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Camargue Wild White Horses

Gill Butler tells of her unique riding experience courtesy of Create Away

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Charismatic Camargue

“My first venture on horseback was at a local ranch with the local gardians, the cowboys of the Camargue.”

It is easy to see why people fall in love with the Camargue region of France. The climate for starters is delightful, and then there is the beautiful scenery, the beaches, the wild bird life and of

course the amazing Camargue Wild White horses.

I don't think I have ever been to a place where all the local residents I met, whatever walk of life they were in were so content and happy to be living where they did. Nobody complained about anything!

My reason for visiting was to enjoy the experiences that Create Away offer, a company set up by Serge Kroulikoff, husband of a good friend of mine. He has returned to France, having been a very successful fashion photographer in the UK for many years. The company is born out of his desire to offer people with an interest in photography the chance to learn new skills and put them into practise with the beautiful wild horses of the Camargue. I am not sure that when he started the company he had realised that there would be people like me with a passion for horses who simply wanted to enjoy a leisure break and indulge themselves in the pure joy of horses!

I was lucky enough to spend an action packed few days, courtesy of Create Away and it is a time I won't forget!

The Camargue region of Provence in the South of France is very accessible. I flew to Montpellier with a budget airline and daily flights can be booked at very reasonable prices. Montpellier is often



referred to as a mini Paris and offers so much and is well worth a visit (to explore, browse and for the shopping too!)

My accommodation was in the beautiful historic walled town of Aigues-Mortes at Hotel Les Templiers which was everything you would want from a typical French bijoux hotel; comfortable, stylish and with a tranquil courtyard where you can enjoy a drink in the sunshine or an alfresco breakfast. There are no vehicles allowed within the town's walls so it is a pure pleasure to wander around and enjoy the art galleries, boutiques and the bars & restaurants. I particularly enjoyed dinner on the first evening at 'Chez Coco' which offers a very reasonably priced two or three course menu. The best steak and frites I have enjoyed in a long time!

Anyway, on to the riding experiences!

My first venture on horseback was at a local ranch with the local gardians, the cowboys of the Camargue, where we had to separate three bulls from the herd and move them to another area. If I am honest, my heart was in my mouth when I was made aware of the challenge and came face to face with the herd of black Camargue bulls, all with long horns! However, this is where trust in your horse comes in to play. My horse obviously knew his job and also enjoyed it, even though he must have done this many many times. The great thing was that you were not just a bystander; you were part of the action. When the mission was completed I have to say that I was ready for a glass of something strong in the ranch house where the gardians all made us very welcome. Watching them perform their skills was truly admirable and they are very accomplished horse people.

The next morning I was treated to a fantastic beach ride and it was great to

watch the gardians school their horses on the sand. It was pure enjoyment cantering through the warm sea water and just having fun in the glorious morning sunshine.

My final and most favourite riding experience was moving a group of young horses from one side of the salt lake to the other. A group of eight of us joined forces to do this and it was pure heaven to ride along and enjoy the amazing scenery. For me though it was watching these beautiful horses in their natural environment and witnessing their

characters and feeling that I knew them, even in a relatively short period of time. As riders we all know that horses are great levellers and it is true amongst the people who are gardians. The mix of people is also part of the appeal, but it is not important who you are, as the love of horses brings everyone together.

When I look back at the few days I spent amongst the gardians and the Camargue horses it made me realise that we can learn so much from the horses and the freedom that their environment offers and I came away more relaxed than when I arrived, with the even stronger belief that horses can teach us so much, ♣





although we always think it is the other way round!

Along with a unique riding experience I also had a very social time in a fantastic place and even learnt a few photographic skills along

the way. Mainly how to ensure my camera didn't fall into the wet Camargue territory!!

I would highly recommend a visit and Create Away offer so many other activities, such as cookery, cycling, wine tasting, so even if you are not a rider, there is plenty for everyone to enjoy!

More information can be found on www.create-away.com **NM**

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