

# EQUESTRIAN TOURISM IN ITALY CALLS FOR INTENSIVE PROMOTION



Equestrian tourism in Italy is growing in popularity. The industry includes not only horseback tours but also training courses and vacations in the saddle. Italy now plans to boost promotion of the local offer of equestrian holidays and events to attract foreigners, especially the young ones.

**Equestrian tourism is the only branch of tourism in Italy not in crisis**, according to Alessandro Silvestri, the president of Italian Equestrian Tourism Federation (Fitetrec-Ante). "The number of events related to equestrian tourism has grown enormously. In 2007, for example, there was only one event in the Lazio region a year. Today there is a horse race almost every weekend. There are approximately 700 regional events per year," said Silvestri.

The regions where the equestrian tourism is practiced mostly are Lazio, Tuscany, Umbria and Abruzzo, but there are also various events in Apulia, Sicily and Sardinia. Most of the events are organized directly by Fitetrec-Ante.

"The local authorities provide only little support. We try to bring out the best aspects of the territory: the gastronomy, the artistic and natural beauty. Our aim is to cooperate with the local authorities more to further promote this sector. Equestrian tourism is a great asset of Italy - here you can go riding 11 months a year. But there is no promotional activity for equestrian tourism abroad," said Silvestri.

In Rome there are 12.5 million tourists every year who stay on average 4 nights. If 1% was induced to take a ride of two days on horseback, there would be 125,000 more tourists only for this sector, according to Silvestri. "Yet, no one has ever suggested and promoted extending the stay of foreigners with a few days on horseback."

According to the estimates, Europe is home to 30 million tourists who go for horseback holidays. **In Italy, there are 1.5 million of equestrian travelers.** Most of them are adults in their forties. Retirees are also an important part of the group – since they have more free time they opt for longer journeys on horseback. Young people on the other hand choose horse riding tours especially on weekends.

In Italy there are about 700 riding stables, farms and equestrian centers open for travelers. They are members of the Federation and provide accommodation for the visitors on horseback. Furthermore, there are simple stopover points, ready to accommodate riders and horses as well in the countryside.

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