

American Chester Weber won the test event for driving and is a favorite to win this summer.  
(Photo by F. Durand/Attelage magazine)







# LES JEUX

2014 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games  
will have a French flavor

By Jacqueline Duke







Endurance riders will compete against the backdrop of Mont Saint-Michel.

With its equine traditions, idyllic landscape, and diverse attractions, Normandy, France, is a fitting successor to Lexington to host the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games. And while the two share similarities, Normandy promises to put a unique stamp on the world's largest equestrian event, which runs Aug. 23 to Sept. 7.

For starters, this seventh edition of the World Equestrian Games will take place in several venues in Lower Normandy, a region on the north coast of France. Lexington, in contrast, held all eight disciplines at the Kentucky Horse Park. The regional capital of Caen will serve as the heart of the 2014 games, where show jumping, dressage, driving, vaulting, reining, and para-dressage will be staged in several metropolitan locations. Endurance will take place around Mont Saint-Michel, some 90 minutes southwest of Caen, while the dressage and cross-country phases of eventing will be held at Haras du Pin, the French national stud located an hour south of Caen.

In addition to the World Equestrian Games disciplines other horse sports will offer visitors plenty of entertainment options. The seaside resort of Deauville, Lexington's sister city, will





put on polo exhibitions while the national stud at Saint-Lô will offer horse-ball demonstrations.

As an anticipated 500,000 visitors witness the pinnacle of equestrian sport that the World Equestrian Games embody, organizers hope they also will experience the pleasures of French and Norman culture as reflected in the food, lifestyle, heritage, and scenic and historic attractions.

"Hosting the FEI World Equestrian Games represents an exceptional opportunity for the promotion and development of Normandy on the international level," said Laurent Beauvais, president of the Normandy organizing committee. "Normandy has a true legitimacy to host the most prestigious equestrian competition [and] is proud to take up this challenge."

Like the Lexington games, the Normandy event has a title sponsor in Alltech, the global animal health and nutrition company based in Nicholasville, Ky. Alltech





FRANÇOIS DECAEN; INSET: NORMANDY ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

The Caen Exposition Center and the Zenith indoor arena will host several disciplines. Insert, a map of the equestrian venues

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Left and below, the national stud at Haras du Pin will be the site of the dressage and cross-country portions of eventing.

signed on three years ago with a commitment valued at 10 million euros and has been an active and visible presence in the event's promotion.

"France, and Normandy in particular with its worldwide reputation of excellence in horse breeding, is a strategic location for our company," said Alltech founder Pearse Lyons. "Alltech has a long-standing history of serving the agricultural community in France, and we are thrilled to support the event in Normandy and to share in the pride of this spectacular event."

The 2014 games coincide with the 70th anniversary of the D-Day invasions and the Battle of Normandy, which signaled the beginning of the end of World War II. To mark the anniversary, numerous commemorations and festivities are planned throughout the region. Visitors hoping to combine attending the games with a visit to the Normandy beaches and the American Cemetery will find these landmarks an easy 45-minute drive from Caen.

"We have much to offer," said Edouard Valère of Normandy Tourism. "Coming to see the games is important, but if you want a day trip, there are many options to experience the culture, food, and heritage of Normandy."

## About the Games

Preparations for the 2014 games be-



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PHILIPPE MILLEREND / ANSP

gan as soon as Normandy won the right in 2009 to host the championships. (Normandy lost out to Lexington for the 2010 games.) Since the symbolic passing of the torch at the conclusion of the Lexington games, Normandy organizers have secured an \$87 million budget, selected sites, recruited regional and local "stakeholders," and held test events. When opening ceremonies take place Aug. 22 at D'Omano Stadium in Caen, participants and visitors can expect:

- 15 days of games
- 60 countries represented
- 1,000 horses
- 500,000 visitors
- 3,000 volunteers

From the outset, organizers pledged to make the 2014 games affordable for spectators. Securing commitments for much of the budget has enabled them to keep a lid on ticket prices, which average 25 euros (about \$32) and range from 5 to 120 euros. "A big part of the games is that they will be accessible to everyone. We want no one to say 'it's too expensive for me to come,'" said Fabien Gro-



bon, managing director of the Normandy organizing committee.

Demand for tickets — which first went on sale to national federations last June and to the public in November — remains strong with more than 200,000 sold so far. The last big block went on sale in early March, with some 25,000 snapped up in the first hours.

Organizers also have worked with hoteliers to keep room rates in check. Grobon said the region has an abundance of accommodations “so there is no stress for rooms.” From luxury hotels and chains to inns, B&Bs, self-catering apartments, and campsites, visitors will have plenty of choices to fit their pocketbooks, he said.

The medium-sized city of Caen, with a population of approximately 110,000, makes a convenient base for the games. Dressage, show jumping, and the jumping phase of the three-day event will take place in the 22,500-seat D’Ornano Stadium, normally used for soccer. Vaulting will be held in the Zenith indoor arena and reining, in the Caen Exhibition Center, also site of the equestrian village, restaurants, and many activities. La Prairie Racecourse,

**From left, dressage, reining, and show jumping are popular World Equestrian Games disciplines.**

otherwise a trotting track, will welcome competitors in para-dressage and carriage driving.

Bombed during the war and almost entirely rebuilt, Caen itself has a number of attractions, including a celebrated museum and war memorial; the Abbey aux Hommes, where the remains of William the Conqueror are buried; and a medieval castle.

South of Caen, Haras du Pin, the national stud commissioned by Louis XIV, will provide a magnificent setting for the dressage and cross-country phases of eventing. Considered the equestrian Versailles, Haras du Pin is a working stud but one outfitted with a grand 18th-century chateau and ornate stables that form an arc around a formal courtyard. Recent renovations to the cross-country course should ensure optimal conditions for the event.

Fans of endurance will watch their sport unfold against the

## ABOUT THE WORLD EQUESTRIAN GAMES

Inaugurated in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1990, the World Equestrian Games are the international championships for eight disciplines: show jumping, eventing, dressage, reining, vaulting, driving, para-dressage, and endurance. The games, held under the auspices of the Fédération Equestre Internationale, take place every four years midway through the Summer Olympic cycle.

Participating nations field teams of horses and riders that undergo rigorous

selection trials to qualify. To date, Germany has won more gold medals, 30, than any other nation, with Great Britain and the United States each with 12.

The 2010 games were the first held outside of Europe and in one location — the Kentucky Horse Park. The Lexington games also marked the first to include all eight disciplines — para-dressage was newly added to the line-up. In addition, the 2010 games secured a title sponsor in Alltech, the global animal nutrition

and health company headquartered in Nicholasville, Ky. Alltech has renewed its sponsorship for the 2014 games.

More than 500,000 people attended the 2010 games, in which 58 nations and 800 horses participated. A similar number of spectators are expected for the Normandy games.

Lexington; Wellington, Fla.; and Bromont, Quebec, Canada have submitted bids to host the 2018 World Equestrian Games.



## les jeux



F. DE CHASSEY



ERIC LORANG



DIETER BASSE



CBT14

From top, Normandy's signatures including apple products such as Calvados and cheese from Norman cows, historic sites such as Mont Saint-Michel, and the American Cemetery.

stunning backdrop of Mont Saint-Michel. One of France's most famous landmarks, the rocky tidal island topped by an ancient abbey is a UNESCO World Heritage site that welcomes three million visitors a year. The 100-mile endurance course begins in the village of Sartilly and concludes at the bay of Mont Saint-Michel.

Followers of polo and horse racing (neither a WEG discipline) can head to Deauville. Polo exhibitions will take place during the games while the prestigious Lucien Barrière Thoroughbred race meeting, with its five group I races, will run from late July through the end of August. A popular summertime destination, the glamorous resort is renowned for its international racing crowd, casino, and charming Norman architecture.

"Horses are our religion," said Deauville Mayor Philippe Augier, noting that the town's founder established a race course before building a church. "Everybody who lives in Deauville is involved with horses."

With Deauville as its center, Lower Normandy is France's horse country, home to scores of breeding farms, two national studs, 21 racecourses, and 93,000 equines. Some 12,000 people make their living directly from the horse industry, which is worth 1.1 billion euros annually. Central Kentuckians might be familiar with such well-known stud farms as the Head family's Haras du Quesnay, the Niarchos family's Haras de Fresnay le Buffard, and the

Aga Khan's Haras de Bonneval.

Games organizers are hoping some of the region's stud farms will open their gates to visitors during the event.

### Other Normandy attractions

In addition to horses, Normandy is known for its cider and Calvados, an apple brandy, thanks to the centuries-long cultivation of apples. To the east of Caen lies a marked tourist circuit known as the Cider Trail, where some 20 cider producers and distillers open their cellars and pressing sheds to visitors.

Normandy is also famous for its dairy products, particularly cheese. A 35-mile Camembert trail takes visitors through the "kingdom of milk" and past verdant pastureland where Norman cattle — the source of it all — contentedly graze.

Another highlight is the Bayeux Tapestry, an embroidered cloth that tells the story of the Norman conquest of England and the exploits of William the Conqueror. Made in the 11th century, the well-preserved tapestry has its own museum in the quaint town of Bayeux.

Lower Normandy also boasts three of France's 152 "most beautiful villages": Beuvron-en-Auge, Barfleur, and Saint-Céneri-le-Gérei.

As organizers attest, Lower Normandy has countless attractions, but in late August and early September the World Equestrian Games will command center stage. **KM**

## IF YOU GO

Various airlines fly to Paris, including Delta, which has a non-stop flight from Cincinnati. Visit [www.delta.com](http://www.delta.com).

From Paris, it's approximately two hours by train to Caen. Visit [www.raileurope.com](http://www.raileurope.com).

For information about the World Equestrian Games, including schedule, tickets, and accommodations, visit [www.normandy2014.com](http://www.normandy2014.com).

For information about Normandy, including accommodations and things to do, visit [www.normandie-tourisme.fr/](http://www.normandie-tourisme.fr/).

