

## Oh the Flying Horses of the Winter Equestrian Festival!



The FTI Winter Equestrian Festival of Wellington, FL like the Flying Horses Carousel on Martha's Vineyard is the longest continually running venue of its kind in the US. Flying horses are everywhere in Wellington, sailing over massive jumper fences, across pristine green polo fields, floating over garden gates in the hunter ring, passage-ing across the diagonal in the dressage arena, even frozen in flight in bronze statuary, topiaries, in the wrought iron designs of the gates to fabulous estates, and of course the beautiful hand-painted working carousel here at WEF.

It is nearly impossible to describe to the un-initiated the amazing visual of the very best in performance horses that this and many other countries have to offer, competing in 12 rings in one place all at the same time. When you stand on "The Bridge", a pedestrian walkway spanning the in gate you see the International Arena on one side and look out over a jaw dropping vista of rings, tents, barns, palm trees, and horses running and jumping as far as the eye can see. Just past the rings are the permanent barns and tents, vendor booths, a full service equine 'spa', feed store, and every imaginable amenity you could think of to offer at a world class equine show facility. With over 5,500 horses issued entry numbers this year at WEF alone, you are truly in "Horse Valhalla"! And that's just the WEF show grounds.

Across the street is the beautiful Adequan Global Dressage Festival catering to the top Dressage horses and riders with multiple competition rings, stabling, shopping, and its own International Stadium. One can watch Olympic riders

competing at Grand Prix dressage and look just a little way further over and see a High Goal Polo match under way on acres of polo fields at the Palm Beach Polo Club, the original Polo Grounds where it all started back in the 1970's. Also on this corner is the Palm Beach Equestrian Center, boasting one of the largest covered arenas in the US and offering school horses and the ability to rent one and show at WEF!

All of which is surrounded by an ever widening circle of horse farm estates of every size and description. From a modest home and 1 stall to multi-million dollar facilities with barns so lavish only the fact that you see horses poking their heads out the stall windows delineates the home from the stable.

Of course because it is Wellington, there are bridle trails beside most every road

and like the roads in Rome, they all lead to WEF. It's a daily sight as you drive near the show grounds to see braided horses being ridden, ponied, and led along the roadside 15 feet away from the traffic at the busy intersection of Southshore and Pierson. They even have their own crosswalk and a traffic control button, set conveniently at rider height, to stop the traffic lights



while they cross!

A visit to the Winter Equestrian Festival really is a must see addition to the 'Equestrian Bucket List' of any horseperson, regardless of what discipline you ride. There is just nothing else quite like it! - MTS