



## Horse and Venture

Go wild in the Alpes-Maritimes/More than just the Riviera

Horse trips are offered all year round from two exciting venues...

Le Boréon – from mid June to the end of September

Riding in the magnificent Mercantour National Park plus tailor made trips into Italy and the Italian Alpi Maritimi Park.

Sainte-Agnès – from October to the middle of June

Enjoy the mix of the Mediterranean and the mountains.



### General informations

#### Number of participants

A minimum of 6 and a maximum of 8. Either contact Denis for set date departures, or create a group of your own.

#### Accommodation

in mountain lodges, inns, and hotels depending on the region. A generous picnic lunch is provided, and a home-cooked style meal in the evening.

#### Clothing and luggage

bring the minimum amount of clothing. Personal belongings should fit into two standard carrier bags. Riding clothes including wet weather gear, plus a change for the evening is sufficient plus sheet sleeping bag, towel and toiletries. Good hiking shoes (not flat soled riding boots) are essential. Chaps and hats are provided as well as foul weather ponchos.

#### Insurance and liability

Horseback riding is an outdoor pursuit and like any such activity, contains an element of risk. While seeking to minimise that risk by adopting sound operational procedures, the operator accepts no responsibility for damage to, or loss of personal equipment, or injury during the course of the ride. The operator has a professional civil liability insurance, which will be engaged for professional fault only.



Summer - From mid June to the end of September - Le Boréon - From the Mercantour.

### “To Italy and back” (2 days)

Discover both the Italian and the French sides of the fine Mercantour Park.

This may just be a two day trip but riders will be able to take in this Eighth Wonder of the World – the views from on high at 2500m plus are splendid, not to mention the abundant wildlife and extraordinary flora.

The adventure begins and ends at Le Boréon which is a mere 75 minutes drive from Nice. It is situated at 1600m in beautiful Alpine forest. The day usually begins at around 9 a.m., and takes you up to the Salèse valley where the valley widens out. The ride ascends over the Col de Salèse and into a superb mountain pasture where an excellent picnic lunch – French style of course, is served. After a leisurely siesta, the climb continues up to Franco-Italian frontier at 2600 metres. What a view down to the Po Valley in Italy! The afternoon continues into the atmospheric Dead Valley where you can be sure to see a wealth of chamois and ibex; curious about the humans daring to cross their territory.

Accommodation for the night is in a mountain refuge where King Emmanuelle II spent much time in the pursuit of wild game. The access to the refuge was created thanks to the valiant efforts of the Italian army – the Questa refuge at 2388 metres can now be enjoyed by visitors on both two and four legs. The refuge, with its Italian flag flapping in the wind is a welcome sight. The lodging is small but the welcome friendly and the food hearty and warm. The bold can take a dip in the icy lake that the refuge sits next to.

The next morning, after rounding up the horses, the ride passes round a couple of lakes which overlook the hunting lodge of Italy’s King Emmanuelle II. Turning back, France is once again the destination, travelling close to the impressive ski resort of Isola 2000. At lunch, likely to be at the stunning Scluos lake, you can have a welcome swim in surprisingly warm water - even though it is at 2200 metres.

Heading down, both riders and the horses can have a welcome gallop through larch forests on the return back to Le Boréon for around five o’clock.





Summer - From mid June to the end of September - Le Boréon - From the Mercantour.

### “Valdeblore - shepherd country” (2 days)



A great two days in the softer back country of the Mercantour.

The trip leaves from Le Boréon and heads down toward the Trinité, a traditional pastoral land where shepherds have tended their cows and sheep for millennia. Having enjoyed a fine picnic lunch, and an obligatory siesta, riders head off towards the family orientated, year round, resort of La Colmiane. The pretty medieval village of St Dalmas de Valdeblore is the evenings resting place, in the cosy Marmottes gite.

Having caught and saddled your horse, the trip continues up into the Mercantour National Park, passing through the Millefonts valley, culminating in a well-deserved view towards the sea.

After a leisurely lunch, the horses head toward the Col du Barn at 2400 metres, which offers a great panorama east, west, north and south. The descent is no less splendid, returning to Le Boréon in the early evening.





Summer - From mid June to the end of September - Le Boréon - From the Mercantour.

### Icy lakes and hot baths in Valdieri (3 days)

A superb three day trip to get to grips with the glorious Mercantour National Park on both sides of the border – the views from on high at 2500m plus are splendid; not to mention the abundant wildlife and extraordinary flora.

The adventure begins and ends at Le Boréon which is a mere 75 minutes drive from Nice. It is situated at 1600m in beautiful Alpine forest. The day usually begins at around 9 a.m, and takes you up to the Salèse valley where the valley widens out. The ride takes you over the Col de Salèse and into a superb mountain pasture where an excellent picnic lunch – French style of course, is served. After a leisurely siesta, the climb continues up to Franco-Italian frontier at 2600 metres. What a view down to the Po Valley in Italy. The afternoon continues into the atmospheric Dead Valley where you can be sure to see a wealth of chamois and ibex; curious about the humans daring to cross their territory.

The Questa refuge, with its Italian flag flapping in the wind is a welcome sight. The lodging is small but the welcome friendly and the food hearty and warm. This is a mountain refuge where King Emmanuelle II spent much time in the pursuit of wild game. The access to the refuge was created thanks to the valiant efforts of the Italian army – it is at 2388 metres and can now be enjoyed by visitors on both two and four legs.

The next morning, after a leisurely start with a swim and a kayak, you will round up the horses, take in a bite of lunch and head down to a traditional hunting lodge, also used by King Emmanuelle II. There's plenty of time to enjoy a well-deserved tea or beer, before heading down to the quaint Hotel at Terme de Valdieri. Guests stay in a gîte d'étape next door to the hotel complex. Meals are taken in the hotel restaurant which still maintains its atmosphere of 1930's glamour. The day is topped off by a swim and a relaxing hour or so in 34 degree water with health giving properties.

The next morning the horses climb back to France passing just under the mighty peak of Cime Argentera at 3400 metres.

Lunch is enjoyed in Dead Valley where guests can swim in one of the many lakes in the valley.

The return journey takes you across the Fremamorte pass at 2600 metres then down to the Col de Salèse, before returning to Le Boréon at around five o'clock.



Summer - From mid June to the end of September - Le Boréon - From the Mercantour.

### In the land of the wolf (4 days)



A superb four day trip to get to grips with the glorious Mercantour National Park – the views from on high at 2500m plus are splendid, not to mention the abundant wildlife and extraordinary flora.

The adventure begins and ends at Le Boréon which is a mere 75 minutes drive from Nice. It is situated at 1600m in beautiful Alpine forest. The day usually begins at around 9 a.m, and takes you up to the Salèse valley where the valley widens out. The ride takes you over the Col de Salèse and into a superb mountain pasture where an excellent picnic lunch – French style of course, is served. After a leisurely siesta, the climb continues up to Franco-Italian frontier at 2600 metres. What a view down to the Po Valley in Italy. The afternoon continues into the atmospheric Dead Valley where you can be sure to see a wealth of chamois and ibex; curious about the humans daring to cross their territory.

The Questa refuge, with its Italian flag flapping in the wind is a welcome sight. The lodging is small but the welcome friendly and the food hearty and warm. The refuge is where King Emmanuelle II spent much time in the pursuit of wild game. The access to the refuge was created thanks to the valiant efforts of the Italian army – the Questa refuge at 2388 metres can now be enjoyed by visitors on both two and four legs.

The next morning, after a leisurely start with a swim and a kayak, you will round up the horses, take in a bite of lunch and head down to a traditional hunting lodge, also used by King Emmanuelle II. There's plenty of time to enjoy a well-deserved tea or beer, before heading down to the quaint Hotel at Terme de Valdieri. Guests stay in a gite d'etape next door to the hotel complex. Meals are taken in the hotel restaurant which still maintains its atmosphere of 1930's glamour. The day is topped off by a swim and a relaxing hour in 34 degree water with health giving properties.

The next morning the horses climb back to France passing just under the mighty peak of Cime Argentera at 3400 metres.

Lunch is enjoyed in Dead Valley where guests can swim in one of the many lakes in the valley.

The return journey takes you across the Fremamorte pass at 2600 meters then down towards Mollières. Mollières is the only village in the core section of the National Park. The village was razed to the ground at the end of WWII, and is now gradually being re-inhabited. Fred, Sarah and Maurice offer a welcome, a great candlelit (there's no electricity!) dinner and even sometimes a piano recital.

On the last morning the horses ascend a wild, forgotten valley where traces of wolves can be found, and the lucky may even see one. Lunch is taken appreciating views of the Italian frontier and birds circling overhead, before returning down the Col de Salèse to Le Boréon.



Summer - From mid June to the end of September - Le Boréon - From the Mercantour.

## The valley of marvels - La vallée des merveilles (5 Jours)

Day 1: We head out of Le Boréon, ride through gorgeous Alpine forests before rising to the Arthurian Lac Trecolpas and beyond, on a rugged mountain trail through the Pas des Ladres. Matches and salt were the main commodities that were smuggled over this route! All of this area down to Saint Martin Vésubie used to belong to Italy until 1947. The trail is dotted with military fort remains, around which now more peaceful residents, chamois and sometimes ibex, now graze. The trail leads down to the Madone de Fenêtre church, a church and refuge which used to offer succour to traveller in days gone by. Riding over the Fenêtre Pass at 2400 metres, we will have to walk down on foot with our horses through unspoilt and wild countryside. We'll be heading down to a little village called St Giacomo (1300 metres). Dinner will be served at Gerbino's Restaurant and the night in a comfortable dormitory in a National Park refuge.



Day 2: Today takes the group over the frontier, with much more opportunity to spot the magnificent ibex which can weigh up to 80 kilos and have horns up to 1.5 metres long. Alpine prairies and lakes at 2400 meters provide a pleasant picnic spot, with a view of the distant Po Valley. After the Val del Bouc Pass at 2600 metres, which is surrounded by peaks of up to 3000 metres we finally enter into the Vallée des Merveilles. The valley which lies under the threatening Mount Bego, was a mystical place for ancient man, who carved over 35000 symbols on the rocks here. The base for two nights accommodation in a friendly auberge in nearby Casterino, which has both double and single rooms available.

Day 3: This is a short day (four hours riding only) to enjoy the Vallée des Merveilles in the Mercantour National Park. An approved local guide brings the mystery of the Bronze Age carvings to life and explores the various theories about their creation and meaning. The presence of sheep flocks and local cheese making, adds to the valley's charm.



Day 4: Riding out of Casterino and up to the Roussa Pass (2400 metres, riders get their first view of the Mediterranean Sea. A long passage across and around Le Pas du Diable (Devil's Pass) takes guests down to the village of Belvédère in the Vésubie valley. This hanging village has stacks of interest for the visitor and is surrounded by ancient arable terraces. Accommodation is in a dormitory on a local farm with its own horses, and the all-important tasty home-cooked dinner.

Day 5: The trail leads down from Belvédère to the Vésubie river itself, where the horses turn north to head up to the village of Saint Martin Vésubie. The area has been known for centuries as the Suisse Niçoise, its style and situation being very similar to the scenery in Switzerland. After lunching again in an idyllic spot the ride concludes back in Le Boréon.



June and September

### Transhumance (3 days)

Transhumance is the ancient bi-annual journey made to move livestock from the low pastures after winter to the high alpine pastures for the Summer

At the beginning of summer we ride up to the high mountain pastures and at the beginning of autumn we return to the coast. This is the genuine ancient trail used for the Transhumance of all livestock. An incredible way of travelling on horseback where the Riviera Côte d'Azur and the beginning of the Alpes (3000 metres) meet in a magical harmony of unexpected beauty and historical charm. The French and Italian frontiers, mix their culture and traditions, share their National Parks (Alpi- Maritime and the Mercantour), a natural reserve of unique wild animal and plant life.

We leave Sainte Agnès along the ridges entering a beech tree forests and an ever changing vegetation as we get higher up the mountain. Friends welcome us and no-one will be disappointed by the delicious home-made dinner that awaits us and the comfy accommodation in alpine style chalets. The next day we're off riding in the famous Turini forest and the military compound Camp d'Argent, A last strong hold in the region of WW II. On the border of the National Park we cross the Red Lands, a strange mix of red and florescent green landscapes where herds of sheep spend the summer. We spent the night at the refuge des Merveilles. The last day we climb over the Prals Pas at 2400 metres and it's 5 lacs. A surprising view of the the french and Italian sommets are layed out in front of us. A final trip down from the plateau of the Mairis into the Boreon brings us to our summer ranch where we will propose are summer trips until the end of September.





Winter - October to mid-June - From Sainte Agnès

### Peira Cava (2 days)

A gentle introduction to horse riding for families, beginners and the more experienced alike. Sainte-Agnès is beautifully located, with the Mediterranean at its feet, and the massif of the Mercantour behind. Riders leave the village and follow the ridges which separate the sea from the mountains, passing through a whole host of vegetation types. Ending the day trotting through a beautiful beech forest, and to the village of Peira Cava. No-one will be disappointed by the delicious home-made dinner that awaits us and the comfy accommodation in alpine style chalets.

The second day takes you down by the Becasse, Mont Simonet and the Col de Braus, and returns you back to the blue in Sainte-Agnès.



### France and into Italy (3 days)

The balconies of the Côte d'Azur lie just behind the Riviera and are both impressive areas to travel in and rich in vegetation. Riding over the Castillon Pass and up to Mont Razet, riders arrive at a perfect little mountain refuge for the first night's accommodation. It sits on a small grassy meadow in the forest – the CAI Refuge di Gerbino.

Day 2, and the riders head towards Olivetta which is surrounded by olive trees, and then down to cross the Bévéra river. After lunch we move on to Sospel via Piene Haute, arriving for the evening in La Figuera, where accommodation is provided in an old local manor house in a chestnut grove.

On the last day is spent on old trails which used to be used, for ferrying provisions around the region on mules and donkeys, before returning to Sainte-Agnès.





## For more informations

### Contact

Denis Longfellow  
06 22 29 58 86  
denis.longfellow@gmail.com

### The guide

Qualified and licensed Professional n°00698ED0058

### Horses

Mainly Merens horses – which are very well trained, sure-footed and motivated animals. They are bred by Denis Longfellow and live in the mountains all year round. The tack consists of English style Portuguese officer's saddles are used, together with hackamore bridles (no bit). Canvas bed rolls are provided as well as leather saddle bags.

### Prices

75 euros per day per person - including lunch  
+ half board - allow 40-50 euros per person

### Riding ability

Ideally riders should have been in a saddle before, and be used to riding all day – for say 5/7 hours. There will also be the need to lead the horse from time to time over difficult terrain and to be prepared for the vagaries of mountain weather. However the trips can be taken by beginners who are reasonably fit.