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## THE BENEFITS OF EQUESTRIAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND ITS INTERACTION WITH THE TERRITORY

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### Abstract

The equestrian industry is an economic sector that encompasses all goods and services related to horses and the activities carried out by them in order to meet the needs of the final users. The popularity of equestrian tourism is now growing rapidly around the world. Horseback riding is known and popular in almost all of Europe, but few countries have developed equestrian tourism until 1980. In equestrian tourism, the main idea is walks in the fresh air, in an open nature, love and care for the horse. And most importantly, it is a kind of sport, available for all ages without restriction. It is the love of the horse that becomes the main reason for laying the foundations of the horse routes.

### Keywords

Horse-related activities – Horseback riding – Equestrian tourism – Positive effect

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## Introduction

This article defines equestrian tourism and discusses the conditions for its development and some of its characteristics, highlighting the profile of equestrian tourism practitioners. It briefly examines the organization of equestrian tourism and the good practices in general in some countries where equestrian tourism is traditional. The popularity of equestrian tourism is now growing rapidly around the world. Campgrounds are being built everywhere to serve riders, and the foundations of the equestrian tourist routes are being laid. Given the huge interest in equestrian tourism shown by various segments of the population in many countries around the world, the International Equestrian Federation has been paying serious attention to this problem in recent years. Within the federation, a special commission was set up under the supervision of the Italian professor Vittorio de Sanctis, which began to develop rules for international horseback riding, hiking and competitions.<sup>1</sup>

The presence of natural resources, the climatic features, the area of the country, the cultural and historical heritage play a big role in the development of tourism. The greater the number of natural and cultural resources and the more carefully and rationally used and protected, the more opportunities for tourism. The more attention is paid to them, the higher the level of tourism development in the region. It is indicators such as natural resources, climatic features and cultural and historical potential that are necessary conditions for the motivation for equestrian tourism.

Until 30 years ago, for many countries in Europe, this type of tourism was unusual. Horseback riding is known and popular in almost all of Europe, but few countries have developed equestrian tourism until 1980. There is almost no country on the Balkan Peninsula and in Europe that is not historically connected with the horse. Such countries are Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Turkey, in Central Europe - Hungary, Austria, Germany. Such countries with traditions in this sport and this type of tourism are France, Italy and Spain, which began to develop it in the 60s of the 20th century.

The equestrian tourism allows the rider to interact in different ways with nature and landscapes, while offering a new and ecological way to develop tourism promotion in the unconventional region so far. Europe is a continent that many people do not know very well. Its antiquity and history offers the possibility of discovering Europe on horseback. The best way to explore and really get to know the regions of this continent is by visiting the various places as they offer so much history, culture and nature. Exploring Europe on horseback is a point of view that is not often experienced<sup>2</sup>. Countries such as France and the United Kingdom have developed this tourism product with great success both locally and internationally, as it has boosted the economic development of their territories as well as the level of acceptance by a growing number of consumers. This experience shows that although it is a highly specialized type of tourism, it is a feasible and successful offer in areas with optimal conditions<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> M.A, Shevtsova, Sotsialno-rekreatsionnae vazmozhosti konnova turisma v Tombovskoi oblasti, [http://journals.tsutmb.ru/a8/upload/upload--2017-12-12/pdf\\_ef0b69570041245ca.pdf](http://journals.tsutmb.ru/a8/upload/upload--2017-12-12/pdf_ef0b69570041245ca.pdf), p. 1

<sup>2</sup> Rutas de turismo ecuestre en toda Europa, <https://www.turismo-ecuestre.com/rutas-del-turismo-ecuestre-en-europa.html>

<sup>3</sup> Turismo ecuestre une paises y continentes, <https://es.slideshare.net/horsetrailmexico/el-turismo-ecuestre-une-pases-y-continentes>

According to the International Equestrian Federation, "The importance of equestrian tourism in the past, devoted solely to tourism, horseback riding and walking, has now expanded, and equestrian tourism includes "all equestrian activities practiced by tourists outside their usual place of residence"<sup>4</sup>.

In order to identify all the opportunities that the equestrian sector can represent for the tourism industry, it is necessary to extend the concept of equestrian tourism to equine-related tourism, taking into account not only the sporting activities, entertainment and discovery activities of the horse, but also all activities related to the horse, as well as site visits, events, traditional festivals<sup>5</sup>.

In the equestrian tourism, the main idea is walks in the fresh air, in nature, love and care for the horse. And most importantly, it is a sport available for all ages without restriction. It is the love of the horse that becomes the main reason for laying the foundations of the horse routes. One of the first countries is Russia. As early as 1899, a Russian officer rode his horse from Potava to Paris in 33 days, traveling 2,633 km. One of the first equestrian routes was established in the Altai in 1971<sup>6</sup>. To this day, equestrian tourism is practiced in Russia in various regions, such as Chuvashia, Central Russia and Siberia, where the horse is a tradition.

Along with the natural resources and the cultural and historical potential of the territory, the equestrian tourism is unthinkable without the participation of the main character in it - the horse. The equestrian industry is an economic sector that encompasses all goods and services related to horses and the activities carried out with them in order to meet the needs of end users. The most important sectors of the equestrian industry are breeding, breeding, dressage, horse training and horseback riding. In addition, the sub-sectors in which horses participate can be analyzed by the type of activity they perform, such as: horse racing, equestrian sports, equestrian tourism, entertainment and therapy for horses, etc.

Apart from this, a favorable economic and social environment for horses and the activities practiced with them, including capital, both human and economic, are requirements that can have an important impact on horse production throughout the value chain of horses. sector<sup>7</sup>.

The equestrian industry influences the development of the region, which specializes in the development of equestrian tourism through equestrian centers. Equestrian centers are institutions specializing in performing equestrian activities, planning routes, and the rider can be a veteran or a trainee. Finally, equestrian centers greatly help to create jobs related to horseback riding and various activities related to the horse. The economic income from these activities directly benefits the region, ie the equestrian centers contribute to the economic and tourist growth of the region<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> S. Tomljenović, Boranić-Živoder, S. Čorak, HORSE RIDING TOURISM –DEFINITIONAL. 4th International Rural Tourism Congress, Congress Proceedings, 2018, pp. 278-287R.

<sup>5</sup> Offre de tourisme de cheval/ Panorama/, A tout France, 2011, Collection Ingénierie et développement touristique n°3, Mars 2011

<sup>6</sup> Cu Chullaine O'Reilly F.R.G.S., A History of Russian Horse Travel, <http://www.thelongridersguild.com/stories/russian-travel.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Z.S. Mihók, 1@ y Castejón Montijano, R. 15.10.2016 Dialnet-El sector ecuestre y la economía 5959658.pdf "Archivos de Zootecnia", 65 (252): 481-488. 2016,

<sup>8</sup> Tipologías-del-turismo-ecuestre, <https://www.turismo-ecuestre.com/tipologias-del-turismo-ecuestre.html>



The equestrian tourism has many positive effects. One of them is the effect of **healing**. It affects health, as it involves practice in nature, in the fresh air, plays a role in the development of human values, caused by the careful treatment and care of the horse as a person, also develops qualities necessary for rapid response in weed conditions, influences the construction of human culture to nature.

On the other hand, the energy of the horse affects the *physical and spiritual condition of man*. For this reason, it can be considered as a subdivision of **ecological** tourism and **recreational** tourism.

The practice of the equestrian tourism provides an opportunity to get to know new places, rare tourist attractions in smaller regions and get acquainted with the culture and customs of the local population. Therefore, it is considered as **cultural - cognitive** tourism.

The equestrian tourism can also be considered as **adventure** tourism, therefore, safety is the most important factor in its practice. First of all, we must keep in mind that we are with a living being, an animal domesticated, of course, but which also has its own character. In general, horses designed for this type of tourism are very obedient and very well prepared and trained, so quadrupeds should not be afraid, but still need careful treatment of the animal. In addition, the hikes are usually on a walk or trot, so you do not need to have great preparation or previous knowledge.

Nevertheless, professional instructors are needed to guide and demonstrate the basic and necessary exercises when it comes to horseback riding, and to always follow their instructions. In this way, riding becomes easier and can be practiced by children and adults, as the routes and programs are adapted to all types of societies. Equestrian tourism is a dynamic activity and balance and coordination are of great importance<sup>9</sup>.

**The aim of equestrian tourism** is to promote each country and its natural regions by increasing the economic and social development in each of them by creating a tourist product based on equestrian routes.

The more **specific objectives that could support a future helpful strategy** for the development of the horse tourism, are:

- Encouraging and development of the potential of the specific tourism as added value in the countries and the regions.
- Exchange of knowledge and innovative experience between the countries in the field of equestrian tourism.
- Creating a network of contacts of various agents and professionals in the sector
- Creating an alliance and mutual assistance between the public and private sectors.
- Designing of equestrian centers and economic support for them, through public and private economic incentives for companies receiving equestrian tourism.
- Building models of equestrian routes and types of infrastructure that can be applied to different countries and regions, adapting to the inherent characteristics of each country.

The general increase of the tourist activity in search of new experiences is the engine for the future development of equestrian tourism in its various forms. Equestrian tourism,

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<sup>9</sup> Rutras a caballo. Turismo ecuestre, Viajeros, <https://www.revistaviajeros.es/reportajes-antteriores/rutas-caballo-turismo-ecuestre>

whose main purpose is to enjoy activities related to the equestrian world, can be considered in two categories:

**A/** tourism, **dedicated to the horse:**

- Horse exhibitions • Competitions • Performances and spectacles

**B/** tourism, **related to the horse activities:**

- Specialized trainings • Lasso riding • Trails related to equestrian tourism / routes /

### **Good international practices**

To achieve a high level of equestrian tourism product, the **Horsetrail** project on Mexican territory has been developed. As a **first step**, Horsetrail is certified as an official license of the CHA "Certified Horsemanship Association" to be able to offer training and certification courses for equestrian guides, equestrian tourism assistants and various disciplines that interact with the activity, giving professionalism. and the safety of the operation and the dissemination of this project. As a **second stage**, it was joined by companies accepting equestrian tourism, which are qualified by the company to offer the service. In **the third stage**, an alliance was reached with the Ministry of Tourism of Mexico, so that the tourist product RUTAS ECUESTRES is considered within its catalog of tourist products and is a sufficient reason to promote the sector at the state and federal level.<sup>10</sup> The Horse trail project is based on the findings of the first phase of research on the viability and potential of equestrian tourism in Europe, Mexico and Latin America. Its organizational and economic effect and state support in rural areas near large cities have been proven. Of great importance for the conclusions made are two very important documents for the transition to the Horse trail project:

- analysis of the current state of equestrian tourism in Mexico, Spain, Argentina and Europe:
- plan for the tourist strategy for development of equestrian tourism.

The findings of the study show that a large amount of equestrian activity is being developed at European level, as evidenced by some successfully developed equestrian tourism products in countries such as Spain, France and countries such as Germany or Canada.

The project proves that the product of equestrian tourism is of great importance for regions with great economic, cultural, gastronomic and historical potential, as well as that it is very important for each country to diversify the economy in rural areas and the positive impact of companies related to the equestrian and tourist sector.

### **Benefits of equestrian tourism**

Since equestrian tourism is an activity that is practiced in different parts of the world, it should be noted that this activity has its advantages for the development of the individual territories in which it is practiced.

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<sup>10</sup> Horse Trial, 26 de jun. de 2015, <https://es.slideshare.net/horsetrail>

The **benefits of this type of tourism are mainly economic**, as it is not only an engine for the development of tourism in a given area, but also **benefits the environment**.

The equestrian tourism is one of the few types of tourism that does not harm the environment, as it is practiced in the fresh air and does not pollute the environment.

This is a sustainable activity that requires respect to the environment and at the same time supports the restoration of roads and paths.

It helps to get to know and improve the culture and the natural heritage of the territories due to the increase of tourists in the wild and insufficiently exploited areas.

It contributes to the development of the rural areas and complements rural tourism in the area.

The development of this activity contributes to the development and partnership with small businesses in a given area.

## Conclusion

Good strategic planning for the development of equestrian tourism has its positive effects. As a type of tourism, practiced outdoors, in nature and based on horseback riding and with sports facilities to protect the health of the tourist, it is not only a kind of sports, but also health and leisure tourism. Creating a variety of job opportunities helps maintain and keep long-standing local and national traditions alive. It involves cooperation between local and foreign stakeholders in tourism. It calls for the protection of natural resources and cultural and historical monuments, and this is the root of its appeal, helping to increase the attraction of tourists, especially through the enormous impact of horseback riding on humans.

Continued planning and development of equestrian tourism would lead to economic diversification in tourist and rural areas and their prosperity by organizing various tourist activities. Only in this way can a green light be given to this type of tourism in the wilder and less developed and familiar to tourist areas, which would motivate every tourist to experience the satisfaction of nature through horseback riding in free conditions, without restrictions on gender, age, social status and financial restraints.

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