

Trail riding safety hints

Three Hints for Your Green Horse

1. **Pair him up with a veteran trail horse**--preferably a horse he already knows. Your green guy will learn from and feel more secure with his more experienced buddy, especially if you must negotiate such potentially scary obstacles as water or bridges.
2. **Talk little**, so you can ride attentively and well. Your green trail horse needs as much confident guidance from you as he can get, and you'll be best prepared to ride him effectively if you aren't distracted by conversation.
3. **Keep his initial outings from being marathons**. Don't make his first trail rides so long that they exhaust him, mentally or physically

Five Tricks to Thwart Post-Ride Pains

1. **Avoid wearing new or starched jeans**. Those stiff seams won't be your friends by the end of your ride.
2. **Pad your seatbones**. Try a gel-filled or sheepskin saddle cover, or padded equestrian undershorts.
3. **Place large adhesive bandages over the saddle-contact area** of your knees. It's a super-simple way to prevent sores from chafing.
4. **Lengthen your stirrup leathers** a notch or two. It reduces stress on your knees.
5. **Get support where you need it**. Wear a back or knee support made for riders, for example.

Seven Risks You Can Avoid

1. **Riding alone**. The risk: If anything happens to you or your horse, there's no one to aid you or go for help.
2. **Leading your horse over an obstacle**. The risk: He could knock down and trample you if he jumped to follow you.
3. **Running from a menacing dog** or other animal. The risk: Your horse's prey-animal instincts could activate, and panic him.
4. **Dismounting on the downhill side** of a steep trail. The risk: If your horse slips or slides, he could fall on you.

Trail riding safety hints

5. **Riding across footing you can't see.** The risk: Thick underbrush can conceal holes, wire, and other hazards; murky water can hide bogs or debris.

6. **Riding with a tiedown.** (The risk: Without full use of his neck for balance, your horse may not be able to save himself during a fall.

7. **Riding during hunting season.** The risk: Your horse could be mistaken for game, or you could end up in the path of a stray bullet.

Four Good Earth-First Practices

1. **Carry a small trash bag** and pack litter out when you find it. As for your own trash--need we say more?

2. **When on an established trail, ride single-file** without cutting new switchbacks. This reduces overall wear.

3. **Spread out when in an open area** without a noticeable trail. This disperses the impact of multiple horses.

4. **Water your horse only in established stock-watering areas.** Steer clear of undisturbed shores and creek edges.