



How to Pack For a Day Horse Ride

Photos courtesy Dwayne Russell

By Abbie Felton-Trexler

Day rides can be a great way to get out of the normal day to day routine of riding one's Morgan in an arena. Seeing the wilderness, smelling the wildflowers, and even spotting some wildlife can be a great payoff! If you don't have any trails near your house, try visiting your state parks website to get a better idea of what sort of horseback riding trails are available in your area.

Dwayne Russell and his late Morgan, GJ's Son De Best (Rovira's Best Man x Son De Jubilee) enjoyed many day trail rides together through the years, including trips to the Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming and Banff National Park in Alberta, Canada.



Any day-packer should carry a saddlebag with them. Some saddlebags are made to fit over the pommel of the western saddle, while others are made to strap behind the cantle. You can pick up a set of saddlebags at a western tack shop for under \$50. One word of caution, though; make sure to sack your Morgan out with the saddlebag prior to departing down the trail. Remember that saddlebags can move differently and can make funny sounds when they rub against clothing or leather.

A small set of saddlebags is all one would need for a day horse ride. Make sure to pack a lunch, water, cell phone, gloves, a light jacket, map, and collapsible water bucket, human and horse first aid kit, and bear repellent. Other optional additions, depending on how much room one has are camera, binoculars, hobbles, and an easy boot.

When packing saddlebags, make sure that the weight is distributed evenly on each side of the horse. Try to pack heavier items in a bag that fits over the pommel of the saddle, as the weight would be distributed directly over the withers, where the horse could use its front end to carry the majority of the weight. Other considerations when packing saddlebags are the condition of the horse, the weight of the rider, the design and fit of the saddle, weather, and the horse's age.

Each rider should carry a pocket-sized survival kit in a waterproof box, such as a band-aid box. Included in it should be matches, compass, mirror, knife, needle and thread, and some butterfly sutures and band-aids. Solar blankets roll down to a very compact size, and they can be quite useful on a cold night in the wilderness. The survival kit is most useful when it's able to be carried on your person, as in an emergency, if you lose your horse, you'd be stuck without the components in the saddlebags.

Since many people trailer to their trailhead for day horse rid-

ing, it is important to have a well-stocked trailer. A trailer kit should be packed at the beginning of each season, and then rechecked for completeness before each trailer ride. Every year, be sure to check the date on any injectable medications that you may be carrying. Two very important medications to carry that are only available from a vet are Acepromazine and Phenylbutazone. The first, "Ace," is a tranquilizer. In an emergency, such as a bad trailer accident, it would be used to sedate the horses in the trailer until the veterinarian could arrive. The latter, "Bute," is an anti-inflammatory that also aids in pain relief. Both medications are available as injections, although bute is also available in paste and pill form.

A single-person lip twitch is also an important tool to carry. It is two bars of metal that are used to pinch the upper lip of the horse to distract them from stimulation. It can be very useful in an emergency situation to have the power to distract your horse. Additionally, scissors, gauge or leg cotton, ointment, iodine, and tape are recommended for the trailer kit. DMSO (Dimethyl Sulfoxide) is available over the counter and can be used for a myriad of ailments, from laminitis to swelling in a leg.

The trailer first aid materials should be stored in a bucket with a lid, such as an empty supplement bucket. That way, all of the materials stay dry, clean, and free of foreign contaminations. Additionally, the bucket may be emptied to administer water to the horse, to soak a leg, or to soak bandages.

Cut out the checklists and fasten them to your trailer's tackroom with a magnet. That way, you'll always remember what to carry with you in case of an emergency!

Day horse packing is a great way to get out of the arena and back to nature with your Morgan. Make sure to leave the house well-prepared, though. You never know when a thunderstorm will spring up or when you might need a little extra help.

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What to Pack in Your Survival Kit*

- Matches or a lighter
- Water purification tablets
- Butterfly sutures
- Band-aids
- Solar blanket
- Needle and thread
- Knife
- Compass
- Hand Mirror
- Lip Balm

*Pack your survival kit in a small waterproof box that will fit in your saddlebag, or more importantly, your pocket.



What to Pack in Your Horse Trailer First Aid Kit*

- Self-sticking bandaging material, such as Vetwrap
- Epsom salts
- Sharp scissors
- Bandaging tape to hold bandages on
- Clean towels and rags
- Gauze or cotton rolls
- Iodine scrub
- Rubbing Alcohol
- First aid ointment
- Thermometer
- DMSO
- Phenylbutazone, or "bute" for pain relief (obtained through vet)
- Acepromazine, to tranquilize horse in emergency (obtained through vet.)
- Disposable syringes and needles
- Pocket Knife
- Masking tape
- Sponge
- Leg bandages
- Wire snips or hoof nippers
- One gallon of bottled water
- Extra lead rope
- Twitch

*Pack your first-aid kit in a lidded bucket, such as an empty supplement bucket. The materials will stay clean and dry and the bucket can be emptied out and used to administer water or to soak bandaging materials or legs. ■