

## Long Distance Horse Riding – Best Practices, Procedures and Equipment

River Pilot Tours has created this document for general use and distribution. These recommendations can be used in preparation for and during Long Distance Horse Riding (LDR) events both on and off road. This document is a comprehensive and proven starting point. Each event should be customized to an individual riders needs, horses, temperatures and workloads. This document will be updated routinely based on evolving scenarios, science, continuous testing and new equipment. This document was created based on multiple LDR events and is discipline agnostic.

### Best Practices and Procedures

- Most horse tack advice regarding LDR is not progressive. Stainless steel, Beta Bio Thane®, hard plastics and Cordura™ are purpose built and better for LDR. Leather is least desirable. Technology is evolving fast and “in field” testing is proving new technology products to be superior in most cases.
- Do not leave ropes at ground level that can get wrapped in horses feet and produce rope abrasions and cuts.
- Do not lose horses. Do not allow horses to run away. Use a second rope attached to horses neck, bridle or halter that is held in riders hands or in rear pocket during dismount and while ground grazing or rest breaks.
- Do not tie the horses to anything you do not want broken or pulled out. Use telephone poles, trees, steel, etc.
- Do not bring or wear anything that you don't want to ruin, lose or break.
- Geldings are preferred. Mares are prone to being in heat monthly.
- Gaited horses and mules are generally preferred as they are fast walkers and are smoother riding. Ensure that both horses are of similar height to ensure similar walking pace. Quarter horses (or world equivalent) are acceptable.
- Ensure all horses are smart. Dim horses are difficult to initially train and ultimately manage while on a LDR.
- Train horse in a pen and do groundwork first. Train the lead horse first if multiple horses are going to be used.
- Hard plastic or metal panniers are recommended for more than 30 days of LDR. Most saddle panniers made of any fabric are prone to cuts, abrasions and tearing. Pommel bags are preferred over canteen bags.
- GPS navigation and communications are recommended. Cellular phones will not have reliable signals.
- Cell Phones, Ipods and netbooks can be taken without damaging. Rechargeable NiMH batteries are recommended.
- Do not allow dogs on a LDR. They will get injured and are long term liabilities to rider.
- Gear Weight – 100 lbs or lighter per person is the target. Distribute load equally amongst the horse when packing.
- Rider Food - Calculate enough for 4-7 days in between replenishment.
- Rider Water - Rider uses approximately 1 gallon per day for drinking and cooking.
- Horse Water - Horses need 3-5 gallons of water daily. Horses should drink once in morning and once in afternoon.
- Ratio Of Riding To Grazing - Allow the horses to graze for 15-20 minutes per 1.5 hours of riding. Select roads and paths that allow horses to graze most of the day.
- Grazing – At minimum they will need to graze early in morning and at night after riding. Grazing frequency during the days ride can be adjusted to grass availability along route.
- Grain - Use discretion and best judgment to avoid colic. If bringing or offered grain, allow 5-7 .lbs of feed per day to start. Increase or decrease based on workload. Most horses easily acclimate to Oats, Corn, Molasses and sweet feed.
- Hay - Horses can eat as much hay as they want and not be overfed on it. Horses use hay to generate heat during cold. Horses need food in their gut and the hay will be utilized as long term energy during the day.
- 9 hours of ride time is normal. DO NOT exceed more than 10 hours a day of ride time. Everyone needs rest.
- If multiple horses are used switch every 3 days on average to keep both animals conditioned and trained.
- Use hobbles, high lines, picket or other means of securing horses at night. Horses can be trained to stand in one spot for 10 -12 hrs after a days ride so rider can sleep with little interruption. Pens are always best.
- Horse Shoes – Tungsten carbide attached to the bottom of any steel shoe like a “cleat” is a better choice and more durable than standard steel shoes. Use #6 nails to get a longer “bite” higher up on the horses hoof. Steel shoes last about 150 +/- miles per set on asphalt. Tungsten carbide fitted shoes will last 500-700 miles per set on asphalt. Prepare to ship a set to your expected future location or bring a second set with you.

### River Pilot Tours

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**Best Practices and Procedures Cont:**

- Horses are unpredictable. Plan as such and never assume they are going to respond to commands or input. They can be like 1000+/- pound 8 year olds at times after a long day.
- Daily Mileage – Start out 10 miles per day / 15 miles per day around day 14 / 20 miles+ per day around day 30. 20 miles per day is acceptable for day in and day out riding. **DO NOT** over stress horses or rider by constantly pushing too hard. Everyone has stories of 50 mile days. Stay focused and conservative to avoid sores, foundering, etc. This is day in, day out riding and not weekend riding. Only highly trained horses and/or riders with support crews make continuous 50 mile days. Constant 20 mile days have been field proven as safe by multiple LDR's.
- Day(s) Off – Plan for at least one day off per week of riding to allow rest for everyone. Two days off is better.
- Horse Medical Supplies - At least Iodine, bandage wraps, Wonderdust and duct tape. They will work in most cases. Other items can be purchased locally or borrowed. There are many products so start small and add as needed.
- Wound Care – Horses are durable. Use patience, persistence and experience to treat common scratches, cuts and abrasions. No matter how diligent or careful a rider is, wounds happen. Remain calm and treat wound accordingly.
- Ensure all of the riders items are in waterproof stuff sacks. It will rain and without them they WILL get wet.
- Ensure a riders head, hands and feet are warm. Loss of perspective and energy decreases when a rider is cold.
- Ensure commercial grade, heavy duty camping gear is used. LDR creates an environment that often breaks light duty gear. The horse is carrying the weight. Use referrals, field proven gear and select quality over weight savings.
- Road Riding – This is not recommended but at times necessary. Most drivers on paved roads do not know how to drive around a horse. Expect that lack of knowledge from drivers and stay as far on shoulder as possible. Stay positive and focused. Talk to the horses in a calm manner and reassure them while heavy traffic is passing. They will respond to a calm rider. Keep them in a straight line rather than side by side during road riding.
- Trail Riding – Use trail riding experience, watch for animals and ensure equipment doesn't get torn by trees.
- Bridges – Walk horses over bridges if they are spooky, bridge is long or situation is dangerous.
- Rider Fitness – Riders will lose weight on a LDR. This is normal due to varying conditions and daily workload. Rider will become acclimated and conditioned during event. Weight loss will stabilize while strength and endurance will increase. Once this happens, pace the ride and day accordingly for time or distance desired.
- Horse Fitness – Monitor horses for excessive or abnormal weight loss, foundering and sores. This should not happen with these proven, outlined procedures. Horses will lose some weight, become conditioned and then stabilize. This is normal. This process takes 3-4 weeks to happen. Error on the side of safety and fitness. Without horses, rider is walking or event is stopped.
- Difficulty – The first two weeks are the hardest. **DO NOT** quit. Once the body, mind and horses reach homeostasis, the ride will get easier and all of the fun and joy of LDR will present itself.
- Evening Planning and Camp Setup – Start looking for campsites within 1.0 - 1.5 hours of end of day riding. Trust that wise decisions and preparation will create an environment that "Something good will present itself." Plan on self reliant campsite decisions while accepting good opportunities.
- Routine – Stay in a routine that works. LDR creates many different scenarios. Routine ensures consistent results and calmness. Horses respond to routines and know what to do and will develop a trust of the rider.
- Rider – Remain constantly self aware and polite in all situations. You never know who is watching and willing to help. Stay vigilant, positive and open to intelligent suggestions. LDR is as much "Situation Management" as riding.
- Money – LDR costs around \$5.00 USD per day in food and extras. Carry cash and do not expect ATM's or your bank to be available. Most stores in USA accept ATM cards. International - LDR should be ATM first, cash second.
- Horse Paperwork – Coggins, Health Certificates and International equivalents will be needed.
- Safety and Security – If available and legal, carry [Defense Technologies](#) brand 1.3% stream pepper spray for unruly animals. Carry a [knife](#) for everyday use as well as security. EPIRBS (Satellite emergency and tracking devices) such as [SPOT](#) or [ACR](#) are suggested. They will show your current position and/or request help if activated.

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## LDR Equipment

The following equipment has been “field tested” and is acceptable for LDR. It will not be available worldwide. Purchase and ship internationally as needed. This equipment is a ‘hybrid’ and an ‘evolution’ of standard packing equipment used in commercial environments. It is a new approach to LDR that evolved from careful research and critical testing.

### Saddles

Light weight saddles made of synthetic materials are better for LDR due to being lighter, rot and rust resistant. They commonly include stainless steel hardware, synthetic trees and other LDR favored accessories.

Abetta Saddles (Action Company) <http://www.actioncompany.com> Approx \$400 USD direct

Chisholm Trail - 15” or 16” seat. Part# 20556-5BK (15”) or Part# 20556-6BK (16”)



### Bridle, Halter, Breast Collar, Reins

The Distance Depot <http://www.thedistance depot.com> Approx \$330 USD complete set delivered  
“S” Hackamore - Traditional Trail Halter Bridle - Padded Traditional Breast Collar



Traditional Trail Halter Bridle - Color: GN522



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**Reins Continued:**

**Note:** The selection of split reins or single strap reins are the rider's preference. Single loop reins are suggested.



Split Reins



Single Loop Reins

**Saddle Pads**

HAF Equitation USA <http://www.hafequitationusa.com> Approx \$170

These pads work well and are of excellent quality. These pads are designed for the lead horse. Durability is limited on the 8300 Versa Enduro. It will last approx 90 days of daily use before replacement needed. The Art 7000 British is more durable and will last 180 days. Fit is excellent.

Part # 8300 Versa Enduro



Part # 8300 British



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**Saddle Pads Continued:**

Classic Equine <http://equibrand.com> Approx \$150-170 USD

These pads can be used for the lead horse or for the pack horse. Durability is excellent. Weight is acceptable. Fit is excellent for most horses.

Part # CESPF1B – ESP Felt Top Pad Round

Part # WFP21 – Bio Fit Fleece Bottom Pad 1”



5 Star Equine Products <http://5starequineproducts.com/saddle-pads/mountain-packer-pack-saddle-pad/>  
Approx \$250 USD

Diamond Wool Pad Company <http://www.diamondwoolpads.com> Approx \$90 USD

These pads are used for the pack horse. Durability is excellent. Weight is acceptable. Fit is excellent for most horses or mules. Both are universal and can be used for saddle bag or full size panniers.

Part # 5 Star-Mountain Packer Pack Saddle Pad

Part # Diamond Wool Felt Pack Saddle Pad



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### Cinches

Weaver Leather <http://www.ridethebrand.com/feature.php?story=61> Approx \$60 USD

Professionals Choice <http://store.profchoice.com/product-p/rv.htm> Approx \$60 USD

These cinches can be used for the lead horse or for the pack horse. Durability is excellent. Abrasion or hair loss is not an issue. They are waterproof.

Part # Weaver Air Flex 35-2471 (Roper)

Part # Professionals Choice SMx VenTECH Roper Cinch



### Horse Collars - Hobbles

O.K. Corral Enterprises <http://www.hobbleman.net> Approx \$40 USD

These products can be used for the lead horse or for the pack horse. Durability is excellent.

Part # Horse Tamer Pro Safety Hobbles 3M Scotchlite

Part # Horse Tamer Pro Safety Collar 3M Scotchlite



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## Pack Equipment

Welsh's Saddlery [http://shop.shopwelshs.com/Pack-Equipment\\_c40.htm](http://shop.shopwelshs.com/Pack-Equipment_c40.htm)

Adjustable Steel Arch Pack Tree Approx \$200 USD

Note: A breech/britchen rig (rear of the horse) is typically NOT necessary unless in extreme angle areas (rugged steep mountains). The cinches within this document prevent the slipping of pack tree or pack saddle under load.

Weaver Cordura Latigo <http://www.ridethebrand.com/downloads/product-catalog/cinches/latigos.pdf>

Approx \$8 ea. USD Qty 4 needed

Part # Welsh Saddlery Adjustable Steel Arch Pack Tree Part # Weaver 35-3055 Brown, 1-3/4" x 70" with holes



Outfitters Supply <http://www.outfitterssupply.com/TrailMax-Bear-Proof-Pack-Panniers-pair/productinfo/WPA500/>

Trail Max Bear Proof Pack Panniers Approx \$400 USD per pair

Robertson Enterprises <http://robertsonenterprises.net/BearProofContainers/> Approx \$350 USD ea.

Bear Resistant Aluminum Panniers

Part # Trail Max Bear Proof Pack Panniers

Part # Robertson Mule Pannier



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**Pack Equipment Continued:**

Chris Tornow Saddles and Pack Equipment <http://horseandmulegear.com/catalog.php> Approx \$175 USD  
Riding Saddle Panniers Trail Max Bear Proof Pack Panniers

Part # Riding Saddle Panniers



**Halter and Lead**

Double Diamond Halter [http://www.doublediamondhalters.com/Halters/150\\_Series\\_Halters.htm](http://www.doublediamondhalters.com/Halters/150_Series_Halters.htm)  
#150 Double Diamond Rope Horse Halter Approx \$ 25 USD

Double Diamond Halter [http://www.doublediamondhalters.com/Lead%20Ropes/Brannaman\\_Lead.htm](http://www.doublediamondhalters.com/Lead%20Ropes/Brannaman_Lead.htm)  
Part # 7512 - 1/2" Treeline Brannaman Lead – 12 foot long Approx \$ 28 USD

Part # 150 Double Diamond Rope Horse Halter      Part # 7512 - 1/2" Treeline Brannaman Lead – 12 foot long



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## Horseshoes

Stockhoffs Horseshoe and Supplies [http://www.stockhoffsonline.com/acatalog/Borium\\_Horseshoes.html](http://www.stockhoffsonline.com/acatalog/Borium_Horseshoes.html)

Kerckhaert SX7 (Clipped) with Tungsten Carbide - Approx \$10 pair USD

These shoes are created by Stockhoffs then prepared for shipping. Farrier will customize and install.

Stockhoffs Horseshoe and Supplies [http://www.stockhoffsonline.com/acatalog/St\\_Croix\\_Forge\\_with\\_Drill\\_Teck.html](http://www.stockhoffsonline.com/acatalog/St_Croix_Forge_with_Drill_Teck.html)

St. Croix Forged with Tungsten Carbide – Lite Heel DTSC Approx \$8 pair USD

These shoes are created by Stockhoffs then prepared for shipping. Farrier will customize and install.

Part # Made in field by Amish farrier with #6 nails

Part # St. Croix Forged with Tungsten Carbide – Lite Heel DTSC



Horse Shoe Notes – Tungsten Carbide attached to the bottom of any steel shoe like a “cleat” is always a better choice and more durable than standard steel shoes. Use #6 nails to get a longer “bite” higher up on the horse's hoof. Look for Amish farriers in the U.S.A. as they use them on their horses which pull their buggies. Steel shoes last about 150 +/- miles per set on asphalt. Tungsten Carbide fitted shoes will last 500-700 miles per set on asphalt. Prepare to ship a set to your expected future location or bring a second set ready to go with you. Total cost for Tungsten Carbide shoes and installation can range from \$70-140 USD per horse depending on the farrier.

Tungsten Carbide Shoes Concerns – Horses feet are supposed to “slide”. For some horses, the rear feet should “slide” a little more. Traction devices hold the horse's feet in place and create stress on the fetlock joint and more seriously in the hock. Watch horses and be mindful of traction devices as they can cause foundering over long term use (months or years of riding). Short term riding of up to 180 days has shown no adverse effects in most cases.

“Caulkins/Calkin/Caulk” - Are generally defined as blunt protrusions on horseshoes. The term is also anecdotally being used as the general term for screw in studs on horseshoes that allow removal of the cleat (like an athletic shoe cleat) with a wrench. While these are desirable like Tungsten Carbide shoes they are harder to find in the field and maintain on a long ride.

There are some incorrect terms being used to describe Tungsten Carbide within the horse and farrier community.

1. [Borium](#)<sup>®</sup> - Is a registered trademark owned by Stoodly Deloro Stellite. It is a “Metal alloy of exceeding hardness used for drilling, boring and the like”. [Borium](#)<sup>®</sup> welding rods contain Tungsten Carbide granules encased in a mild steel tube.
2. [Carbraz](#)<sup>®</sup> – Hartwell Industries supplies Tungsten Carbide welding rods that include flux for adhesion.
3. Drill Tech / Drill Teck – This was a trade name that is no longer used to describe Tungsten Carbide welding rods. There are two vendors supplying Tungsten Carbide rods in the industry and neither use this name.

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**Misc**

Chris Tornow Saddles and Pack Equipment <http://horseandmulegear.com/catalog.php> Approx \$28 USD  
Tree Saver Straps  
Chris Tornow Saddles and Pack Equipment <http://horseandmulegear.com/catalog.php> Approx \$10 USD  
Knot Eliminators

Part # Tree Saver Straps



Part # Knot Eliminators



Airhawk Seat Cushion [http://www.therohostore.com/Products/AIRHAWK--Medium-Cruiser-Seating-System\\_CRUISERMEDIUM.aspx](http://www.therohostore.com/Products/AIRHAWK--Medium-Cruiser-Seating-System_CRUISERMEDIUM.aspx)  
Airhawk Medium Cruiser Seating System - Adjustable air seat and cover \$150 USD

The North Face [http://www.thenorthface.com/catalog/sc-gear/equipment-luggage\\_duffels/base-camp-duffel-large.html](http://www.thenorthface.com/catalog/sc-gear/equipment-luggage_duffels/base-camp-duffel-large.html)  
North Face Base Camp Duffel - Large Approx \$135 USD

Part # Cruisermedium



Part # North Face Base Camp Duffel - Large



## Food

Food is an important part of any LDR. It is suggested that the food used while on LDR be procured in the country of origin or along the route. The foods shown are in specific food groups which are the key to sustained nourishment. It's common to carry 4-7 days worth of food. Food product mix and actual selection is a field decision and based on geographic availability, appetite, and weight. The following groups need to be addressed:

1. Meats/Proteins - (Smoked or seasoned for long term use) I.E., Sausage, Salami, Smoked Meats, Beans, Nuts
2. Carbohydrates - (Long acting carbohydrates) I.E., Pasta, Noodles, Potatoes, Popcorn
3. Sugars - I.E., MM's, Cookies, Cakes, Sugar Snacks
4. Vegetable and Fruits - Field selected
5. Canned Goods – These can be most anything including Chili, Fruits, Vegetables, Pastas
6. Dried Foods – I.E. - Pineapple, Apples, Salty Snack Mixes, Rice Cracker Mix
7. Dehydrated Coffee – A warm beverage in the morning is good for psychological and physical well being.

Approximately 7 days of food procured in U.S.A.



## Camping Equipment

Visit <http://www.riverspilot.com/Travel-FAQ> for a list of equipment referrals.

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