

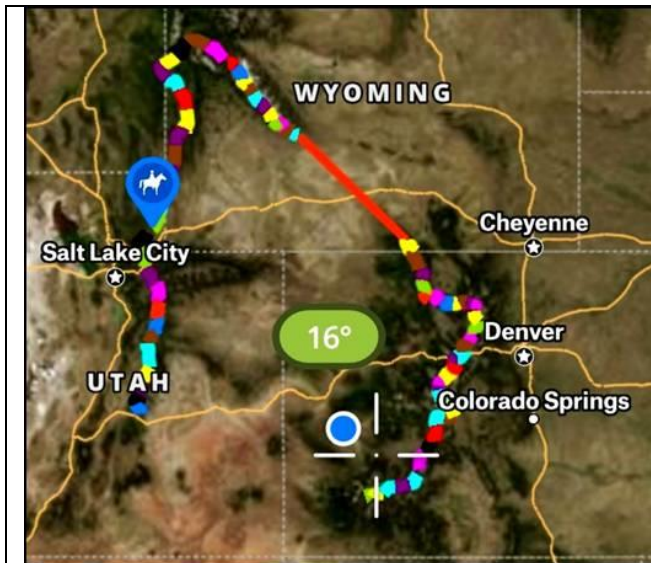
# Long Rider Family Carries Guild Flag During Pioneering Environmental Study by CuChullaine O'Reilly



*Shane Stratton, Lacy Stockton and Clara Fisher and will ride their horses Sarge, Mack and Firefly on a unique ecological journey.*

In an age where traditional family values are derided and a growing number of young people have no interaction with Nature, a mother, daughter and father are preparing to undertake an environmental study for the Long Riders' Guild. The 1,200 mile ride will take the family through 23 of America's national parks and forests.

## Where Will They Ride?



The journey, which is expected to take five months, will begin in June. However the departure date is dependent upon the changing climate. Lacy wrote to the Guild to state, *"This winter's snow pack has accumulated well over 200% of average throughout the Continental Divide. That is good news for us as far as having enough forage on our trip, but it has also delayed our start date by at least two weeks so far."*

Equestrian travel dates back to the Bronze Age. Despite the passage of time, Long Riders and their Road Horses remain closely linked to the landscape that they travel across. Grass and water are of fundamental importance yet both of these basic natural resources are increasingly at risk. A recent news story documented how America's beloved parks and forests are suffering from a variety of natural disasters that will have an effect on the future of equestrian travel in the United States.

**How the Climate Crisis is Forever Changing our National Parks.** - *The consequences of the climate crisis – more wildfires, devastating drought, sea level rise, flooding, ecological disease – are plaguing the country's national parks.*

<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/07/02/us/national-parks-climate-extreme-weather-impacts/index.html>

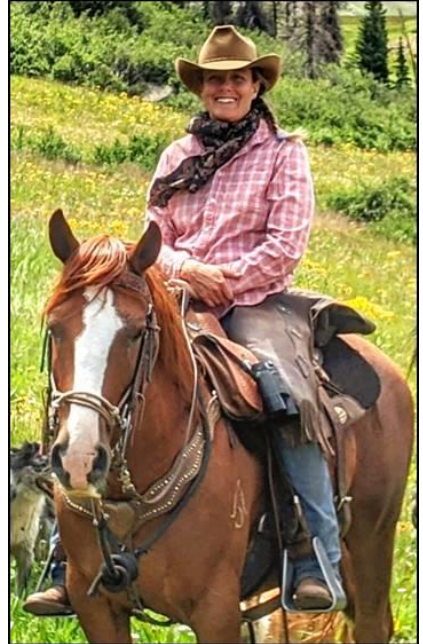
Having witnessed the effects of climate change, Lacy, Clara and Shane decided to depart on the equestrian journey that they had long dreamed of. Yet they realised that this would present them with a unique opportunity to not only study each national resource but to also speak to the horse owners, ranchers, farmers, back country packers and National Park Rangers whose lives and historical activities are under threat.

That is why the family's route was carefully created so as to allow the travellers to visit a treasure trove of endangered national parks and forests - *Manti-Lasal National Forest, Uinta National Forest, Cache National Forest, Wasatch National Forest, Bridger National Forest, Bridger Wilderness, Greys River Range, Grand Teton National Forest, Wind River Range, Gros Ventre Wilderness, Fitzpatrick Wilderness, Popo Angi Wilderness, Route National Forest, Rabbit Ears Range, Mount Zerkel National Forest, Never Summer Range, Rocky Mountain National Park, Indian Peaks Wilderness, San Isabel National Forest, Rio Grande National Forest, La Garita Wilderness, Weimanauche Wilderness, San Juan National Forest.*

## Who Are They?

While their ambition to make the journey is worthy of praise, they are uniquely qualified to undertake such a physically challenging ride.

**Lacy** - Bachelor's of Science in Equine Science from Colorado State University, 8 years of veterinary technician work experience, 28 years of horse starting/training experience, 7 of these include participating in mustang training challenges sponsored by the Mustang Heritage Foundation. Also 4H growing up in a mountain riding and camping type club rather than a show horse club. Thirteen years back country packing experience, 3 years commercial packing experience (packing hunting camp and mine closure supplies). Five years of driving teams for parades and wagon rides.



**Clara** – Eight years training experience, 90% of which have been mustang challenges and 7 years packing in back country experience. Five years driving experience with teams.

**Shane** – Thirty-six years horse training experience, 30 years packing experience, 3 years commercial packing experience in hunting, outfitting and mine closures for National Forest Service, 15 years experience driving teams for parades, funerals, logging, farm team competitions and wagon rides.



When the Long Riders' Guild asked them to explain why they wanted to make this particular journey, they provided these answers.

**Lacy** (44 years) – *“I instigated this trip as I believe I was born to trek. I want to deeply connect with what's real and be in the moment with my family, nature and horses.”*

**Clara** (17 years) – *“I want to do something different before I go on to college, experience nature and teach the importance of wild places to my peers.”*

**Shane** (52 years) – *“I want to take a break from life, I hadn't imagined going this far before and I'm up for it. I want to connect with my horses and the journey.”*

Lacy summarized when she wrote, *“The year 2023 presented a unique opportunity to go on a trek as we are all moving from one life to another. Shane and Lacy (married) are moving from Utah to Colorado and will essentially be homeless and jobless therefore free to take months off to ride and Clara (Lacy's daughter) is graduating high school this spring and can defer starting college a semester or year to do this trip with us. We are all so lucky that even as a blended family we all have similar interests and different talents to contribute to this journey.”*

## Who Inspired Them?



In 2017 Brazilian Long Rider Filipe Leite sent the Guild this photo entitled *Tears of Thirst*. It shows the legendary Argentine pampas baked, cracked and eroded by the fierce sun and drought.

In 2012 a recent journalism school graduate wrote to the Guild to state his desire to ride from Canada to his native Brazil. What resulted was a three-part journey that took Filipe Leite from Alaska to Patagonia. In response to a request from the Guild, when Filipe departed he became the first modern Long Rider to document how climate change was drastically effecting nations, landscapes and the people that he encountered during his historic journey across the Americas.

In Alaska Filipe filmed a lake being blown away before his eyes. In southern Mexico he witnessed thousands of Central American families migrating north to seek refuge from their destroyed environments. In Argentina he documented how the famous grasslands of the gauchos were being destroyed by intense heat.

Lacy wrote, *"I was originally inspired by Historical Long Rider Isabella Bird's journals, but then I discovered Brazilian Long Rider Filipe Leite. I read his first book and we've all watched his interviews on Youtube. He did our favorite TED talk."*

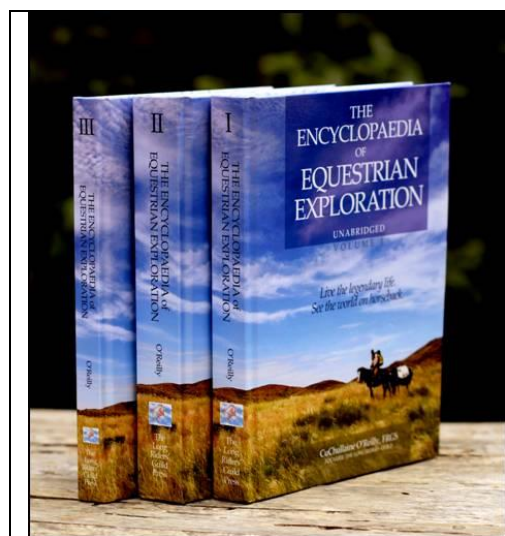
When informed of the motivation he had invoked, Filipe expressed his support for this extraordinary expedition.

In a message to the Guild, Filipe wrote, *"It will be both an honor and a privilege to support Lacy, Clara, Shane and their horses on this important ecological Long Ride. This environmental equestrian journey, the first of its kind, will be extremely important in the preservation of our natural world! As a Long Rider, I have seen and felt the effects of climate change first hand. During my rides from Alaska to Ushuaia, Argentina, I was forced to ride my horses through wildfires, dry creeks and unforgiving and unpredictable weather. What I saw left me with a deep feeling of sadness but it also made me want to*

*do everything possible to help save our planet. It's full circle to see a family now jumping into the saddle to undertake an environmental equestrian journey, inspired by my rides. I'm sure they will inspire others with their ride."*

Filipe's role as an advocate for the protection of the planet has indeed provided the inspiration for this new mounted study. Lacy wrote, "*This is Clara's dream come true because her wish for this journey is to bring environmental awareness along with a sense of adventure to her peers!*"

## How Will They Prepare?



The three-volume *Encyclopaedia of Equestrian Exploration* is the most extensive study of equestrian travel ever created. The three volumes contain the collected wisdom of more than 400 Long Riders going back 500 years.

The Long Riders' Guild is preparing to publish the entire *Encyclopaedia of Equestrian Exploration* on the LRG website. This new project entitled, *Learn How to Be a Long Rider - Free On Line Equestrian Travel Course*, will provide the public with 80 chapters containing 1800 pages and 1000 images that document every aspect of equestrian travel.

Lacy, Clara and Shane are the first participants of this new course and each is studying different EEE chapters prior to departure.

## Carrying the Guild's Flag

Brazilian Long Rider Filipe Leite carried the Guild flag across North, Central and South America. The author of three books and an award-winning documentary film, Filipe's travel stained flag is about to depart on a new journey of discovery.



When the Guild asked Filipe Leite to observe any changes in the weather, no one could have foreseen the drastic and dramatic verification that he would encounter. The climatic research done by Filipe is often under-estimated. A decade later the Long Riders' Guild has gathered evidence from equestrian explorers who have crossed every continent except Antarctica. From the melting taiga of Siberia across the Pacific to the fired destroyed forests of California, from cyclone devastated New Zealand north to monsoon destroyed Pakistan, alarming data indicates that humanity's ability to continue travelling by horse is under threat.

Lacy shares the Guild's concern. She wrote, "*We are going to parks and forests that are isolated. Most people feel these places are pristine and preserved but our theory is that they are suffering as much environmental change/damage as the big cities.*"

The Long Riders' Guild flag represents those horse-humans who protect, preserve and promote the ancient art of equestrian travel. Journeys deemed to be of extreme danger or academic importance are deemed to be worthy to ask the Long Rider to carry the Guild flag. Such rare trips require intrepid teams of humans and horses to survive innumerable dangers, overcome tremendous hardships and endure intense emotional challenges.

No family has ever been asked to carry the Guild flag. No one has ever been tasked with the significant and specific scientific mission of investigating climatic conditions in the USA's parks and forests. That is why the Guild has asked Lacy, Clara and Shane to carry the same flag that Filipe took on his 10,000 mile journey across the Americas.

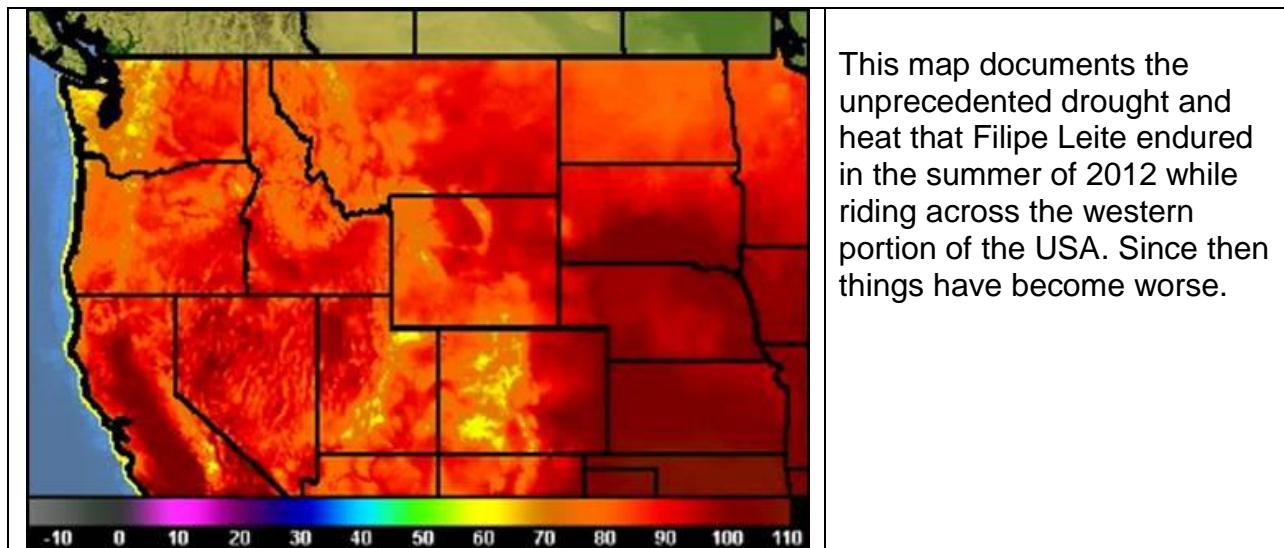
In response Lacy wrote, "*This is my biggest wish. Just to have my name recorded as a Long Rider is a dream come true. But to carry the LRG flag as ambassadors for the wilderness and high country we love so much would be the highest honour.*"

Filipe shared his thoughts about the importance of carrying the Guild flag.

*“The LRG flag I carried means a lot to me! When things got tough out on the trail, the flag reminded me I was never alone. All of the past Long Riders and their horses gave me great power to continue on. They had done it. They hadn't quit. So I couldn't either.*

*I think it's extremely important that the Guild is now documenting climate change because no one sees this change better than a man or woman on the back of a horse. We are completely immersed in the natural world as Long Riders. We depend on creeks to give our horses water. We depend on pastures to feed them. We are outdoors 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, trekking at 3 km/h and 30 kilometers a day. We don't just see climate change, we feel it!”*

## Will They Succeed?



Three humans and eight horses will soon attempt to ride through 23 endangered environmental jewels. Will they make it? Long Rider history proves that desire alone isn't enough to guarantee success. But it helps that their hearts are in the right place.

*“We always finish our pack trips wishing we could have continued on forever,” Lacy wrote. “Even though we are traveling in our homeland there will be diversity, new situations and a different way of life. We plan to humbly adjust and embrace it all. Our goal is to promote freedom and the truth of what it is to be alive. All three of us believe we were put on this beautiful planet to experience its magic.”*

The Guild will share news of the family's journey via its editorial ally, *Horse & Rider Living* magazine.

<https://www.horseandriderliving.com/>





*[CuChullaine O'Reilly](#) is the Founder of the [Long Riders' Guild](#), the Executor of the [Tschiffely Literary Estate](#) and the Director of the [Long Riders' Guild Press](#). An award winning journalist, O'Reilly has spent more than forty-years investigating equestrian exploration and history. He is the author of [The Encyclopaedia of Equestrian Exploration](#) and [The Horse Travel Handbook](#).*