVIDEO - DEPARTURE - 3 hours riding

After breakfast, you'll head back to Valizas along the beach. You pass through the village of Aguas Dulces and enjoy beautiful canters on the beach with the view of Valizas' sand dunes. Once back at Los Chajá Ecolodge, you'll end this lovely week in the saddle with a delicious lunch and final "brindis" (cheers).

Then you'll transfer back to Montevideo for your flight home.

Please note: It is possible to extend your stay with two extra days of riding to Punta del Diablo and Santa Teresa Fortress. Please contact us for details and rates.

DATES & PRICES

DEPARTURE	RETURN	PRICE WITHOUT FLIGHTS	STATUS
22/11/2026	29/11/2026	£2,548	Open
13/12/2026	20/12/2026	£2,548	Open
07/03/2027	14/03/2027	£2,810	Open
04/04/2027	11/04/2027	£2,810	Open
02/05/2027	09/05/2027	£2,810	Open
17/10/2027	24/10/2027	£2,810	Open
14/11/2027	21/11/2027	£2,810	Full
12/12/2027	19/12/2027	£2,810	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 tent/room.

- It is possible to book a double or triple room in Don Bosco on Days 5 and 6, for an extra $60 per person in 2026 or $70 per person in 2027 (the price is for two nights).

- Groups are composed of a minimum of 4 international riders and a maximum of 10 riders, plus guides.

- The ride will also confirm for 2 or 3 riders on payment of a small group supplement. Once the group has reached 4 people, we will remove this supplement from your invoice and refund you if you have already paid it.
In 2026, the supplement for 2 riders will be c. $790 / €700 / £595 per person and the supplement for 3 riders will be c. $250 / €220 / £190 per person.
In 2027, the supplement for 2 riders will be c. $995 / €850 / £740 per person and the supplement for 3 riders will be c. $349 / €299 / £259 per person.

- 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. You will be reimbursed if a sharer is found for you at a later date.
In 2026, the supplement is $306 / €270 / £230.
In 2027, the supplement is $330/ €280 / £245.

- Bus tickets to/from Montevideo are included, as well as transfers to the eco-lodge are from the bus station in Barra de Valizas. You will need to organise your own transfers from and to the airport and hotels. If your flight plans do not match the transfer times or if you would prefer a private transfer, we can organise a minibus from or to the airport. Please contact us for rates.

- It is possible to extend your stay with two extra days of riding to Punta del Diablo and Santa Teresa Fortress. Please contact us for details and rates.
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
1 local horse guide

LOGISTIC

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

INLAND TRANSPORTS

Private bus
Transfers to and from the Tres Cruces train station to the ride at set times

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation in double or twin tents/rooms

MEALS

Full board from lunch on the ride to breakfast on departure from the ride

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT

First aid kit

Price doesn't include

MEALS

Beverages and personal extras
Meals outside of the ride

TRANSPORTS

International flights
Airport local fees
Transfers between the airport and the Tres Cruces bus station
Transfer from Montevideo to the airprt on the last day

EXTRA

Tips to local team
Small group supplement. For price list see above in prices details

INSURANCE

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

Optional

ACCOMMODATION

Single room supplement

TRANSPORT

Airport transfers - outside of those stipulated in the itinerary

EQUESTRIAN INFO

Horses

On this trail you will ride Uruguayan Criollos and Criollo cross horses. Criollo is the horse breed in Uruguay, Argentina and the south of Brazil. The breed was developed from horses that were brought from Spain in the 17th century and then bred in this region. Your guide has bred and trained them from a young age on the estancia for working cattle. They are extremely well looked-after: your guide Mauro is a veterinarian and regularly checks the health and well-being of each horse. They are ideally suited to the terrain, and will give you a confident ride across the wetlands, high hills and dunes. Each estancia has its own herd consisting of around 20 horses, you will be paired with a horse that matches your riding abilities and preferences. They are well natured, and have great individual characters which you will get discover as the week goes on.

Saddles are traditional and consist of a basic frame with a sheepskin on top for comfort. The horses respond to neck-reining.

Guide & local team

Mauro is a veterinarian who has had years of experience training and caring for horses, his sister Macarena has been riding for over thirty years. They were joined by Laura a few years ago where she came from Italy and never left. Together, with the help of the local team of gauchos, you can be assured you are in the hands of a capable team. The team are extremely dedicated to the preservation of the environment and regularly participate in the census of marine animals and environmental care.

Minimum riding ability

MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

You must be capable and comfortable in all paces. There are horses suitable for experienced riders and also gentle horses for more nervous riders.

Rider weight limit: 90kg / 14.1 st / 198 lbs.

PACE

The pace is mixed to include canters and occasional gallops, but there will also be long stretches of walk. When working with cattle the pace is usually slower, but the rides along the beaches and on grassy stretches can be faster.

TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

You will be asked to help tack and untack, groom and help assist with general duties to care for your horse.

TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE

During the ride every effort will be made to maintain the same set of horses throughout the whole tour. The intention is that then a rider can build a bond with their horse and enjoy not only the landscape and ride but also the company of their horse! The group will also be accompanied by one or more additional horses in case a change is needed.

EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

Saddles used are ‘western' type with a sheep skin. The horses respond to neck reining (western ‘one-hand' riding). Help will be given in adjusting to this tack which is very suitable for long days in the saddle. Saddle bags are provided.
For safety and hygiene, your own helmet is highly recommended.

TRAVEL INFO

COMFORT

You'll spend the first two nights at Los Chaja Ecolodge (located on the edge of a marsh) in a twin or double cabin. The cabins were built with natural materials and using bioconstruction techniques -- designed to be environmentally-friendly and comfortable. They each have a private bathroom and a deck facing the wetlands so you can birdwatch.
The other five nights are spent camping in a 2-person tent, with mattresses and sleeping bags provided.
If preferred, it is possible to switch two of the camping nights (Days 5 and 6) for guest house accommodation for an additional fee. Please inform us upon booking.

MEALS

You will start your day with a breakfast of teas/coffee and local produce.
A picnic lunch consisting of a freshly made assortment of foods. Days 6 and 8 you will be dining at a restaurant where you can try the local fish.
After a full day in the saddle, you will be greeted by a lit campfire and a delicious local delicacy.
Water is provided during hikes and meals. If you wish to treat yourself to a glass of alcohol, you must inform your guide at the beginning of the trip so they can purchase it before the ride begins (any alcohol or supplementary drinks will be charged at your expense).

CLIMATE

The weather in Uruguay is variable, but you can usually expect warm spring like temperatures with some rainfall. Although you might get some cooler days, particularly in the morning and at night, the average temperature in winter is usually between 10° and 16° C (June to September) whilst the summer time you can expect a lovely hot day with temperatures ranging from 21° to 28° C.

TIPS

Whilst tipping rests entirely at your discretion, it is customary to leave a tip of around 10% if you are happy with your experience.

PACKING LIST

PACKING LIST

You are welcome to bring a normal-sized piece of luggage on this ride, but please a smaller bag to carry your belongings for the camping section of the trip. For the camping, we kindly ask you to bring just one bag per rider, and to keep your bag as compact and lightweight as possible, as there is limited space in the support vehicle.

Head
- A riding helmet is recommended and we ask 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 (with a chinstrap).
- 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 - please bring layers so that you're prepared for cold and warm weather in the same day. There may also be rainy days, muddy and/or hot days, so it recommended you bring dry clothes to change into in the evening.
- Thermal underwear (optional).
- T-shirts in cotton and long-sleeved shirts (to protect against the sun) or tops made from rapid-dry material.
- 1 lightweight fleece or jumper.
- 1 lightweight waterproof jacket / raincoat (needs to be able to fit inside the saddle bags).
- For the evenings, additional extra-warm clothes and a warm jacket.

Legs
- Non-irritant cotton or synthetic underwear.
- 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.
- Non-riding trousers or jeans for the evenings.

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.
- 1 pair of lightweight and comfortable shoes or trainers for the evenings.

- Several pairs of warm socks.
- Gloves - your hands are particularly exposed to the sun whilst riding.

Other important items
- A towel (it is possible to borrow a towel if you'd prefer, please let us know).
- Sandals/flip-flops for the shower.
- 1 water bottle (max 1 litre) - you will refill this each day.
- Headlamp / small torch - we recommend you bring spare batteries/bulbs.
- A power bank to charge phones and cameras (during camping nights there is no electricity).
- Toiletries (shampoo, soap etc).
- Pyjamas.
- Sleeping bag (optional and available to borrow if you'd prefer, please let us know).

Optional useful items
- Swimming costume.
- 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 checked luggage!!)
- Small plastic bags for your rubbish.
- Ear plugs and eye mask.
- Camera and high capacity memory card. Spare battery.
- A pair of binoculars.

Medical kit
Important: Please make sure any allergies (to medication or otherwise) are clearly stated in your medical kit.
- Any medication you regularly take.
- Painkillers.
- Anti-diarrhoea medication.
- Re-hydration sachets.
- Sunscreen and lip balm - should be high factor.
- Insect repellent.
- Eye drops.
- Plasters.
- Blister plasters in case of any rubs.
- Antiseptic cream.
- Anti-histamines, insect-bite salve etc..
- 10cm wide bandage.
- Spare prescription glasses/contact lenses.
- Antiseptic wipes.
- Handwash gel.
- Vitamin C tablets.
- A soothing cream may be useful to treat areas irritated by long hours in the saddle.

The following equipment will be provided to you for camping:
- 1x tent.
- 1x inflatable mattress.

Recommendations:

- We recommend taking a copy of your passport and insurance documents with you in case you lose your originals.
- Carry any liquids, such as shampoo, moisturiser, deodorant over 100 ml in your hold luggage.
- Carry any valuables, such as your camera, ipod, ipad etc. in your hand luggage.
- Backpacks cannot be worn whilst riding. However, you will be given saddle bags to carry small items with you during the day.
- 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!
- If you wish to travel 'light' and wash your clothes throughout the ride, please bring with you laundry detergent that is biodegradable.

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 .