
SEEING THE WORLD WITH
“Life Between The Ears”

Contributors to the “Life Between The Ears” social media accounts transport us to the world’s most interesting and beautiful places—all viewed from the saddle. Each issue, we share a few of their images.



RUSTY STEEL/@WAIT_A_LITTLE_HORSE_SAFARI PHOTO

HOEDSPRUIT, SOUTH AFRICA

Seeing giraffes while out on a ride might be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for most, but for Rusty Steel, it's all in a day's work.

Steel is a guide for the Wait A Little Big Five Horse Safari company in South Africa. "Having grown up on a farm in Zimbabwe where my mother had a keen interest in horses, I have experience in in-hand showing of Anglo-Arabs to cattle hustling horses to general horses to hack out on," Steel said. "I don't remember not knowing how to ride, but over 30 years my type of riding went from get on and go to the deep seat, sit back polocrosse player to heels down, light seat, straight back English style riding that I try to perfect while riding with clients through the South African bush on safari. I have never competed in the arena, as my patience and need to head out into the bush is far too great of a distraction."

Wait A Little, founded and run by Gerti and Philip Kusseler, runs guided horseback safaris in the Karongwe Private Game Reserve, which encompasses about 86,000 acres of wilderness.

Steel has been working for Wait A Little for six years. "I had no idea what I was expecting," he said of the career. "I cannot see myself doing anything else. My bosses have amazing horsemanship skills and have built up this incredible company from scratch for almost 20 years. With over 40 horses in the yard, it's a full-time job for everyone working there."

The ears in this photo belong to Samuel Smith, one of Wait A Little's string for safari rides. He's a 14-year-old Friesian-Selle Français cross who was bred in South Africa. He's been part of Wait A Little's string for nine years. "His amazing personality and bulletproof behavior sent him to the front as lead horse within a few months of being here," said Steel.

"I have had the privilege of riding him now for almost five years," Steel continued. "I cannot express how much faith I have in this horse. He has gotten me out of many dangerous situations from close encounters with the wildlife. And he's never questioned going forward into danger. His laidback behavior allows us to get amazingly close to the wildlife and gives off a relaxed vibe for the other horses that follow."



SUMNER, NEBRASKA

Jessa Karlberg was a city girl when she met her husband.

"Kurt and I met at college, after I had left the big city of Omaha to try my hand in cowboy country at Chadron State [Neb.]," she said. "God crossed my path with this cute Wrangler-wearing cowboy, and now I'm navigating gravel roads and picking sweet corn as well as making sure the cows come home."

The ears in the photos belong to Coozie, an 11-year-old buckskin Quarter Horse mare. She and Jessa are working cattle on the ranch.

"My dad and sister broke her as a 3-year-old, and I've been putting the miles on her ever since. She is very independent yet very cowy and has quite the attitude," Jessa said. "While pushing cows down the road, she will pin her ears and nip the calves on the tush if they walk too slow. She is also a tad on the short side. At just 14 hands, she holds her ground just fine."

Jessa and Kurt live on a ranch in central Nebraska at the base of the Nebraska Sandhills. Kurt and his father David run a commercial Angus-Hereford cross cattle business. Jessa works as a teacher's aide during the school year, but she devotes her summer months and spare time to helping work cows, doctoring calves and tending her flock of chickens.

"Being from the big city, ranching was a new subject for me, but I have caught on quickly and love every minute of it—well, almost," she said. "I went through some shopping withdrawals, learned how to hurry and feed hungry farmhands, and then trying to keep the food warm when plans change, and finding out the actual reason why the front porch is really called the 'mud room.'"

"My husband and I live here on the ranch, where he is in charge of the feeding and day-to-day operations," she added. "We try to keep it traditional, using mainly horses when it comes to bringing in and rounding up the cattle, including roping and doctoring any sick cows. Along with the ranching, we grow just enough corn to feed the cattle and make silage, as well as some soybeans, cane and alfalfa."

LIFE BETWEEN THE EARS

SPIAGGIA DI PORTU TRAMATZU, ITALY

Lorenza Dessi is a 21-year-old college student living on Sardinia, the second largest of Italy's islands. She started riding at age 5 and had horses in her backyard as a kid but then took some time out of the saddle.

"Last year while I was coming home from the beach I saw horses beside the road, and suddenly I felt the desire to get back in the saddle," Dessi said. "I'm not a professional horseperson, but I have a strong passion for horses, and I have a special relationship with the mare in the photo; her name is Sigismonda."

Sigismonda is a 6-year-old Sella Italiano who was bred and raised in Teulada, a small town on the southwestern tip of Sardinia. "During the last year we developed a special bond," said Dessi. "We love working together though she's lazy—you can have her attention only when you ask her to jump. That is the only moment in which you can see her happy because she's doing what she's born to do."

Dessi doesn't compete now but hopes to eventually enter "Sigisbella" in some shows. "For now I just enjoy taking long rides in the countryside and on the beaches in good company of other horse lovers, training Sigisbella and having fun," she said.

The beach in the photo is in Portu Tramatzu in southern Sardinia, near the stables where Dessi keeps Sigisbella. Dessi and her friends ride on the beach frequently, letting their horses wade in the water.

"To get there we ride in the countryside near the sea and the beaches, so from every angle you can spot the sea and feel the breeze," she said. "This place unifies two of the things that I love the most: sea and horses. So I love to go there and just rest with the stunning view I have and thank Mother Nature for the paradise she gave us."

"Sardinia is a magic place, a land full of history and gorgeous nature. They know us for being one of the blue zones on earth, where people live a long and healthy life," Dessi added.

SIWA OASIS, EGYPT

Jura Craven is a world traveler currently living in Ecuador. She grew up in Maryland and competed in hunter/jumper shows as a teenager, but as the wife of a diplomat, she's lived in Sudan, Vietnam and the United Kingdom before settling in Ecuador for the present.

"I studied as an anthropologist and environment/development specialist, but while abroad I have been a teacher, and now I have a small business, Tala Beads, making and selling ecologically friendly and sustainable palm seed (tagua, pambil and acai) necklaces," said Craven. "I now ride when I can and also take my toddler when I can, and he is also starting lessons.

"At the moment I mostly just do the odd several-hour hacks in the mountains from haciendas or with Ecuadorian friends, as we live in the city," Craven added. "When I have a chance I also stick and ball or play the odd polo chukka. In Sudan I used to own three Sudanese horses (Arabian/local horses) and played polo regularly with them. Marhab, Kamun and Freyfaxi—they were all 7 years old and were originally cattle ponies that were ridden thousands of miles to Khartoum from Darfur."

This photo was taken in the Sahara Desert in the far west of Egypt near the Siwa Oasis. The Siwa Oasis is a deep depression in the earth that reaches below sea level. It's one of Egypt's most isolated communities, located 30 miles east of the Libyan border.

Craven was staying at the eco-lodge Adrère Amellal, known as one of the world's most unusual hotels. There's no electricity or phone service, and guests stay in traditional dwellings made of kershef, a mixture of earth, stone and saltwater. The food all comes from the lodge's organic garden.

When Craven was visiting, the lodge's owner loaned her group some of his out-of-season polo ponies. "We went for some incredible gallops in the desert—also known as the Great Sand Sea," she said. "Riding in the desert has to be my absolute favorite in terms of pure freedom. We also rode in the desert in Sudan and near Cairo."



JURA CRAVEN/ @JURA.PHOTOS PHOTO

CHANDLER, ARIZONA

Paige Nerrie is a freelance graphic designer and amateur dressage rider from Rhode Island who takes lessons on a leased Hanoverian-Thoroughbred cross, Mac.

"Mac has ongoing medical issues, so most of my time with him is devoted to love, the unique medical care he needs multiple times per week, and making him more comfortable," she said. "Mac and I do not compete. What I love most about riding Mac is the pride he has and the pep in his step after we have a good ride. I love for him to be happy."

Nerrie also volunteers for a local therapeutic riding center and on a polo farm. "I am extremely passionate about polo, especially Newport International Polo [R.I.]," she said.

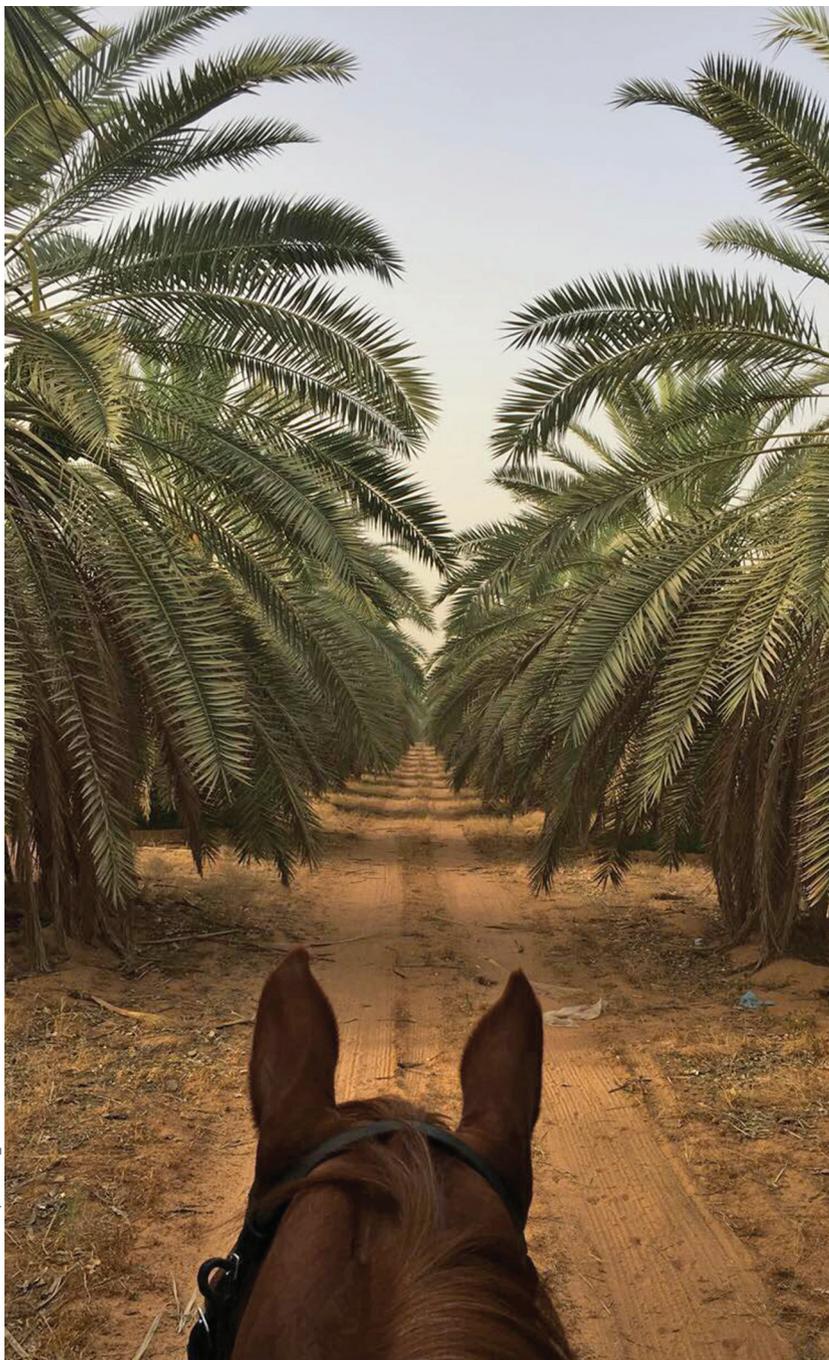
While on vacation in Arizona, Nerrie went on a private, guided morning desert trail ride on the Gila River Indian Reservation in the Sonoran Desert near Phoenix. Nerrie told her Native American guide she hoped to see the local herd of wild horses.

"I learned that the herd continuously moves and is not fenced in, but there is an area where they tend to be in the mornings," she said. "When we arrived in the area of the desert shown in the photo, there they were. Luckily, the band of six included two foals. They were all grazing, as we watched from about 50 feet. They continued grazing for five minutes or so, even though they were aware of us being there. We remained still and quiet. All of a sudden they bolted. It appeared to me that the mares ran first with the stallions in the rear, after the foals. One little foal was the last to leave since his attention was on the grass. He got the message that it was time to go. I loved how the foals are protected in the middle! The dust formed a cloud as they disappeared into the horizon. What a dream bucket list day!"

Nerrie was riding Stormy, a 12-year-old Quarter Horse from the Koli Equestrian Center. "Stormy was very sweet, game for a morning ride, and most happy to have a carrot party with the guide horse and me after the ride," Nerrie said.



PAIGE NERRIE/ @POLOPONIES PHOTO



CLEMENTINE CHINOUILH/@CLEM_CHICHI PHOTO

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA

Clémentine Chinouilh grew up in Vosges, a region in the east of France, and dreamed of becoming a professional rider, but her parents didn't think it was a sensible path for her life. She rode as a young girl but then hung up her tack to become an optometrist. She would still ride on the weekends though.

"I was 26 years old, and I had everything to be happy—diplomas, my first car and my apartment. I had steady work, a boyfriend, my own van, and the dream of all my life—my own horse!" she said. She competed in endurance rides with Gamal, a Hungarian-bred Shagya Arabian who inspired her love of the breed.

But in 2015, "life separated me from my boyfriend, and this is when my perfect world collapsed," she said. A friend called her with news of a job opening in Saudi Arabia, and Chinouilh decided to make a life change.

Now she works as the manager of the riding department of Prince Khaled Bin Sultan Bin Abdul-Aziz al Saud's Al Khalediah farm. "I'm manager, rider and coach for the princess," Chinouilh said. "Al Khalediah is a famous stud, one of the farms where the most beautiful pureblood Arabian show and race horses are gathered. Often I trail ride my horses in the paths of palm trees on the farm. I am the proof that it is always necessary to believe in your dreams and take chances!"

Sharing Life Between The Ears



Since 2008, Life Between The Ears founder Kristine Dahms has posted stunning photos shot by riders in all corners of the world with one hand on the reins and the other on the shutter. Dahms mines photos with the hashtag #lifebetweentheears, contacts the original poster of the image, then features the photo, complete with educational details about the place that's portrayed.

Life Between The Ears photos appear on a LBTE Facebook page, an Instagram feed, a dedicated website (lifebetweentheears.com), a Twitter feed and a Pinterest page (all under lifebetweentheears account names).

Dahms—who lives in Vashon, Wash., with her Welsh Cob, mini horse, pygmy goats, two dogs and two cats—rides dressage and takes quite a few photos herself on the picturesque Vashon-Maury Island.

Dahms has taken some of the Life Between The Ears images from cyberspace to print, creating three lines of greeting cards with selected photos from her social media pages. A portion of the proceeds from the card sales goes to the Equine Land Conservation Resource (elcr.org). Cards are available at lifebetweentheears.com/retail.