

Why Drive When You Can Tölt?

By Rachael Dunlap, February 18, 2009



So, the other day, while I was trying to get my horse to *tölt* across a lava field in Iceland...

OK, so maybe I don't get to say things like that on a regular (or even an irregular) basis. [Darley Newman](#), however, does. Newman is the host of [Equitrekking](#), a [PBS](#) television series about equestrian travel.

I'll admit; when I first heard the name of the series, I was ready to write it off. Though I've always enjoyed horseback riding on my own, I have suffered through many smelly, boring, tourist-oriented trail rides in my lifetime, and I certainly have no desire to watch a television series about them. After watching a few promo videos, checking out the show's website, and exchanging e-mails with Newman, however, I think I will be tuning in to the new season come May.

The series follows Newman as she embarks on various adventures around the world - Costa Rica, Alaska, central Turkey, the Scottish Highlands - all on horseback. Newman rides with local guides, on local horses, using regional techniques. It's a way for her to connect with the cultures and the landscapes she is traveling through.

Learning to coax horses to tölt (the smooth, characteristic gait of Icelandic horses) across lava fields is just one example.

"I did a horse drive with local farmers in [Iceland](#), where we drove about 50 horses to Gullfoss, this giant waterfall. An Icelandic farmer that we were riding with demonstrated the smoothness of the tölt by riding with a pint of beer in his hand and not spilling a drop," she says "When you explore a place on horseback, like we do in our series, you ride with local people, who show you the best of their area, without the conventional limitations of roads, paths or most importantly, distance."

And she does cover great distances (without having to worry about miles per gallon and carbon offsets!), often riding to places that are far from the beaten path. Sound like something you'd be

interested in? Good news: if the show inspires you to take up our own equitrekking hobby, you can actually visit the places Newman and her film crew take you in the show.

"The rides that we do on our show are rides that viewers can recreate," says Newman. "We ride with local ranches, guides, tour operators and outfitters who specialize in taking people out riding on their horses, so people watching the show could book with the same people and experience the same adventure. This is a practical travel show where I am not an omniscient host, but rather a traveler learning from the locals."

And you need not be a pro to participate. Most have options for all riding levels - pack trips, inn-to-inn rides, hour-long rides on the beach, and so on. To find horseback vacation options around the world, check out the [Equitrekking travel planner](#).

Whether you are looking for practical vacation options or a new armchair travel obsession, tune in to PBS in May for a full season of new episodes.

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Photo courtesy of www.equitrekking.com