

BODY

DWAG
#38

Horsing Around

ADVANCE PREP:

Decide on activity, may
need to book ahead

TIME TO COMPLETE:

An hour or more

**BEST PAIRED
WITH:**

DWAG #32
Girlfriend Agritourism

The essential joy of being with horses is that it brings us in contact with the rare elements of grace, beauty, spirit, and fire. —Sharon Ralls Lemon

There is something about the cooperation between woman and beast amidst the invigorating splendor of nature that makes *Horsing Around* a girlfriend experience like no other. We don't recommend bareback riding or show jumping except for experienced equestrians or budding Joans of Arc, but there are many ways that you can incorporate horses into your girlfriend get-together:

1. *Hop into a horse-drawn carriage (it isn't just for lovers).* Nothing says I'm a tourist quite like taking a ride in a horse-drawn carriage, particularly in the horse-drawn carriage capital of the world, Central Park. If you're ever in New York with your girlfriends and would rather do something whimsical, try riding horses on sticks and galloping through Central Park with the joggers. The locals won't bat an eye, but the people in horse-drawn carriages may take photos.

2. *Go for a trail ride on horseback.* Horseback riding is a great way to time travel while enjoying the sights, sounds and smells of nature. Imagine what it was like in the days before disc brakes, stability control and power steering.

3. *Take in a race or two at the track.* There's nothing like watching the ponies with a beer and a hot dog to help girlfriends bond. Be sure to bet on a filly.

4. *Ride a carousel.* If you prefer your horses to go merrily around in circles, try riding a wooden horse on a carousel. According to the National Carousel Association, there are 365 carousels in the United States and Canada, 214 of which are of the classic wood variety dating from the 1800s to 1940. In Martha's Vineyard you will find the oldest platform carousel in the United States, the *Flying Horse Carousel*, where the wooden horses have real horsehair manes and tails, and their glass eyes each contain a tiny hand-carved animal. Grab the brass ring at the *Flying Horse* and you'll get a free ride, one of the few places in the world where free rides are still offered.

Your ride may not be free of charge, but whatever you and your girlfriends decide to do, think of *Horsing Around* as a great way to get in touch with the *neigh*-sayers.



Lynne's Giggles

Even before we left the corral for our hour-long riding experience, I had a feeling there was something terribly wrong with my mount, Maggie. On the trail she chomped at her bit and became increasingly agitated with the numerous flies. I tried to tell myself Maggie was a filly with attitude, and if I were a horse I'd be just like her, but when she stopped in an open field and refused to move, Maggie triggered a series of unfortunate events that I can't help but feel somewhat responsible for...



Julie's Giggles

My horse seemed to take a cue from Lynne's horse and began misbehaving, snacking on grass whenever and wherever he felt like it. When we'd all stopped to accommodate Lynne's horse, Deb's horse took off. Our guide told us to immediately turn our horses away so they wouldn't get any similar ideas. As I glanced back, I could see Deb disappearing around a tree-lined corner. It was a beautiful scene, like something out of an equestrian movie starring Elizabeth Taylor, but what was majestic soon turned horrific when we heard that Deb's horse was back in the barn. Without a rider...



Deb's Giggles

Far from cooperation between woman and beast, Joey stopped taking my commands when Lynne's horse refused to move, and we were all forced to stop in the middle of an open field. With no forward motion to keep him interested, Joey quickly became irritated with the flies and, like a thoroughbred when the gates at Belmont spring open, he saw an opportunity to race back to the barn, so he took it.

As we cantered away from the others (a brief period of exhilaration in my triple

crown of emotions), I reminded myself that I had taken riding lessons some seventeen years ago (a fleeting moment of calm) and forced myself to focus on what I needed to do to make Joey stop. As I pulled back on the reins and shouted my most stern “Whoa,” Joey seemed to take this as a challenge and broke into a full-out gallop that threw me into a full-out sense of terror.

*When my city-slicker tennis shoes became separated from the stirrups that in hindsight were set too low, I knew *Horsing Around* with Joey would soon come to an end. I had two choices: either I could decide on where I was going to bail or take my chances and surrender to Joey’s determination as to where he was going to dump me. Up to that point, I didn’t have a lot of faith in Joey’s decision-making and wanted to take control away from him, so I looked for a soft landing spot as I reminded myself to tuck and roll, tuck and roll. It was a slight incline with high grass on my left where I took the plunge and seconds later opened my eyes to the blue sky.*

Breathing heavy—but still breathing—I slowly got up and was amazed at how quiet and lonely the scene was. I guess I was expecting Bonanza music and my trusty steed to return to me once he realized I was missing, like horses did whenever cowboys fell off them in the old westerns I watched with my dad as a child.

I walked around in circles, both because I was disoriented and to assess the bodily damage. Nothing seemed to be broken except my pride. Falling off Joey knocked the air and all of the urine completely out of me—at some point during the climax of my triple crown of emotions, I peed my pants.

*If you ever find me *Horsing Around* again, it will be on a carousel.*