



## 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.

<b>Trail Riding</b>	 <b>9 days / 8 riding</b>	 <b>From £2,331</b>	
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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: OVERNIGHT FLIGHT TO MONTEVIDEO

Overnight flight to Montevideo

Your flight should land the following morning (day 2) on time for your transfer from the Tres Cruces bus station at 07:00 am. If your flight plans do not match, then you need to arrive a day early.

Flights are not included but can be booked upon request.

## Day 2 — 2: MONTEVIDEO - BARRA DE VALIZAS - 3 hours riding

Upon arrival at the airport, you will need to make your way to the Tres Cruces bus terminal where your guide will be waiting to take you on the public bus towards Barra de Valizas where you will start your 4-hour drive (meeting point is 7:00 am). We can also organise a minibus transfer from the airport at an additional cost (see dates and prices).

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.

At Los Chajá Ecolodge, in Barra de Valizas, you meet the team and horses and enjoy your first lunch together. We set up our saddlebags and start riding through the woods to a Hidden Lagoon where we can enjoy a refreshing swim! Return on horseback to Los Chajá along the Atlantic coast with a first long canter. Dinner and overnight at Los Chajá Ecolodge.

### Day 3 — 3: CABO POLONIO - VALIZAS SAND DUNES - 5 hours riding

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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! A full day ride that takes us 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, we have lunch at a typical local restaurant, with fresh fish and typical local seafood on the menu. Horseback ride back to Valizas via pine forests. At the end of today's adventure, if the weather conditions allow it, we have the opportunity to swim with the horses!

Dinner and overnight at Los Chajá Ecolodge.

### Day 4 — 4: OMBU FOREST - WETLANDS - 6 hours riding

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 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, we start early in the morning with a ride towards the Castillos Lagoon wetlands. 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 birds, such as the South American screamer, *Rhea americana*, Flamingos and the beautiful Black neck swan. We 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 (*Dasyus novemcinctus*).

Our first camping site is in Barra Grande, a private biodiversity reserve. Dinner and camping at Barra Grande

### Day 5 — 5: EAST WETLANDS - HIGHLANDS - 6 hours riding

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 Rocha camp

A vastly different landscape is waiting today. We start early in the morning, riding into a somewhat arid and rocky landscape. At midday we stop for a picnic lunch, where our criollo's saddles are fundamental part for the deserved siesta! In the afternoon we arrive to 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! Our camping site is in middle of the native sierras forest, full of birdlife and unspoiled nature. Millions of stars and the sounds of nature are the perfect decor. Dinner and camping at El Mirador

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

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 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 we can see on the way. In the afternoon we arrive to 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 \* optional Room Accommodation - see dates and prices

### Day 7 — 7: CERRO DE LA VIRGEN - HIGUERONES FOREST - 2 hours riding

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After breakfast, we get ready for a half-day ride. 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. We return to our campsite for lunch. In the afternoon there is time to rest, enjoy the peace of the Lagoon and recharge 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 \* optional Room Accommodation - see dates and prices

### Day 8 — 8 - PALM TREE FOREST - ESTANCIA - BLACK LAGOON'S WETLAND - 5 hrs riding

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 Rocha camp

In the morning, we 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 silent and pay special attention to the guide's indications. We find a special spot for 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. We continue riding toward the Atlantic coast, reaching our camp site Los Moros just next to the Atlantic coast. Dinner and camping at Los Moros.

## Day 9 — 9: PUNTA DEL DIABLO - MONTEVIDEO - 3 hours riding

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

Transfer back to Montevideo - it is also possible to extend your stay with a few more days in the saddle, please contact us.

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

### DATES & PRICES

DEPARTURE	RETURN	PRICE WITHOUT FLIGHTS	STATUS
19/04/2025	27/04/2025	£2,331	Guaranteed departure
10/05/2025	18/05/2025	£2,331	Open
18/10/2025	26/10/2025	£2,331	Open
15/11/2025	23/11/2025	£2,331	Open
13/12/2025	21/12/2025	£2,331	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 6 and 7, for an extra \$60 per person (the price is for two nights).

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

- Please note: the ride will also confirm for 2 riders on payment of a supplement of c. \$780/€730/£640 per person. Once the group has reached 4 people, we will remove this supplement from your invoice and refund you if you have already paid it.

- 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 \$300/€260/£240. You will then be reimbursed if a sharer is found for you at a later date.

- Transfers are included to/from the Tres Cruces bus station. You will need to organise your own transfers (public transportation around €10/£9 return, or taxi) from and to the airport, as well as from the station to your hotel on the last night.

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 at \$1088/€995/£870 each way (up to 8 riders).

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

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

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

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### **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 airport 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

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### **ACCOMMODATION**

Single room supplement

### **TRANSPORT**

Airport transfers - outside of those stipulated in the itinerary

## EQUESTRIAN INFO

## Horses

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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

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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

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### MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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.

For safety and hygiene, your own helmet is highly recommended.

## TRAVEL INFO

### COMFORT

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Most of the nights are spent camping out: 5 nights in a 2-person tent with mattress and sleeping bag provided. Other nights are spent in standard rooms in hotels or ecolodges.

Single tents can be provided at an extra cost.

### MEALS

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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

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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

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#### 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)

- 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

- Thermal underwear (t-shirts with long or short sleeves)

- 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 and a towel

- 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 favorite leather boots in case they get damaged

- 1 pair of lightweight shoes or trainers for the evenings

- Several pairs of warm socks

- Gloves - your hands are particularly exposed to the sun whilst riding

#### General information

- 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

#### Equipment provided

- Group pharmacy

- 1 pair of medium saddlebags

- 3-man tent (sleeps 2)

- Foam mattress

- Sleeping bag liner

#### 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.

#### 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)

- 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 liters (hold luggage)
- Travel bag 25-30 liters (cabin bag)
- Double saddlebags are available on request; Only in some places saddlebags are included
- Water bottle (1.5 liters or 2 equivalent) better 2 bottles of 0.5l
- 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
- Toilet paper and a lighter to burn it after use
- 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

Make sure any allergies (to medication or otherwise) and clearly stated in your medical kit

- 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

## 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](#) .