

In the bleak mid-winter



While Britain is undoubtedly the centre of the Eventing world, for those making the move to our shores, winter can be a shock to the system! *Hilary Manners* talked to riders from sunnier climes to find out how they cope →



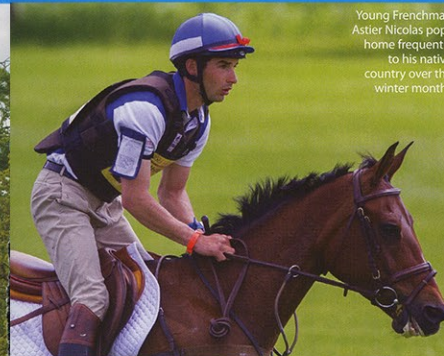
Giovanni Ugolotti spends a couple of weeks in Parma in winter



New Zealander Tim Price spends the festive season catching up with friends from his and Jonelle's UK base in Marlborough



New Zealand Olympic team member, and wife of Tim Price, Jonelle Richards



Young Frenchman Astier Nicolas pops home frequently to his native country over the winter months



Marcelo Tosi will be in Brazil with his family for Christmas



Shrewsbury-based Brazilian Carlos Paro heads back to Brazil for a few weeks every winter

Italy's Giovanni Ugolotti moved to England in 2008 and has no plans to return home – influenced in part by his recent engagement to fellow Eventer Kathryn Robinson. “I like to spend a couple of weeks with my family in Parma during the winter, but if I’m honest, I don’t really miss home because everything I like is here – and I don’t like winter wherever I am!” Giovanni admits.

Tim Price and Jonelle Richards are no more likely to be returning to their homeland, New Zealand, any time soon. They relocated to Wiltshire eight years ago. “When we’ve ticked a few boxes here I’m sure we’ll settle into retirement back home,” says Jonelle. “But that’s probably 20 years away!” Tim adds.

While Tim and Jonelle only manage a month in New Zealand every other year, for France's Astier Nicolas popping home is easier. “I come from Toulouse and get back regularly over the winter – a bit more partying and a bit less

mucking out,” he laughs. “Toulouse is an amazing town and I really miss the heat. It’s great for staying out all night, but then again, less nice to ride under.”

Astier moved to the UK in March 2013; with time at both Andrew Nicholson's and Hartpury College, he knew what he was letting himself in for. “I remember breaking ice in the water trough at Hartpury as the temperature dropped to minus 19°C. But this year I’m looking forward to my first experience of hunting, which should make up for that – I don’t see myself moving back.

I’m happy here.”

Both Carlos Paro and Marcelo Tosi come from the state of São Paulo, “the horse capital of Brazil”. Carlos moved to the UK after the 2002 WEG, while Marcelo spent seven years in Belgium, only arriving here at the end of 2010.

“I go home for a few weeks every winter,” says Carlos. “I can’t imagine ever moving back though – I’m marrying my fiancée, Nicola Tootle, next year and so long as I get to Brazil when it’s really cold here, that’s fine by me!”

“I don’t really miss home because everything I like is here – and I don’t like winter wherever I am!”

This year, Marcelo is spending all winter in Brazil. “I’m doing some teaching, some riding and plenty of work – I have a stud and an animal feed company back home,” he reveals. In contrast to Carlos, he does plan to move back home, before the Rio 2016 Olympics.

Clark Montgomery hails from Texas. “We only moved to Britain in January (2013) and it’s the snow that I dread most. The rain and cold aren’t fun, but at least I can work,” he confesses. Despite the snow, Clark wants to stay here for the rest of his competitive career: “A lot will depend on maintaining, and gaining more, support from the States in the form of sponsors and owners – it’s important that everyone back home doesn’t feel like I’ve abandoned them. But to be one of the best you have to consistently compete among the best.”

With such an intensive competition season in Britain, winter is the perfect time for Eventers to relax. Astier enjoys

The best bits:

Jonelle: “Skiing and tobogganing behind the quad bike – until someone (Tim!) decides to build a jump, which inevitably ends in tears.”

Tim: “Snow generally means that only 4WD can get in and out of Mere Farm, but we’ve had a lot of fun trying it in non-4WD!”

Clark: “The feel of winter. Lighting fires. Going to a cosy pub. Catching up with friends.”

Carlos: “Going away to somewhere hot. Winter here is summer in Brazil – coming back with a tan is great – everybody knows about it!”

Clark: “TexMex food – though on a recent trip home I ate so much queso (cheese dip with tortilla chips) that I gained five pounds, so it’s probably a good thing that it’s not readily available here!”

Astier: “It comes early and leaves late.”

Carlos: “Snow, especially when I have a big Event early on. One

year I was snowed in for two weeks and my neighbour with a 4WD had to do my shopping.”

Giovanni: “Icy roads – I once crashed the car in a ditch when I was rushing home (I needed the toilet!).”

Clark: “The snow: it’s pretty on the first day, but after that it sucks!”

And the most missed:

Marcelo: “Family, friends, and working in my company.”

Giovanni: “Proper Italian food.”

Jonelle: “Our families and the lifestyle in New Zealand.”

Clark: “TexMex food – though on a recent trip home I ate so much queso (cheese dip with tortilla chips) that I gained five pounds, so it’s probably a good thing that it’s not readily available here!”

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of weeks for my cousin’s wedding and my Dad’s 60th birthday. It will be great to see my family, but it’s not the beach!” he jokes.

So, how will our riders be spending Christmas and New Year? Last year, Clark and his wife Jessica were in Costa Rica. This year, they will be looking

after the horses on Christmas day so that Karen (“boss of the yard and master of our universe!”) can be with her family. “If the weather is OK the horses will spend the day in the field, and will definitely get some extra treats – they all love bananas, apples and carrots! Our family arrive on 28 December when the celebrations really start. We enjoy just hanging out together, cooking food and drinking good wine. The only difference this year is that we’ll be doing that inside a cosy cottage next to a fire rather than on the beach!”

Although Giovanni has no firm plans, his philosophy is: “It’s all about spending time with your family – and eating good food!” Astier invariably goes home for Christmas, but will be in the UK to see in 2014. “If I am with the horses, they work, and if I’m away they will hack or lunge – they don’t believe in Santa!” he laughs.

“Christmas is the best thing about winter,” says Jonelle. “It’s so different to home. I love the street lights and the mulled wine, and the need to be inside creates a festive atmosphere. Even the short days make a nice change.”

“Back home Christmas is usually spent near water,” adds Tim, “and we’ve spent many New Year’s Eves at music festivals, camping in the mountains with 5,000 people – here you don’t want to leave home! I’m not sure where we will be this year, but it will involve close friends and a banquet fit for a king!”

Marcelo will be in Brazil with his family for Christmas, before heading to the beach with his girlfriend, Anna Ross Davies. “I haven’t had a holiday for three years because I need to work in order to afford my UK Event season, so I’m looking forward to the beach,” he says. In contrast, Carlos will be in Liverpool with Nicola’s family before they fly out to Florida to join him.

Whatever their plans, it sounds like they will all be refreshed and raring to go come the 2014 season. ✨



Another Wiltshire-based international rider, American Clark Montgomery, will be staying in his cosy cottage this winter