

Work Experience in France – Report for the Henry Morris Memorial Trust

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Thanks in part to a grant from the Henry Morris Memorial Trust, I was able to carry out a 2-week work experience at the “*Ferme Équestre du Puits de Riquier*” in August 2018.

The eco-farm is located in the forest near the village of Régusse in Provence. It has a few wooden huts and some tepees where people can stay for a few days and go for horse rides in the forest.

During that time, I took care of the horses and also learnt to ride. Below is a small diary of what I did while at the farm



Day 1:

We started off the day by getting the horses later in the morning. We brushed the horses and put on their saddles and reins. After this, we took the horses out in the ring and then I got on my horse for the first time. The instructor then taught us the basics of riding a horse, how to get them to start walking (loosening your grip on the reins, giving the horse a verbal cue and kicking the horse with your heels), how to change the direction of the horse (gentle pulling your arm in direction you want the horse to go), how you need to sit on the horse (upright with your eyes on where you are going), and how to stop the horse (squeezing your feet, leaning back and closing the grip on the reins).

After we had learned this, we did a few laps of the ring and then did some trust exercises with the horses. I spent the rest of the day with the instructor helping him to clean up all the horse dropping and then with feeding the horses.

Day 2:

We started off the day by getting the horse ready and then taking them to do a few laps around the ring. Today, my horse didn't really want to move forward. Afterward, I put oil on the horse's hooves making sure not to go past a certain point. We then got taught all the names for the different parts of the reins. We then treated the leather on the reins by greasing them. We were also taught how to properly tie up a horse and which knot to use. We finished off the morning by giving one of the horses. I spent the afternoon brushing and greasing the hooves of all 7 ponies.



Day 3:

We started off the day by learned how to get on a horse without a saddle. After I had done this the instructor got us to turn around on the horses back, get into a superman position (by kneeling on the horseback and sticking out the opposite arm and leg), and stand up on the horses back. I then got to ride

the horse to see what it felt like without a saddle. To get off the horse we slid down it's behind. We then took the horses out for a walk in the woods, taking care not to get hit by any branches and making sure the horses didn't eat when they wanted. In the middle, my horse needed to wee so I had to stand up to not put pressure on her back. When we got back, we fed dry bread to the horses and ponies.

This afternoon, I helped get 9 horses ready for a walk in the woods. This involved brushing them and getting them saddled up. Once they came back from the walk I helped to put the horses back their paddocks. We kept the older horses back, so we were able to feed them fortified foods. Afterward, we fed all the ponies and horses hay, for the horse which is sensitive to dust we soaked the hay in water before giving it to him.

Day 4:

This morning I started off by taking my horse out of its paddock, brushing her, putting her matt and saddle on her back. We then took the horses out for a walk in the woods. This walk was originally meant to be an hour longer, but a storm had been forecasted to start later in the morning.

No work could be carried out in the afternoon because of the heavy rain and I spent the rest of the day reading.



Day 5:

We started off the day by getting our horses ready to take out for a walk. The walk was meant to take 3 hours, but it ended up being a four-and-a-half-hour walk. This walk took the horses out onto the roads as well as in the forest. We were also taken into a canyon by our instructor, the scenery was amazing. However, I am now incredibly achy.

This afternoon I helped get a few horses ready to go out for a walk in the forest. Then we fed the horses hay and made sure they all had plenty of water. We also checked to see how the horses with minor injuries to see how they were doing, we put disinfectant and Vaseline (to stop flies from getting to the injury) on any of the fresh injuries.



Day 6:

Today we got the horses ready to take them out for an hour walk in the forest. Once we got back, we took out the older horses to feed them their fortified food. We also put disinfectant and Vaseline on one of the horses. Afterwards, we filled up all the horses' buckets with fresh, clean water.

Day 7:

Today I rode a bike into the local village, Régusse. The cycle took around 15 minutes. Once I arrived, I went to the market and brought myself some food. Afterwards, I headed to the windmills on the edge of the village where I got given a tour and was shown how they make the flour.





Day 8:

This morning there was a storm, so the day started later. We made sure that all the horses and ponies had plenty of water and topped their paddocks up if they needed more. Then we fed all the horses and ponies. Afterwards, I gave the chicken some left over food and some seeds, fed the cat and gave the dog it's medication.

Day 9:

This morning I topped up the horse's water and fed them by myself for the first time. We checked how the horses with injuries were doing. Once I had done this I got my horse ready for an hour long walk in the woods. The horse I was riding today needed to have bandages to support her front legs. When we got back and had taken off the saddle and reins the horses got given a piece of dry bread each as a reward for their work. Then we washed off any mud the horse had on their legs.

This afternoon I brushed all the ponies, making sure to brush them in circular movements to get all the dirt out of their fur. Brushing their mane is the trickiest bit as they get loads of balls from weeds tangled in them. I also greased their hooves. Once I had finished this I made sure all the paddocks had plenty of water and gave the dog his medication.

Day 10:

I started the day by making sure all the ponies and horses had plenty of water. Once I had done this I helped the instructor to get the horses ready for her to take them out on a walk in the woods. Afterward, I brushed all the ponies ready for the party this afternoon.

Before the party started we fed the old horses and pregnant ponies some grain before they started any walks this afternoon.

The party was a success with around 15 people taking the ponies out for walks.



Day 11:

In the morning, I made sure that all the ponies and horses had plenty of water. I then helped the instructor by getting the horses ready for her to take them for a walk in the woods. I brushed them and greased their hooves. Afterward, I fed the chickens and gave them some water.

This afternoon I started by helping the instructor with getting the horses and ponies ready to be taken out for a walk in the woods. Then I emptied the water containers to fill them up with fresh water. Then I helped get all the ponies and horses unsaddled. Afterward, I washed the horse's legs and helped them to bring the horses back to their paddocks.



Day 12:

I started the day by helping the instructor to take a few horses out for a lesson she was teaching. When taking the horses out of the paddock you must make sure you are holding them on their left and to walk without making eye contact with the horse. I helped to saddle up the horses and then went round the paddocks to make sure they were filled with plenty of water. I helped the instructor to put all the horses back in their paddocks once the lesson she was teaching was over.

Before letting the horses go, you must make sure they are facing you just in case they start to roll on the floor.

In the afternoon, I helped get some of the horses ready to be taken out for walks. I also helped out the farrier as a horse had lost one of their horse shoes.

