



The Tango from Duett Wide Saddles is a hybrid trail/dressage model. A padded seat, broad panels and dressage flaps are featured on this saddle. www.duettsaddles.com



Prestige's Trekker, distributed by La Selleria Italia, features big front blocks and a floating seat with a large bearing surface. This saddle can be completely taken apart by hand if desired. www.laselleria.com



Circle Y saddles are designed to accommodate the special needs of the gaited horse. This "Alabama" Trail Gaiter helps allow for freedom of movement with a gaited horse. www.circley.com

Tucker Saddles have Gel-Cush, V-Foam, and Micro-Cell Ventilating leather that provides their saddles with more comfort. Tucker puts Gel-Cush in the seat of all their saddles. V-Foam padding covered with MicroCell Ventilating leather is available on the GEN II styles.

"Tucker first introduced Gel-Cush about 10 years ago," said Fordyce. "That really made it possible for weekend trail riders to be comfortable. They wouldn't be getting in and out of the saddle as often as in shows; instead they would be in the saddle for hours."

The Gen II saddle from Tucker has its comfort features built in layers. The gel is built into layers of padding. A V-Foam (conforming foam) padding on top of the Gel-Cush on the seat is topped with a layer of breathable leather.

It's not only the trail rider who knows the comfort of a trail saddle, either. Duett has sold its line of trail saddles to both Park Rangers and Mounted Police in Boston, and to the Mounted Patrol in Atlanta, all of whom spend a great deal of time atop their horses.

Variety of styles

Because trail saddles are so popular with a lot of riders, they come in many styles. The beauty of trail saddles is that no special tack or gear is really required. In most circumstances, the saddle will do. The trail saddle can be as basic, or as high-tech, as desired. They come in so many varieties that it makes it easy for riders to find the right one for their needs.

Duett Saddles has been modifying their models to respond to the needs of their customers. Temple began with the Companion Trail model, with extra padded seat and broad, wool panels with a wide channel—this saddle was modified to produce a second model in the line, the Companion Foxhunter, with a more conservative look. Duett now offers a third version of the saddle, the Tango, with the padded seat and broad panels of the Companion Trail, but with dressage flaps.

Trail saddle design

A trail saddle is designed specifically for trail use to enhance the enjoyment of riding. The basic trail saddle has a broad, padded seat supported by foam, gel or webbing. The stirrups are hung more forward for the rider's security and comfort. The design of the trail saddle utilizes a close-contact saddle with cutout skirts, with the tree tapered in the center to improve the rider's comfort and contact with the horse. To make it easier for riders to maneuver over tricky terrain, the trail saddle is designed to keep them in the center of the saddle. The horse also benefits from this center placement by feeling balanced and less fatigued during the ride. Fenders are placed underneath the saddle and wider stirrups let the rider distribute their weight more evenly.