

» the world's best riding... for specialist passions LOS POTREROS, SIERRA CHICAS, ARGENTINA

Estancia Los Potreros is a small family-run ranch in Córdoba, in the foothills of the Sierra Chicas in Argentina, completed with an Aberdeen Angus cattle and stud farm.

It is a totally organic enterprise, and its owners, the charming Begg family, allow cattle and horses free range (they're even encouraged to eat back certain paddocks to build natural fire breaks).

This L-shaped estancia has over 160 horses, which are mostly Criollos but with some wonderful Peruvian Paso ponies, too, that have a comfortable five gait (between a walk and a trot). Take twice-daily rides around the 6,000-acre establishment or ask for a more extensive trek that can be arranged to the lakes and mountains of Córdoba. Riders aiming to travel further afield are encouraged to tie their horses up to trees and take a plunge in some stunning waterfalls.

Those with sufficient confidence are also welcome to get a real taste of what it's like to be a *gaucho* by

helping round up the foals in the evenings. Although this is to ensure that the pumas don't get them, Kevin Begg, who has lived on the Estancia all his life, has only seen a couple so the pumas pose little danger to man.

Los Potreros has horses to suit every age, size and ability, as well as great *gauchos* and helpful English-speaking guides. Beginners at the royal game of polo are also welcome, and the emphasis is on

fun, although things can get quite competitive at times. The owners, Kevin and Louise Begg, are always on hand for a friendly chat or to offer advice if it's needed, and Louisa is an inspiring and patient polo coach.

By the end of a stay at Estancia Los Potreros guests have become accustomed to riding up and down really steep hills and mountains and through rivers, as well as riding back to the ranch feeling both happy and very soggy indeed.

or try these..

- Stay and play at Desert Palm, Dubai; Polo Star Ali Albwardy's private estate
- Go cattle driving and roping at a ranch stay in South Alberta, Canada
- Ride the famous Lipizzaner horses at Lipica, Slovenia, while at a stud farm
- Get married and honeymoon on horseback in luxury in romantic Rajasthan, India



the world's best riding... for long treks and challenges BISHKEK TO BARSKON, KYRGYZSTAN

His mountainous trek reveals the remarkable and untouched world of Kyrgyz shepherds, their yurt homes, horses and exquisite untouched surroundings south of the great inland sea of Issyk-Kul in Kyrgyzstan.

Small groups of riders, animal welfare and putting money into the local community are key aspects of these small treks. Horses are an important animal in the locals' way of life and culture. The route follows tracks from Bishkek (the capital and largest city of Kyrgyzstan) to Barskon, and riders are often welcomed into a local home before travelling on to see a stunning waterfall at the beginning of the Barskon Valley.

Not a trip for novices; up to five hours a day are spent on sure footed horses who pick their way up steep hills and tracks, over open grassland and mountain streams with confidence born from a familiarity with the terrain. The



scenery here is breathtaking with vast mountain vistas, huge skies and wonderful wild flowers. Far more than a horse trek, this is a visit to a very special culture. Riders get to know the shepherds and their families, and the legendary Kyrgyz hospitality is part of the experience.

Riders also share a cup of *kumis* (fermented mare's milk), soak off the trail dust in a hot spring and, if lucky, will also witness hunting with falcons.

The horses are small (about 14 hands) and easy to handle, but to get the most out of this

trip it's important to be able to control a horse at all gaits and be confident on often rough and steep terrain.

Everything is carried on the trek, nothing left behind and even rubbish is bagged and packed up after each meal and camp.

or try these..

- Prove you really are 'better than most' at Wyoming's Wild Mustang Rides for the advanced rider
- Join the Great Australian Outback Cattle Drive on the Australian prairie
- Take the route taken by early settlers between glaciers in Kjolurs, Iceland
- Gallop long distances and cross fast-flowing rivers through the Ibera Marshlands in Argentine Mesopotamia