

THE LOCAL

palate

FOOD CULTURE OF THE SOUTH



Getaway: The Equestrian Hotel

A 2021 Gold Key Awards finalist for Best Luxury Hotel, The Equestrian Hotel in [Ocala, Florida](#), was designed with a particular goal in mind: “to expose the equestrian sport to a broader audience,” according to hotel operations manager Justin Garner.

Visionary owners Ralph “Larry” and Mary Roberts determined that the 380-acre showgrounds be designed with equine occupants top of mind—but they added every possible human comfort to the [property’s luxury hotel](#). The 248 rooms and suites, opulent decor and custom furniture designed by Ric Owens and the Roberts Design team. The Equestrian Hotel is a destination in and of itself, with grounds maintained by former Augusta National horticulturalists Alexis Anthony, top-notch dining, and the site of the World Equestrian Center.



The Neighborhood Around The Equestrian Hotel

Pedestrian-friendly downtown [Ocala](#) is a 20-minute drive from the hotel and boasts a marquee-front movie theater with \$5 flicks, First Friday art walks from September through May, and [Grandpa Joe’s Candy Shop](#). In cooler months, sign up for daytime or moonlight horseback and zip line tours with [Canyons Zip Line and Canopy Tours](#), or beat the heat with their kayak tour through Big Cliff Canyon on Lost Spring Lake.

Alternatively, enjoy a staycation on the WEC property, order room service, and watch Olympic and world-class equestrian athletes compete from the comfort of your room overlooking the Grand Outdoor Arena—or splurge for VIP seating while dining on the [Stirrups Restaurant](#) patio.



The Digs

The black, white, and gold lobby greets guests with 20-foot ceilings, marbled floors, and Swarovski crystal chandeliers. The rooms are no less luxurious, from spacious one-bedrooms with picture windows overlooking the showgrounds to the apartment-sized presidential and vice presidential suites outfitted with luxuries like a full kitchen and a claw-foot soaking tub. Pamper yourself with a visit to the [Calluna Spa](#) or a swim in the outdoor pool, shop luxury retail at [Lugano Diamonds](#) or marvel at the hand-carved rocking horses and larger-than-life stuffed giraffes at [Mr. Pickles & Sailor Bear toy store](#).

The Food Scene at The Equestrian Hotel

You don't have to leave the hotel grounds to enjoy exceptional fine dining and a 25-page wine list by master sommelier Roland Micu at [Stirrups Restaurant](#). You can also saddle up (literally, on their saddle-seat bar stools) at the [Yellow Pony](#) for over-the-top nachos, or treat yourself to handmade French pastries at [Emma's Patisserie](#). Downtown Ocala is home to more than a dozen eclectic food-and-beverage options, from the [Tippy Skipper](#) rum bar and tiki lounge to fresh European fare at [Stella's Modern Pantry](#) to an award-winning wine program and local-focused menu at Morevino



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