



ye-ha holidays

by **Katie Berryman**

Whether an amiable animal lover or fervent outdoor enthusiast, a horse-riding holiday could be the perfect opportunity to increase your wellbeing, whilst minimising your carbon footprint. So whether, galloping across a beach, cantering over a mountain or clod-hopping through snow, you'll be guaranteed spectacular views and intrepid thrills.

The UK offers beautiful trekking routes, with Bigland Hall Equestrian Centre (www.biglandhall.com) at the very heart. Based in Cumbria, Mike and Sheelagh Myers run the school and provide expeditions out into the countryside. Rides vary from half hour rides for beginners or the two hour Lake District Fell Ride, to a trekking holiday of several days. Choose to return to the same accommodation each evening or take in more sights by journeying to a new destination each day. With the latter option, your luggage will be transported ahead of you from place to place, so you can quickly settle in upon your arrival. Enjoy pastures anew, but without the heavy load on your back and blisters on your feet!

For a completely different experience take part in the Brecon Beacon Trail, organised by Unicorn Trails (www.unicorntrails.com). You'll need to hold onto your horses though as it next runs in spring! So, in the meantime, meander through the unspoilt Cambridgeshire countryside instead. Unicorn will have you exploring hills and lakes in abundance, all on horseback with



experienced leaders. Unicorn Trails was set up in 1999 by Wendy Hofstee, a veterinary surgeon and traveller. She endeavoured to set up holidays where people could enjoy horse riding through varying terrain and it has grown into a worldwide affair. You're guaranteed happy horses in good health, small groups and lush natural environments. If UK's chilly climate pushes you further afield, journey to the ever-sunny Algarve in Portugal where you can saddle up a horse in an authentic cattle ranch. Sleep under the stars and embrace the wilderness, as you wile away a week in the peaceful outback. To those to whom a snowy ride appeals, the mighty Vologda lakes region in the north of Russia promises huskies, snow mobiles and horse drawn sleds. Or perhaps Sweden, with its winter wonderland, can tempt you? Why not ditch the plane and journey by train? Reduce your carbon footprint and absorb some of the picturesque landscape enroute.

Trekking is a fantastic opportunity to immerse yourself in the grass-roots culture of a country. Whether a novice or experienced rider, don't delay. Throw your leg over, clamber aboard that horse, and, ye-ha... you're off and away!

on a green shoestring!

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Fancy travelling on a shoestring and minimizing your carbon impact? What better place to start than an eco-friendly hostel? It's not just intrepid teenagers that hostels aim to attract. Inexpensive, comfortable and clean rooms can be just as suitable for families and the older generation alike.

Solar power, bio-diesel generators, rain harvesting and drip irrigation are the impressive credentials of eco-hostels, as well as offering organic, locally grown, produce. One snag is that some large, old buildings, that may be listed, come with a lot of red tape in the UK, and it can be difficult turning them into environmental hubs. Nevertheless, there are many examples of green hostels across the country, such as Deepdale Farm in Norfolk, which, along with its wind turbines and extensive recycling ethos, has won many awards. Also on eco-alert is Sparrowhawk in Dartmoor, one of the first hostels to install solar panels to heat its showers.

If you're travelling further afield, pay the Reykjavik City Hostel in Iceland a visit which is located next to the country's largest geothermal swimming pool. If heading for the Alps, try out Zermatt Youth Hostel, famous for its green approach to living, and the first hotel in Switzerland to use 100% green electricity and biogas.

So, discover new places, swap stories with travelers and coin the change. After exploring all day, take a hot shower, tuck yourself into clean sheets and rest assured that green is clean.

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