



*Monday morning
– at Pony Camp!*

Jody, the lady who runs Sunnyside Stables, gave me this cool diary when I arrived just now. Her letter at the front says it's to write down all the adventures I have this week. It's fantastic here – there are two outdoor manèges and lots of cute ponies and dogs everywhere and even a swimming pool! I'm hoping to have lots of adventures – especially jumping ones!

I really wanted to come on this week because when Mum rang up and spoke to Jody, she said they're holding a special jumping competition on the last day. In our lessons, we're going to work on building up to an eight-jump course, and it's even going to include some cross-country fences for fun – I can't wait!

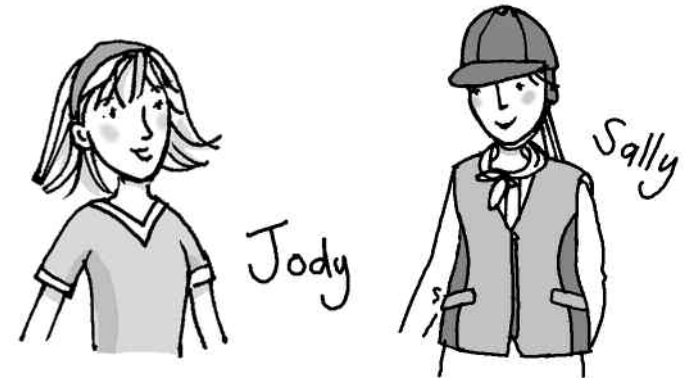


I love jumping but I've only done a couple of smaller courses at clear round events at my local riding school. I'm really hoping to improve while I'm here – and I'm desperate to go clear in Friday's competition.

The reasons I want a clear round so much are:

- a. because I've never had one before so it will be a big challenge for me and
- b. to make Dad proud of me.

Although Dad knows how much I love ponies (I'm always talking about getting my own one day!), he's never actually seen me ride. He's always working, even at weekends. But he said he'll really, really try to come with Mum to pick me up on Friday, then he'll be able to see me in the jumping competition and I can amaze him with my clear round (fingers crossed!). I really hope he keeps his word and doesn't get stuck at work as usual.



As soon as I got here, I kept asking Jody what we'll be doing every day because I was really excited. She smiled and said Sally, the instructor, will explain that when everyone arrives, but I really, really wanted to know straight away so she gave me a copy of the timetable to stick into my diary. She has warned me that it will change, though, because we have special activities on some days. Like, it says in her letter we're going on a treasure hunt this week – that sounds really fun!



Here's the timetable for the week:

Pony Camp Timetable

- 8am: Wake up, get dressed, have breakfast
- 8.45am: Help on the yard, bring in the ponies from field, muck out stables, do feeds, etc.
- 9.30am: Prepare ponies for morning lessons (quick groom, tack up, etc.)
- 10am: Morning riding lesson
- 11am: Morning break - drink and biscuits
- 11.20am: Pony Care lecture
- 12.30pm: Lunch and free time
- 2pm: Afternoon riding lesson
- 3pm: Break - drink and biscuits
- 3.20pm: Pony Care lecture
- 4.30pm: Jobs around the yard (i.e. cleaning tack, sweeping up, mixing evening feeds, turning out ponies)
- 5.30pm: Free time before dinner
- 6pm: Dinner (and clearing up!)
- 7pm: Evening activity
- 8.30pm: Showers and hot chocolate
- 9.30pm: Lights out and NO TALKING!



Wow! There's so much to do here! I just can't wait to find out which pony I'm getting – having my own pony to look after for a whole week will be fab!

This morning we're having an assessment lesson where we all ride in together, and then Sally will decide who goes in which group. So the timetable's different already because there's no lecture this morning. It's now 10.35am and not everyone is here yet, including the girls who are sharing my room – but, oh, now I can hear talking and clumping on the stairs. Maybe it's them!



Two minutes later

It was them!

The two girls I'm sharing with have gone downstairs to help on the yard – we are all still waiting for a couple of others to arrive, but the adults keep telling each other that there's a hold-up on the M3 so we're running a bit later than planned.

I'm going down in a minute but first I just wanted to do a quick profile of my room-mates for my diary.



Name: Isabella

Age: 12

Lives: Buckinghamshire, which is sort of near to London but still in the countryside.

Description: Quite tall for 12,



goes to a school for girls only, has amazing green eyes and long wavy brown hair and plays the cello and has packed three different swimsuits because she couldn't decide which to bring (I've only got one!). She says her friends call her Bella, and we can too (how cool!).



Name: Georgia

Age: 12

Lives: Georgia comes all the way from Devon, which I suppose isn't actually far from here, but it's a long way from where I live (i.e. London).

Description: Short blondish hair. She seems very sensible and mature for 12, but she's also really friendly so that's okay. She has two younger brothers and one younger sister and says she has to help her mum and dad look after them quite a lot.



The best thing is that Isabella and Georgia are both really into jumping too and they also chose this week specially to come to Sunnyside, so they could spend lots of time focussing on it. Also, they're both really nice and are not leaving me out just because I'm a weeny bit younger than them, which older girls can sometimes do.

Oh, I have to go – Bella's calling me down to the yard. Maybe it's time to find out which ponies we're getting. I'm so excited just thinking about it! Fingers crossed mine's a good jumper!



*Still Monday morning,
in our break*

I am quickly writing this because I've got something exciting to put down that can't wait till later. The girls who were delayed are here now and we're just about to have our assessment lesson. But even though we haven't been given our ponies yet I have already met the perfect one for me.

What happened was, when I got outside, Jody explained that while we were waiting for the last two girls to arrive, we could get on with some yard work. She gave me mucking-out duty with this really nice stable girl called Lydia. That's when I met Charm, who is an amazingly gorgeous grey Connemara.





I fell in love with him straight away and Lydia said I could lead him out and tie him up in the yard while we did his stable. I gave him a big stroke and pat on the way and he whinnied and nuzzled into my T-shirt.

While we were working I asked Lydia about him and she told me what a great jumper he is. That just made me want him to be my pony even more!

When Lydia and I had put the new straw down on top of the clean bits of bedding and spread it all out, I got to lead Charm back in, and I whispered to him that I really hoped he'd be my pony for the week. After a while, the other girls arrived and Jody called us all back into the main yard and introduced us to each other and the Sunnyside Stables team.



Lydia



As well as me and Bella and Georgia there is Millie, Jody's daughter, who I read about in the welcome letter. The girls sharing her room are called Suki and Mai and they go to an international school in London. They are both eight and three-quarters and are actually from Japan.

Then there are the little ones, Olivia, Asha and Joelle (who is only just seven and the youngest of all), and they're in a room together.



Suki

Mai



Olivia

Asha

Joelle



Me, Bella and Georgia are all really excited about the jumping and we're crossing our fingers that we get put in the group to do it. Bella and Georgia have jumped a bit but neither of them have done a competition yet, so I've probably got the most experience, even though it's not much.

I really, really hope I've got Charm. I've worked out I've got a 33.3333333333% chance of getting him – he's a bit big for the younger girls and Millie has her own pony, of course, and so I reckon it will be between me, Georgia and Bella.



Still Monday,
after the ponies were given out

Well, it didn't exactly go as I'd hoped, but I'm trying not to be too disappointed. We were all waiting in the yard with our hats and crops and everything, and Sally was reading from a list while Lydia brought the ponies out, one by one. They were already tacked up, because some of the girls had been helping do that while I was mucking out.

I was really excited and as Lydia led Charm out I had all my fingers crossed for luck, but then Sally said, "Isabella, you're on Charm. I hope you two will hit it off. Charm's a superb jumper, and he has lovely manners." Well, my heart sank and I had to blink fast to stop tears coming into my eyes. Bella looked so excited and I forced myself to smile at her.