



# RIDE WORLD WIDE

## Portugal

### Alentejo 2012

#### Ride Information Sheet

These rides take place on the coast of south-west Portugal, in the Alentejo province to the south of Lisbon and north of the Algarve. They are run from 'Herdade Pessegueiro' a riding and breeding stables owned by Claudia Castanheira and her family and situated in a peaceful location a few minutes from the coast and about 20 minutes drive from the seaside town of Milfontes and 10 minutes from the smaller fishing town of Porto Covo. A large part of the Alentejo coast is protected parkland reserve where building and development is restricted and with its dramatic cliffs and rocky coves, clean, sandy beaches and stunning views out over the Atlantic and inland to the mountains, it is a wonderful area for riding. Claudia and her business partner Paulo are knowledgeable, welcoming and easy-going hosts. They are fun to ride with and together with their charming Portuguese family offer a wonderfully warm welcome as well as intimate knowledge of the region, its horses and traditions.



**Dates** Rides are for 7 nights Saturday to Saturday year round except in August, with dates organised on request. Rides are normally run for a minimum of 4 guests though can be confirmed for less with changes to the itinerary. Please contact us to discuss dates and availability.

**The Horses** The horses used for the rides are well schooled pure or crossbred Lusitanos, the native horse of Portugal. There are about 15 riding horses at the stables and about 40 horses altogether, including stallions, breeding mares and youngsters. Most of the horses used for guests have been bred by Claudia and Paulo and are between about 15hh and 16hh. They are good natured, well schooled, forward going and responsive to ride. Tack is English style with saddle blankets with pockets for personal belongings or saddlebags provided when riding. There is a maximum weight limit on the rides of 13 stone 5lbs (85kgs) but some experienced and fit heavier riders can be taken by special (prior) arrangement, so please ask. Horses are normally groomed and tacked up for you before and after riding and your guide is on hand to assist with your horse if necessary at lunch breaks.

**Riding** The ride starts from Herdade Pessegueiro, Claudia's farm, with riders spending each night in guest accommodation at the farm. There is between about 4 ½ and 6 ½ hours riding each day on 6 days, with the horses left out en-route on several nights during the week (whilst riders are driven back to base) so you can ride a loop some days and travel further afield. **cont over.**

**Riding cont.** The rides explore the Alentejo's coastal plain, crossing cliff tops and open sandy beaches and also goes inland into the Cercal mountain range so there is a good variety of terrain, landscape and vegetation. The maximum riding group is usually 8 guests plus guide(s), although accommodation at the farm sleeps a maximum of about 14 (including one or two rooms which sleep three or four eg double bed plus bunk beds) so more guests can be taken at a time if necessary – for example if there is a private group or non-riders. Rides are normally lead by Paulo, whilst Claudia or an assistant organises the back up, although when the group is of mixed ability, two guides (usually Paulo and Claudia) generally ride with guests so the ride can be split if necessary. Both Claudia and Paulo are very experienced as well as sympathetic, easy going and friendly guides who are a pleasure to ride with. There is a sand school at the riding base and Claudia is a qualified instructor so lessons can sometimes be included by special arrangement (horses and group numbers allowing).



**Pace** The rides are usually at a well-balanced, medium to fairly fast pace, with plenty of opportunities for long trots and canters although the pace will always depend on the overall ability of the group, the weather and other local conditions. Much of the route is on coastal plain and there are many compacted sand tracks winding along the cliff tops, through eucalyptus and cork oak forest and around open fields of wheat and other crops. These provide perfect going for horses and many chances to canter.

**Riding Experience** As with all our rides, to join these trips you must be a reasonably competent rider. The rides are generally aimed at intermediate riders and above who are well balanced, comfortable and secure in the saddle and able to control a well-schooled horse outside at all paces. Some of the horses are young, there are plenty of chances for long canters and a variety of going which includes thick sand on sand dunes, paths winding along cliff tops and open beaches with crashing waves so confidence, a good independent seat and balance are important. It also helps if you are fairly fit and we recommend that you ride regularly in the months before you go to ensure you can cope with the hours in the saddle. There are places on the rides where riders may be asked to dismount and lead for a short way, for example if the ground gets a little rough or steep so you should be comfortable getting on and off your horse and handling a horse from the ground.



**Terrain** Much of the area ridden through is part of a protected nature reserve and has thus not suffered the tourist development and building often associated with a large part of Europe's south coast. It is unspoilt and in places virtually untouched, retaining much of its natural beauty and wildlife. You will ride on paths through sand dunes and along cliff tops, on wide, sandy tracks through low scrub, heather and forests of pine and eucalyptus and also around open fields of crops. There are plenty of opportunities for long canters on compacted sand tracks that provide perfect going and there are also many wonderful invigorating coastal views.

**Wildlife** The region is home to more than 200 species of bird including partridge, migrating hoopoe, buzzard, kite and protected species such as golden eagles, osprey and the black storks that are often seen nesting on craggy coastal rocks. Wild boar, fox and genet are also found, along with 750 different plant species that include lavender, thyme, rosemary, cistus and autumn crocus. Farming and fishing are the main industries.

**Accommodation** Accommodation on the rides is in small apartments close to the stables. These are simple but sufficiently comfortable with a double or twin bedroom (some apartments have two bedrooms) with beds made up with sheets, blankets / duvets and pillows, a kitchen / breakfast room equipped with table and chairs, a fridge, kettle, cooker etc, and a bathroom with loo and shower. Some also have a sitting / dining room with sofa / arm-chairs and television. All have terracotta-tiled floors, furniture that is typical of the Alentejo region and several have an open fireplace in the breakfast or sitting room where a fire can be lit on chilly nights. They also have a small terrace (with chairs to sit on) leading to a lawn and flower beds, at the front and back.



**Meals** Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included each day. Breakfast and dinner are eaten at Claudia's family restaurant, which is about a 10minute walk or couple of minutes drive from the stables and guest rooms. It is in an enviable position, next to the ruins of an old Moorish fort, overlooking a beach and, beyond, the 'Ilha do Pessegueiro', a small rocky island a few hundred yards off shore. The restaurant is quite a large, typical seaside restaurant in a low level building with big glass windows at one end. It is furnished with long tables, one of which is reserved for the riding group. Breakfast is usually quite simple in typical Portuguese fashion - your choice of tea or coffee, excellent locally made bread or toast with jam and perhaps also cheese or ham. Lunch, usually a picnic out riding, is a combination of salads (perhaps a pasta or rice salad, a green or tomato salad) and maybe hot samosas, epanadas or mini meat-pasties as well as bread, cheese or cold meats and fruit, cakes or biscuits for pudding. In the evenings, dinner is a set menu at the restaurant, carefully chosen to ensure you are able to try the area's different specialities during the week. There is usually a starter or appetizer - perhaps garlic bread, bruscheta, stuffed peppers or grilled prawns, then a main course such as grilled fish with vegetables or salad, or pork or chicken cooked in local style, and a choice of puddings. The food is very good and vegetarian and other special diets can be catered for by prior arrangement. Wine and beer are included with lunch and dinner and other spirits and 'digestifs' are available to purchase at extra cost

**Non-riders / afternoon activities** This part of the Alentejo is a great holiday destination for non-riders, whether looking to relax or for action! Days can be spent relaxing on the lovely beaches, there is some excellent surfing or you can kayak on the Mira River. It is a lovely area for walking (coastal and inland) and there are some good mountain biking trails through the local cork oak forests. There are several reputable equipment hire/tuition companies (with qualified instructors) in Milfontes which is within 15 or 20 minutes drive and Claudia and her family have many excellent local contacts and can help organise a number of activities. A back up vehicle meets riders at lunchtime each day and non-riders can usually travel in this to meet riding partners at lunchtime if required - although for total flexibility, it is usually best to hire a car (there are no hire companies in Milfontes but plenty of options in Lisbon or Faro).

**Weather** Daytime temperatures in summer are around 24 to 28 degrees C, usually with a pleasant cooling breeze. In winter daytime temperatures are generally 16 to 20 degrees C. At night even in winter the temperature rarely drops below 10 degrees C and conditions are ideal for riding year round. The area averages 275 days of sunshine each year.

**What to bring** We will send you a list suggesting what to take when you make your booking.

**Itineraries** The following is an example of the itinerary planned - but please note that it is only an example and day-by-day arrangements may be varied by your guide if the weather, riders' ability or local conditions require.

**NOTE** Between 1st June and 30th September horses are not allowed on beaches in Portugal so there will be no riding on the beach on this ride. If there are less than 4 riders then the itinerary will be changed, with rides out from the farm each day.

**Example itinerary:**

**Day 1** Own arrangements to travel to Lisbon. Met at the airport (usually at about 5pm) by Claudia your host and driven about 2 hours to the stables at Herdade Pessegueiro. Shown to your rooms and time to settle in and perhaps for a tour of the stables, before being collected and driven a few minutes to Claudia's family restaurant for a welcome dinner and chance to hear more about the horses and programme for the week. Overnight Herdade Pessegueiro. (D)

**Day 2** Collected at about 9.00 am and taken for breakfast at the restaurant which overlooks a lovely sandy beach and, just off shore, the rocky Ilha do Pessegueiro. After breakfast a short drive (or walk) back to the stables, then mount up and set off riding, heading southwest. The route takes you towards the island and past the impressive Moorish fort that provides a wonderful look-out point on the mainland. Then with the fresh, salty breeze of the Atlantic blowing away any cobwebs that remain after your journey, ride across the remote Malhão beach with Atlantic breakers crashing onto the sand to one side and dunes rising up to the coastal plain on the other. After crossing the beach, head inland and stop for a delicious picnic lunch in a shady spot in a pine forest, surrounded by lavender and thyme. A rest and siesta before mounting up again to head back across the coastal plain. Return to the stables and a shower and chance to relax before meeting up for dinner at the restaurant. Overnight. (B,L,D)



**Day 3** Breakfast at about 8.30 and set off riding north to the small fishing village of Porto Covo, following winding cliff tops with wonderful views over the rocky coves and unspoilt beaches that line the coast. Plenty of chances for long energetic canters on wide, sandy tracks before riding into a cork oak forest where there will be a break for lunch close to the Morgavel dam. Those who wish can take a refreshing swim in the dam and then, after a siesta, ride on along a meandering track through the Gaio valley reminiscent of an ancient forest with its tall ferns and many wild flowers. Finally you reach an old windmill adjacent to a small paddock in which the horses spend the night, whilst riders are driven back to Herdade Pessegueiro. Dinner in the restaurant. Overnight at base. (B,L,D)

**Day 4** After breakfast a short drive to meet the horses and then, starting from the windmill ride through the Sela Vermalha Valley to the ridge of Cercal where there are spectacular views in all directions of the region. A picnic lunch next to a small creek shaded by overhanging poplar trees and then, after lunch ride into the green rocky Roncão valley. Canter inland through eucalyptus and cork oak forests, then head back to the windmill where the horses spend a second night. Driven back to Herdade Pessegueiro for dinner and night as before (B,L,D)

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**Day 5** Breakfast and a short drive to meet the horses. Mount up to ride south through the Godins valley until you reach the Ribeira da Azenha plain with sandy tracks leading through pine and eucalyptus forests. The route then takes you close to the seaside town of Milfontes and after riding across an impressive bridge over the Mira River, there is a stop for lunch in a pine forest close to the riverbank looking back to Milfontes. In the afternoon continue riding through pine forest to the small village of Almogrove and to a cottage with paddock where the horses spend the night. Driven back to Herdade Pessegueiro for dinner and the night (B,L,D)

**Day 6** Breakfast and a drive of about 20 minutes to where the horses spent the night. Mount up and from Almogrove ride in the direction of the coast to reach the spectacular cliff tops of Cabo Sardão. Lunch today is in a magnificent spot on the cliff top with stunning view of the Alentejo coastline. Time to enjoy the scenery and in the afternoon ride along the cliffs, keeping an eye out for storks that nest on perilous cliff towers, before crossing the rolling sand dunes of Almogrove. The horses spend a second night in their paddock close to Almogrove and riders are driven back to Herdade Pessegueiro via Milfontes with a chance to stop for a drink in the town. Dinner and night as before. (B,L,D)

**Day 7** Meet the horses and from Almogrove ride along a farm track until you reach the sand dunes and sea. Then, cross the bridge over the Mira River again and ride through the town of Milfontes. After stopping for a picnic lunch close by, ride up the coast and cross the coastal plain to finally reach the farm. A farewell dinner at the restaurant and final night. (B,L,D)



**Day 8** Breakfast before transferring to the airport for your flight home. (B)

## DATES

On request for 7 nights Saturday to Saturday year round except in August (a minimum of 4 riders are required before the above itinerary is confirmed but riding out from the farm each day is usually possible if less than 4) Shorter rides or tailor-made itineraries may also be available on request. Please contact us to discuss

## RATES

**Please note that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are now quoted in euros. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the euro/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay.**

Rates are seasonal. High season rates apply 1st April to 31st July and from 1st to 30th September;  
Low season rates apply 1st January to 31st March and 1st October to 31st December

**High season - Euros 1030 per person      Low season - Euros 965 per person**

The rates quoted above **INCLUDE** all riding and guiding, 7 nights **twin** bedded accommodation (single supplements as indicated below), meals (dinner the first day to breakfast the last), wine / beer with lunch and dinner **and** return transfers from / to Lisbon airport with the group at set times on the first and last days.

The rates **EXCLUDE** international flights to Lisbon and taxes, transfers outside the set times (and transfers from Faro if this is your preferred arrival airport), extra drinks, personal medical insurance (compulsory) and any tips you may wish to leave.

**Single supplements** - Please note that rates quoted above assume shared **twin** rooms. If you are travelling alone, an apartment can be booked for single use (if available) on payment of a supplement of Euros 180 per week. If you are travelling alone and are happy to share with another guest of the same sex, the supplement is not charged.

**Non-riders - High season - Euros 830 per person; Low season - Euros 765 per person**

**Flights and Transfers** - The best airports to fly to for these rides are Lisbon or Faro. All rates quoted above **INCLUDE** transfers by mini-bus from Lisbon and back (approx. 2 hours each way) at fixed times on the first and last day. Transfers at other times, or from / to Faro, can be arranged (see below). The meeting time on the first day is usually 17.00 at Lisbon airport (it may be earlier if all guest arrival times allow - the time will be confirmed closer to the ride date). The return transfer usually leaves Herdade Pessegueiro to arrive Lisbon at approximately 11.30.

To make use of the included transfer service, flight arrival times should be at least 45 minutes before the set pick up time on Day 1 (i.e. by 16.15) and flight departures should be after 13.00 on Day 8. If you arrive / leave Lisbon at other times, we can arrange a taxi transfer for an extra charge. We can also arrange taxi transfers to / from Faro - there may sometimes be an extra charge for this depending on the date / other meeting arrangements - please contact us to check. Flight costs to Lisbon / Faro vary depending on the season, availability and airline you choose, but please contact us if you would like a quote or help booking flights. We can book British Airways scheduled flights for you and can advise on other flight options. Our ATOL number for flight bookings is 6213.

**General visa and health information** (NB this is only a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking.)

**Visas** If you hold a full British passport you do not need a visa for visits to Portugal whatever the length of stay, although for visits of over 90 days residence permits are required. NOTE - visa requirements can change without notice and it is your responsibility to check up to date requirements with the Portuguese Embassy or Consulate.

**Health** No vaccinations are legally required by EEC residents to enter Portugal. If you have a particular condition requiring special medical treatment, you should carry a letter from your own doctor translated into Portuguese describing your condition and the medicine / treatment required in case of emergencies.

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