You have just bought a Balaïtous pack saddle designed by Randoline.

Print out this sheet and read it carefully.

• The ash wood on this frame is untreated. Please choose your own treatment, wood stain or paint and apply it straight away, before your first hike. We recommend traditional methods: a 50/50 mixture of linseed oil and turpentine. A single application is sufficient for ash wood. The treatment should be reapplied every year.

• The leather on this pack saddle is untreated. Apply your usual product, repeating the treatment regularly as soon as the leather feels dry to the touch. We are quite fond of the traditional method: natural beef tallow. However, this must be diluted 50/50 with a commercially available vegetable oil (such as sunflower oil). The treatment should be repeated at least once a year.

• Positioning the saddle: lay out the saddle carpet, then place the Balaïtous on the animal. The front pad should be positioned just behind the shoulder. The shoulder is a flat bone located beneath the St Andrew's cross in the coat, which you can feel quite clearly when running your hand over it.

• Adjusting the saddle carpet: depending on the model of saddle carpet you have, insert felt pieces inside so that all 8 pads on the saddle rest flat.

• Adjusting the front strap and the rear strap: tighten the buckles, leaving a gap the width of a hand between the animal's coat and the leather (about 2 cm), at both the front and the rear. The tail strap (rear strap) should be positioned 5 cm below the anus (males) or just below the vulva (females).

• Adjusting the belly strap: tighten the buckle so that the strap touches the belly. But the crafty animal has puffed itself up… Five minutes later, tighten it slightly. It's a pack saddle, not a riding saddle. The leather simply needs to skim the belly.

• Fitting side luggage: hang panniers, rucksacks, baskets, etc. behind or in the middle of the wooden crossbar.

• Loading light items: position these items (tent, mattress, sleeping bags) diagonally, lying flat on the upper section of the pack saddle. Secure them in place with straps or bungee cords. Never place heavy items on top of a pack saddle, as this would disrupt the centre of gravity; the pack saddle could twist and the animal would be uncomfortable.

==> Correctly positioning the luggage is the key to a stable pack-saddle.

Once you've finished your test runs – or even whilst you're doing them – please feel free to send us photos and videos, or arrange a video call with us so that everything is properly sorted and your hike gets off to the best possible start

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