Experience the scenic wonders of our state and the joys of being outdoors on one of Missouri’s many equestrian trails.

The Missouri Equestrian Trail Guide is a handy reference for horseback riders seeking information on where they can ride and what services are provided.

The guide lists equestrian trails open to the public on federal and state lands. Special sections are included on Katy Trail State Park and the Ozark Trail. The guide also provides helpful tips to ensure your next horseback trip is a positive experience.
Trail Use Guidelines
ENSURING A POSITIVE TRAIL EXPERIENCE

Equestrian trails are a popular way to experience nature and enjoy the outstanding recreational opportunities in Missouri. While you provide the perfect setting for trails, these same natural settings and conditions require you to be aware of your surroundings and prepared to ensure that you have a positive experience.

Here are some suggestions to make sure your next equestrian trail experience is safe and enjoyable.

Know your own physical capabilities. If you are not a frequent equestrian trail rider, don’t try a long, strenuous trail. Public agencies offer different trails that vary in length and terrain so find one that fits your abilities.

If you are not familiar with the trail, pick up a detailed map and make sure you are familiar with how to use it. A compass or GPS unit is also handy.

Read the information on the trailhead signs and maps before you go to become oriented and aware of the trail terrain, length and special features. Make sure you have adequate time to complete a trail before dark.

Stay on the designated trails and do not take shortcuts. This will help ensure that you do not get lost or injured.

Be aware of the weather and dress accordingly. Hypothermia can set in quickly in the event that you become cold and wet.

Be aware of changing trail conditions, especially after rain and snow. Trail conditions may be muddy and rutted in some areas. Watch for loose rocks, roots and desnuded vegetation over the trail. Be aware of steep slopes and drop-offs next to the trail.

Always carry water to ensure you stay hydrated. Also, carry food for added energy.

Wear the proper clothing and use the proper equipment.

Take appropriate precautions against common insects such as ticks, chiggers and mosquitoes. Be prepared with insect repellent.

When you plan to use a trail, especially one for any length or in a remote area, let a friend or family member know where you are going and when you expect to return.

Carry some form of communication such as a cell phone but please note that there may not be coverage in all areas.

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Ethics & Good Trail Use
THE TRAILS IN MISSOURI ARE YOURS.
Please help to maintain and preserve their beauty and natural qualities by following these rules:

1. Carry out what you carry in. If the users before you have not done this, you can help by removing their trash as well.

2. Keep your group small. Small groups are less likely to harm the environment.

3. Avoid using a trail when wet. Using wet trails causes erosion and increases trail maintenance. Check the weather before you plan a trip.

4. Stay on the trail. Do not take shortcuts. The trail has been designed to minimize destruction of surrounding vegetation and to prevent erosion.

5. Share the Trail. Expect to share the trail with other users. Be courteous and communicate your intended movements with other trail users.

6. Respect the Environment. Windrows, rock piles and other natural features were designed by nature to add dimension and beauty to the trail. Leave them alone. Keep your horse schooled so that it does not damage vegetation.

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Leave No Trace (LNT.org)

On your next equestrian trail adventure, follow the guidelines promulgated by the national education program known as Leave No Trace. The goal of the program is to encourage outdoor enthusiasts to develop an attitude that lessens the impact of their recreational use. That means picking up every speck of litter, even what may have been left behind by a previous user. It basically follows the principle of taking nothing with you but photographs and memories.

Here are the seven principles promoted by the program:

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare: Before you leave home, review park rules, know the weather forecast and pack appropriate clothing. Pack a food for your convenience and to minimize waste. If using a trail, review the route and check trail conditions to make sure the experience is suitable for everyone in your group.

2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces: When hiking, mountain biking or horseback riding, stay on designated trails. Illustrates can cause erosion and other damage. Know what routes are appropriate for the trails andremember that some trails are closed to bicycles and hunting in wet weather. Use designated areas when camping, and park only on designated spots.

3. Dispose of Waste Properly: Pack out what you pack in. Even fruits, vegetable peels and cores should be taken with you. Pick up after your pet. If a restroom is not available, dispose of human waste properly. If you cannot make it to 8 inches deep at least 200 feet from the nearest trail or water source, use the latrine with loose soil and tamp the sod back down. Remember to pack out your toilet paper.

4. Leave What You Find: Every plant, rock and animal should be left as you find it. Gravins is vandalism. Don’t use trees as toilet lines, or to tie up hammocks, dogs or horses. Leave wildlife trails for the next visitor to admire. Avoid introducing or transporting nonnative species or invasive insects.

5. Minimize Campfire Impacts: When possible, use a camp stove rather than building a fire. If you do build a fire, use only the existing fire ring. Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfire completely, and scatter ashes at least 10 feet away.

6. Respect Wildlife: All wildlife is protected. Leave that bird nest on the trail for others to see. Observe wildlife from a distance. Keep pets on control. Never feed wildlife, either intentionally or unintentionally. This learning food unneeded. Be considerate of other visitors: Keep pets on a leash and under control at all times. Trail etiquette indicates hikers and bicyclists should yield to hikers. Most visitors are there for the solitude. Don’t play loud recorded music through your speakers and keep voices and noises to a minimum.