



# Harmony in Motion: Yoga and Horse Riding in Albania

Project prepared in October 2024  
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## Summary

Incorporating yoga into Caravan Horse Riding Albania's beginner horse-riding program offers a holistic approach that enhances both the physical and mental experience of participants.

Yoga, through asanas (physical postures), breathwork, and meditation, provides numerous benefits that complement the learning of horse riding, fostering harmony between the rider, the horse and the natural environment.



# Physical Benefits of Yoga for Horse Riders:

- 1. Improved Balance and Stability:** Yoga postures help develop core strength and balance, which are essential for maintaining a steady position in the saddle. Asanas also build stability in the legs and hips, aiding riders in staying centered on the horse, even during dynamic movements.
- 2. Increased Flexibility and Mobility:** Asanas improve flexibility in key areas such as the hips, lower back, and legs. This added flexibility allows participants to move more freely and comfortably during horse riding.
- 3. Enhanced Body Awareness:** Through yoga practice, participants develop a deeper sense of proprioception, or body awareness. This heightened awareness allows riders to better align themselves with the horse's movements, improving communication and creating a more fluid riding experience.
- 4. Relaxation and Recovery:** Yoga stretches and poses performed after a day of riding help release tension in overworked muscles, aiding recovery and reducing stiffness. This is especially beneficial after long tracks, helping participants feel refreshed for the next day.



# Mental Benefits of Yoga for Horse Riders:

- 1. Increased Focus and Concentration:** Breath-focused yoga practices train the mind to focus on the present moment, enhancing concentration during horse riding lessons. This mental clarity is especially valuable during complex maneuvers or when learning new skills.
- 2. Stress Reduction:** Yoga's calming breathwork techniques, help lower stress levels and calm the nervous system, making participants feel more at ease around horses and in new riding environments.
- 3. Mind-Body Connection:** Meditation practices enhance the mind-body connection, encouraging participants to approach horse riding with a mindful and patient attitude. This mindfulness leads to better decision-making, a more intuitive riding experience, and a deeper bond with the horse.



# Emotional Benefits of Yoga for Horse Riders:

- 1. Confidence Building:** By integrating yoga and horse riding, participants gain a sense of accomplishment both on and off the mat. The gradual progress in mastering asanas, controlling breath, and learning new riding skills boosts self-confidence, empowering individuals to overcome challenges with poise.
- 2. Emotional Resilience:** Yoga, through its meditative practices, encourages emotional regulation and resilience. Meditation sessions offer a space for participants to process their emotions, be it excitement, frustration, or fear, leading to a more balanced and emotionally grounded approach to horse riding.
- 3. Connection with Nature and Horses:** Yoga's emphasis on mindfulness fosters a deeper connection with the surrounding environment and the horses themselves. By promoting a calm and grounded mental state, participants are better able to attune to the horses' behaviors, creating a relationship built on trust and mutual respect.



# Complementary Benefits Throughout the Program

- **Pre-Riding Yoga:** Morning yoga sessions before breakfast prepare the body and mind for the physical demands of horse riding. Energizing flows and strength-building postures improve posture and readiness, while breathwork creates a sense of calm focus to start the day.
- **Post-Riding Yoga and Meditation:** Evening sessions of breathwork and meditation allow participants to unwind, reflecting on their day's progress while relaxing sore muscles. This daily practice aids in recovery, leaving riders refreshed and prepared for the next day's adventure.
- **Enhanced Group Bonding:** Yoga provides an additional opportunity for participants to connect with one another, fostering a sense of community. Group meditation and reflection sessions at the end of the week offer emotional closure, allowing participants to share their experiences, insights, and memories with their fellow riders.

By integrating yoga into the horse-riding program, participants benefit from an all-encompassing experience that not only improves their riding skills but also enhances their physical wellbeing, mental sharpness, and emotional resilience. This combination creates a deeper, more mindful connection between rider and horse, as well as a lasting sense of accomplishment and inner peace.



# About me

I am Rosela Ciko, a certified yoga teacher with over a decade of experience, integrating yoga with a holistic approach to health and well-being.

My yoga journey began in 2006, and since then, I have developed a rich practice combining asanas, breathwork, and mindfulness.

With my deep Albanian roots, I bring a unique connection to the culture and natural beauty of my homeland, aligning seamlessly with Caravan Horse Riding Albania's philosophy of harmony with nature.

I have guided students from diverse backgrounds and levels, blending my experience with compassion and a deep understanding of physical and emotional balance.

Originally from Tirana, I hold a master's degree in economics from Warsaw. After a successful corporate career, I fully embraced yoga, earning my certification from the Polish Association of Iyengar Yoga following a rigorous three-year training.

I have also traveled extensively to study Ayurveda and various yoga methods, further broadening my expertise.

My long-standing experience enables me to meet the unique needs of each student, creating a transformative and empathetic yoga practice.



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## Itinerary 2025

### Day 2: Getting Acquainted with Horses

#### Morning Session: Asanas for Balance, Strength, and Flexibility

- Time: 60-90 minutes, before breakfast.
- Focus: Strengthening balance, opening hips, and stretching the legs and back for riding.
- Asanas:
  - Tadasana (Mountain Pose) to establish balance and body awareness.
  - Warrior I (Virabhadrasana I) and Warrior II for building strength and stability in the legs.
  - Tree Pose (Vrikshasana) for improving focus and balance.
  - Downward-Facing Dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana) to stretch hamstrings and calves, preparing for leg engagement in riding.
  - Seated Forward Fold (Paschimottanasana) for flexibility in the lower back and legs.

**Benefits:** Prepares the body for horse handling by improving balance, core strength, and flexibility, which are essential when working around and riding horses.

#### Evening Session: Breathwork and Meditation for Connection

- Time: 60 minutes, after dinner.
- Focus: Breath and focus to deepen the connection with horses and nature.
- Practice:
  - Alternate Nostril Breathing to enhance focus and calm the nervous system.
  - Loving-Kindness Meditation to foster compassion and connection with the horses, the environment, and fellow participants.

**Benefits:** This session encourages mindfulness, promoting a calm, present, and open mindset when interacting with horses.



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## Itinerary 2025

### Day 3: Independent Horse Preparation and Nature Ride Testing

#### Morning Session: Core Stability and Hip Flexibility

- Time: 60-90 minutes, before breakfast.
- Focus: Strengthening the core and opening the hips for better riding posture and balance.
- Asanas:
  - Warrior III (Virabhadrasana III) for core strength and balance.
  - Chair Pose (Utkatasana) for building strength in the thighs and glutes.
  - Low Lunge (Anjaneyasana) to stretch the hip flexors and quadriceps, opening the hips for riding posture.
  - Plank Pose to engage core muscles.
  - Pigeon Pose (Eka Pada Rajakapotasana) for deep hip opening and flexibility.
  - Bridge Pose (Setu Bandhasana) for strengthening the glutes and lower back.

**Benefits:** Enhances posture and control during independent horse preparation, improving stability and flexibility for the nature ride.

#### Evening Session: Calming the Mind and Reflecting

- Time: 60 minutes, after dinner.
- Focus: Deep relaxation and mental clarity.
- Practice:
  - Box Breathing to regulate the breath and calm the mind.
  - Guided Visualization Meditation to mentally prepare for riding in nature by visualizing a harmonious ride with the horse.

**Benefits:** Prepares participants mentally for the next day's challenge by promoting focus, calmness, and clarity.

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## Itinerary 2025

### Day 4: Trotting Preparation and Riding in Nature

#### Morning Session: Asanas for Endurance and Focus

- Time: 60-90 minutes, before breakfast.
- Focus: Building endurance, stability, and mental focus.
- Asanas:
  - Sun Salutations (Surya Namaskar) to build energy and engage the whole body.
  - Warrior I and II to strengthen the legs and maintain focus.
  - Eagle Pose (Garudasana) to improve concentration and open the shoulders.
  - Camel Pose (Ustrasana) to stretch the front body and release tension.
  - Standing Forward Fold (Uttanasana) for releasing tightness in the lower back.
  - Seated Twist (Ardha Matsyendrasana) to keep the spine flexible.

**Benefits:** Improves mental and physical endurance and helps riders stay focused and grounded.

#### Evening Session: Restorative Breathwork and Relaxation

- Time: 60 minutes, after dinner.
- Focus: Recovery and relaxation.
- Practice:
  - Belly Breathing (Diaphragmatic Breathing) for calming the nervous system.
  - Progressive Muscle Relaxation to release physical tension accumulated during the day.
  - Mindful Meditation to center the mind and reflect on progress made.

**Benefits:** Encourages muscle recovery and mental relaxation, allowing riders to unwind after a full day of learning.

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## Itinerary 2025

### Day 5: Mastery Trek to Cini Lake

#### **Morning Session:** Energizing Asanas for Endurance and Strength

- Time: 60-90 minutes, before breakfast.
- Focus: Energizing and strengthening for the long trek.
- Asanas:
  - Extended Side Angle Pose (Utthita Parsvakonasana) for building strength in the legs and side body.
  - Warrior III for enhancing balance and focus.
  - Boat Pose (Navasana) to engage the core and build endurance.
  - Standing Forward Fold and Downward Dog to stretch the back of the legs.
  - Bridge Pose to strengthen the lower back and glutes.
  - Supine Twist for a gentle spinal release before the trek.

**Benefits:** Prepares the body for the physical challenges of the trek, helping participants maintain stamina and mental clarity.

#### **Evening Session:** Deep Relaxation and Reflection

- Time: 60 minutes, after dinner.
- Focus: Reflection and deep relaxation.
- Practice:
  - Ocean Breath for deep calming and grounding.
  - Guided Body Scan Meditation to deeply relax each part of the body.
  - Silent Meditation to reflect on the day's experiences and foster gratitude.

**Benefits:** Aids in mental recovery and relaxation after the intensive trek, promoting a sense of accomplishment and calm.

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## Day 6: Intensive Trotting and Horse Games

### Morning Session: Stability, Balance, and Agility

- Time: 60-90 minutes, before breakfast.
- Focus: Enhancing balance, core strength, and agility for trotting and games.
- Asanas:
  - Warrior I and II for leg stability.
  - Plank Pose and Side Plank for core stability.
  - Tree Pose for improving focus and balance.
  - Seated Forward Fold and Reclined Pigeon Pose to release tightness in the legs and hips.

**Benefits:** Prepares participants for the technical aspects of trotting and games, improving their balance, agility, and control in the saddle.

### Evening Session: Breathwork for Balance and Focus

- Time: 60 minutes, after dinner.
- Focus: Enhancing focus and inner balance.
- Practice:
  - Alternate Nostril Breathing for calming and balancing the nervous system.
  - Mindfulness Meditation to stay present and focus on the week's achievements.

**Benefits:** Enhances mental clarity and balance, which are key for the technical tasks during the games.



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# Itinerary 2025

## Day 7: Final Test and Lake Adventure

### Morning Session: Energy Boost and Mental Focus

- Time: 60-90 minutes, before breakfast.
- Focus: Energizing and focusing for the final test.
- Asanas:
  - Sun Salutations to energize the body and build stamina.
  - Warrior II for strength and stability.
  - Half Moon Pose (Ardha Chandrasana) for balance and mental focus.
  - Seated Forward Fold for a final stretch of the legs.
  - Supine Twist for releasing tension in the spine.

**Benefits:** Prepares participants mentally and physically for the final test, helping them stay energized and focused.

### Evening Session: Closing Breathwork and Gratitude Meditation

- Time: 60 minutes, after dinner.
- Focus: Gratitude and closure.
- Practice:
  - Gratitude Meditation to reflect on the week's journey. Encouraging participants to mentally revisit the week's highlights—strengths, challenges, and personal growth moments.
  - Focus on gratitude for the horses, the natural environment, and the collective experience shared with fellow participants.
- Reflection and Sharing
  - A group sharing session where participants can express their feelings and impressions about the week. Sharing insights gained from both horse riding and yoga, any memorable moments, and how they feel as they prepare to leave.
  - Space for feedback or suggestions, creating a collaborative and reflective environment.

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### Benefits:

- This final session allows participants to physically unwind and mentally integrate the experiences of the past week.
- The asanas recap the physical benefits of yoga, while the breathwork and meditation foster mental clarity and inner peace before departure.
- The reflection and sharing time provides emotional closure, enhances group bonding, and gives participants a chance to express their thoughts and feelings, leaving the program with a sense of fulfillment and gratitude.



Contact

# Information

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