

How You Can Get Involved!

Whether you are looking for a fun new activity for you and your horse, or used to ride but don't currently have a horse of your own, equestrian events in the [SCA](#) (Society for Creative Anachronism) add a new aspect to the medieval re-creation experience. There are even plenty of things for non-riders to do!

If you have your own horse

Most horses take to the SCA equestrian games quite well. You don't need much in the way of special equipment to get started - I first began practicing by taking a stick and hitting each fence post as I rode around the arena. Your horse should neck-rein reasonably well, since much of the time you'll have a weapon in one hand. Riding in straight lines and weaving through posts (as in pole bending) will get you through most SCA equestrian games, and your horse should also get used to the rider carrying things (from a short sword, to longer ring-spearing and quintain lances - the latter best learned with an experienced SCA marshal or equestrian) and dropping/throwing things (try a tennis ball dropped or tossed into a 5-gallon or similar bucket). More advanced activities include mounted archery, mounted (boffer) combat and foam-tip jousting!

There are new things to get used to: Riders, spectators and even other horses in colorful or flowing garb; the noises and sights of an SCA event, including fighters in clanking armor beating each other with sticks, and tents and pavilions of all shapes and colors; and their own rider wearing different clothes and carrying weapons and hitting things with them while riding. Take it slow at your first event or two, and soon you and your horse will both be enjoying your new hobby!

To begin, I would suggest you read the current SCA (Society) Equestrian Handbook (see the [Resources](#) section). You should also read the current Middle Kingdom Equestrian Handbook (at least Part II, which deals with authorizations. Part IV, Equipment Standards, and the Appendices that cover games equipment may also be interesting). Membership in the SCA is not required to attend events or attend and ride at practices, but is required to ground crew at events when horses are in the list field, and to authorize and ride at events.

If there is an event or practice coming up in your area (check our [Events and Practices](#) page), contact the person listed as Equestrian Marshal or otherwise in charge. Tell them you are interested in getting involved in the equestrian games, and a little bit about yourself and your horse and experience. You may wish to come to your first event/practice without your horse, and help ground crew, which is a great way to learn the games and how to handle the weapons safely.

If there are no upcoming events, contact an Equestrian Marshal near you (see the [Marshals](#) section), introduce yourself, and ask them how to get involved. Some people may hold 'unofficial' practices, or get together informally to work on equipment or weapons. You may also want to contact your [local SCA group](#), especially if you're not familiar with the SCA. They can help you learn about the SCA and all the things we do, and what to expect at an SCA event.

For your first event with your horse, you will need to pre-arrange a time to 'authorize' with the Equestrian Marshal in Charge. This is a basic riding test, part of which includes handling a weapon, to show you can safely handle your horse and use a weapon at the same time. There are usually loaner weapons available, so you don't have to worry about having your own yet. You will need to 'make an attempt' at pre-17th century dress (garb), which can be a simple tunic over your clothes at first. Safety comes above all else, so shoes with a heel are still required, and a helmet is highly recommended, and required for minors (many riders cover them for a more appropriate appearance).

Some SCA equestrian events are one-day (or close enough to daytrip), and some include overnight camping. Horse camping experience is helpful, but not required. Ask the Equestrian Marshal what the accommodations are, and what you need to bring. Camping is fun, but takes much more work and equipment, for both you and your horse.

If you ride but don't own a horse

Horse rentals and loaner horses allow non-horse-owning riders the chance to participate in SCA equestrian events. Read the above section carefully, for if you do get a chance to ride, it will apply.

At some equestrian events, it is possible to rent a horse for the games or even a trail ride (horse rentals are arranged privately, not through the SCA - contact the Equestrian Marshal in Charge to ask). Although rare in the Middle Kingdom, rental horses are more common in some of the southern and western states.

Some equestrians are willing to loan their horse for use in the games. Not all horses are suitable for this, and because of the risks, it is a carefully considered decision for any horse owner. Volunteering to help ground crew at events or practices is a great way to learn the games and get to know fellow SCA equestrians. As they get to know you and your experience, you may be offered the opportunity to ride. Listen carefully to any rules they may have (such as helmet required or specifics about their horse), and ride your best. A great way of thanking someone is offering to help (according to your abilities) - grooming, tacking/untacking, carrying equipment, or helping feed or clean up after their horse.

Riding is a skill just like fighting, fencing or archery, and must be practiced on a regular basis to maintain a minimum level of skill and safety. Consider taking lessons at a local stable, especially if your riding experience was minimal, or a long time ago. Leasing a horse is another possibility - you'll have the use of a horse (and many of the responsibilities of horse ownership), without the initial cost or long-term commitment - ask around at local stables to see if anyone might be interested in a lease arrangement.

Activities for non-riders

Even without riding, there are many opportunities to get involved in SCA equestrian activities.

Ground crew (as mentioned above) is a great way to help out, and will earn you much gratitude from the Equestrian Marshal in Charge and the riders. Setting up the list field (arena) and equipment might be done the night before, or early in the morning on the day of the event. During the event, people are needed to hand weapons to riders, reset some of the games or obstacles, and help keep an eye out for

safety. After the event, the equipment has to be taken down and loaded for the journey home. Help with any or all of these tasks is always greatly appreciated!

Since most of the equestrians are busy either running the event or riding, a good photographer is always welcome so that we can share pictures of the event. Check with the Equestrian Marshal in Charge for suggested spots for the best photos. If you have enough SCA equestrian experience, you may be permitted inside the list field (arena) during some games, if being there does not create a safety hazard. If you are taking photos to be published (print or online), you may need photo releases - check with the Marshal in Charge or bring your own.

Although not as commonly seen, horses can be driven for some of the equestrian games. A passenger carries and uses the weapons. This passenger does not need to be an authorized equestrian, however you should be familiar with the games and equipment. Archers take note - archery from a moving cart can be quite challenging! Check with a Marshal to find out if there are any SCA equestrians who drive in your area, or who may be at an upcoming event.

As you can see from some of the pictures on this site (or perhaps have seen at an SCA equestrian event), many riders make caparisons (barding or horse trappings) for their horses. If you have skill with a needle and thread, offer to help research, design or make some barding - it not only adds to the atmosphere of an SCA event, it makes a really neat A&S project!

Those interested in research can add to our knowledge and expand our activities. Research a period training game or technique (from any culture in the Middle Ages that had horses), and help adapt it as an SCA equestrian activity.

"Hands-on" types might be interested in helping to make equipment and weapons. Equipment might be made of PVC, wood, metal or other materials. It has to be portable, horse-safe, functional, and sturdy. A medieval appearance is desirable, and a bonus is being waterproof and able to withstand 40 MPH winds. Nearly any Marshal who has been making their own equipment has a design challenge or two they are working on. Contact one and offer to help!