



THE  
MAJESTY  
OF THE  
HORSE

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*An illustrated history*

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Tamsin Pickeral  
*Photography by Astrid Harrison*



A CELEBRATION OF THE GLORY of this noblest of animals, *The Majesty of the Horse* explores the sheer beauty and grandeur of horses and reveals the central role they have played in human societies throughout the world and across the ages. Showcasing equine photographer Astrid Harrison's amazing portraiture and stunning images of horses in motion, which magnificently capture the essence of every breed, this lavish book pays homage not only to the physical splendor of the horse—its grace, strength, and extraordinary adaptability—but also to its remarkable diversity. Equestrian specialist Tamsin Pickeral traces the evolution of the most striking, significant, and fascinating breeds—from the tiny, fiery Caspian that lives on the south shore of the Caspian Sea to the proud Thoroughbred, the genetically pure Icelandic Pony, and the heroic Shire horse.

For millennia, horses have enabled humankind to work the land effectively, travel across vast territories, go to war, and ride for sport and pleasure. Open the pages of this richly illustrated book to discover the stories of more than ninety breeds—from the world's oldest known horses to those bred for a particular type of work, for a specific sport, or to suit their environment. With evocative text and exceptional photography, *The Majesty of the Horse* is an essential volume for everyone who loves horses.







# ANDALUSIAN

## ANCIENT – SPAIN, ANDALUSIA – COMMON

<b>HEIGHT</b> 15–15.3 hands	<i>head with a straight or ramlike profile, alert ears, and large, kind eyes. The neck is well set, the frame compact with a deep chest and very muscular quarters. Moves with great freedom.</i>
<b>COLOR</b> Generally gray but can be chestnut or bay, often spotted.	
<b>APPEARANCE</b> Athletically built and tremendously muscular with strong, sound limbs. Beautiful	
<b>APTITUDE</b> Riding, classical dressage, dressage, historic warhorse	

ACCORDING TO FOLKLORE, the Spanish horse was the offspring of Zephyr, the ancient Greek god of the west wind who fathered Balius and Xanthus, two immortal horses who pulled Achilles’ chariot during the Trojan War. While the truth may be slightly less exotic, the Andalusian, or Pura Raza Española (pure Spanish breed), remains a superlative horse. One of the most respected and widely used warhorses, it was the mount of kings and noblemen, and equally of bullfighters and cowboys. Today the Andalusian is much sought after as a competitive athlete.

The Spanish, or Iberian, horse is a name that covers various different breeds of the Iberian peninsula, and these breeds, which include the Andalusian, have much in common. The Andalusian, from Andalusia in southern Spain, was historically, and confusingly, also called the Iberian Warhorse, Jennet, Carthusian, Lusitano, or Alter Real, all of which are recognized today as different breeds.

The roots of the Iberian or Spanish horse can be traced back to the indigenous horse *Equus stenonius*, which roamed the great peninsula thousands of years before the end of the last Ice Age (10,000 years ago). Cave paintings across Spain and France, some dating from 25,000 years ago, depict horses bearing a striking resemblance to the Sorraia, the modern equivalent of *Equus stenonius*. The Andalusian derives from an eclectic gene pool of indigenous and very ancient breeds, including the Asturian, the Galician in its original form, and the Garrano, which evolved in Spain and Portugal along with the Pottok pony of the Pyrenees Mountains. However, the indigenous horses

of Iberia were subjected to a substantial and fairly continual genetic influence from outside during continual invasions of the peninsula by human cultures that brought their own horses with them.

Trade routes were also established from 500 B.C.E. all along the Mediterranean coast, with gold, silver, and, in all likelihood, horses being exchanged across cultures. At this early date the incoming equine influences fall into two specific groups: Oriental horse breeds (hot-blooded desert horses from Western and Central Asia), and the heavier, cold-blooded horses of Europe. Among the earliest of the desert horses to reach Iberia were those belonging to the Hyksos, an Asiatic nation that ruled Egypt from 1674–1567 B.C.E. The Hyksos were a horse-oriented people and would have taken their prized desert horses, ancestors of the ancient Turkmene, with them into Egypt. It is likely that these horses would then have spread across the north of Africa and into the Iberian peninsula.

Oriental blood was again introduced to the Iberian stock when Visigoths from Sweden invaded the Iberian peninsula in 414 C.E., ruling there until the arrival of the Moors in 711 C.E. The warring Visigoths had traveled through Germany and Poland in 200 B.C.E. before settling near the Black Sea in western Russia for around 100 years. While there, the Visigoths’ horses were subjected to the influence of Central Asian breeds, which was passed on to the Iberian breeds many years later. Similarly, the Moors brought with them desert-bred horses, including the Arabian.

Early European influence came via the Celts, who moved into the northern and central parts of Spain and parts of Portugal and Galicia from 800 to 600 B.C.E. During this period, eastern and southern Spain retained its ancient Iberian cultures, and where the two cultures overlapped they were referred to as Celtiberian. Following a visit to Spain, the Stoic philosopher Posidonius recounted in 90 B.C.E. that both the Iberians and the Celtiberians had horses of great quality. Those of the Iberians were highly



trained and used by the cavalry. They would allegedly drop down onto their knees at a single command and were able to carry two men at once. Posidonius described how the Celtiberian horses were “starling-colored,” probably meaning that they were a flea-bitten gray. This early mention of coloring is interesting since historically there was also much exchange of Spanish and Camargue blood, and the tough little Camargue of southern France is nearly always born dark and turns gray. This trait is also seen in the Lipizzaner, another of the Iberian breeds, and gray is the predominant color in the Andalusian.

The Romans were responsible for the spread of many equine gene pools throughout Europe as their empire expanded, and the Andalusian is no exception. Roman historian Tacitus (56–117 C.E.) acknowledged that Rome provided all the cavalry regiments of European origin with Iberian horses, since they were bigger than their contemporaries, as well as weight carrying, strong, noble, obedient, and loyal. Roman accounts and earlier indications offer irrefutable evidence of the Andalusian’s existence prior to the Moorish invasion in 711 C.E.; by this date there already existed a fine horse of antiquity. Andalusia was a prime center for breeding, and it was here that the most sought-after military horses were developed.

Just as horse breeds passed from outside into Iberia, so too did the indigenous Iberian breeds migrate outward, particularly into North Africa, where they were

fundamental to the development of the North African Barb. So when the Moorish invasions of Iberia began, great numbers of Barb horses, with their Iberian blood, passed back into the peninsula and crossed again with the native Iberian stock, the hot-blooded Barb diminishing the Iberian horse in frame and helping to generate a breed of greater speed and elegance.

The Andalusian reigned supreme as the ultimate warhorse, swifter and more agile than the massive types being bred in northern Europe, yet larger than many of the desert breeds, and able to carry more weight. With its combination of hot Oriental blood and calm cold blood, the Andalusian became a horse worthy of, and sought after by, kings and leaders alike. It was used by the knights of the Reconquista against the Moors on their Arab horses. Indeed, the famous mercenary El Cid (c. 1040–99), who battled against the Moorish occupation of Spain, is said to have ridden an Andalusian; his loyal horse, Babieca, came from the Carthusian monastery at Jerez de la Frontera, which was still a center for Andalusian breeding.

Around the same time that El Cid and Babieca were crushing Spain’s foes, the first Andalusians were recorded in England. These were two black warhorses ridden by William the Conqueror (c. 1028–87). Many of the numerous horses that appear in the Bayeux Tapestry, which records the Norman conquest of England (1066), also clearly reflect Andalusian qualities. Centuries later, the Andalusian was taken by the conquistadores into South America and used against the indigenous people; the Andalusian was among the first of the horses reintroduced to the Americas by the conquistadores. Today, the influence of the Andalusian and other Spanish breeds can be seen in nearly all American horse breeds.

The horses of knights in medieval Europe had to be highly skilled and agile, able to turn and twist quickly and smoothly in close combat, to rear up, kick out, back up, and even leap in the air to avoid injury or aid attack. It was from these movements, so crucial on the battlefield, that the concept of High School dressage evolved, with those same breeds that fought bravely under arms also performing the highest level of athletic maneuvers in the school at a later date. Horses of Iberian breeding, as well as the noble Friesian, served as ideal mounts for use in the High School, where the arts of horse training and dressage became part of the education of noblemen. Of



the many depictions of horses in Renaissance paintings, a large proportion of them strongly exhibit Andalusian characteristics, providing compelling visual evidence of the extent to which the Andalusian was used and prized.

Early in the seventeenth century the Andalusian breed suffered briefly under King Philip III (1598–1621), who appointed a Neapolitan horseman, Juan Jeronimo Tiuti, as director of the royal stud at Córdoba. Tiuti imported massive Neapolitan, Danish, Flemish, and Norman stallions and used them on the Andalusian mares. The result was disastrous and quickly apparent: the Andalusian lost its elegance and agility, becoming more massive in frame and less athletic.

That situation was addressed, but then disaster struck again in the nineteenth century, resulting in an almost complete destruction of the original Andalusian. There was a sudden and greatly misguided attempt, following the Peninsular Wars (1808–14), to introduce Arabian blood to the already magnificent Andalusian breed. A number of Arab stallions and mares were brought to the royal stud at Aranjuez and over the following eighty years or so more Arab stock was introduced to the royal studs. The Arab, which is itself an undeniably beautiful creature and also a breed that generally has an improving effect on others, had

suddenly become the horse of choice. A fashion developed for horses with small, Arablike heads, rather than the majestic and noble head of the Andalusian. The Andalusian was arguably already close to perfect, and the Arab’s influence had a weakening effect. The Andalusians started to lose the power that had made them the best warhorses of old. Fortunately the integrity of the breed was saved by a handful of dedicated breeders, including Don Pedro Jose Zapata, founder of the Hospital de Arcos de la Frontera, and Carthusian monks at Jerez de la Frontera. The monks bred a special type of Andalusian called the Carthusian, considered by some to be the purest form of the breed. Don Pedro also bred the Carthusian line, and it is still bred in the Jerez region, most famously at the Stud at la Cartuja. Horses bred at Jerez were purchased by some of the best breeders of the Andalusian, including the owners of Miura fighting bulls.

The Andalusian horse is now widely bred across Andalusia and across much of the world. It exhibits a natural aptitude for working fierce fighting bulls calmly and smoothly and it has become the leading mount of Spanish bullfighters. Cowboys have also long recognized the Andalusian’s stock-working abilities, and in the sixteenth century these qualities were transferred into American breeds such as the Quarter horse.









# MARWARI

## ANCIENT – INDIA, MARWAR – RARE

**HEIGHT**  
14.2–15.2 hands

**COLOR**  
Any color except albino; bright bay with a metallic sheen is most prized.

**APPEARANCE**  
The elegant head is well set to an arched and muscular neck. Mobile ears curl inward at the tip.

*The withers are defined, the body compact with a well-sprung ribcage and a long, muscular croup. The tail is set and carried high. The natural ambling gait is called the “revaal” or “rehwal.”*

**APTITUDE**  
Riding, dressage, jumping, competitive sports, cavalry

THE MARWARI, ALONG WITH ITS CLOSE RELATIVE the Kathiawari, is India’s most respected horse breed and was historically closely affiliated with the Indian ruling families. Legends were written of their fearlessness and heroic exploits in battle. They are most famous as India’s warhorses of the Middle Ages, but their role in war continued right up to the twentieth century; their last great efforts were seen in 1917 in Haifa under General Allenby

as part of what is today called the 61st Cavalry Regiment. Significantly, this regiment is the only mounted cavalry regiment in the world to remain unmechanized.

The earliest origins of the Marwari are unrecorded. It is likely that the breed developed from the desert horses of Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, with probable Mongolian, and later Arabian, influence. Certainly the Marwari exhibits many similarities to the descendants of the ancient Turkmenian, although it has its own unique appearance and character. The Marwari is a classic desert-bred horse and thrives in the extreme climate and poor conditions of its home, namely Rajasthan, and particularly the state of Marwar (Jodphur). It is fine skinned with a very silky coat, slender framed, and has a quality, refined head. The Marwari is generally small, quick, and agile—the qualities that made it so useful in warfare—and has incredibly

strong, sound limbs and feet, which rarely need to be shod. Most striking on first inspection are the Marwari’s ears, which curve inward to touch or even overlap at the tips. This trait is also present in the Kathiawari; in fact, if the ear tips do not touch, the horse is considered to be a poor example. This curling of the ears, almost certainly achieved through consistent and specific breeding early in the breed’s development, possibly derived from Arabian strains. The Marwari’s ears are also highly mobile, and the horse is believed to have exceptional hearing.

Legend recounts that the Marwari was so respected that only those of royal blood, or from ruling families or warrior castes, were allowed to keep them. The early breeding of Marwaris is closely linked to specific powerful families, the Rathores in particular, who bred the horses from around the twelfth century. In 1193 the Rathores lost the Kingdom of Kanauji and retreated to the Great Indian and Thar deserts. In these remote and inhospitable areas their horses were absolutely essential to their survival. Bred in the desert, the Marwaris evolved not only to be incredibly tough and hardy, but also to be very loyal to their riders. The loyalty of the Marwaris forms the center of nearly all the legends surrounding the breed. They were said never to leave their rider’s side, and never to fall in battle, despite their own injuries, until they had carried their rider to safety. Marwaris are also reputed to have leaped city walls and taken on elephants to aid their riders in battle, allegedly standing over their injured riders to bite and kick any assailant attempting to reach them. The horses were declared “divine and superior to all men.”

In 1576 Maharana Pratap (1540–97), the fiery Rajput leader of Mewar, led his soldiers to victory against the Mughals at the famous battle of Haldighat in present-day Rajasthan. By all accounts he was greatly aided by the efforts of his much-loved horse Chetak, a Marwari (or Kathiawari) who launched an attack on the elephant carrying the Mughal commander Man Singh. During the attack, Chetak sustained a leg injury, but in spite of this he managed to carry his master away from the battle before staggering and falling to the ground, whereupon he died. Maharana Pratap was devastated and erected a small monument at the spot to honor his faithful horse.

By the twentieth century, warhorses were no longer so important and the breed’s numbers had dropped dramatically. In the 1930s the late Maharaja Umaid Singhji



of Jodphur, with great foresight, acquired good remaining examples of breeding stock and began a program to try to save the breed. At around the same time, Maharana Bhagwat Singh of Mewar in Udaipur started the Chetak Trust to preserve the Marwari. Several of the best stallions, including Mor, Kanaiya, Pratap, Peelo, and Rajhans, helped to restore the noble Marwari breed. One of the best stallions of modern times was Rajtilak, foaled in 1982 and owned by Raja Bhupat Singh of Jodhpur, a leading authority on the Marwari horse. Today Marwaris are used for pleasure riding, by the police force, in competitive sports, and at ceremonial events.





# ROCKY MOUNTAIN HORSE

MODERN – UNITED STATES, KENTUCKY – UNCOMMON

<b>HEIGHT</b> 14.2–16 hands	<i>shoulders have a good slope. The chest is deep and wide. A natural four-beat ambling gait allows the horse and rider to travel a long distance without tiring.</i>
<b>COLOR</b> Dark brown coat with flaxen mane and tail. Solid body with no white marks above the knee or hock.	
<b>APTITUDE</b> A fine head is well set to a slightly arched neck of good length. The	<i>Riding, working livestock, showing, dressage, jumping, western riding horse sports</i>

THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN HORSE is one of Kentucky’s less well-known treasures. The breed’s early development was little documented, but since the formation of the Rocky Mountain Horse Association (RMHA) in 1986 there has been a sustained effort to preserve and promote it. Despite its short recorded history, the Rocky Mountain Horse exhibits true definitive characteristics through all its progeny.

The Rocky Mountain Horse evolved in the eastern parts of Kentucky at the foot of the Appalachian Mountains, probably at the same time as the American Saddlebred (Kentucky Saddler). This was in the days when pioneers set off from eastern states such as Virginia and the Carolinas and trekked over the Appalachians in search of new land. These settlers needed horses that were frugal, versatile, full of stamina, and surefooted enough to cover the treacherous landscape smoothly and with some speed. Money was often tight and a single horse was required to perform a multitude of tasks, from working the land to hauling produce and carrying riders. The horses also had to have an excellent temperament, one that was calm, biddable, and easily trained. It is no coincidence that the breeds of Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee—the American Saddlebred, the Missouri Fox Trotter, the Tennessee Walker, and the less widespread Rocky Mountain Horse—are remarkable for their gentle temperaments.

Like its neighbor the Saddlebred, the Rocky Mountain Horse may be traced both to Spanish stock and to the ubiquitous little Narragansett Pacer, which was so formative in the American gaited breeds. Its characteristics

were reinforced by its geographic environment. Living in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, these horses had to be tough to withstand extreme winter weather, often without shelter. Feed was not always in good supply, and the horses had to be thrifty, eating coarse grasses and even tree bark to survive.

Although never formally documented, there is a story of a gaited colt who was brought into eastern Kentucky in the 1890s. He was called the Rocky Mountain Stud Colt (of 1890) and was by all accounts a beautiful dark chocolate brown with a flaxen mane and tail. Bred to him, the local mares produced offspring in his likeness to which the term “Rocky Mountain Horse” began to be ascribed. However, many horses at this time would have exhibited a natural gait, and both the gaited Narragansett Pacer and the Canadian Pacer were then widespread. But it is possible, and has been seen in other breeds, most notably the Morgan, for a single prepotent stallion to reproduce progeny in his own image, and the uncorroborated story of the “birth” of the Rocky Mountain Horse is not perhaps as outlandish as it sounds.

The most important, and best documented, period of the breed’s development was at the hands of breeder Sam Tuttle. One of the Rocky Mountain Stud Colt’s offspring had been a colt foal named Old Tobe (f. 1928), who sired the colt foal Tobe (f. 1942) on Tuttle’s farm. Tobe was much loved on account of his character and was sought after as a stallion because of the quality of foals he sired. Tuttle used him for ten years while managing the trail-riding concession at the Natural Bridge State Park in Powell County, Kentucky. Tobe was the most popular trail horse there, and he was also used prolifically as a stallion until he was retired at age thirty-four. He lived to age thirty-seven, and longevity remains a predominant feature of the Rocky Mountain Horse. Tobe is recognized as the foundation stallion of the breed, and the five main stallions of the breed, registered in 1986 (when the registry opened), were all his sons.







TAMSIN PICKERAL, horse expert and art historian, grew up in the English countryside but has lived in both Europe and North America and has worked in practical horse care, health, and management in both regions. She is a widely published author whose recent books include: *The Horse Lover's Bible*; *The Horse: 30,000 Years of the Horse in Art*; and *The Dog: 5,000 Years of the Dog in Art*. Her books have been favorably reviewed in British and North American newspapers, as well as in a number of European publications.

ASTRID HARRISSON has more than ten years of experience in photography, creative direction, and graphic design. She began photographing horses while working on a ranch high in the hills in northwest Argentina, dramatically fusing her lifelong love of all things equine with her creative artistry. Daily horseback adventures allowed her to capture ranch life from new perspectives and she has since published a book on the history of the estancia. Harrisson has traveled widely in Europe, the Americas, India, Africa, China, and Australia in pursuit of her equine subjects, chasing wild Mustangs with her camera in the United States and following horses in the foothills of the Andes.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7641-6416-3  
Pub: October 2011  
Trim: 11 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 9 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in  
Price: \$35 Canada \$41.99  
Hardcover w/jacket 288 pp



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Please return to: The Publisher, Quintessence Limited,  
226 City Road, London EC1V 2TT





AWARD-WINNING HORSE PHOTOGRAPHER ASTRID HARRISSON AND EQUESTRIAN EXPERT TAMSIN PICKERAL HAVE SPENT A YEAR COMBING THE WORLD IN SEARCH OF THE BEST EXAMPLES OF NINETY DIVERSE HORSE BREEDS. THIS IS THE RESULT OF THEIR AMBITIOUS PROJECT: A FASCINATING READ THAT IS ACCOMPANIED BY SENSITIVE AND STRIKING PHOTOGRAPHY. DISCOVER THE VITAL ROLE THAT THIS MAGNIFICENT ANIMAL HAS PLAYED THROUGHOUT HISTORY, FROM PLOWHORSE TO WARHORSE; TRACE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MOST STRIKING AND SIGNIFICANT BREEDS; AND LEARN, TOO, INTRIGUING TALES OF BREEDS THAT HAVE ALMOST BEEN FORGOTTEN. SUMPTUOUSLY ILLUSTRATED THROUGHOUT, THIS UNIQUE BOOK IS THE PERFECT GIFT FOR EVERYONE WHO LOVES HORSES.

*"The relationship between horse and human is one that stretches back into the distant realms of antiquity, and yet it still survives, as powerful and tangible as ever..."*

