



# RIDE WORLD WIDE

## PORTUGAL

### ALENTEJO COAST 2024

#### RIDE INFORMATION

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, 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 family are helpful and easy-going hosts who offer a wonderfully warm welcome as well as intimate knowledge of the region, its horses and traditions.



#### DATES

Riding programmes are normally 6 nights, Sunday to Saturday year round, except in August. The standard Alentejo Coast programme includes riding on 5 days, following a progressive route and is normally run for a minimum of 4 guests although rides can be confirmed for less with changes to the itinerary. Shorter 4 night stays, usually Monday to Friday - the Beach & Cork Ride - are sometimes possible on request and include a few hours riding out from the base each day. Please contact us to discuss dates and availability.

## HORSES

The horses used for these rides are well schooled pure or crossbred Lusitanos, the native horse of Portugal. There are about 10 riding horses at the stables and about 25 horses altogether, including stallions, breeding mares and youngsters. Most of the horses used for guests have been bred by Claudia and her business partner Paulo Rosa (who has been at Herdade Pessegueiro for over 25 years and often guides the rides). They are between about 15hh and 16hh, are good natured, well-schooled, forward going and responsive to ride.

## TACK

English style with most horses are ridden in snaffle bits, some in pelhams. Saddle blankets have pockets for personal belongings or saddlebags are provided if required. 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, however you can of course assist with grooming and tacking up your horse if you wish.



## RIDING

Rides start from Herdade Pessegueiro where the horses are based and where riders stay in guest accommodation. On the standard Alentejo Coast itinerary, there is usually between about 4 ½ and 6 hours riding each day on 5 days, with 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. The 4 night Beach & Cork programmes include daily riding out from the stables on 5 days for between 2 and 3 hours a day. Routes explore the Alentejo's coastal plain, crossing cliff tops and open sandy beaches and also head inland into the Cercal mountain range so there is a good variety of terrain, landscape and vegetation. Rides are normally lead by Paulo, whilst Claudia organises the back up and the maximum riding group is usually 6 guests plus guides. If the group is of mixed ability two guides may ride with guests so the ride can be split if necessary. Paulo is a very experienced guide, who is sympathetic, easy going and 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).

## WEIGHT LIMIT

85kgs (13st 5lbs). Experienced and fit heavier riders may occasionally be taken by special (prior) arrangement, so please ask.



## PACE

Riding is 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 riding in this area 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. Both riding programmes 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 [however on the Beach & Cork programme it may be possible to take less experienced riders]. 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.



## NON-RIDERS / OTHER 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 options in Lisbon or Faro).



## 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 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. Rooms are not spacious but some apartments also have a sitting / dining room with sofa / arm-chairs. 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. There is a small terrace (with chairs to sit on) leading to a lawn and flower beds, at the front and back. There is also a clubhouse by the stables with honesty bar and seating area which is always open and available for you to use throughout your stay.



## MEALS

All rides include breakfast, lunch and dinner each day. Breakfast and dinner are eaten at Claudia's family restaurant, which is about a 10 minute walk or couple of minutes drive from the stables and guest rooms. It is in an enviable position, close 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. 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, beer and other drinks are available to purchase at extra cost (about 14 euros for a bottle of wine, 2 euros for a beer).



## 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 when you book.



## ITINERARIES

The following is an example of the 6 night Alentejo Coast itinerary and the 4 night Beach & Cork itinerary - but please note that they are only examples 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 15th September** horses are **not allowed on beaches** in Portugal so there will be no riding actually on the beach during these months (you will still ride through the sand dunes and on tracks adjacent to the beaches). If there are less than 4 riders then the itinerary will be changed, with rides out from the farm each day.

### Alentejo Coast Ride - Example itinerary:

**Day 1** Own arrangements to travel to Lisbon. Met at the airport (usually at 17.00) 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 a welcome dinner at the family restaurant on the beach, 10 minutes walk from the stables, with a chance to discuss your riding preferences, hear more about the horses and programme for the week. Overnight Herdade Pessegueiro. (D)

**Day 2** Breakfast in the clubhouse then, after tacking up, set off riding, heading north and passing traces of a Neolithic Necropolis before reaching the small fishing village of Porto Covo. There are wonderful views from the cliff tops 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. Set off riding across a large plain, often covered with wild flowers. Arrive back at the stables where you can help wash the horses and watch them play in the field while enjoying a drink at the bar. Dinner at the family restaurant and overnight at base. (B,L,D)



**Day 3** Starting from the Herdade, you ride southwest with views out to sea and the delightful “Ilha do Pessegueiro” and impressive Pessegueiro Fort. With the salty Atlantic breeze for company, you reach to the beaches of “Aivados” and “Malhão”, hemmed in by beautiful sand dunes and with trails of compact sand that are ideal for long canters. Stop for a delicious picnic in a pine forest, surrounded by lavender and thyme. After a well-deserved siesta, you set off riding again across the plains, passing small towns and with views of the mountains, to arrive at a windmill in the village of “Cabeça da Cabra” adjacent to a small paddock. Here the horses spend the night whilst riders are driven back to Herdade Pessegueiro. Dinner at the family restaurant and overnight at base. (B,L,D)

**Day 4** Breakfast and re-join the horses, then set off riding eastwards, passing by centuries-old cork oaks and stone pines until you reach the “Campilhas” dam, a freshwater lake where the silence is deep and where only birds are heard. Stop for a picnic lunch on the bank. After a siesta, mount up again and follow the historic trail of the Rota Vicentina, along clay paths between eucalyptus trees and green valleys towards a farm in the Serra do Cercal where the horses overnight. Transfer by vehicle back to Herdade. Dinner at the family restaurant and overnight at base. (B,L,D)



**Day 5** After breakfast a short drive to meet the horses and then, starting from the farm in Cercal, ride through the Sela Vermelha Valley to the ridge of Cercal where there are spectacular views in all directions of the region. After passing the old iron mines you stop for a picnic in the shade of huge centenary cork oaks. In the afternoon there will be some good chances for canters through the oak and eucalyptus forests. Arrive back at the windmill at “Cabeça da Cabra” where once again the horses will spend the night. Transfer by vehicle back to Herdade. Dinner at the family restaurant and overnight at base. (B,L,D)

**Day 6** Breakfast and a short drive to meet the horses. Mount up and ride south through the Godins valley until you reach the sand dunes and the sea. A picnic lunch is served near the town of “Milfontes”. After lunch you will start feeling the Atlantic breeze again and you will be amazed by the sparkling clear bluish green waters of the Atlantic Ocean. Cross a remote beach with sand dunes from where you can see the coastal plain to the north. Ride along the coast and then cross the coastal plain to reach the stables. A farewell dinner and final night at Herdade Pessegueiro. (B,L,D)

**Day 7** Breakfast and the group transfer departs around 10.00, to arrive Lisbon airport 12 noon (onward flights should be after 13.30). (B)



### Beach & Cork Ride - Example Itinerary:

**Day 1 (Monday)** - Own arrangements to arrive Lisbon before 10.00. You will be met at Lisbon airport and driven about 2 hours to the stables at Herdade Pessegueiro. Shown to your room and time to settle in and perhaps a tour of the stables, before a welcome lunch and chance to hear more about the horses and programme for the week. Then in the afternoon enjoy your first ride; perhaps following paths along the cliff tops with wonderful views over the rocky coves and unspoilt beaches that line the coast. Dinner at the family restaurant on the beach and overnight Herdade Pessegueiro. (L,D)

**Day 2 (Tuesday)** - After breakfast mount up and set off riding, heading 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. Return to Herdade Pessegueiro for a picnic lunch and an afternoon at leisure (approx 3 hours riding). Dinner at the family restaurant and overnight at base. (B,L,D)



**Day 3 (Wednesday) and Day 4 (Thursday)** - Two half days riding out from the farm. You might explore the Gaio valley, follow paths along the cliff tops with wonderful views over the rocky coves and unspoilt beaches that line the coast, or head inland through the cork oak forests to the Serra do Cercal. There will be plenty of chances for long canters on wide, sandy tracks. Picnic lunches and dinner at the family restaurant are included. Nights at Herdade Pessegueiro. (B,L,D)

**Day 5 (Friday)** - A final mornings ride with perhaps a delicious picnic to make the most of the wild Atlantic views and breathe the fresh sea air as you explore new ground, or if you wish perhaps return to a favourite forest route or a long stretch of beach for some exhilarating canters. At 15.00 transfer back to Lisbon airport, arriving around 17.00. Own arrangements for onward travel (flights should be after 18.30) (B,L)



## DATES & RATES 2024

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

### **Alentejo Coast Ride (6 night) - 2020 Euros per person**

Single supplement 300 Euros

Sunday to Saturday year round except in August.

Please note that a minimum of 4 riders are required before the itinerary above will be confirmed although daily riding out from the stables each day is usually possible if less than 4 guests book.

### **Beach & Cork Ride (4 nights) - 1715 Euros per person**

Single supplement 200 Euros

2 to 3 hours riding a day. On request for 4 nights Monday to Friday, except in August.

The rates quoted above **INCLUDE** all riding and guiding, **twin** bedded accommodation (single supplements as indicated below), breakfast, lunch and dinner each day, **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 (or Faro) and taxes, transfers outside the set times (and transfers from / to Faro if this is your preferred arrival airport), your bar bill, 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 the above supplement. If you are travelling alone and are happy to share with another guest of the same sex, the supplement is not charged.



## FLIGHTS & TRAVEL INFORMATION

The best airport to fly to for these rides is Lisbon and all rates quoted above **INCLUDE** a transfer by mini-bus from and back to Lisbon (approx. 2 hours each way) **at fixed times** on the first and last day. You can also fly to Faro and transfers from / to Faro or at other times from / to Lisbon, can be arranged on request (see below). For the standard 6 night Alentejo Coast programs the meeting time on the first Sunday 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 on the following Saturday usually leaves Herdade Pessegueiro at about 10.00 to arrive Lisbon at approximately 12.00.

On 4 night Beach & Cork programmes meeting time on the first Monday is usually 10.00 at Lisbon airport and the return transfer on the following Friday usually leaves Herdade Pessegueiro at about 15.00 to arrive Lisbon at approximately 17.00.

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## FLIGHTS & TRAVEL INFORMATION cont.

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 and flight departures should be after **13.30** on Day 7 for the Alentejo Coast Ride or after 18.30 on Day 5 for the Beach & Cork programme. 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 - usually at an extra charge but occasionally if other riders are also flying to / from Faro, this may be included - please contact us to check.

Airfares to Lisbon / Faro vary depending on the season, availability and airline you choose, but budget around £100 to £300 for a return Economy flight from London. 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 & 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.

(DRAFT 24/10/2023)

