



# **RIDE WORLD WIDE**

## **Portugal**

### **Dressage at Solar do Espirito Santo, Golega 2017**

#### **Riding Information Sheet**

Solar Do Espirito Santo is hidden away in the small town of Azinhaga, a few kilometres south of Golegã, the Portuguese “Capital of the Horse”. With buildings that date back to the 15th century, Espirito Santo is owned by Fernando and Raquel Firmino who, along with their staff, are passionate about dressage and Lusitano horses. A welcoming and friendly, yet highly professional base, a week at Solar Do Espirito Santo is a wonderful opportunity for both experienced and less experienced riders to learn and develop their skills on superbly schooled Lusitano horses. Spending a week here is the perfect way to learn or improve classical dressage techniques, to focus on ‘working equitation’ or you can just enjoy the whole experience of riding a Lusitano horse in comfortable and convivial surroundings.



**Teaching at Solar do Espirito Santo** Eyke Krause is head instructor at Solar do Espirito Santo. Originally from Hamburg in Germany and speaking several different languages. Eyke’s studied Equine Management at the School of Agriculture in Abrantes in Portugal and has many years’ teaching experience. Her excellent understanding of dressage combined with her fun and relaxed teaching style help her make sure each rider has a chance to reach his or her goals whilst also enjoying the course of instruction - something that can often seem quite daunting.



Lessons take place in a centrally located, purpose built 650 m<sup>2</sup> covered arena. The recommended length of stay is 6 nights Sunday to Saturday, but this is flexible and shorter stays can also be arranged. When staying the full 6 nights, the usual program is two lessons a day, usually of around 45 - 60 minutes each with riders split into groups of 2 or 3 depending on ability. Eyke tries hard to put riders who are travelling together in the same lessons but if ability varies, each rider will be matched with a group of their own ability. Lessons are then individually tailored so personal attention is assured and each rider is able to ride different horses during the week as skills change and improve. When not riding, a chance to watch other rider's lessons is a good learning experience and although the standard of instruction is high, the relaxed, informal atmosphere encourages discussion of wishes and aims when there.



**Other Riding** The main purpose of a stay at Solar do Espirito Santo is to improve dressage skills but if you are an experienced rider and Eyke and Raquel are happy with your ability on their horses, it may be also possible to ride out on some short rides in the surrounding area. However please note this is not guaranteed and is entirely at their discretion. Availability may depend on other factors.

**The Horses** There are usually about 8 school horses at Solar do Espirito Santo, all pure bred Lusitanos and each at a different stage of training. There are 13 horses altogether, ranging from youngsters just being backed to senior schoolmasters, with horses to suit all levels of rider, from those who want to start learning dressage to those who want to improve their advanced dressage skills such as piaffe, passage and flying changes. Riding a finely schooled Lusitano stallion might be the first time you will experience true collection and although you should not go expecting the horses to perform high school movements for any rider, irrespective of riding ability, you will certainly notice improvements in your riding after a course of lessons and, whatever your standard, can be sure of a horse that is more than capable of doing what you ask. The horses are all generally ridden in double bridles and dressage saddles with a working equitation saddle available to try if you wish. The horses are stabled in a modern stable-yard, built during the restoration in 2011, that has 17 modern boxes all equipped with automatic water drinkers, electric lighting and thermal protection. It is close to the arena, swimming pool and restaurant so guests are always aware of the horses and what is going on - there is definitely a feeling of involvement with the horses whilst you are there.





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**Accommodation** Guest accommodation is either in the main Manor House, where there are two guest bedrooms, or in one of 4 bedrooms in the old stables, which have been well restored and converted whilst also keeping their rustic charm. All bedrooms have twin or double beds, private bathroom, air conditioning and LCD television with Netflix available. There is also an air conditioned central restaurant, in the restored and converted olive-press mill, with a large and comfortable dining room and a sitting area with sofas and a television. Outside, close to the main arena, is a garden, patio and swimming pool, where you can swim and relax in sun loungers before or after lessons and enjoy a drink from the honesty bar. In addition to horses, there are several dogs at Solar do Espirito Santo; there is Wi-Fi in most areas and it is within easy walking distance of the small town of Azinhaga - set behind a huge wall, it is hard to believe the equestrian centre is in fact in the centre of the town.



**Meals** Meals are served buffet style in the restaurant, with breakfast typically Portuguese and usually including fruit, different types of bread, yoghurt and cakes served with tea, coffee and fruit juice. Lunch is generally a buffet of cold meat, bread, cheeses and salads or a traditionally cooked Portuguese dish and dinner is usually a choice of hot traditional dishes. Tea, coffee, cakes and fruit are available in the restaurant throughout the day, as are bottled water, soft drinks and beer from the honesty bar by the pool. Wine, beer and water are included with lunch and dinner and spirits and other drinks are available at extra cost. Vegetarians can be catered for with prior notice but please advise us of any special dietary requirements when you book.



**Weather** The climate in this part of Portugal is good year round, with average day time high temperatures about 16°C in April, 17°C in May, 18°C in June, and climbing to around 20°C in August and September before starting to cool down again in October. Through winter months, days are normally still warm, averaging 10°C, though the risk of rain is greater.

**What to Bring** We will send you a list with suggestions of what to bring when you book.

**Itineraries** Itineraries are usually 6 nights, Sunday to Saturday, with dates on request year round (except the 1st to 22nd January, 7th to 20th August, 11th December to 21st January 2018, when Solar do Espirito Santo is closed). Shorter stays (2 nights, 3 days minimum) are also available on request.

## Example itinerary

**Day 1 (Sunday)** Arrive in time for dinner, the perfect ice breaker where you can get to know your hosts and discuss what you wish to achieve in the week ahead. Night at Solar do Espirito Santo. (D)

**Day 2 (Monday)** Breakfast then meet Eyke, your instructor who will run through what you are trying to gain from your week at Solar do Espirito Santo before your first lesson. A good lunch, siesta and then your second riding lesson. Dinner later provides a perfect environment to discuss all things horse and your first lessons. The night at Solar do Espirito Santo. (B,L,D)



**Days 3 (Tuesday) to Day 5 (Thursday)** Riding twice a day, you will be moving forwards with everything you are learning to develop your knowledge and skills of classical dressage. Three nights at Solar do Espirito Santo. (B,L,D)

**Day 6 (Friday)** In your last two lessons, Eyke will encourage you to conduct the lessons yourself to explore what you have learnt during the week. The final night at Solar do Espirito Santo. (B,L,D)

**Day 7 (Saturday)** - Breakfast and your own arrangements for onward travel.

### Optional activities / Non-riders.

During the week, optional activities (at an extra charge) include a visit to a Lusitano Thoroughbred stud and / or to the museums at Equuspolis Golega. Non-riders are also very welcome and can enjoy the club facilities and swimming pool, watch lessons and / or explore the surrounding area on foot or by hire car. Please contact us for non-rider rates.







## 2017 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 and per person in shared twin/double bedrooms.

**Low Season 30th October to 3rd March (but not including Golega National Horse Fair 4th - 11th November)**

**High Season 4th March to 28th October and Golega National Horse Fair 4th - 11th November**

**Full Week Classical Dressage (6 nights, 10 lessons)**

**Low Season - 1050 Euros per person**

**High Season - 1150 Euros per person**

**Classical Dressage 5 nights, 6 days or less (minimum 2 nights, 3 days)**

**Low Season - 250 Euros per person per day High season - 275 Euros per person per day**

The supplement for a single room is 300 Euros per week.

Rates **INCLUDE** twin / double accommodation, breakfast, lunch and dinner every day, wine beer and soft drinks with meals and two daily lessons (shared).

Rates **EXCLUDE** International flights to Lisbon and taxes, transfers to / from Solar do Espirito Santo, any visa fees, additional drinks (at the pool bar or outside mealtimes), any extra activities (such as a visit to the Lusitano Thoroughbred stud), personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have with cover to ride), any gratuities you wish to leave and personal items such as shopping, telephone calls etc.



**Flights / Travel** You need to aim to arrive at Solar do Espirito Santo in the afternoon or early evening on the first Sunday and departure is after breakfast on Day 7 (Saturday). The nearest airport is Lisbon. Airfares to Lisbon vary depending on the season, availability and airline you choose, but budget around £250. 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.

**Transfers** From Lisbon we recommend you take the short train journey (1 hour) to Mate do Miranda, where you will be collected and transferred to Solar do Espirito Santo at no extra cost. Otherwise transfers from and to Lisbon are available on request and cost approximately 120 Euros each way. Transfer rates are subject to confirmation so please confirm these when you book. Car hire is another option allowing maximum freedom to explore during a weeklong stay.

**Other Things To Do & Local Places of Interest** As well as riding, there is plenty to do in the area around Solar do Espirito Santo. **Azinhaga** is home town of the famous Noble price winning writer Jose Saramago and in the centre of the small rural town, you'll find a bigger-than-life-size statue, to commemorate him. Saramago was of simple background and spent much of his youth in Azinhaga.

Once a year, in November, the small town of **Golega**, a few kilometres to the north, teams with Portuguese tradition and international interest during the National Horse Fair 'Feira Nacional do Cavalo'. This is a major event for horse breeders, buyers and horse lovers as well as local and international tourists during which the town transforms into a horse 'metropolis' with horse shows, dressage displays, regional food and numerous festivities.

About 28 kms south of Azinhaga is **Santarem** the lively capital of the Lezíria do Tejo sub-region, home to a collection of interesting churches and to the popular Jardim das Portas do Sol – a garden encircled by the city's medieval walls. As one contemplates the staggering views from atop the walls, it's easy to understand why Roman, Visigoth, Moorish and Portuguese armies all wanted to claim this strategic stronghold above the Rio Tejo.

**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 a visit 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 06/09/2016)

