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TEC Winter Recap

I can't believe it is February! If you're in the colder temperatures I hope you are keeping the fire stoked and have a few breaks in the weather to enjoy a little time with your horse.

Here's a quick recap of the last few months activities. An uneventful move south to the winter facility in the Fall and I arrived to the lovely desert warmth (okay, way TOO hot temperatures in AZ that took forever to finally cool down.)

Within a few days of settling in I was back on the road heading to CA for a clinic. A few days later I was off to New England to teach for a week.

Three weeks later I condensed my life to one backpack plus riding helmet, said goodbye to my animals and headed to the southern tip of South America to work for seven weeks. No power, no car, no hot water, and completely self-reliant (i.e. this involved A LOT of walking either straight up or straight down kilometers on end)...

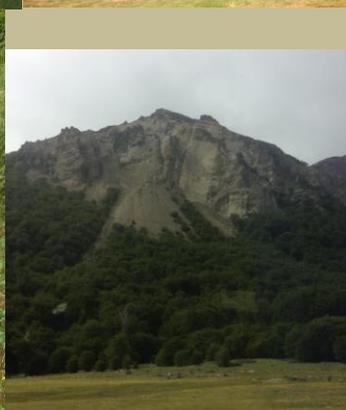
My initial "plans" changed but it was a fantastic experience, phenomenal people and epic scenery. Definitely a refreshing step back in time for a much needed "reboot" after 10 years of working hard on the farm!

It was a great opportunity to reconnect with a simpler lifestyle, build lasting friendships and experience some of the last truly "wild" places on planet earth. They seem to be clinging desperately to the past not wanting to dive full on into western society's technologically addictive ways...

Traveling by one bus, four planes, one rental car, through three countries and two states over the course of 28 hours and I returned stateside a few weeks back. Within a few days of my return I resumed teaching and was off to CA again for another successful clinic.

Staying busy here in AZ for a few weeks and then I will be heading to CO for a week of teaching and hopefully some winter sleigh fun!

Needless to say, I'm definitely getting in my travel miles this winter. I look forward to catching up with you in the upcoming season!



24 hours at sea, 1,500 miles of travel overland the country never going faster than 50 km/hr and "feeling" every bump, bounce and turn in the gravel road (I use that word loosely.) But totally worth it!

A few observations

When I have a few minutes I'll sit down and write an in depth account of the fantastic time in South America... But from the equine related aspects here are a few of the glaring differences I saw in the time I spent around the horses south of the equator.

1.) **Treated Like Horses**

The animals are bred in natural settings, born in nature without human assistance and raised in a herd. Because the seasons are reversed, I was present to see several births (from a distance) and then watch within a few days the colts climbing sheer 6,000-10,000 foot cliffs. They learned how to find wind blocks from the consistent 50-70mph winds. They learned how to find the snowmelt and fresh water. They learned how to forage and find the freshest grasses. And when the "unknown" approached, they were alert with a sensibility, rather than reactivity.

2.) **Exposure**

Although for the most part horses are kept in open range scenarios, there was also the reality that basically horse trailers don't exist. The roads are bad at best, and it is often easier and faster to ride to where you need to go. So as you rode down the road you'd pass a variety of cars, mini semi's, barking dogs, piles of equipment waiting to be used, the hides of various animals hanging on fence lines (as all parts of a butchered animal is used, not just the meat), etc. Keep in mind the wind is a constant, so any discarded trash, flapping tin roofs, etc. were continually flying about, making obnoxious noises, never mind the never ending barrage of random barking dogs that would appear out of nowhere.

3. **Get with the program**

Once you arrived, there was nothing to tie to. So it was totally normal to have a horse standing fully tacked, with the bridle on, ground tied in three feet deep lush grass, in the middle of nowhere, and wait. This could be for five minutes or five hours. During this time other horses may come or go, but if you dropped the reins, the horse realized his "job" was to watch and wait. When moving livestock on foot, the ground tied horses would move themselves to watch the working dogs and humans sort animals.

4.) **Thoughtfulness vs. fleeing**

I witnessed on more than one occasion if gauchos were passing through the area, they would appear and randomly let three or four of their horses loose on the side of the road to graze. *FOR SEVERAL DAYS*. The horses would stay put only meandering a ¼ mile or so during that time. Then the gauchos would easily catch them and ride on.

5.) **"Ride or die" kind of partnership**

Most people don't realize the hidden ecosystem and phenomenal landscape that awaits at the "ends of the earth." I've traveled to most continents and have been to many, many beautiful places in the world, but what I witnessed on this trip was jaw dropping. Often with amazing scenery it is gorgeous to look at from a distance, but impassible.

Unless of course you have the 4x4 version of South American horsepower. For those of you who have seen the movie, *The Man From Snowy River*, and know the classic "off the cliff scene," well, that had nothing on some of the places I rode.

And I can honestly say I've only ridden maybe two horses in my life that I would have trusted in that extreme environment, but down south there was this confidence in the animal that truly renewed my faith that there were still some horses that had maintained what "horses used to be"-mentally, emotionally and physically. Oh yeah, and remember whatever goes straight up, must ride straight down, and yet I never felt worry, a misstep, or concern from the horses, even when asking them to do something they hadn't planned to do...

6.) **The horses that had issues**

Ironically were the ones whose "training" was based on western society's police/classical programs. They were not the typical 14.3-15.1H local rough stock but rather imported Thoroughbred types. They were tacked in standing martingales, double bridles, with officers holding crops and wearing spurs. The horses (and I saw this in several cities) displayed frazzled nerves as they "paroled" (or my guess would be probably "survived" in the horse's mind) the streets of a town. Agitated, fussy, worried, and insecure and stressed out. Hmmm...

Keeping it in Perspective

Part of what excites me when traveling abroad is the change in the “norm” and the challenging aspect of needing to be adaptable at any given moment. So here are my top five “traveling traits” that I wish more equine enthusiasts offered their horses:

- 1.) Not to be cliché, but it **is** the journey not the destination that makes the most memorable impressions and lasting quality relationships.
- 2.) There is no reason to rush. If whatever today’s initial “plan” was doesn’t happen, there is always tomorrow.
- 3.) Use unexpected events as an opportunity to work through something stressful, rather than trying to avoid them.
- 4.) The less easy route often leads to more challenges, but it always is more rewarding in the long run.
- 5.) Because you have no idea what lies around the bend, embrace the unknown rather than fear it. You’ll be more confident and adaptable when it confronts you.



Consultation Call

What is it? Don’t let distance hinder your learning experience! You have the option of a private half hour or a one hour phone consultation. I will address any equine related questions, videos or pictures previously submitted by you.

How much is it? You can choose from a half hour session (\$40 fee) or an hour session (\$60 fee), payable via PayPal; click here to [register](#).

Once you make a payment, an emailed confirmation will be sent. We will then schedule a day and time to for the consultation.

How do you sign up? Please click the [link](#)

Why read the blog?

Enjoy browsing the blog with my thoughts, theories and some funny stories. I’ve added an option (scroll the right hand column near the top of the homepage) and you’ll find the option to “*Follow by email.*” You’ll automatically be notified via email of any new entry I make. Please click **[HERE](#)**

Articles of Interest

Considerations when buying Off the Track Thoroughbreds www.thehorseback.com/ex-racehorse-problems/

Blister Beetles in Horse Hay
<http://hayusa.net/blister.html>

Breathing Issues in Horses
<http://www.equi-therapy.net/equi-therapy/veterinary/respiratory-problems-horses.shtml>

Angelo Telatin- Slowing down the bolting horse

(A really great video clip on pressure and horses- everyone should watch this!)

<http://bit.ly/1W3JLNs>

When not to trust the “equine professional”

In the last week I received three different phone calls from potential clients around the country. Although each had varying equine experience, each had the same underlying root cause with their horse’s current dangerous, insecure and dramatic behavior. Each person had sent their horse to a “reputable” trainer; once their horse returned home they each were surprised to find their horse an emotional wreck and physically dangerous. The owners are at a loss and are trying to do damage control and figure out how to cope with their now unrecognizable horses.

Sadly I hear these stories all too often. The horse owner blindly trusts the “equine professional” thinking that they know best. Often because trainers are not located nearby, the owner is unable to witness what is happening during the “training” with their horse.

Here are a few suggestions you might consider to perhaps decrease the chances of a potentially negative and traumatizing training experience for your horse.

1) **GO AND WATCH** the trainer work with other horses before you commit your horse to their program. If they won’t let you watch or make it difficult to set a time to visit, this is a red flag. There should be nothing “secret” about what they do with the horses.

2) **TRUST YOUR INSTINCT** when watching the trainer. Ignore their sales pitch of “experience”, their show record, etc. and see what your immediate mental response is when they handle a horse, ride a horse and talk about a horse.

3) **LANGUAGE** can be a huge indicator as to their mentality and approach when training. Words such as “stubborn, tough, ornery, dumb, slow learner, lazy” should be red flags and immediately display the trainer’s lack of empathy and inability to read the horse if it isn’t easily complying with the trainer’s style.

4) **WHAT DOES THE FACILITY** look like? It doesn’t have to be state of the art and it can be basic, but does it prioritize safe and happy horses? Does the hay look fresh? Do the other horses look to be at a healthy weight, calm and relaxed or do you see them pacing, weaving, chewing, bothering their neighbor and generally stressed or anxious?

5) **IF THERE IS A RIGID PROGRAM** that the trainer adheres to for *all* horses, then the trainer will not have your horse’s best interest in mind. Just as with people, who all learn differently, so do horses. If the trainer is unwilling to adapt to work with the individual horse and what his needs are, this often leads to an “ego match” between human and horse. All too often the outcome is dramatic and aggressive behavior from the horse trying to defend himself.

6) **ASK QUESTIONS** If there is a lack of patience, any sort of “blowing you off” or other disrespectful behavior this is a red flag. You’re probably not going to be kept in the “loop” with clear communication and updates about your horse’s progress.

Of course there are many other things involved with finding an appropriate trainer, and often it does tend to take a bit of time, effort and research on the owner’s behalf. But much better to make an educated decision and find a good match, than have to spend thousands of dollars trying to undo destructive training to your horse.

A few perspectives on horses...

“When I hear somebody talk about a horse or cow being stupid; I figure it's a sure sign that the animal has somehow outfoxed them.” Tom Dorrance, True Unity: Willing Communication Between Horse & Human

If you have seen nothing but the beauty of their markings and limbs, their true beauty is hidden from you. Author Unknown

Wherever man has left his footprints in the long ascent from barbarism to civilization, we find the hoofprint of a horse beside it. John Trotwood Moore

The horse. Here is nobility without conceit, friendship without envy, beauty without vanity. A willing servant, yet never a slave. Ronald Duncan

Winter Training Programs

Each program is designed for the individual horse and/or rider. Training options range from one week through the entire season. Limited spots for horses sent south for the winter- don't let another winter delay your horse's progress!

For more details please visit [Training Details](#)

Sam's Social Media...

Alternative Horsemanship

Blog learnhorses.blogspot.com

[LinkedIn](#)

Facebook [Learnhorses](#)

Twitter [@Learnhorses](#)

Alternative Equestrian Assessments

Web [AlternativeEquestrianAssessments](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

Facebook [AlternativeEquestrianAssessments](#)

The Equestrian Center

Facebook [TheEquestrianCenter](#)

Sam's Winter Schedule 2016

January 29-31

Oakzanita Ranch

Descanso, CA

[Email](#) for details

February 19-21

Oakzanita Ranch

Descanso, CA

[Email](#) for details

February 23-March 1

Private Facility

Hesperus, CO

March 11-13

Oakzanita Ranch

Descanso, CA

[Email](#) for details

April 1-3

Oakzanita Ranch

Descanso, CA

[Email](#) for details

How to host a clinic with Sam!

Typically clinics are booked months in advance, but I do occasionally have last minute openings. It can take anywhere from a few weeks to several months to get a clinic organized. Once you have six to nine people committed to participate I will be happy to schedule a clinic.

Host's responsibilities: Don't be scared! It's quite easy and a fun way to gather like-minded horse people for a fun filled, safe and supportive clinic.

- Determine at least two date options, times, length of clinic (2-5 days) and clinic content/focus
- Secure a suitable facility to hold the clinic (see requirements below)
- Distribute and collect all paperwork (see below) related to clinic registration and liability waivers
- Collect fees from participants one month PRIOR to the clinic
- Mail participant's registration, liability waiver and fees and submit to Sam one month prior to clinic
- Organize accommodation/meals for Sam
- On-site" organizer during the clinic

Why should you host a clinic?

- Opportunity to bring Sam to your area
- Meet other likeminded horse people
- Host discount of 30% off clinic fee

Participant Requirements:

Clinic Size- Smaller, personalized clinics designed to address the individual participant's needs. A minimum of six and maximum of nine participants is necessary to hold a clinic. All ages, riding levels and disciplines welcome.

Clinic Format- Flexible according to the needs and focus of the participants. Most include individualized groundwork sessions and both individual and group riding sessions.

For details on hosting a clinic