

Ride Your Horse on the Beach

Prepare for the ultimate beach riding adventure.

Audrey Pavia

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It's every horse person's fantasy: You and your horse are galloping through the sand, the surf lapping at his hooves. The sun is shining, the air is cool, and the waves are crashing on the shore. Your horse's mane is flowing, and you feel free as you glide along the sandy beach among the seagulls.

While the dream of riding on the beach is a common one, turning it into reality takes a bit of work. Unless the ocean is right outside your front door, you'll have to do some research to find the best place to take your horse for this fantasy ride. You'll also want to prepare your horse for the adventure if you want your first beach ride to be as wonderful as it is in your dreams. [Horse Meets Beach](#)

If your horse has never seen the ocean, don't expect to arrive at the beach and get him to march right in. While the occasional horse will step easily into the water, most want nothing to do with the ocean. In fact, the mere sight of the sea for the first time can frighten even a normally calm horse.

Before considering a ride at the beach, make sure your horse is completely reliable in the arena. If you have trouble controlling him in there, you definitely won't be able to get him to listen to you when the wind is blowing, the waves are booming and other horses are freaking out around him.

If you plan to ride in the surf, your horse must be comfortable around water before you attempt a beach ride.

This means teaching him to walk through water on the trail. Rushing creeks are the closest type of obstacle you'll find that will help your horse get used to the idea of stepping into the ocean.

The first time you take your horse to the beach, try to go with riders on seasoned beach horses. If the other horses in your group are calm, it will go a long way toward helping to boost your horse's confidence.

Choose a day and time when the beach will be relatively quiet. Weekends during peak season are not usually the best days to go because you'll have to share the shoreline with crowds of people throwing balls, flying kites, listening to music and providing all kinds of extra stimulation for your horse to deal with.

Be sure to arrange your ride during low tide, when the sand is firmer and the waves are less dramatic. [Into the Sea](#)

When you unload your horse at the beach for the first time, be prepared for him to be on heightened alert. The sounds and smells of the ocean will be new to him and can be intimidating. Let him get used to being in this new environment for a while before you mount up.

Slowly approach the shoreline, being careful to read your horse's cues to determine how he's feeling about it. For your first beach ride, you may have to be content just riding in the dry sand and avoiding the water. It may take one or two trips before your horse will even consider approaching the surf.

One method for slowly getting your horse into the water is to ride circles in the sand, slowly moving toward the water with each circle. Be prepared for a startled reaction the first time your horse feels the water around his legs.

If your horse seems amenable to getting his feet wet, start slow, staying in shallow water as you ride, and limit your pace to a walk. Eventually, you can go faster and deeper.

Be aware that many horses can also experience vertigo and may stagger when a wave begins to recede. If this happens, help your horse steady himself by using your reins and legs.

Some horses like the water so much that they want to roll in it. If your horse puts his head down and starts to paw, push

him forward with your legs while pulling his head up. Otherwise you will end up a lot wetter than you'd like to be!
Where to Ride

Finding a beach that is suitable for riding can take a bit of work. Most public beaches don't allow horses, so you'll have to track down one that does.

First consider beaches that are closest to you. If you know of a beach that allows horses, visit its website to get information on what days and times of year horses are allowed. Make sure the beach has a large parking area nearby where you can leave your rig.

If you aren't sure where you can go, you'll need to do some research. Start by looking for a website for your destination's public beaches. Here you'll get information on whether horses are allowed, directions, and other pertinent details.

Another option is to type the state name and the words "beaches" and "horses" into a search engine. You'll get a list of websites with information on beaches in that state that allow horseback riding.

Once you find a location that looks like a good option for your first ride, you may want to contact officials to get information on the shoreline conditions. Find out the best time to ride to avoid crowds. Ask about the hours of low tide, and how far it is from the parking area to the sand. If you've never been to this beach, ask about the size of the waves. For your first ride, a beach with low breakers is your best bet.

What to Bring

Before you head out, make sure you pack everything you'll need. For your horse, bring water and a bucket, since it's unlikely you'll find any fresh water near the beach. Also pack a hay bag with your horse's usual forage. While you tack him up outside your trailer, allow him to eat from the hay bag. This will help him associate the beach with something positive right from the start and encourage him to relax.

When you tack up your horse, consider keeping his halter on under his bridle and bringing a lead rope with you. This can come in handy if your horse has a hard time dealing with being on the beach and you have to get off and lead him.

For yourself, bring your riding helmet and clothes that are right for the weather. Some beaches can be windy and chilly, while others are calm and warm. Don't forget sunblock on a sunny day.

If you plan to go far enough into the water to get your feet and legs wet, don't wear your best riding boots; the salt water won't be good for the leather. Also consider bringing a change of shoes and pants so you don't have to drive all the way home in wet clothing.
Rent a Horse

Another way to enjoy beach riding is to find a rental stable that specializes in taking guests on shoreline rides on the stable's horses. These horses are well-acclimated to the ocean and will be relaxed and calm when walking, trotting and even cantering in the water.

It's important to choose a reputable stable for riding on the beach. In order to enjoy your experience, you want the horses to be in good condition and well-trained. If possible, visit the stable before you book your ride and check out the horses. Ask the manager about their care. Do the horses get breaks in between rides out to the beach? How many days a week do they work? How is a guest matched to the right horse?

If you get a good feeling and want to hire the stable to take you out on a ride, find out how long the rides are, what the pace is (walking, trotting or cantering) and how many guests are taken out at time. Ask if you'll be riding in the water or just along the sand. If you'll be going into the water, how deep will you go? Will the horses be swimming or just walking on the edge of the surf? These are important questions to ask so that you won't be surprised when you are in the middle of your ride.

Riding on the beach can be one of the most exciting ways to enjoy being on a horse. The smell of salt water, the waves rolling onto the shore, and the vast horizon before you can provide you with a riding experience like none you've ever known. With just a little bit of preparation, you can make your first beach ride a great adventure.

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AUDREY PAVIA is a freelance writer and the author of *Horses for Dummies*. She is based in Southern California.

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