THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAVEL
2nd EDITION
We all know the feeling of carving that left/right/left on your local trail, the one you’ve ridden what seems like a few hundred times. It doesn’t even feel as if you had to turn the bars to get through that old familiar section—it was like the gears changed themselves; the brakes knew when to slow down; and your wheels were the ones driving you through the trees. Perhaps you’ve been at it since the days of fully-rigid frames and steel everything, or maybe you’ve only been riding for a handful of years. Regardless, somewhere along the way, you’ve thought about the wonderful places your mountain bike could take you beyond your local forests.

If that is the case, you’ve come to the right place. We’ve created this guide as a comprehensive resource for anyone planning a mountain bike trip—whether you’re doing one entirely on your own, with a guide or guiding company, or something in between.

At Sacred Rides, we’ve been leading mountain bike trips around the world since 1996—we’ve made a few mistakes along the way, but in the process we’ve also learned just about everything there is to know about planning and executing a successful mountain bike trip—from when you first start dreaming, all the way to stepping off the plane when you get home. And we want to share that with you, in the hopes that it will help you pull off amazing mountain bike trips.

In this guide you’ll find tips on how to decide on the type of trip for you, how to book a cheap flight, a comprehensive primer on travel insurance, maintenance tips, bike packing tips, and more.

If you have any comments about any of the content in this guide, or there’s anything we missed, just drop us a line at ride@sacredrides.com, or call us at 1-888-423-7849 (toll-free North America) or +1-647-728-7930 (int’l). We’re always happy to talk mountain biking and travel!

We hope this guide serves you well for years to come (and yes, we will be updating it and notifying you when updates are available).

Happy trails,
The Sacred Rides Office Team
Mike, Nate, James, Meagan, and Mark
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PLANNING YOUR TRIP
Thirteen Ways to Be a Mountain Bike Ambassador
adapted from ethicaltraveler.org and imba.com

Whether you’re going for a spin on your local trails or venturing to foreign lands, once you strap on a helmet and throw your leg over your fat-tired steed, you’ve earned your title as a mountain biker. Now we all know mountain bikers to be a jovial folk: kind, good-humoured and respectful. And we’d like to keep it that way, in all four corners of the world. Follow these 13 guidelines for mountain bike travel, and you’ll help forge a reputation for our beloved sport that we’re all proud of.

When Traveling

1) BE AWARE OF WHERE YOUR MONEY IS GOING, and patronize locally-owned inns, restaurants, and shops. Try to keep your cash within the local economy, so the people you are visiting can benefit directly from your visit.

2) Before visiting any foreign land, TAKE THE TIME TO LEARN BASIC COURTESY PHRASES: greetings, "please" & "thank you," and as many numbers as you can handle (those endless hours in airport waiting lounges, or aboard trains and boats, are all opportunities for this). It’s astonishing how far a little language goes toward creating a feeling of goodwill.

3) REMEMBER THE ECONOMIC REALITIES OF YOUR NEW CURRENCY. A few rupees, reais or Nuevo soles one way or another is not going to ruin you. Don't get all bent out of shape over the fact that a visitor who earns 100 times a local's salary might be expected to pay a few cents more for a ferry ride, a museum entrance, or an egg.

4) CURB YOUR ANGER, AND CULTIVATE YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR. Anger is a real issue for westerners—even the Dalai Lama remarks on this. It's perversely satisfying, but it never earns the respect of locals, or defuses a bad situation. A light touch—and a sense of cosmic perspective—are infinitely more useful. As former Merry Prankster Wavy Gravy says: "When you lose your sense of humor, it's just not funny anymore."

5) LEARN TO LISTEN. The ability to listen is the essence of diplomacy, on both the personal and international levels. Many of the world's conflicts arise when people feel
marginalized. Wherever you're from, listen well—and with respect—to all points of view.

6) **LEARN TO SPEAK.** People from wealthy and powerful countries often express their opinions as if they are the absolute truth. Such preaching invites anger and resentment. We suggest tempering conversations with phrases like "I believe," or "My view is," rather than, "Everybody knows...."

7) The single most useful phrase any traveler can learn: **"CAN YOU PLEASE HELP ME?"** Rarely, in any country or situation, will another human being refuse a direct request for help. Being of service, and inviting others to reciprocate, is what the phrase global community is all about.

8) **LEAVE YOUR PRECONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE WORLD AT HOME.** The inhabitants of planet Earth will continually amaze you with their generosity, hospitality and wisdom. Be open to their friendship, and aware of our common humanity, delights, and hardships.

9) **NEVER FORGET KURT VONNEGUT JR'S BEST LINE:** "Peculiar travel suggestions are dancing lessons from God." In other words: go with the flow, and give free rein to your sense of adventure!
On the Trails

10) Respect trail closures and only **RIDE OPEN TRAILS**. — ask a local bike shop or land manager for clarification if you are uncertain about the status of a trail. Do not trespass on private land. Obtain permits or other authorization as required. This also means staying on existing trails and not creating new ones.

11) Be sensitive to the dirt on which you ride and always strive to **LEAVE NO TRACE** other than your tire tracks. Wet and muddy trails are more vulnerable to damage than dry ones. Never throw away trash, and if you come across the odd wrapper, pick it up, if simply out of respect for those who've spent countless hours building and maintaining those very trails.

12) **YIELD APPROPRIATELY**: Do your utmost to let your fellow trail users know you're coming — a friendly greeting or bell ring are good methods. Try to anticipate other trail users as you ride around corners. Bikers should yield to other non-motorized trail users, unless the trail is clearly signed for bike-only travel. Bicyclists traveling downhill should yield to ones headed uphill, unless the trail is clearly signed for one-way or downhill-only traffic. In general, strive to make each pass a safe and courteous one.

13) **BE RESPONSIBLE & PLAN AHEAD**: Know your equipment, your ability, your limits and the area in which you are riding. Prepare accordingly and strive to be self-sufficient: keep your equipment in good repair and carry necessary supplies in case of mechanical breakdown and changes in weather. If riding solo on unfamiliar trails, always let someone know where you'll be and how long you plan to be away for. Always wear a helmet and appropriate safety gear.
On your own or with a guide?
by Nate Lessnick, Operations Director at Sacred Rides

The age-old question: should I do it on my own, with all the freedom and all the research and work that entails, or sacrifice some of that freedom for the fun of being in a group and relief of having all the details taken care of by someone else? To make the decision easier, we’ve made some comparison charts, comparing the pros and cons of doing a trip on your own vs. with a guide.

ON YOUR OWN

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PROS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
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| **CHEAPER**  
Save your dough – mainly for bike parts, bike gear, bike mags, bike movies. And beer. | **A LOT OF WORK**  
Gotta organize it all – get maps, book hotels, rent a van or find a shuttle, pack food, chill beers, pack first aid and full tool kit. |
| **YOUR OWN PACE**  
March to the beat of your own drum – ride the trails you want at your own pace. | **WHERE AM I?**  
At some point, somewhere along the way, you’re likely to get lost. This can very well fall under Pros, just not after watching 127 Hours. |
| **MAKE FRIENDS ON THE WAY**  
Go with the flow – bring some homemade jerky and cans of microbrew, and you’ll likely make some new riding buddies on the trails or at the local bike shop. | **SOMEONE TO PUSH YOU**  
Progression in any sport involves pushing yourself, something most easily achieved when playing with and learning from better, more accomplished players. |
| **FREEDOM...**  
Ask any mountain biker: there’s something deeply humbling and rewarding about riding solo, of being one with machine and trail with no other sound but that of your own grunts and chain slap. | **...OR LONELINESS?**  
Who’s going to be tossing high fives and ego-boosts your way after making it up that monster climb or clearing that log drop when on your own? |
| **ON A BUDGET** | **THE JOY OF SHARING** |
The belief that you need to blow a ton of cash on a trip and a bike to have a good time is a bunch of bologna. With the right attitude, roughing it on new trails with an old-school hardtail can make for the best of stories.

Your friends and relatives will quickly tire of hearing about your solitary two-wheeled escapade. Sharing photos, videos and stories for months, even decades after a trip with friends from around the world is one of the biggest draws of traveling in a group.

WITH A GUIDE

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<th>PROS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>LOCAL TRAIL KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>NOT ALWAYS YOUR PREFERRED PACE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Just as you know the ins and outs of your local trail system, a mountain bike guide will know exactly where the best trails are (some trails in remote areas can only be accessed with a guide), which sights to see and which hidden gems to check out.</td>
<td>Although most itineraries tend to be designed for specific skill and fitness levels, traveling with a group inevitably means having to wait or hustle after someone else at some point.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAFETY AND SECURITY</td>
<td>(MOSTLY) SET ITINERARY</td>
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<td>Regardless of your skill level, knowing that a guide is ahead of you and another is behind you in case anything goes awry is damn reassuring, especially on foreign dirt.</td>
<td>An easy-going nature is more or less mandatory for maximum enjoyment as you’ll be following a set itinerary and daily schedule that will most likely need to be adhered to. Most companies allow for some flexibility in the itinerary, however.</td>
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<tr>
<td>FUN IN NUMBERS</td>
<td>SOMETIMES THERE’S A JERK</td>
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<td>Much like sex, riding on your own, although at times satisfying, just isn’t as fun. The joys of mountain biking often involve laughing over that ladder bridge bail or reminiscing about that sweet gnarly descent with a bunch of other helmet-clad nutcases.</td>
<td>Who’s to say you’re even going to like your new riding crew? Although most mountain bikers tend to be of jovial, fair-tempered nature, we all know one or two wackos who seem hell-bent on giving us a bad rep.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOCAL EXPERTISE</td>
<td>OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE</td>
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<tr>
<td>As with any form of travel to foreign</td>
<td>An openness to new experiences and a</td>
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countries, whether it be museum hopping or wine tasting, you're bound to learn more, gain a greater understanding of local customs and ways of life, and just get more out of the whole experience when following a knowledgeable expert.

willingness to try new things is par for the course, as at one point or another, you may very well be pushed out of your comfort zone or sense of familiarity.

| **NO DETAILS TO SWEAT OVER**<br>You're free to focus fully on the ride, and have someone else sweat over the small, yet paramount details, like getting all riding permits and making sure beers are chilled at the end of an epic ride. | **MORE $**<br>Unless you plan on crashing at the Ritz-Carlton and dining on caviar, it pretty much goes without saying: you'll be paying more for a guided trip. |

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**About Nate**

*I fell in love with the outdoors and riding a bike at an early age. Joining the Sacred Rides crew as the ops director in 2012 has allowed me to combine my passions for traveling, mountain biking and building one awesome company. Perhaps the greatest satisfaction I get is seeing other people live life to the fullest and making their dreams a reality.*
How to ‘Sell’ a Mountain Bike Trip to Your Significant Other
By Mike Brcic, Founder/Chief Happiness Officer, Sacred Rides

If you're a mountain biker of a certain vintage, it's probably not as easy to just take off somewhere with your bike as it used to be: there are other people to bring into the decision-making process when considering/planning a mountain bike trip - people like your spouse, your kids, etc...

So if you find yourself in a situation where you have to get consent from a significant other for your mountain bike wanderings, here are a few suggested strategies:

1) "Honey, it will make me a much happier - and hence much better - husband/wife/father/mother."

2) "I'll be in such good shape after a week of mountain biking that I'll have way more energy to help around the house."

3) "I NEED to go on a mountain bike trip. It's burning a chainring-sized hole in my heart."

4) "Please. Please. Please. Can I go? Can I? Can I?" (repeat daily until he/she relents)

5) "Let me go on this mountain bike trip and you can go on that ______ trip you've always wanted to go on." (a classic and time-tested strategy)

6) Get your partner hooked on mountain biking and bring him/her with you. This strategy has the highest longterm odds of ensuring lots of mountain bike trips are in your future. Send them on a skills camp to start!

7) Stash a suitcase somewhere, then just say you're going to the store to get some milk. Then grab the suitcase, hop on your bike, and slip out the back door. (n.b.: this strategy is NOT recommended if you actually want to stay with your significant other.)

About Mike
I'm the founder of Sacred Rides. I started this company way back in 1996 in beautiful Fernie, British Columbia, out of a passion for mountain biking and beautiful places. 17 years later I'm proud to have brought mountain biking and mountain bikers to the four corners of the globe!
MOUNTAIN BIKE TIPS
How to Set Up Your Mountain Bike
By Karen Eller, 3x Transalp Challenge winner

You just got your brand new mountain bike home from the store. Awesome! Except for the fact that your mountain bike is set up for the average mountain biker, and you're not average, are you?

Here are a few tips for making your mountain bike a natural extension of you:

Regardless of whether you already have your own bike or if you've just bought a new one, there are many ways to improve its performance and riding features.

When new to the sport, you very quickly find yourself in front of a wall of specific terms, bike slang and technical details. It may not be easy to remember everything at first. However, there are some essentials to know. Additionally, it is a huge benefit if you are able to adjust your bike's basic settings by yourself.

A saddle at the wrong height wastes a lot of energy, a stem that's too long puts the load on the front of the body in sitting position and makes the bike more difficult to control. A handlebar that's too low will make the bike unnecessarily nervous. Unlike a car, bike components such as the fork and shock should be set according to the rider. While a mountain bike can seem so simple at first glance, it becomes a really complex sports engine when it comes to settings.

Each one of you should take the opportunity to have a perfectly adjusted bike from the beginning and be present while these settings are being done. Don't forget that bikes need to be checked from time to time, even old ones!
**Cockpit**
The handlebar and the stem are the bike’s control center (cockpit), just like the steering wheel and the column are a car’s control center. Begin moving the gear and brake levers inwards so that you can use the brake lever ideally with just one finger or a maximum of two. Once these are properly placed, turn the bar on its axis to find a comfortable position in which your wrists are as straight as possible.

![Image of cockpit](image)

The handlebar should more or less correspond to the width of your shoulders. Bikers with narrow shoulders can possibly shorten their handlebar, while those with wider shoulders should choose one accordingly.

**Sitting Position**
Professional bikers immediately notice every millimeter that their saddle was moved higher or lower, because they have their specific sitting position almost printed in their DNA. This demonstrates the importance of an optimal combination of height, position and gradient of the saddle.

First of all, your seat post should have a quick release (or even better, a dropper post). As a result, you can easily lower your saddle before a descent. In addition to this technical detail and before going any further, you will have to adjust your saddle to the correct height. To do this, sit on your bike with your heel (in cycling shoes!) on the pedal placed at its lowest point, but aligned with the seat post (so slightly inclined). Your leg should not be completely tensed. You can mark your optimal saddle height with a line of permanent marker in order to quickly find your correct height after a descent.
The next step is to adjust the horizontal position of the saddle on the seat post. To do this, a second person is needed. Attach a weight to a string and make it hang from your tibial plateau (the bone just below the kneecap) while sitting on your bike. As a general rule, it is assumed that when the foot pedal is clicked in the horizontal position, the string should fall just behind or in line with the axis of the pedal. If the string does not fall correctly, then you have to move your saddle accordingly until the right position is found! A saddle that sits too far forward causes pain in the knees while a saddle that sits too far back overloads the calf muscles.

The gradient of the saddle is the final touch and plays an important role in the comfort of the bike. This setting allows shoving of pressure points while sitting. You can check the angle of your seat with a bubble level. If your saddle points too far down, you will slide forward and there will be too much pressure exerted on the bottom of your palms. On the other hand, if your saddle points too far up, it can cause uncomfortable pressure in the crotch. Some bikers ride with a slightly downwardly inclined seat, but normally it is better to have it perfectly horizontal for best allocation of your body weight. Although in the end it is up to the individual to decide!

**Fork Settings**
Currently, the most used forks on the bike scene are produced by FOX and Rock Shox. Air and oil suspensions have replaced metal springs, which means that you can adjust
the stiffness of the fork by adjusting the air pressure with a small pump and you can set the damping (compression and rebound) by rotating a knob.

On FOX forks, attach your shock pump to the valve placed on the left of the crown. Normally, you should pump the equivalent of your own weight in PSI (you will find this unit on all pumps). Sometimes, a little less is enough for a very comfortable setting. Rebound can be adjusted using the red knob under the right tube. When rotating it inwards, the rebound gets slower. From a fully open position, turn the knob 1 to 3 times. This should suit most trails.

On Rock Shox forks, you will find a weight/air pressure chart printed on the tube - a small detail that facilitates settings. These forks have a negative chamber in the lower part of the tube and a positive chamber in the upper part which must be adjusted accordingly. The chart defines a scale of settings for each of them but in general, we just choose the smaller value. Just as for FOX, the rebound knob is underneath the right tube. Once these settings are done, there is not much left to adjust. From this point we use a Lockout system to completely block the fork when pedaling uphill on asphalt.

**Shock Settings**

Most air shock models are produced by FOX and are set in the same way as forks. You adjust stiffness with a shock pump and rebound with a knob (usually red, as on the forks). However, we barely find any recommendations about air pressure on the bikes. So you just have to try and get the right feel.

From here on, you have to add an important new technical word to your bike vocabulary: sag. According to your rear triangle system, you will need a sag of between 20 and 30 percent of the piston length. To check this, shove the rubber O-ring to the very end of the shock shaft. Then, sit on your saddle and see how far the shock travels.
supporting only your body weight. The distance from the shock shaft to the edge of the rubber O-ring is the sag. However, for an accurate setting, it is better to get advice from your local dealer or from an expert. Do not forget that only an optimally adjusted fully will make for the most fun!

Same as with the fork, the rebound is set according to individual preferences. From a fully open position, 2-3 knob turns are usually enough. Caution: you must proceed in a systematic way! This means, you have to screw the knobs one after the other and not all at the same time. Eventually, you can do the following check: sit on your bike and ride down a sidewalk, still sitting on your saddle. Your shock should normally bounce one and a half times. If this is the case, then the setting is correct.

Some models have a shock Lockout or Platform system, which you can activate with a small lever. When flapping it down, the rear triangle either becomes completely stiff (Lockout) or resistant without being completely blocked (Platform). This setting is intended to facilitate uphill pedaling and avoid annoying seesaws. Currently, some manufacturers (eg. Rock Shox or SCOTT) enable you to block the shock with a small lever placed on the handlebar. The big advantage of this system is that you no longer need to remove your hand from the bars while riding.

To use these functions correctly and optimally, you should definitely spend some time trying different settings, learn to read the terrain in which you ride and develop a certain feeling to determine which setting you need. Practice makes perfect!

Tip:
If you go on a bike tour with a big backpack, it is better to set your fork and shock accordingly (i.e. stiffer) or determine the sag once you’re all geared up.

Tire Pressure and Choice
There is no bike part that is less considered than tires. Yet, tires have the greatest influence on riding behavior, rolling resistance and safety. You can read the width of a tire – always measured in inches – on the tire’s edge. The narrower the tire, the less comfortable and more likely they are to puncture. Lightweight women obviously do not
need 2.4 inch monsters, but there is nothing to say against a fair 2.25 inch pair. Note: tires under 2 inches should no longer be considered as mountain bike tires.

With regards to the tire pressure, you should not go beyond 30 psi. Only bikers over 80 kilos need that much pressure, or even more. Men usually inflate their tires with more air pressure than required as this setting depends on their own body weight. The lighter you are, the lower your tire pressure should be. The minimum pressure recommended by the manufacturer is always written on the edge of the tire.

Concerning tire choice, you should not only take into account a low rolling resistance but you should also pay attention to the transfer of braking forces on the ground. Your local store will give you best advice if you tell them where you intend to ride.

About Karen
Karen was born and raised in Munich, Germany, and was primarily a skier until the age of 15. She has won the TransAlp Challenge three times, and has had various podiums at other marathon and enduro-style events. She is a founder of SCOTT’s Contessa Team, a coach, author, and all-round bike lover.
What to pack when going on a mountain bike ride
By Nate Lessnick

The bare necessities

1. Hydration pack
There are many to choose from, so we suggest you narrow it down to features that are important for you (ventilation, size of pockets, breathability, etc.). Our guides – who need to lug a ton of gear with them – happen to be big fans of Osprey’s Raptor packs.

2. Lots and lots of water
When going on a 3 to 6 hour day ride, you’ll want to bring at least 3 litres of water with you. A combination of water bladder and bottle works best. Remember that it’s always better to have more than not enough. It’s also wise to pack some form of electrolytes, either in powder or tablets. For something that tastes good and works well, we recommend Nuun hydration tablets.

3. Spare tubes, pump and tire leavers
A flat tire is one of the most common bike hiccups you’ll encounter – so be prepared. 2 spare tubes should suffice depending on the length of your trip, and 2-3 tire leavers. If you’re going on a multiday trip, it’s a good idea to pack a patch kit to fix punctured tubes in the evenings or on long shuttle drives. Grab a pump that’s compatible with both Presta and Schrader valves (like this one, by Lezyne), and make sure the tubes you buy fit your tire size.

4. Multitool and chain breaker
You should always ride with a good multitool. No need to spend over $30 – a basic multitool with hex wrenches and Phillips screwdriver will come in handy in a pinch (like this one, by Topeak). More expensive multitools will often come with a small chain breaker tool, although we find it better to buy this piece separately as its easier to handle and more reliable.

5. Chain lube, spare chain links and/or Quick Link
Pack a small bottle of chain lube as it always comes in handy (staff pick: Boeshield T-9 – it’s good stuff). Always be sure to carry a few spare links or better yet, use a Powerlink that unhooks and easily re-attaches when a chain is compromised.

6. Spare derailleur hanger
A derailleur hanger is the small piece that connects your rear derailleur to your bike frame. A bad bend or a break means you’re faced with a long walk home. Hangers are generally unique to each bike, and shops will generally only stock hangers for the models they sell, so be sure to pack a spare that’s fit for your bike.

7. ID, cell phone and money

Should-haves
1. Gloves
2. Sunglasses
3. Rain jacket
4. Duct tape
5. Zip ties
6. Swiss army knife

Nice-to-haves
1. Camera and/or GoPro
2. Sunscreen and bug repellent
3. Night light
4. GPS
5. Cans() of beer
6. Spare socks & underwear for ride home
Pre-Ride Checklist
6 to-do's before hopping on your bike

You should inspect your bike before every ride to avoid potential problems on the trail. Use the following quick checklist before each ride to improve riding efficiency while maximizing safety.

1. **Let your bike fall.** Pick your bike up 5-6 inches off the ground and let it drop. Investigate any rattling or odd noises when it hits the ground. They could be signs of loose parts.

2. **Test the brakes.** Engage the brake levers to make sure they are functioning properly. They should snap back into position after letting go. Test out your lever-reach (how far you need to squeeze your brakes before then engage with the brake pads), and adjust them if needed. This is usually done through a dial on the lever body, or on older models, with a small Allen key.

3. **Tires OK?** Make sure the tires are inflated according to the specifications on the side wall of each tire. Check for cuts, tears, and rips and replace if necessary. This step only takes a minute, but it is one of the most important steps you should take to ensure safety and efficiency before every ride.

4. **Spin the wheel.** It should spin freely without wobbling and there should be no contact between with the brake pads.

5. **Secure the wheel.** Most mountain bikes have quick release levers, which are levers located at the hub (center of the wheel) that allow for easy removal or adjustment of the wheel without using a tool. These should be securely tightened.

6. **Secure the headset.** The headset is the short tube located at the front of the bike connecting the forks and the bike frame. Your handlebars slip into this tube, which pivots to allow steering. To test if the headset is secure, apply the front brakes while gently tilting the bike forward and back (your rear tire should raise up and down). Listen for clicking, which is a sign of a loose headset. Tighten if necessary.
Two On-Trail Maintenance Tips to Save Your Ride
By James Fedosov

Having to do these two different fixes is pretty much inevitable if you own a mountain bike (or any bike at all, really), so read up— they just might save you from walking home.

The flat tire fix
You might not be a real cyclist if you don’t know how to fix a flat. In order to change that, follow these steps:

• First, you need to take your wheel out of the fork or rear dropouts, depending on which wheel has the flat. The easiest way to do this trail-side is to flip your bike upside down (onto its seat and handlebars). Then, loosen the quick-release or axle nut holding your wheel to the bike, and pull the wheel up towards you. Bear in mind to disengage v-brakes if you have them, and if it is the rear wheel, pull the derailleur out of the way as well.
• Once the wheel is off, you should reach for your trusty tire levers. Slip the flat end of one lever over the rim and under the tire’s bead (stiff edges of your tire), and push down on the end of the lever still in your hand. This will bring the bead over the rim.
• Next, use the second lever to get under the gap between bead and rim that you just created with the first lever. Slide the second lever all the way around the wheel— so that one side of the tire is completely off the rim.
• Remove the old tube, and if you have the time (and patience), inspect it for where the puncture was by re-inflating it and searching for the leaky spot. Note that if you see two small holes next to each other (think snakebite-looking), that you likely had a pinch flat—a result of underinflation.
• Be sure to run your fingers along the inside of the tire and rim, in search of the any debris that could have caused the flat (a thorn, piece of glass, or small nail or rock).
• Patch the tube, or grab a new one out of your pack. Inflate it enough that it will just hold its shape. This makes putting it back into the tire and onto the rim much easier.
• Put the valve stem through the corresponding hole in your rim, and slide the tube into the tire. Using your palms, work the bead of the tire back onto the rim. Try starting by the valve stem and finishing at the opposite side. Be careful to not pinch the tube in the process!
• Re-pump your tire to the desired psi, ensuring that the tire’s bead is seated correctly on the rim. This will ensure smooth rolling over even terrain.
Repairing a broken chain

One minute you’re pedaling towards that big climb, the next minute, your pedals are spinning so freely, you’d think you were in some sort of super granny-gear...if it weren’t for the fact that you were no longer being propelled forward, and the nice big *kwa-PING* telling you that you just snapped your chain. *Bummer.*

Check out these steps before you head out, and you’ll be laughing along again in no time:

- Flip your bike upside-down, onto its seat and handlebars.
- If it isn’t still in place, feed the chain around the front chainring, and through the derailleur and corresponding rear cog. This can be tricky while your bike is upside down, so use caution to do it right the first time.
- Next, if you have one on your multi-tool or chainbreaker, use the chain hook to hold the two ends of the chain together. Be sure to place the hook two links on either side of the break, to make working on it easier.
- Since you will likely be able to re-use the end of the chain with the inner plates, it does not need any extra attention. However, if the end with the outer plates is bent, you will need to remove one extra link in order to have one end with a working inner plate, and the other with a working outer plate.
- To do so, place your chain in the chain breaker, aligning the tool’s plunger (the part that drives the pin out of the chain) in line with the corresponding pin. Hold the chain in place, and tighten the chain breaker by turning its handle (or in some cases, an Allen key) in a clockwise direction. This will drive the pin out of the plates, and leave you with a working outer plate.
- Re-align the inner and outer plates from each end of the chain with your fingers. Then, insert the “pilot end” (the end that is slightly rounded) of your new replacement pin into the hole of the plates.
- Use the chain tool to drive the replacement pin into the plates, re-connecting your chain. You should not need excessive force to push the pin in, and make sure to stop when the pin is fully seated. If the link is stiff, work it back and forth with your fingers to loosen it up.

*NB* If you are using a SRAM Powerlink chain, common on many mountain bikes, there are replacement “master links”, typically gold in colour, that will re-connect your chain without (or at least with minimal) tools. They are very handy to have on hand!

About James

I’ve been addicted to all things cycling from a very young age. Growing up in Niagara allowed me to feed my need for cross country racing through my grade school years. I now race and ride all type of bikes – fixed gear to downhill. When I’m not working as Sacred Rides’ Rider Experience Director, I study for my B.Sc. in Nutrition at the University of Guelph!
Top 7 Tips on Keeping Your Bike in Tip-Top Shape
By the team at Sacred Rides

You've already spent a pretty penny on your bike, so why not squeeze every ounce of pure blissful joy out of it? Regular preventive maintenance will keep your bike rolling safely for longer. And doing your own bike maintenance saves labour costs, and proves an invaluable skill to have in your back pocket in case a mechanical threatens to ruin your ride. It's quite easy to take care of your own bike, and can mean the difference between riding all day or walking home.

Here are our top 7 tips on keeping your bike ride-ready:

#1: Clean your bike.
Want to extend the life of your ride? Keeping it clean on a consistent basis is a sure-fire way of doing so.

What to do: Use a basic biodegradable cleaner such as Simple Green, a sponge, a towel and an old toothbrush to clean everything: the frame, chain, chain rings, cassette, derailleurs, pedals, brakes, and seat. No need to use bucket-loads of water or strong jets; a gentle rain-like spray or mist will do just fine to rinse away any soap residue. Also, remove the seat post for a thorough clean, and add a small amount of bike grease before reinstalling it.

#2: Inspect your brakes.
Brakes are a vital part of your bike, and ensuring they are in good working condition and properly adjusted can mean the difference between a flawlessly-maneuvered corner and losing control, which could lead to serious injuries. Keep these puppies running smoothly and they'll pay you back in spades.

What to do: Check the brake pads, the small rectangular metallic and/or rubberized surface that actually rubs against the disk (or wheel rim). These wear down over time and need to be replaced. Use a flashlight to assess whether the pads are wearing evenly and replace them if they show excessive wear.

#3: Watch your wheels.
Wheels (rims) hold your tires in place and provide stability and smoothness while
riding. Properly tuned and trued wheels (that don’t wobble or rub against the brakes) mean consistent contact between tires and dirt.

What to do: Elevate your bike and spin the wheels; both should move smoothly, without wobbling. A wobbly rim can be adjusted with a spoke wrench - a simple fix a bike mechanic should take on if you’re not sure what you’re doing. Replace your wheels if denting or other damage is excessive.

#4: Inspect the drivetrain.
A bike’s drivetrain includes the pedals, chain, chainring, derailleur (the ingenious little device that moves the chain to make riding easier or harder) and rear-wheel cassette (the set of teeth attached to your rear wheel). The drivetrain is important because it transfers the power generated by your legs to the rear wheel, which moves the bike.

What to do: You’ll likely need a partner or bike stand to assist with this part of the tune-up. Raise the rear wheel and spin as you did when checking the wheels (task #3 above). This time, shift through all the gears. Shifting should be smooth and easy to perform. Inspect the chain, chainrings, derailleur and cassette for damage (excessive wear, missing teeth, dents, scrapes, etc.). Note that small chainrings wear out sooner than large chainrings, and that the chain is the most frequently replaced component of the drivetrain (should be done every 2,000-3,000 miles). Replacement cost is generally between $20 and $50. Waiting too long to replace a chain will wear down the other drivetrain components faster. If shifting is not smooth, it’s best to take your bike to a repair shop to have it looked at by a professional.

#5: Check both tires.
Mountain bike tires offer traction with the ground, allowing travel over a variety of unlikely surfaces, like mud, rocks, roots and ladder bridges. In addition, they form a flexible cushion which helps smooth out bumps and thumps along the way, making for a more comfortable ride.

What to do: First, check your tire pressure. The ideal pressure will vary according to the terrain you’re riding, but as a general rule, you’ll want to keep your tire pressure between 30-45 psi. Lower psi will provide more traction (grip) on technical and loose terrain, but is more prone to flats. Air will escape naturally from your tires, so be sure to invest in a good floor pump with gauge, and check tire pressure often. Second,
check your tires for splits, cracks or tears, especially along the side-walls (where the
tire doesn’t touch the ground). You’ll also want to check the tread for uneven or
excessive wear, in which case you’ll want to have it replaced. Damaged tires are
prone to burst, causing a sudden loss of control—a potentially dangerous situation.
Changing tubes and tires is a simple fix that requires tire levers and a pump to re-
inflate the inner tube.

#6: Check the cables.
Cables are either made of tightly coiled metal wire or oil caged in a plastic housing.
Cables connect the shifter and brakes on the handlebars to the derailleur and brake
pads. Those connected to the shifters assist with moving the chain from one gear to
another via the derailleur, while those connected to the brakes aid in stopping the
bike when the lever on the handlebars is pulled.

What to do: Inspect the cable and surrounding rubber housing for cracks, crimps,
rust, dirt and looseness. New cables and/or oil make shifting and braking smooth,
which increases bike performance. If braking/shifting is not optimal, get your cables
replaced or oil changed at your local bike shop. Unless you’re well trained in this task,
changing cables/oil can be tricky and time consuming. Schedule replacement every 2-
5 years based on use. If you ride your bike year-round, consider replacing your
cables/oil yearly.

#7: Add lubricant.
Oil lubricant coats the chain and other components of the drivetrain, helping them
last longer and work more efficiently. Lube also reduces accumulation of dirt and
grime, which helps increase performance of the moving parts.

What to do: Apply lubricant evenly to the chain while slowly rotating the pedals in a
counter-clockwise direction. Also, remember to lube moving parts on the derailleur,
the pivot point on the brake levers and any exposed cable wire. Remember to wipe
off any excess oil with a clean, dry rag, especially on the chain. A properly lubricated
bike makes shifting and braking smooth, thereby increasing performance. You can
fix minor rust spots by rubbing them with steel wool. You may want to wear work
gloves to protect your hands as steel wool can cause splinters in your skin. It is usually
too difficult to remove rust from certain components (e.g., the chain), which should be
simply be replaced.
How to Adjust Your Rear Derailleur
By Syd, singletracks.com

Your rear derailleur is one of the key components of your bike – one you use (or should be using) often, and one that can seriously affect your ride if it’s not working properly. Rather than taking it in to your local bike shop every time it's ghost shifting or jamming your chain into your spokes, take a few minutes to get to know your rear derailleur and make friends with it.

Before we get started there are a few derailleur parts I’d like to illustrate and explain.
Limit Screws
There are three limit screws (shown above): the B-screw (B-tension adjustment) found on both Shimano and SRAM rear derailleurs, the H-screw (high gear limit stop), and the L-screw (low gear limit stop).

B-tension Adjustment
The B-screw controls the derailleur body’s angle in relation to the sprocket-set. Shift to the largest sprocket and check the distance between the guide pulley and the large sprocket. Adjust the B-screw until the pulley rubs the large sprocket, and then tighten the screw until it barely clears and the chain does not bind.

High Gear Limit Stop

The H-limit screw high gear limit stop prevents the guide pulley from shifting any further past the highest gear and into the axle. In order to adjust it properly there must be zero tension on the lower inner cable. If you feel tension, loosen the cable adjuster until there is none. Now check from behind to see how the chain is riding on the smallest sprocket. If it looks like it wants ride off into the axle, tighten the H-screw clockwise until it lines up. If it looks like it is rubbing on the next gear, loosen the screw until the chain is nicely centered on the sprocket. Now re-adjust the cable tension until the derailleur shifts smoothly down to the next gear.
Low Gear Limit Stop

The L-limit screw prevents the guide pulley from shifting any further past the lowest gear and into the wheel spokes. Shift down to the lowest gear, step behind the bike, and check how the chain rides on the sprocket. If it looks like it wants to ride into the spokes, tighten the L-screw clockwise until it is centered on the sprocket. If it looks like it wants to shift down, loosen the screw until it lines up. As an extra precaution you can use your thumb to gently push the derailleur body and make sure the chain will not run into the spokes, as this could obviously have a nasty effect on both you and your bike.

Now that we have the limit screws figured out, let’s start adjusting your gears. This article assumes you’re using a conventional derailleur where the default, no-tension state places the chain in high gear (smallest cog in the back).
NOTE: Stop here and read this first. Check your chain to make sure it isn’t bent. Look down the chainline as you back pedal and look for twisting. If anything looks wonky, replace the chain first.

NOTE 2: Check the cassette and chain rings to make sure the teeth are straight and none are missing or bent. Both these items will make smooth shifting impossible.

Replacing Cables and Housing
Starting from the top, shift all the way into high gear. From here, if you want to replace the cable (tis the season), you would release the bolt that holds the cable at the rear derailleur and remove the old cable. After opening up your shifter pod, (SRAM X.0, x-9, x-7) it’s just a matter of loosening up the single screw on the pod, pulling the cable out, and inserting a new cable (replace cap). For Shimano shifters there is a plastic cover to remove (near the thumb shifter); pull out the old cable and insert the new one (replace plug).

Check out your cable housing and remove the housing caps to get a better look. If the ends look frayed it may be time to replace the cable housing as well. If you do decide to change the housing, use the existing pieces to match the lengths. Cutting shifter cable housing requires a proper cutter (not a side cutter as it squishes the housing and increases drag on the cable); try the Park CN-10 cutter. Using a proper cutter also ensures a nice clean, straight cut essential for proper shifting. Once the housing is all cut and installed with cable ends, feed the shifting cable through and down to your derailleur. Do not attach the cable at this point.

Alignment and Tensioning
Check out the alignment of your derailleur in two spatial planes. From behind the bike, first check to see if your derailleur hanger is straight. Next, look at the two jockey pulleys and the cassette body to make sure they all line up – there shouldn’t be an angle between them. If there is and it’s small, you can try to bend it back by hand. Looking top down at the derailleur, check out the pulley positions again, this time relative to the cassette body. They should be straight from this angle as well; if not, you may be able to tweak the derailleur hanger to get them in line.
After all the limits are set, let's get the chain in place and install the shifting cable. Both Shimano and SRAM derailleurs have a small detent with mounting bolt where the cable goes. Before you tighten down the cable, double check that everything is routed properly and you have turned the adjuster screw all the way in and then out two turns (more on this later). Pull the cable and tighten it in. Turn the pedals and pay attention to the rear cassette as you go and shift up one gear. If the derailleur hesitates then you need to turn out the adjuster screw on the shifter pod (half turns) until it shifts. Shift down and back up again checking to see you get a clean shift. If you're satisfied, try shifting up again; if the shift is jumping almost two gears at a time, you went too far. Check to see (viewed from behind) that in any given gear, everything is in line as you shift. The chain line on each gear should be dead on.

Once you have the derailleur shifting smoothly on the stand, get out there and test it out! Adjusting a rear derailleur takes patience but in the end it's a great skill for any mountain biker to have.
10 Awesome Accessories for “Serious” Mountain Bikers
by Mike Brcic, Sacred Rides

So you’ve gotten serious about mountain biking, and are ready to splurge on some accessories and/or upgrade the ones you already have.

Here are 10 accessory upgrades that will help you get more out of the sport and ride safer and with more enjoyment. They’re ranked in order from most important to least (get the ones at the top of the list first).

Total expenditure (for really good accessories): ~$2400. If you buy them all at once, see if the shop will cut you a bit of a deal.

1. An Expedition-Style Hydration Pack: water bottles that affix to a water bottle cage on your frame are the cheapest option, but they generally don’t carry enough water for a long-distance ride. If you’re planning on doing any rides that are more than 2 hours long you should invest in a hydration pack (i.e. a small pack that goes on your back and has a water bladder and hose). We love Osprey Packs – they’re some of the best-built and feature-rich packs on the market.

COST: $150

2. Dropper seatpost: unless you’re riding DH exclusively, a dropper post (i.e. a seatpost whose height you can control with a handlebar mount) is one of the best upgrades you can get.

COST: $300

3. Knee/shin and/or Elbow Pads: If you’re getting serious about mountain biking, you’re probably riding more aggressive terrain, and probably wiping out more often. Invest in a set of arm and leg armour to protect your hide. If you can only afford one of the two, go for knee/shin protection (your legs tend to get beat up more than your arms).

You can go one of two ways with this: a) knee pad only or b) knee and shin protection. I recommend the knee/shin combo – my shins tend to get pretty beat up my pedals on particularly difficult rides.
COST: $120 (for arm and leg protection)

4. **Shoes (and Pedals):** You probably started out riding flat pedals with sneakers. Now that you’re an ‘official’ mountain biker, it’s time to graduate to proper pedals and shoes.

Unless you’re riding a lot of North-shore-type trails with lots of stunts and aerial features (for which being able to dismount quickly is a must), SPDs/clipless pedals are a great investment— you’ll feel more “at one” with your bike, and your pedal stroke will be more efficient.

Of course, SPD pedals will require the appropriate shoe. Get a pair with a nice stiff sole to make your pedaling more efficient, but make sure they’re still comfortable.

COST: $250 for pedals and shoes

5. **Protective Glasses with Removable Lenses:** You’re riding with glasses, right? Please tell me you ride with glasses!

If you shelled out for just a basic set of glasses with clear lenses, now you can upgrade to a set with removable lenses. Multiple lenses will allow you to a) select different style/colour lenses for different lighting conditions and b) replace lenses that are scratched, fogged or dirty so you can see again. Get a set with polarized lenses.

COST: $100

6. **Night Lights:** Mountain biking is awesome. Mountain biking at night is even more awesome. The trails are way less busy, everything’s quieter, and everything’s just a little bit cooler.

Don’t ride at night with just a $30 headlamp – you won’t see well enough and will likely tag a tree or two along the way. Invest in a good set of lights. A few things to consider:
- brightness (how many lumens)
- how long the battery lasts
- how quickly the batteries recharge
- if you want a headlamp add-on (in addition to the bar mounts)
e) does it offer different brightness modes?

COST: $300 for a decent set

7. **POV Camera**: Now that you’re shreaddin’, you want to capture all your awesomeness on film. GoPro and Contour make two of the best cameras on the market, and get a chest mount to go along with your camera (helmet and handlebar-mounted footage is usually pretty shaky).

COST: $400

8. **Chainbreaker**: if you’ve been using a chainbreaker as part of a multi-tool, you know by now that they’re usually pretty crappy. Investing in a good quality standalone chainbreaker will make those trailside emergency chain fixes way easier and quicker.

COST: $40

9. **Bike Stand**: if you’re going to get serious about mountain biking, you should get serious about mountain bike maintenance. At the very least you should be able to tune/clean your drivetrain, replace your brake pads, and be able to clean and lube your bike. All of this is way easier on a proper bike stand.

COST: $250

10. **Travel Case/Bag**: You’ve invested $5000 in your carbon-fiber beauty and you’re going to ship it across the world in a cardboard box? What are you, nuts?

If you want to properly protect your bike for airline travel, you need to invest in either a hard-shell bike case or bike bag. We recommend high-quality bike bags for ease of use and portability. See ‘A Guide to Protecting Your Mountain Bike’ in this guide.

COST: $400

11. **An Awesome Jersey**: it’s time to graduate from your ‘Team Building Exercise ’99’ t-shirt to a proper mountain bike jersey. There are generally two styles:

a) **Form-fitting XC jersey**: tight-fitting, usually with a front zipper (either full or ¾) and back pockets
b) All-mountain/freeride jersey: looser-fitting jersey, usually worn over armour, without zippers or back pockets.

Get the appropriate one for your riding style, and get one made of fabric that wicks away sweat. If you can afford it, get 2 (or more) of them. Unless you don’t care about hygiene, you can’t really get more than one ride out of a jersey before having to wash it.

COST: $75

12. Riding Buddy: Ok, technically not an accessory, but a good riding buddy or two makes every ride that much better.

COST: a few beers every now and then
TRAINING, NUTRITION, AND HEALTH
Nutrition for before, during, and after your ride

One of the easiest ways to feel better about your physique and your riding abilities (aside from hitting them gym) is managing what you eat. In the next few sections, you'll read about how best to manage what you eat before, during, and after your ride, as well as a recipe corresponding to each.

The Pre-Ride Meal

Feeling light headed during your morning interval session? Hungry soon after you eat that morning bagel? These are results often related to an unbalanced breakfast.

Science has shown that there is in fact NO one-size fits all optimal macronutrient ratio (carbohydrates to proteins to fats). That said, there are a few rules of thumb to go by, if investing in a sports nutritionist to customize a plan for you is out of your means or interest.

5 Tips for your Pre-Ride Meal

• Try to consume your Pre-Ride Meal at least 1 hour prior to riding to avoid stomach cramping.
• Consume 250 mL of water at least 1 hour prior to riding to avoid stomach cramping, dehydration (and having to pee the moment you saddle up).
• Reach for real, whole foods (you will be eating bars and gels soon enough!).
• Include a combination of all the macronutrients: carbohydrates, protein and fats.
• For the “Rule of Thumb Ratio”, here you go: 60% carbohydrate, 20% fat, and 20% protein (again, this is only a rule of thumb and the ratio differs amongst individuals).
5-minute Blueberry Breakfast Bowl
If a pre-work pedal is your thing, this recipe is for you! Sitting at an approximate 550 calories, this dish replenishes your overnight deficit fueling you for your pre-work pedal. This recipe is 100% gluten free.

Ingredients
- 1/2 banana
- 1/4 cup Quinoa Flakes (Oatmeal would be the alternate)
- 1/4 cup water
- 1 tsp of coconut oil
- 1/2 cup blueberries (Frozen, organic is my personal preference)
- 1 tbsp hemp seed
- 1 tbsp chia seeds

Preparation
- In a microwave safe bowl, add banana, Quinoa Flakes and water.
- Microwave on high for 3 minutes.
- With a fork, mash coconut oil into softened banana and cooked Quinoa Flakes.
- Fold in blueberries (I use frozen blueberries, as they defrost while cooling down the bowl enough to eat right away!).
- Top with 1 tbsp hemp seed and 1 tbsp chia seeds.
- Eat.

Preparation Time: 5 minutes.

Recipe developed and tested by Sacred Rides very own Meagan Broughton, Business Development Director and food-loving cyclist.
The Ride “Meal”

If you are anything like me, and most avid cyclists I know, you like to eat - a lot. This shouldn’t change when on the bike. Eat, a lot, and often. Eating on the bike will avoid the infamous “bonk” and reduce the chances of gorging when you and your dirty bike roll back home.

Science has shown that there is in fact NO one-size fits all optimal macronutrient ratio (carbohydrates to proteins to fats). That said, there are some rules of thumb to go by, if investing in a sports nutritionist to customize a plan for you is out of your means or interest.

Fuel:
• Consume 30-60 grams of carbohydrate per hour. This equates to 120-240 calories per hour and can be a combination of both liquids and solids.

For example:
- 1 Carrot Cake Clif Bar has 45 grams of carbohydrates and 240 calories.
- 1 Cashew Lara Bar has 23 grams of carbohydrates and 230 calories.

Hydration:
• Consume 1 bottle (750 mL) of water and 1 bottle of sports drink to replenish electrolytes every hour.

For example:
- 2 scoops of Mandarin Orange HEED has 54 grams of carbohydrates and 200 calories.

Timing:
• Eat before you are hungry.
• Drink before you are thirsty.
• Begin consumption no later than 30 minutes into your ride. Aim to consume calories and hydrate every 30 minutes.
• For rides 3+ hours, consider bringing “real” foods along that are high in carbohydrates, low in protein and moderate in fat.

If you have had your fair share of store bought bars and just can’t choke down another, try giving these real food brownie bars a try. Your kids will even like them!
Chocolate Fudge Raw Vegan Brownie Bars
This recipe is 100% gluten free, vegan and paleo.

Ingredients:
- 2 cups Roasted Mixed Nuts (I suggest Central Roast Roasted Mixed Nuts with Sea Salt)
- 2 cups Medjool Dates (pitted)
- 1 cup Cacao Powder + 3 tbsp for dusting
- 1 tsp Pure Vanilla Extract

Preparation:
- Using a food processor or coffee bean grinder, grind 1 cup nuts into flour. (If there are still some larger pieces, don’t stress, as long as most has turned to flour). Set aside.
- Roughly chop the other 1 cup nuts (I do this by hand). Set aside.
- Using a food processor, blend dates until a dough forms. (It will likely turn into a big ball, so spread it out with a spatula). Add vanilla and 1 cup cacao powder to the dates and blend until combined.
- Add all nut flour and roughly chopped nuts to the date mixture and blend until just combined. (Do not over combine at this point, as you want to keep the integrity of the larger nut pieces as they add great texture!).
- Line a standard size baking sheet with parchment paper.
- Place dough on the parchment lined baking sheet and press evenly with your hands or a rolling pin.
- Dust with cacao powder (this make them less sticky when handling).
- Freeze overnight. Cut while frozen.

Preparation Time: 20 Minutes

Storage Tips:
Store in airtight container in the freezer. Edible right from the freezer and will keep for weeks!

Makes: 15 Squares
The Post-Ride Meal
Rubbery legs, salt laced dirty face, raccoon eyes, and a killer farmers tan. The ride is done, and it’s time to refuel. But with what? As noted in The Pre-Ride Meal post, Science has shown that there is in fact NO one-size fits all optimal macronutrient ratio (carbohydrates to proteins to fats). That said, there are some rules of thumb to go by, if investing in a sports nutritionist to customize a plan for you is out of your means, or interest.

Within 15 minutes of finishing your ride:

• Reach for **real, whole foods** (tell me you are sick of gels and bars by now?).
• Include **mostly carbohydrates with some protein** (the carbohydrates will refill your used up glycogen/energy stores in your muscles and the proteins will assist with muscle recovery).
• Chug back **250 mL of fluids** – those with electrolyte-replacements are recommended.
• Some **“Fast Food”** ideas include: banana with nut butter, eggs on toast, muesli cereal with dairy milk or nut milk.

Within an hour of finishing your ride:

• Reach for **real, whole foods** (yep, again!).
• Include a combination of all the macronutrients: **carbohydrates, protein and fats**
• For the “Rule of Thumb Ratio”, here you go: **60% carbohydrate, 20% fat, and 20% protein** (again, this is only a rule of thumb and the ratio differs amongst **individuals** and the specifics of your ride)

In summary, don’t stress too much about the ratios, just get it in to you! Real, whole foods will always treat you best.

Try out the colourful, flavourful and macronutrient-filled recipe, sure to please every hungry rider!

**Pad Thai with Fresh Lime and Ginger**
(This recipe is 100% gluten free).

**Ingredients:**
• 6 chicken thighs, cubed
• 2 red onion, diced
• 1 tbsp coconut oil
• 2 x 340 g bags, broccoli slaw
• 1 x 170 g bag, snow peas
• 1 red pepper, chunked (see photo)
• 1 tsp red pepper flakes
• 1/2 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
• 1 ½ cups long grain white rice

**Sauce:**
• 540 mL / 19 fl oz canned whole tomatoes
• 1/4 cup almond butter
• 1/4 cup almond milk
• 5 dates
• 2 limes, zest and juice
• 2 tbsp apple cider vinegar
• 2 tbsp fish sauce
• 1 tbsp fresh ginger
• 2 cloves fresh garlic
• To taste, Himalayan rock salt

**Preparation:**
• Prepare rice as directed. Set aside.
• In a large heavy saucepan, sauté onions, chicken and coconut oil on medium heat for 10 minutes or until chicken juices run clear. Stir occasionally. Add red pepper flakes and red pepper. Sauté for an additional 2 minutes.
• In a blender, add all Sauce ingredients. Pulse until smooth.
• To the chicken pot, add broccoli slaw, snow peas, cilantro and Sauce. Fold ingredients together. Simmer for an additional 10 minutes or until the broccoli slaw turns vibrant green and sauce is hot through.
• Serve over rice.
• Garnish with fresh cilantro or chopped almonds.

**Preparation Time:** 45 mins  
**Serves:** 6

**About Meagan**
Meagan lives in Collingwood, ON, only a few pedal strokes to the area’s most technical singletrack, longest downhills, and picturesque country roads. She is an ambassador for Oakley, TREK Women, and the YMCA, and strives to help build a community of women.
dedicated to progressing women's cycling. She's also Sacred Rides' super-rad Business Development director.
Steven’s Top 10 Training Tips
By Steven Moniz, personal trainer and founder of Monvida Sports

1. Start early (training a couple of months in advance)
You were probably there once in your life, where you said to yourself, “I will start working out next week, or next month”. The problem with telling ourselves this is that we put a lot of pressure, and in the end, cramming way too much training in a very short period of time. You never want to start training two weeks out. Giving yourself at least two months will help your body progress a lot better, without increasing your risk of injury or exhaustion in the process. No one wants to get injured or sick right before their trip! My recommendation is start your training three months in advance to optimize performance.

2. Rise, shine and train
The great thing about doing your workout early in the morning is that you get it out of the way, so it doesn’t leave you with the option to make up an excuse later on in the day as to why you can’t workout. Life gets in the way, so get your workout done before!

3. Do it gradually
Starting off with the basics and working your way up is the best way to train for anything. For instance working up from twice a week to 3 times a week, starting off with a squat and progressing to a jump squat. Doing things gradually will not only improve your performance, it will also prevent INJURIES.

4. Work on balance
As you know, being on a bike, riding over obstacles, turning corners, and keeping stable as you are airborne coming off a drop, will need balance! So exercises that emphasize single leg, or working on unstable pieces of equipment, like Bosu balls, stability balls, and balance boards will really help with increasing your spatial awareness.

5. Work on leg endurance and strength
Leg endurance is crucial when it comes to the sport of mountain biking, due to the fact that the only thing propelling you forward are you legs! A lot of mountain bikers think that because they ride a bike, they don’t need to strengthen their legs because
“that’s what mountain biking is supposed to do”. Working on increasing the strength and endurance in your legs will help you go for longer rides, without feeling the fatigue you would normally feel on shorter rides. Strengthening your legs will also prevent injuries from happening and hopefully keep you at the front of the mountain biking pack, instead of behind. Remember that the view never changes for the person behind!

6. Strengthen your upper body
As you work on your leg endurance you must also work on your upper body. Holding your body up on your handlebars will tire you out. Strengthening exercises like pushups, and planks on your hands, will increase your upper body strength and endurance to keep you stabilized and strong enough, to prevent your arms from collapsing from right under you.

7. The fundamentals
Training with fundamental exercises will help keep the your prime movers strong, without having to complicate things. This means, squats, deadlifts, and planks. Each one of these exercises will work on your, legs, core and upper body, to keep you efficient The great thing with these exercises is that you’re not isolating anything, so less time in the gym and your body will work as one unit with these great functional exercises.

8. Work on your weakest link before it breaks
Whether it is posture, old injuries, or just weakness in certain muscles, getting those issues taken care of early will help you big time in the long run. I would suggest talking to a strength coach, physiotherapist, or massage therapist to deal with the issues before they become big problems. And once those issues are fixed your body will perform at its best, and you will feel the difference. Remember your body is only as strong as its weakest link.

9. ALWAYS remember to recover properly!!! Stretch, foam roll, and ICE
Training is only half of the journey. Recovery is the other half, without the recovery, over training starts to happen, and with overtraining comes, injuries, exhaustion, and do I dare say not being motivated to ride! So a proper stretching, foam rolling and icing routine, will definitely help and really improve your performance on a
mountain bike. In order, you should train, foam roll, stretch and then later on at night ice.

10. Energize, sustain and recharge
Fueling up before, during, and after your ride will add to your performance on your mountain bike. Think about it like a Ferrari with premium gas, the minute you put regular in it, the car will not perform close to where it should, or it won’t even start at all. That goes with the body, if you fuel up properly, you will have the energy to ride, sustain it throughout the day and also recover a lot faster, so that you can continue your trip without the infamous BONK occurring.

About Steven
Steven Moniz is a mountain biker, personal trainer, and the founder of Monvida Sports Inc. He currently lives in Toronto, ON.
Four Stretches for Your Next Adventure

Often neglected but just as important as the training routine is the post-workout recovery, or as I like to call it, the “R&R”. A proper cool-down and recovery strategy, which includes icing, stretching, and soft tissue manipulation like foam rolling or massage therapy, is extremely important to prevent overtraining and injury; with a proper recovery and stretching routine you can substantially decrease your chance of getting injured. Aerobic and strength training activities cause muscles to shorten, but with a proper stretching routine you keep muscles limber and help improve the range of motion in your joints. This will allow you to stay efficient and better your performance in whatever adventure you take on. It will also help to prevent overuse injuries from occurring because the muscles that do become tight during your activities are being stretched immediately after and this will keep them from getting tighter and tighter.

Included below are a few stretches you should incorporate into your routine. Try and hold each stretch for approximately 30 seconds, and remember to do it gently, absolutely NO PAIN. And always consult a doctor before performing any exercise routine.

1. Hip Flexor

   Step forward and lower yourself to place one knee down on a mat or soft surface. Extend your front forward (lean), making sure that your shoulders are square and chest is up, focusing on the stretch happening in the hip of the leg on the floor.

2. Cobra

   Start in a push-up position. Slowly, and as far as you feel comfortable, straighten your arms and bring your chest up. You should feel the stretch in the front of your stomach. Try doing it in the morning and before you go to bed.
3 Chest and Shoulder

Place your arm against the wall, making sure not to shrug your shoulders. Turn your chest away from the wall and look straight ahead, while keeping the length of your arm against the wall. You should feel this stretch in the front of your shoulders and your chest.

4 Hamstring

Place one foot in front of the other, with the toe of your front foot pointing to the sky. As you bend over, make sure to bend at the waist and not your back. You should feel the stretch in the back of your front leg. You can place your hands to support yourself on the opposite leg.
6 Exercises to Get You Primed for a Mountain Bike Trip

1. Squats

Squats work your glutes, hamstrings and quads. Start with your feet shoulder-width apart, your core tight and spine neutral. As you come down, bend at your hips and knees, making sure your knees don’t pass your toes, and stop when you’re parallel to the floor. On your way up, emphasize pressing through your heels.

2. Single Leg Deadlifts

Single leg deadlifts emphasize the posterior side of your body by working your glutes, hamstrings and quads. Start off by balancing on one leg then lean forward, making sure to keep your core tight and spine is neutral. Stop once your upper body is parallel to the floor. Squeeze your glutes and hamstrings on the working leg to get back to the starting position.

3. Push-ups

Push-ups are an upper body exercise to improve upper body strength by working your chest, arms and shoulders. Place your hands shoulder-width apart and bring you chest as close to the floor as you can without touching it. As you return to the starting position don’t lock out your elbows. Also make sure to look at something a foot in front of you to prevent you from bobbing your head and reaching to the floor with your chin closer to the floor rather than your chest.

4. Lunges

Lunges are a lower body exercise that work your glutes, hamstrings and quads. You’ll be starting lunging out making sure that your knee does not pass you toe and that most of your weight is on your front leg. Also make sure you back leg is bent and as you come back up press through your heel. Repeat with your other leg when done. Throughout this exercise make sure that your chest is out, core is tight and spine is neutral.
5 Bent Over Rows

This a great exercise to balance the body from becoming too chest dominant from riding the bike all day. Bent over rows work your back and arms. Start with your feet in a staggered position and your body bent over and parallel to the ground. You will then row the weighted object up, making sure that you keep your core tight and spine neutral. Slowly lower the weight and repeat.

6 Planks

This exercise strengthens your core and builds endurance in your arms, shoulders, and core muscles. Start on your elbows with your spine as straight as possible. Hold this position for the desired length of time, and do not twist or sag at waist. If you want to mimic being on a mountain bike, do the plank on your hands to strengthen the stabilizer muscles in your shoulder joint. Perform 3 sets of 20 repetitions with 30 seconds of rest between sets. Hold them for 25 seconds, and then increase your time accordingly. To improve endurance, perform the exercise in a circuit format — one after another with very little to no rest.
The Scientific Seven-Minute Workout
Adapted from ACSM's Health and Fitness Journal

Don’t have a gym membership or exercise equipment at home? This 7-minute workout can be done in the privacy of your own home with no equipment other than a chair. In 12 exercises deploying only body weight, a chair and a wall, it fulfills the latest mandates for high-intensity effort, which essentially combines a long run and a visit to the weight room into about seven minutes of steady discomfort — all of it based on science.

Spend 30 seconds on each exercise for best effect and allow 10-15 seconds rest in between each exercise. Click here for a link to the article and then scroll down and click on images for more detail on how to do each exercise.
18 Tips for Avoiding Mountain Bike Injuries
By Mike Brcic, Sacred Rides

Let’s face it, injuries are a regular part of mountain biking – it's a riskier sport than, say, hiking. But that doesn’t mean injuries have to be an unavoidable part of the sport. A little bit of preparation and a dose of smarts can help you avoid a lot of injuries.

Mountain bike injuries fall into 2 general categories:
   a) Wear-and-tear type injuries as a result of poor preparation/overtraining/riding too long
   b) Injuries sustained through crashes

The key to avoiding injuries of type a is some basic preparation. The key to avoiding type b injuries is not being dumb.

1. **Get fit**: the best way to prevent wear-and-tear injuries is to get as fit as possible - especially with respect to back injuries, which are common for mountain bikers due to our hunched-over position and repetitive strain on our core. Get in the groove of a regular strength training program, and make sure you're training your core: bicycle crunches, lateral raises, etc...

2. **Get limber**: make flexibility a regular part of your fitness routine. Start and end each workout session with 5-10 minutes of flexibility training (see 'Steve's Mountain Biking Warmups and Stretches' below). Get into yoga – yoga and mountain biking are a perfect complement to each other, like peanut butter and chocolate. The added flexibility and strength from your yoga practice will serve you well on the trail and help you ride better and more injury-free! (BTW we've got some amazing yoga/MTB camps for women)

3. **Stretch before you ride**: riding without warming up is a great way to get injured! Take 5 to 10 minutes before your ride to stretch (see 'Steve's Mountain Biking Warmups and Stretches' below). If you don't have time to stretch, then at least try to start your ride off with 15-20 minutes of easy riding so you can warm up before you get into the hard stuff.

4. **Plan your ride**: know where you're going and how long it will take to finish your ride. One of the most common causes of injury is fatigue: when you're tired you're more prone to wear-and-tear injuries as well as crashes. Poor planning can mean your 2-hour ride turns into a 6-hour epic, riding the last 2 hours on empty, and/or
5. **Make sure your bike is in good shape and give it a full inspection before you ride:** nothing ruins your day more than taking air off a jump and having your front wheel come out of the fork because the axle wasn't screwed in (trust me on this one). Make sure all the bolts and quick releases are tight, check your frame for cracks, etc... see ‘*Top 7 Tips on Keeping Your Bike in Tip-Top Shape*’ in this guide.

6. **Wear a helmet:** I shouldn’t even have to write this, but it amazes me that to this day I still see people riding trails (often difficult ones) on $3000 bikes without a helmet (that they can buy for $40). Don’t be fool.

7. **Wear cycling glasses:** the 2nd best way to ruin your day (other than your wheel falling off mid-jump) is getting a branch in the eye because you forgot to bring your cycling glasses. You can get a decent pair of clear glasses at your local bike shop for under $30, or at the very least, throw on a pair of sunglasses (not recommended if you are riding in forested areas as you will find it hard to see).

8. **Wear body armour:** knee and arm pads are inexpensive (compared to the cost of a mountain bike), and unless you’re riding a trail that you know for sure you won’t wipe out on, there’s no good reason not to wear them. They can save you a lot of skin. If you’re riding something super-gnarly, then full-body protection is a good choice as well.

9. **Set up your bike properly:** having your bike set up and tuned to your body will reduce wear-and-tear injuries, particularly on your wrists. Having your wrists under- or over-rotated because of poorly set up brake levers is an easy way to having ongoing wrist problems, which can often take a really long time to heal. So set up your bike properly (see ‘*How to Set Up Your Mountain Bike*’ in this guide).

10. **Keep well-hydrated:** a good rule of thumb is to carry at least 50% more water than you think you’ll need. You never know what might happen, and getting dehydrated is a quick way to hit the wall and deplete your energy stores, which leads to fatigue and injuries.

11. **Keep your glucose levels up:** bring plenty of energy bars, energy gels, or energy drinks with you and snack along the way to keep your energy level up and prevent bonking.

12. **Know good body positioning:** Stay centred in your cockpit, with your weight evenly distributed between your front and back wheels. This requires moving
your body back and forth in the cockpit as you climb/descend, and will help you stay on your bike (as opposed to off it, on the ground).

13. **Get out of your saddle**: one of the common mistakes beginners make is always staying seated. Getting out of your saddle takes the weight off your saddle and onto your pedals, moving your centre of gravity lower and making you stable (think Formula One car versus double-decker bus: which would you rather be in when taking a corner at 200 km/h). So when the going gets rough (i.e. technical terrain) or when you’re going over undulating terrain, get out of your saddle.

14. **Scope Out Your Drops**: If you’re going to take air, scope out the jump and the landing before you drop. You should never hit jumps and drops blind – this is a quick ticket to the hospital.

15. **Don’t get cocky**: building your mountain biking skills and confidence is all about small gains and progression. Build your skills in small steps and don’t overestimate your skills. If you get cocky and decide that you can go from a beginner trail to a Whistler Bike Park double-black-diamond, or go from 2-foot-drops to 40-foot gap jumps, you’ll quickly discover the error of your ways. Nothing shatters your mountain bike confidence more than a big crash, so push your limits gradually!

16. **Look ahead**: when I’m riding I like to look at least 40 feet ahead on the trail. This allows me to see what’s coming up and prepare myself; while looking ahead I can still see what’s directly in front, but if I’m looking down at my front wheel I’m going to get surprised by trail features and probably wipe out a lot.

17. **Know how to eject**: even if you do all of the above, you’re still going to wipe out from time to time. Knowing how to eject can save your hide. One great way to eject is something our lead instructor Johanna calls the ‘North Shore eject’, where you lift your leg over the top tube and jump off to one side of the bike (this is especially effective when you’re riding obstacles that are off the ground).

18. **Take a mountain bike skills course**: there are dozens of great mountain bike skills camp providers around the world. You’ll be amazed at how a day or two of instruction with a great instructor can improve your riding and help you build confidence (BTW, did I mention we offer a number of [mountain bike skills camps for women](#))?
TRAVELING WITH YOUR MOUNTAIN BIKE
7 Things to Think About When Travelling Abroad (To Mountain Bike)
By Mike Brcic

1. **What are the entry requirements into the country?**
   Do I need a visa? If so, can I get it on entry or do I need to get it in advance? Do I need a passport? You can find answers to questions such as these at Visa HQ or Project Visa.

2. **Are there any entry fees?**
   Some countries charge an entry fee or reciprocity fee (such as Chile). Google '[your citizenship] traveling to [intended destination country] entry fees' to find out if you'll need to pay any fees when you enter the country. Some fees can be as high as $150, so do some research in advance.

3. **Will I need vaccinations?**
   Travel in many countries may necessitate some vaccinations. Check out the [MDTravelHealth](http://mdtravelhealth.com) website for some preliminary information, and then visit a local travel clinic for up-to-date/in-depth information and vaccinations.

4. **What's the best way to get local currency?**
   Usually the best way to get local currency is via a local ATM – withdraw enough cash to get by for a few days (but not so much that if you lose it/get robbed you'll be out a ton of money) and your bank will usually convert it at a favourable rate. Check with your bank about foreign withdrawal fees, as they can often be hefty.

   Alternatives include **traveler's checks** (which many vendors don't accept, so they have to be converted to local currency), **USD** (which is widely accepted in most countries around the world, albeit often at a poor exchange rate), or **credit cards** (which can be widely accepted depending on your destination, and usually result in a favourable exchange rate).

5. **What are the hospitals and medical facilities like?**
   If something serious happens, like a serious illness or injury, are the local hospitals equipped to handle it, or will you have to be flown home to get the proper care? Where are the best facilities in your intended destination? Find out in advance so you can demand the best care if something does happen.

   Again, [MDTravelHealth](http://mdtravelhealth.com) is a great resource for research about medical facilities in your intended destination.
6. **How good is local cell service?**
   If you're traveling on your own and are going to be getting into remote areas, and especially if you're doing something risky like hardcore mountain biking, it's prudent to find out if you can reach help on your cell or if other means of communication (e.g. a satellite phone) will be required.

   [OpenSignal](https://www.opensignal.com) is a great resource for finding out if and where you can get coverage in your intended destination. Type in your destination to see coverage and then find out if your carrier can be accessed via roaming with the local carriers.

7. **Is it safe?**
   Every country in the world has some sort of safety risks. Unless you like living on the edge, it's prudent to do a bit of research in advance to find out if there are any areas you should avoid, and what precautions to take.

   The Government of Canada keeps a pretty good and regularly updated database of travel advisories around the world. Keep in mind, though, that embassies tend to take a very conservative approach to risk management, and a) will often inflate the actual risk, sometimes significantly, and b) often don't have the resources to get up-to-date, on-the-ground information.

   I've travelled to many areas around the world that were subject to travel advisories, yet when I arrived I found no evidence of any significant safety risk, often because the local embassy hadn't bothered to follow up on a travel advisory and/or hadn't been to the area in years.

   The best approach is to try and get local advice: connect with locals in the area and find out what the real situation is. Reach out to them via online forums, friends of friends, Facebook, Twitter, etc... and get the insider’s perspective. You may even make new friends that you can visit when you get to your destination!
What to pack for a mountain bike trip
By the Sacred Rides Team

We’re sure that most people reading this have been on enough mountain bike rides to know what they pack on a day trip into the woods. That being said, we’ve compiled a fairly (read: “very”) comprehensive list of items that could be taken in a pack on a day trip, or in a suitcase and in your bike bag for a flight across the world. This is best used as a base to pick and choose freely from, in accordance with your destination and needs.

On the bike:
• Jersey(s)
• Cycling shorts with a quality chamois
• Helmet (a total no-brainer ....get it)
• Full-finger bike gloves with a padded palm (you’ll be grateful for more than one pair on a week-long trip)
• Cycling socks (synthetic or lightweight wool)
• Arm warmers
• Leg warmers (or long bibs)
• Cycling shoes
• Hydration pack with zippered utility pockets (we happen to be big fans of Osprey’s Raptor Series)
• More water than you think you need (because you just never know)

On and off the bike:
• Quality rain jacket (preferably Gore-tex, with pit-zips for ventilation)
• Wind Jacket (lightweight and form-fitting)
• Sweater (fleece and form-fitting mid-layer)
• Top and bottom base layer (synthetic or lightweight wool)
• Sunglasses (polarized are ideal)

• Camera (phone or point-and-shoot, and a GoPro or other POV camera if you’ve got one)
• Ear warmer

Chill time:
• Swimwear
• Flip flops and towels
• Cotton t-shirt
• Cotton hooded sweater
• Jeans
• Trail shoes or boots

Personal and first-aid:
(Refer to our section above, entitled “Medical Kit” for an in-depth look at what you might need for First Aid)

• Toiletries (toothbrush and toothpaste, shampoo and conditioner, soap, etc.)
• Sunscreen (oil-free for sport)
• Insect repellent (with DEET)
• Anti-bacterial wipes and/or gel
• Toilet paper (depending on where you’re going, this could be difficult to find!)
• Chamois crème
• Basic First Aid kit (ibuprofen, band aids, polysporin, tweezers)
Tips for flying with your mountain bike
By Mike Brcic

1. Get a proper case
If you plan on traveling more than once with your mountain bike, or are doing multiple legs on your journey, invest in a proper case for your bike. Nothing sucks more than getting to your destination, opening up your cardboard bike box and finding a bent or broken derailleur hanger or brake rotor, and then spending half a day looking for bike shops to fix the problem.

2. Clean your bike before you go
Some countries (like New Zealand, for instance) are really strict about foreign dirt coming into the country; your dirt-caked tires might look really cool, but they could also result in your bike being impounded. Do your research, and if you need to, give your bike a proper cleaning and washing before packing it up for travel. Plus it’s a lot nicer pulling a clean bike out of your case and caking it with fresh local dirt!

3. Don’t just use your bike bag for your bike
All airlines have a maximum weight allowance for your main checked baggage, but you can often get around this by transferring clothes and other gear from your luggage to your bike case (you usually pay a flat rate to bring a bike on the plane, with no weight restriction). If you’ve followed suggestion #2, then you can kill two birds with one stone by wrapping your bike clothes (jerseys, shorts, armour, etc...) around your bike frame to further protect it.

4. Bring lots of riding clothes
Let’s face it, mountain bike gear gets dirty – and really stinky – fast. You may think you can get more than 1 day out of a jersey, but trust me – after you’ve put a hard day of riding into a jersey or shorts, you’re really not going to want to put them on again the next morning. And you probably don’t want to spend a big chunk of our vacation sitting at laundromats, so bring at least 3 or 4 jerseys and shorts if you have them. Ditto with socks.
5. Shipping vs. Flying vs. Renting
If you're flying to your destination then you have three options for having a bike at your destination: ship it via mail/courier or bring it with you on the plane or rent a bike.

Shipping
If you're staying within your continent (e.g. North America, or Europe) then shipping your bike may make sense: you don't have to lug it around with you, courier companies are usually more careful with your bike than airline baggage handlers, and you can purchase insurance easily. Here are a few shipping options:

• FedEx (They will insure your bike case.)
• UPS (According to Adventure Cycling Association, UPS costs more and takes longer than FedEx. They will not insure your bike case.)
• Bikeflights (Prides itself on being the “easiest and cheapest” way to ship a bike.

Flying
If you're flying away from your home continent, then it's usually prohibitively expensive to ship your bike (for example, shipping a bike from our office in Toronto to Lima, Peru is about $600 CAD) and it makes more sense to bring it with you on the plane. Most airlines charge an extra fee for transporting a bike, generally anywhere from $50-$250 each way. Although it's a bit of a hassle to pack up your bike and lug it with you to the airport, it's usually not as much hassle as you might think. See our section on ‘TOP 10 AIRLINES FOR TRAVEL WITH A MOUNTAIN BIKE’ for more information on the best airlines to travel with when you're bringing a bike with you.

Renting
A final option is to rent a mountain bike at your destination. While we generally recommend our Riders – and all mountain bike travelers - bring their own bikes with them (you'll usually ride better on a familiar bike, unless your familiar bike is a piece of crap), sometimes it's just more convenient to rent, for example if you're planning on traveling on after your mountain bike trip and don't want the hassle of lugging your bike around or storing your bike.

A few recommendations re: rental bikes:
1. Plan ahead: in high season many shops are slammed and may not have availability at the last minute, so book your bike well in advance
2. Ask for exact details on brand, model and year of their fleet.
3. Ask how often they maintain their fleet: are they inspected and maintained after each ride, or on a periodic basis?
4. Ask about their damage policy: for instance, whose responsibility is it if the derailleur hits a rock and the hanger snaps off? Or whose responsibility is it if the front fork blows out and leaks oil all over the place?

5. Sizing is super-important: a medium Specialized doesn’t fit the same as a medium Santa Cruz. If you’re interested in a rental, find out the model and then find a local shop in your area that sells or rents the same bike, and go to the store and try out bikes to find your size.

At Sacred Rides we’ve partnered with great local bike shops and rental shops in all of our destinations to ensure that we have high-quality mountain bike rentals for our Riders. Whether you’re traveling with us or on your own, feel free to drop us a line to ask about rental options in our destinations.

6. Check your airline’s baggage policies
It pays to read the fine print about baggage policies: some airlines even go so far as to prohibit bikes on planes. Read the fine print about weight restrictions, bike fees, etc. before you decide to book that flight.
A guide to protecting your mountain bike
By Mike Brcic

There are many ways to protect your mountain bike during travel – whether it’s by train, plane or automobile. Here we’ll outline the 3 main methods (hard shell case, soft shell case/bike bag, cardboard box) and outline pros and cons of each. If you’re traveling by car you’re probably using a bike rack, and because they generally don’t require packing or protection we’re not going to go into that here.

Hard Shell Case (or Bike Box)
A hard-shell case is just what it sounds like: a hard shell to protect your bike from bumps and bruises incurred when getting tossed around by baggage handlers, taxi driver, or you when you’re getting impatient. They’re generally made of high-strength, durable plastic and if you’re planning on travelling a lot and/or have an expensive bike, they’re a great choice.

**Pros:**
- Highest level of protection
- Very durable
- Some boxes have compartments for parts
- Rollers on some models make them easy to transport

**Cons:**
- Expensive (generally starting at $500+)
- Heavy and bulky
- May incur extra weight charges when flying
- You will almost always pay airline bike charges (if applicable)

**Good for:** Frequent travelers, people with really expensive bikes who are concerned about any damage
Soft Shell Case (or Bike Bag)
A soft-shell case or bike bag is a specialty bag made specifically for transporting bikes. They’re usually made of high-durability nylon and often have several compartments so you can easily store your bike parts (such as pedals, wheels, saddle, etc...) There is a wide variety in quality and pricing, so as with anything - you get what you pay for. We recommend you purchase a high-quality bag made by a reputable manufacturer that will guarantee your bag. We sell the amazing Pika Packworks bag at our online store. They’re handmade in Utah, and are built to last. And we’ve gotten away with checking them in as regular baggage many times, saving us thousands of dollars in airline bike fees over the years. Do this two or three times and the bag’s paid for itself!

Pros:
• More affordable than hard-shell cases
• High level of durability (if you buy a good one)
• Usually have lots of compartments for wheels, parts, etc...
• Often have extra room for other baggage (e.g. bike clothing), which can save you airline fees
• Lighter than hard-shell cases
• Some bags can pass as regular luggage and save you airline bike fees (which can be as much as $200 each way!)

Cons:
• Lower level of protection than hard-shell cases
• Not as durable as hard-shell cases
• Good bags are moderately expensive ($300-$500)

Good for: Frequent travelers who want a moderately high level of protection for their bike, but are OK accepting the risk that there may be minor damage to their bike if it is handled poorly - in our experience with dozens of customers using our Pika Packworks bag, we’ve never heard of any major damage beyond a bent rotor (which was quickly and easily bent back).
Cardboard Box
The cheapest option for protecting your bike is a cardboard bike box, the kind you can get from your local bike shop for free. These are only recommended if you’re unsure whether you’ll ever be traveling again with your mountain bike and aren’t sure you want to invest in a bike bag or hard shell case. A better option than a cardboard box (and still much cheaper than buying a bike bag or hard shell case) is renting a bike bag or hard shell bike case – ask around at your local bike shops.

Pros:
- Cheap (i.e. free)
- Easy to get (from your local bike shop)
- Lighter than other options

Cons:
- Lowest level of protection
- Not very durable (you can usually only get 1 trip out of a cardboard box before it falls apart)

Good for: one-time users who aren’t sure they’ll be doing more travel with their bike and don’t want to commit the $ for a bike bag or hard-shell case.
How to Pack Your Mountain Bike in a Box for Shipping or Flying
From www.singletracks.com

A mountain bike may seem like a large, unwieldy object when it comes to shipping or flying cross-country, but if you know what you’re doing, you can easily pack your mountain bike into a nice, neat box. Here’s a step-by-step article to show you how.

Get a box.
If you can’t afford the $ for a soft or hard-shell case for your bike (however, if you’ve spent more than $2000 on your bike, then it’s silly to not spend an additional $300-$400 to properly protect it), then use a cardboard bike box. If you saved the box your bike originally shipped in, +1 for you. If not, don’t worry—you can usually find a bike box at your local bike shop, and oftentimes they’ll even give you one for free (if not free, then for a nominal fee). Boxes come in all sizes based on the bike type, so look for a box that held a mountain bike your size or larger.

I ride a size XL 29er, which means boxes are hard to come by locally but I’ve found hybrid bike boxes usually work, as long as they’re meant for a size XL bike.
2. **Prepare for disassembly.**
Shift your rear derailleur to the largest cog on your cassette to tuck the derailleur in as much as possible. Grab all the tools you’ll need and make sure to keep them together; if you’re flying, you’ll need these exact tools on the other end of your trip.

3. **Begin disassembly.**
The idea is to disassemble your bike as little as possible while fitting the bike in the box as securely as possible. Remove your front wheel. Pedals will almost always need to be removed; in fact, many airlines require this step.

Next, remove the seat post (leave the saddle attached). Remove the stem (with handlebars still attached) from your fork. Remember to bolt your stem cap back on so you don’t lose any hardware.

At this point you can test to see if your bike will fit in the box lengthwise. If not, it’s time to make more room!

4. **Continue disassembly.**
Note, this is only required if your bike didn’t fit after completing all the items in step 3. Remove the air from your rear tire to gain an extra inch or two in length. Remove the tire entirely if you could use even more room.
If the bike still won’t fit (but it’s close), try turning your fork around 180 degrees. Your disc brake caliper may be jutting out, so remove it if necessary (I don’t like to do this but in my case, it was necessary).

Bike still doesn’t fit? You need a longer box.

5. Pack the box.
Slip the front wheel and seatpost/saddle inside the box wherever they will fit and rest your handlebars over the top tube of the frame. The hybrid bike box I’m using isn’t super wide, so fitting my front wheel in beside the frame is a no go. To make it all work, I removed my tire from the rim and folded the tire up on top of the bike (extra padding!). The rim fit in beside the bike no problem. If your wheel uses a QR skewer, you may need to remove this to fit the wheel beside your frame.

Keep all the hardware you removed, including pedals, caliper bolts, and skewers, in a ziplock baggie, and tape it to the inside of the box. If you’re bringing tools, I suggest placing those in a bag too and taping them inside the box.

6. Pad the bike.
Ideally your bike will be shipped upright (and not on its side); most bike boxes are marked “this end up,” but that’s no guarantee. For this reason, padding is key.

First, identify any punch points—places where the box looks like it’s bulging near the rear derailleur or fork. Slip styrofoam
between the bike and the box at these points and add tape to keep the packing materials in place.

Many bike shops will give you packing materials along with the bike box, so just ask! For example, many bikes ship plastic bits to protect QR fork mounts and rear axles, so pick these up if you can find them.

Next, look for any items that might rub together in transit. Metal on carbon fiber isn’t good, so add padding to any parts or loose items that might cause problems.

Finally, identify any spots where the bike might have an opportunity to move up and down or side-to-side in the box. Pack lightweight materials in to keep the bike as stable as possible. When I’m traveling, I like to put some of my clothes in the box as padding, which also saves me from checking (and paying for!) a second bag at the airport.

**Parting Shot**
If you choose to use a cardboard box, you should be able to get at least a couple round trips out of it... but throw the box away if it becomes damaged.

It’s pretty easy to pack a bike in a box, and the whole process should take less than an hour. Reassembly is often even faster—just reverse the steps above and ride away!
8 Questions to ask when renting a mountain bike
by Mike Brcic, Sacred Rides

How often are the bikes maintained?
Some shops do an awesome job of maintaining their bikes; they clean, lube, and repair broken parts after every rental. Other shops might not be so diligent, and nothing can ruin your ride more than a bike that keeps breaking down. So make sure you ask about their maintenance policies.

What year are the bikes?
Are the bike new this year, or are they a few years old? Most bike shops replace their rental fleets every year, but some don’t. Rental bikes get beat up pretty bad, so the shelf life for a rental bike is usually not more than 1 year, depending on how often they get rented/used.

How do you assess damage vs. wear & tear?
Rental bikes get a lot of abuse, especially if you’re using them at a lift-accessed bike park. A lot of the abuse is regular ‘wear-and-tear’ (that bike shops shouldn’t charge you for, like a slightly bent derailleur) but often it crosses into the area of actual damage (like a derailleur that’s broken right off the frame, which they should charge you for). Ask the rental shop in advance what their policy is regarding damage vs. wear-and-tear.

And on that note, do a full bike check with the shop before you take the bike out of the store, and note any existing damage (just like you would with a rental car).

What kind of pedals does the bike have?
Most rentals have flat pedals (i.e. pedals you can use regular shoes on). Some have combination flat/SPD pedals (i.e. flat on one side, SPD on the other). Very few rental bikes come with SPDs, so if you do want to ride with your SPD shoes, you’ll need to bring your shoes and pedals with you – or you can ask if the shop has the appropriate pedals for your shoes and can put them on for you. If not, then ask if they can put your pedals on the rental bike for you, to save you having to lug a pedal wrench around.

Does the seatpost have a quick release?
Depending on the type of riding you’re doing, a quick release seatpost (vs. fixed) is often very useful to have. Many rental bikes come with fixed seatposts, so ask in advance!
Are the components stock or have any of them been replaced?
Sometimes shops will swap out the stock parts on a rental bike with cheaper parts, to avoid having expensive parts get thrashed. If you have your heart set on a bike with XT components, then make sure that the XT components that usually come with a certain make/model are actually on the bike you're going to ride.

Do you offer a discount for multi-day rentals?
Most shops do, but often they don’t post it on their website. If they don’t have a multi-day rate, then try and negotiate one. You should be able to at least get a free day for a 7-day rental.

Do you charge a security deposit or take a pre-authorization on my card?
Often shops will take some sort of deposit or pre-authorization on your credit card when you rent it. We’ve heard of some shops charging as much as $2000, so if you have limited available credit on your card, find out how much the deposit/pre-auth is in advance, to avoid any last-minute surprises and/or no bike!
11 Tips for booking a cheap flight
By Nate Lessnick

1. Sign Up for Alerts
First, sign up for AirFareWatchDog’s fare alerts and email newsletter that sends cheap flight deals based on your home airport. Most domestic deals are under or around $200 – and some are so low, it’s mind-boggling.

2. Follow Airlines on Social Media
Friend or follow carriers you’re most likely to use and keep tabs on what they’re offering. Airlines often tout pretty amazing deals on Facebook and Twitter and they go fast, so get ready to jump on an opportunity when you see one.

3. Sign Up for Third-Party Fare Alerts
Whether you prefer Orbitz, Bing Travel or FareCompare, sign up for fare alerts so when flights become available in your budget, you can jump on the deal. Travelocity’s FareWatcherPlus feature also lets you track airfare for up to 10 routes at once. Other sites such as Yapta allow you track your specific itinerary and let you know if the airline owes you a price-drop refund.

4. Know When — Exactly — to Buy
While searching for deals, remember that traveling on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday are the cheapest days to fly, while Friday and Sunday are the busiest travel days and the most expensive. The most cost-efficient time to fly is also first thing in the morning and red-eyes, followed by lunch time and dinner-hour flights. The best times to purchase an airline ticket, however, is Tuesday at 3 p.m. or Friday at 4 p.m. ET, as discounted flights hit the sites.

5. Use Priceline for Last-Minute Trips
Short on time to purchase airfare? You can name your own price on Priceline.com. Although you won’t know the exact flight times or airline you’ll be flying with until you pay, it’s possible to save 50%. Hotwire.com can also be useful for last minute trips.

6. Hire a Travel Agent
Despite the plethora of websites mentioned earlier designed to allow anyone to snag deals on airfare, there are many instances when contacting a travel agent makes
sense. Hiring a professional at Flight Centre or the Adventure Travel Company, for example, will often pay for itself and more with the discounts they’ll find you, not to mention the time and hassle of sifting through all the information they’ll save you.

7. **Consider Hotel + Air Packages**
If you are planning on arriving to your destination a few days prior to your trip start date, it’s often cheaper to buy an air-plus-hotel package rather than airfare alone, especially for last minute travel. In some cases, the deal will include wholesale airfares that are only available as part of a package. Travelocity’s "TotalTrip" offerings often pop up with hotel-plus-air for half the price of air alone. Lastminute.com is also a great source for finding last minute packages.

8. **Test the 24-Hour Rule**
After booking your flights, check the next morning to see if the price of your airfare fell. If it did, give the airline a call to see if you can cancel your flight and rebook without penalty.

9. **Become a Frequent Flier**
It pays to cozy up to your airline of choice. Become an elite member of the airline’s frequent-flier program or use a credit card that’s tied to the airline to get a leg up on other travelers. Likewise, be sure to use a credit card with travel rewards and to rack up points on an Air Miles card whenever possible.

10. **Book six weeks in advance**
Studies have shown that the best time to purchase your airfare is about six weeks prior to travel. The reason being that around this time, prices drop below the average fare.

11. **Check out Google Flights**
Google’s new Flights feature is super basic but super fast and effective. Check it out: https://www.google.com/flights
Top 10 Airlines for Mountain Bike Travel
By Nate Lessnick, Sacred Rides

We’ve meticulously researched which airlines are most bike-friendly (relatively speaking) and have maintained respectable Skytrax ratings (the world’s leading airline and airport review site) over the years, and summed up our findings in the following table. Remember that if lugging your bike across the globe appears to be too cumbersome and costly a task, we offer mountain bike rentals in all of our destinations.

Disclaimer: The information presented is current as of July 2014. Airline policies have a tendency to change without warning, so be sure to check details before you book your flight. If you’ve experienced bike-unfriendliness or lackluster service from any of the following airlines, let us know.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our Ranking</th>
<th>Airline</th>
<th>Weight/Size limits</th>
<th>Fee(s) for bike/Additional notes</th>
<th>Skytrax rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>Max weight: 50lb (23kg) Max size: 62in (157cm)</td>
<td>Free if within weight and size restrictions - counts as one checked piece of luggage if in a hard-sided bicycle box.</td>
<td>3 Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Qatar Airways</td>
<td>Max weight: 50lb (23kg) 70lb/32kg if Business/1st</td>
<td>Free if within weight restrictions - counts as one checked piece of luggage.</td>
<td>5 Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Virgin America</td>
<td>Max weight: 50lb (23kg)</td>
<td>Counts as checked baggage regardless of class of service.</td>
<td>4 Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Frontier</td>
<td>Max weight: 50lb (23kg)</td>
<td>Free for “Classic” or “Classic Plus” ticket holders. “Economy” ticket holders are charged the regular $20 bag fee.</td>
<td>3 Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Westjet</td>
<td>Max weight: 50lb (23kg) Max size: 62in (157cm)</td>
<td>$20-$23 CAD/USD as second bag. Additional fee per kg will apply for excess weight</td>
<td>3 Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Air New Zealand</td>
<td>Max weight: 50lb (23kg) Max size: 80in (2m)</td>
<td>Excess baggage fees vary depending on where your flight begins and ends (Canada and US = $150). Mountain bikes need to be clean/dirt free and will be inspected.</td>
<td>4 Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>LAN</td>
<td>Max weight: 50lb (23kg) Max size: 80in (2m)</td>
<td>Free if within weight and size restrictions - counts as one checked piece of luggage.</td>
<td>3 Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Singapore Airlines</td>
<td>Max weight: 70lb (32kg) Max size: 115 in (2.9m)</td>
<td>Bikes count as regular checked baggage, otherwise no additional fees apply</td>
<td>5 Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Thai Airways</td>
<td>Max weight: 50lb (23kg) (70lb/32kg if in Business &amp; First Class) Max size: 62in (157cm)</td>
<td>Free if within weight restrictions - counts as one checked piece of luggage. $119 USD fee applies if length is between 62in to 80in. $238 USD fee applies if length exceeds 80in.</td>
<td>4 Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Air Canada</td>
<td>Max weight: 70lb (32kg) Max size: 115in (2.9m)</td>
<td>$50 CAD/USD one-way handling fee. Counts as one piece of baggage towards the max number of checked bags allowed by fare type. Single fixed handling charge waived for Latitude and Executive fare customers for travel within Canada, and between Canada and the US.</td>
<td>4 Star</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Visas and Entry Requirements

Many countries around the world have visa requirements and other restrictions on traveling. Before you travel it’s prudent to do your research – for some countries it may take up to 3 months to get a travel visa, so make sure you check out requirements as soon as you’ve selected your destination(s)!

Here are a couple of great resources on entry requirements for countries around the world:

Visa HQ: select your country of citizenship and then the site will update the country list with requirements for your citizenship. Make sure you click on the country/countries you’re visiting to get complete information (such as passport validity requirements).

Project Visa: simply select the country you’re traveling to and then read the information provided.
HEALTH AND VACCINATIONS
Health and Safety Issues for Mountain Bike Travelers
Below are listed some common concerns related to mountain bike travel.

Altitude sickness
If you're mountain biking in the mountains, altitude sickness may be a risk. Altitude sickness may develop in travelers who ascend rapidly to altitudes greater than 2500 m, including those in previously excellent health. Being physically fit in no way lessens the risk of altitude sickness. Those who have developed altitude sickness in the past are prone to future episodes. The risk increases with faster ascents and higher altitudes.

Symptoms of acute mountain sickness, the most common form of the disorder, may include headaches, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, malaise, insomnia, and loss of appetite. Severe cases may be complicated by breathlessness and chest tightness, which are signs of pulmonary edema (fluid in the lungs), or by confusion, lethargy, and unsteady gait, which indicate cerebral edema (brain swelling).

Altitude sickness may be prevented by taking acetazolamide 125 or 250 mg twice daily starting 24 hours before ascent and continuing for 48 hours after arrival at altitude. You'll need a prescription from your doctor to get acetazolamide.

Other measures to prevent altitude sickness include
  • Ascend gradually or by increments to higher altitudes
  • Avoid overexertion
  • Eat light meals
  • Avoid alcohol

Bites and stings from larger animals
As mountain bikers we tend to travel to off-the-beaten-path and remote areas, where we can often encounter critters and animals that we don't find in urban and more developed areas. This risk can go up significantly if traveling in less-developed areas.

Any bite or scratch by a mammal, including bats, should be promptly and thoroughly cleaned with large amounts of soap and water, followed by application of an antiseptic such as iodine or alcohol. The local health authorities should be contacted immediately for possible post-exposure rabies treatment, whether or not the person has been immunized against rabies. It may also be advisable to start an antibiotic, since wounds caused by animal bites and scratches frequently become infected.
In the event of a venomous snake bite, move the victim a safe distance from the snake and place him or her at rest, with the affected extremity immobilized and kept below the level of the heart. Remove constrictive clothing and jewellery. Apply a pressure bandage, which does not impede blood flow. Avoid tourniquets, which are no longer recommended. Bring the victim immediately to the nearest medical facility for administration of anti-venom and supportive care.

If bitten by a scorpion, apply ice, immobilize the affected body part, and seek immediate medical help. Scorpion bites are painful but generally not dangerous, except in infants. To prevent scorpion bites, sleep under mosquito nets, wear gloves and protective clothing when working around piles of wood or leaves, and be sure to inspect and shake out clothing, shoes, and sleeping bags before use.

**Food and water precautions**

A broad range of diseases may be acquired by consuming contaminated food or water. When traveling in developing countries, it is essential to exercise discretion in the choice of meals and beverages.

Do not drink tap water unless it has been boiled, filtered, or chemically disinfected. Vigorous boiling for one minute is the most effective means of water purification. At altitudes greater than 6500 feet (2 km), boil for three minutes.

Chemical disinfection with iodine is also effective, as are water filters. Those with smaller pores (reverse osmosis filters) provide the broadest protection, but they are relatively large and are readily plugged by debris. Those with somewhat larger pores (microstrainer filters) are ineffective against viruses, although they remove other organisms. Objective data comparing different filters is limited. In all instances, manufacturers' instructions must be carefully followed for the filters to operate effectively.

**Do not** drink unbottled beverages or drinks with ice. Do not eat fruits or vegetables unless they have been peeled or cooked. Avoid cooked foods that are no longer piping hot. Cooked foods that have been left at room temperature are particularly hazardous. Avoid unpasteurized milk and any products that might have been made from unpasteurized milk, such as ice cream. Do not eat raw or undercooked meat or fish. Avoid food and beverages obtained from street vendors.
Jet lag
Jet lag is common when a traveler crosses more than five time zones. Symptoms may include sleep difficulty, fatigue, malaise, nausea, loss of appetite, and other gastrointestinal symptoms. Levels of performance, both intellectual and physical, may be less than par. Sleeping pills may be helpful in promoting sleep and adjusting to a new time zone after arrival. Options include newer medications such as zolpidem (Ambien) (PDF), as well as short-acting benzodiazepines such as temazepam (Restoril). The chief side-effect of all sleeping pills is drowsiness or dizziness upon awakening. Other helpful measures include:
• Get adequate rest before departure
• Drink plenty of fluids
• Eat light meals
• Avoid alcohol

Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule for meals, sleep, etc.) as soon as possible

Medical kit
If you're planning on mountain biking in remote areas where quick evacuation and/or communication with evacuation personnel are difficult, you should pack a personal medical kit. The contents of the kit will vary depending upon the carrying capacity of your pack (our guides use Osprey Raptor 18s, which are big enough to store a pretty large first aid kit), your destination, the duration of your trip, the range of potential exposures, the age and health of the riders in your group, and the availability of medical care.
The following should be considered for inclusion in the kit:

**Medications**
(These can be stored in small plastic containers to save space – remember to label clearly)

- Antibiotic for travelers' diarrhea
- Antibiotic for skin infection
- Antibiotic for respiratory infection
- Antidiarrheal drugs (e.g. loperamide, diphenoxylate, kaolin-pectin)
- Drugs for motion sickness (e.g. meclizine)
- Acetazolamide (for altitude sickness)
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Acetaminophen with codeine
- Anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g. ibuprofen)
- Antiemetic (e.g. prochlorperazine for nausea)
- Antihistamines (e.g. Benadryl)
- Decongestants
- Antibacterial ointment for cuts or abrasions (e.g. Bactroban)
- Epinephrine injection (e.g. EpiPen) - for those with a history of allergies to insect stings or other severe allergic reactions

**First aid supplies**
- Bandages
- Gauze and gauze rolls
- Adhesive or paper tape
- Ace bandage
- Scissors
- Pocket knife
- Tweezers
- Thermometer
- Tincture of iodine
- SAM Splint
- Moleskin (for blisters)

**Other**
- Sanitary napkins
- DEET-containing insect repellent
- Permethrin-containing insect spray
- Sun block
- Sunglasses
- Hat for sun protection
- Oral rehydration salts
- Water purification tablets
- Sterile needles
- Syringes
Sun exposure and heat stroke
All mountain bikers should protect themselves from excessive sun exposure. Adverse effects include sunburn, sunstroke, damage to the eyes, and skin cancer. Especially in the tropics, riders should stay out of the midday sun, wear sunglasses, and apply sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher, with both ultraviolet A (UVA; wavelength 315-400 nm) and ultraviolet B (UVB; wavelength 280-315 nm) protection. Sunscreen should be generously applied to all exposed parts of the body approximately 30 minutes before sun exposure and should be reapplied after swimming or vigorous activity. Surfaces such as water, snow, and sand may reflect ultraviolet light and increase the sun’s effect.

Heat stroke may occur in those who are exposed to excessively high temperatures for a number of days. The elderly are at greatest risk, especially those with chronic medical problems. Heat stroke often occurs during physical exertion but, particularly in the elderly, may also occur at rest. The first sign may be an abrupt collapse, but there may be early, subtle findings, including dizziness, weakness, nausea, headache, confusion, drowsiness, and unreasonable behaviour. If early symptoms of heat illness are observed, remove the victim from direct sunlight, loosen clothing, give cold fluids, and make sure the victim rests for at least 24 hours. In the event of heat stroke, the victim should be brought immediately to the nearest medical facility. To prevent heat stroke, drink plenty of fluids, eat salty foods, protect yourself from sun exposure, and avoid alcohol and strenuous exercise when the temperature is high.
Vaccinations
Depending on the area you're traveling to, it may be wise to get vaccinated against disease.

One of the best resources for health-related resources and vaccination advice for travelers is MD Travel Health. Their site gives country and even region-specific information for travelers: what diseases are common, what vaccinations are recommended, how to prevent common traveling illnesses, etc. Click on the link above and then click on the ‘destinations’ link to get information on specific destinations.

For the best and most-up-to-date information, however, we recommend you visit a local travel clinic and speak to a doctor about your specific trip details: areas you're going to, type of traveling you're doing, etc... MD Travel Health has a great listing of clinics you can access by clicking here.
Travel Insurance: A Primer
Travel insurance is, on the surface, a pretty simple thing: go to a travel insurance website, plug in your details, review the quote and then purchase. Or talk to a travel agent and get them to create a package for you. But like house insurance, life insurance, or car insurance, there’s a lot to consider when you really get into it, and you may end up finding out the hard way that you really should have done your homework before buying.

**What coverage do you need as an adventure traveller?**
While the following is not an exhaustive list of all the coverages available with travel insurance plans, it describes those that are most useful to adventure travelers.

**Evacuation and repatriation coverage** provides the coordination and funds necessary to arrange for a medically necessary evacuation or to return your body home for burial. (Review the details of evacuation and repatriation coverage.)

**Medical coverage** provides advance payments or reimbursement for medical and dental care received on your trip – even in a foreign country. (Review the details of medical coverage.)

**Financial default coverage** provides reimbursement for your pre-paid non refundable trip costs when a travel supplier ceases operations. (Review the details of financial default coverage.)

**Trip cancellation coverage** provides reimbursement of your pre-paid non refundable trip costs when the trip has to be cancelled for a covered reason. (Review the details of trip cancellation coverage.)

**Accidental Death and Dismemberment coverage** provides a lump sum payment to you or to your family if you are disabled or die on your adventure trip. (Review the details of AD&D coverage.)

**Travel delay coverage** provides a per-day amount for unexpected lodging, meals and transportation when your travel is delayed a certain number of hours for a covered reason. (Review the details of travel delay coverage.)
Who should buy travel insurance?
You should purchase adventure travel insurance if you are:

A **traveler on organized adventure tours** – in many cases, tour operators will require proof of travel insurance at the start of the trip and they’ll expel you without it.

An **individual and experienced adventure traveler** – no matter how experienced you are at your preferred activity, accidents and illnesses can happen anywhere and without travel insurance coverage for adventure activities, none of the coverages will be available to you on your trip.

A **newbie on a learning adventure** – even if you’ve joined a trip so you can learn a new skill, it’s important to have the right coverage for the activity. Without it, all your coverage will be invalidated.

When should you buy your travel insurance?
Purchase your policy just after making your first trip payment. In some situations, this timing is important because of some benefits, such as:

- pre-existing medical condition waivers,
- ‘cancel for any reason’, and
- ‘cancel for work reasons’

are only applicable if the policy is purchased within a certain number of days (usually 10-15) from making your initial trip deposit. Plus, you’ll benefit from the longest period of cancellation coverage. Remember that most travel insurance companies offer a free look period with a refund if you decide the plan is not what you need.

The 2 Most Popular Types of Travel Insurance
The two basic types of travel insurance are:

1. **Vacation Plans** (provides the most coverage, including trip cancellation)
   This type of plan provides the most coverage in a single package, including cancellations, medical emergencies, evacuations, loss or delays, luggage, assistance, and more. Vacation plans are very popular with travelers because they provide a simple solution to their needs. Vacation plans include coverage for:
Cancelled trips
• Interrupted trips
• Medical emergencies
• Emergency evacuation
• Delayed baggage or trips
• Lost baggage
• 24/7 Assistance
• and several other coverages

If you are looking for ‘travel insurance’ for your next vacation, you need a vacation plan.

2. Travel Medical Plans (Medical coverage while traveling abroad)
Travel medical plans are for travelers leaving their home country who are not concerned with cancellation or other factors - they just want coverage in case they get sick or hurt while abroad, and don’t want to be hit with a massive hospital bill. This type of plan focuses on medical emergencies, evacuation, and sometimes life insurance. A travel medical insurance plan is perfect if you are traveling outside your home country and are not concerned with cancellation, interruption, delays, and baggage.
Travel medical plans focus on coverage for:
• Medical expenses
• Emergency evacuations

Some types of travel medical plans provide benefits such as medical coverage for pre-existing conditions, multi-trip and renewable protection, emergency medical evacuation, and coverage for long-term travel abroad.

Specialty plans (evacuation-only, travel accident, rental car)
Beyond the two basic types, there are specialized plans to meet unique needs.

Evacuation plans focus on emergency evacuations, and are often sold on an annual basis as a membership. With an evacuation plan, the company arranges transport, and you won’t lose your savings to a costly emergency medical evacuation

Accident plans provide life insurance style coverage for travelers. It pays benefits if you should have a serious injury that results in dismemberment or loss of life.
Benefits paid by these accident plans are in addition to any benefits paid by separate life insurance plans.

**How to select a plan based on your needs**

Each travel insurance company has a variety of plans to choose from. These plans will each have varying coverage, which makes some plans more affordable and other plans higher priced.

When you start comparing plans, you will need some criteria to help you prioritize and narrow down your choices. Use a list of coverages that you think are the most important for your trip. You might also factor in minimum coverage amounts on certain coverages like medical expenses.

The following is not a complete list of coverage, but simply a prioritized list of the most important coverages for their trip:
Most Popular Coverage Criteria

• Emergency Medical (at least $50,000)
• Medical Evacuation (at least $100,000)
• Pre-existing Medical Conditions
• Cancel For Any Reason
• Hazardous Sports
• Hurricanes & Weather
• Terrorism
• Employment Layoffs
• Missed Connections
• Rental Car Coverage

Medical Related

• Primary Medical
• Emergency Medical
• Pre-existing Medical
• Medical Deductible

Evacuations

• Medical Evacuation
• Non-Medical Evacuation

Loss or Delays

• Travel Delay
• Baggage Delay
• Baggage Loss
• Missed Connections

Cancellations

• Trip Interruption
• Hurricane & Weather
• Terrorism
• Financial Default
• Employment Layoff
• Cancel For Work Reasons
• Cancel For Any Reason

Life Insurance

• Accidental Death
• Air Flight Accident
• Common Carrier

Sports

• Hazardous Sports

Other Benefits

• Rental Car
• Money Back Guarantee
• 24 Hour Assistance Service
• Identity Theft
• Renewable Policy
• All Events Upgrade
Five “Loopholes” and How to Avoid Them

An insurance policy is a legal contract. The coverage, exclusions, and ‘small print’ of the insurance plan are available to read in something called the Policy Certificate.

Many travelers buy insurance and assume ‘everything’ is covered, but as with all insurance plans that’s not the case. Travelers get frustrated if a claim is delayed or denied, and assume that they have been cheated because of a ‘loophole’. These frustrations could be avoided by understanding the policy, knowing what is covered, and what is not covered.

Here are the most common ‘loopholes’, and how to avoid them:

1. **Not a Covered Reason for Cancellation**: Read and understand the list of covered reasons in the policy, and if in doubt select the optional “Cancel for any reason” rider or a plan that includes that coverage.

2. **Pre-Existing Conditions**: Only buy a plan that offers a waiver to the pre-existing condition exclusion, and make sure you meet the requirements for it to apply.

3. **Coverage Exclusions**: Read and understand the list of exclusions in the policy certificate.

4. **Incomplete Documentation**: Contact the insurance company as soon as you have any issue, and start saving all receipts and documentation.

5. **Enrolling Too Late**: Get your travel insurance as soon as you make a trip payment.
Top 9 Travel Insurance FAQs

1. **Doesn't my credit card have travel insurance?**
   No, not in the way most travelers want it to. Credit cards that have ‘travel insurance' provide little coverage, but nothing in comparison to a separate policy from a travel insurance company.

   Some cards provide cancellation coverage, but with an annual limit ($1,500-$2,500 per 12 month period), and the list of covered reasons is limited. Interruption coverage is limited as well, as is travel delay coverage. Most importantly though, is that almost no credit cards provide medical expense or evacuation coverage.

2. **Won't my regular health insurance cover me abroad?**
   Not completely. Most regular health insurance plans provide partial or no coverage while you are traveling in another country. For Medicare, there is never coverage abroad.

   Countries with ‘universal health care' might assist with minor needs, but they are under no obligation to do so. In the event of major or ongoing medical expenses, they would cease to help, and they would never pay to evacuate you or help you return home.

3. **Are hurricanes covered?**
   Yes, many plans cover hurricanes and weather under trip cancellation coverage. To be covered you need to 1) make sure it is listed as a covered reason, 2) buy before the storm is named, 3) insure for the full trip cost, and 4) some plans require that you buy soon after your trip payment to avoid the waiting period.

4. **Are pre-existing conditions covered?**
   Yes, many plans offer a waiver that removes the pre-existing condition exclusion. To be covered you need to 1) buy your plan soon after your first trip payment, 2) insure for the full trip cost, 3) be medically cleared for travel at the time of purchase.

5. **What does travel insurance cost?**
   Insurance costs 4-8% of the trip cost (pre-paid, non-refundable expenses). Basic plans
can be very budget-minded at less than 4%, and premium vacation plans can be over 12%. Travel medical insurance is sold on a trip-length basis, and can be as little as dollars per day.

6. When should I purchase my plan?
Within days of making your initial trip deposit. There are many benefits to purchasing the plan sooner, including maximizing the period of cancellation coverage, and being eligible for pre-existing condition coverage and hurricane coverage.

7. How do I know I can trust the company?
The companies Sacred Rides recommends, and the ones featured by insurance comparison website Squaremouth.com are companies that have years of experience with solid AM Best ratings of financial stability, and they comply with a Zero Complaint Policy.

8. What is the refund policy?
A 100% refund of premium within the Free Look Period is guaranteed by almost all companies. This allows travelers to review their policy and return it for any reason with the time period (less a small administration fee $5-$8)

9. How do I buy travel insurance?
Travel insurance can be quoted and purchased instantly online using a credit card. Since travel insurance is a temporary insurance product, there is generally no underwriting period or medical examination required. You can get a quote online, buy with a credit card, print your email confirmation, and you’re all done.
Where should you buy your travel insurance?

At Sacred Rides, we have partnered with two reputable companies to offer travel insurance to our Riders (our clients):

**Bikeflights.com**: for North American Riders

**World Nomads**: for International Riders

Although we recommend bikeflights.com and worldnomads.com for purchasing insurance, there are a whole host of considerations when buying insurance, and their plans may not be right for you.

Squaremouth offers a great travel insurance comparison tool. [Click here to access the tool](https://www.squaremouth.com/).
37 Reasons Why Mountain Biking Is Just Like Sex
by Mike Brcic, Sacred Rides, and Sacred Rides Facebook Fans

1. You don't need a partner to have fun...
2. ...But it's better with someone else, and even better in a group.
3. Accessories make the ride more fun.
4. Frequent hydration leads to better endurance.
5. It's all about body position.
7. Although you sometimes have to pay admission, it's better when it's free.
8. You should try to stay away from the wet spots.
9. You can get multiple orgasms from one ride.

And from our Facebook fans...

10. If you ride too hard or too long, you're sore for a week
11. Some say the dirtier the ride the better..
12. The first time generally hurts
13. The more you pay, the better the ride.
14. If it's squeaky, you need to lube it.
15. Not all videos are good, but every once in a while a lil pearl comes along that goes down in history.
16. As much as we might drool over our mates' rides, we all know that ours is the one.
17. We all remember our first ride
18. Treat your ride with respect and she'll stay true to you forever.
19. NEVER EVER pee when you are riding!!
20. An extra three inches really helps
21. Some freaks like to wear skin tight lycra and funny shoes
22. Make sure you're pumped up hard first
23. Everyone thinks what’s between their legs is the best
24. It can be more enjoyable with two or three friends.
25. It’s ok to eat a sandwich half way through.
26. Sometimes you get some scrapes and bumps.
27. No two rides are ever the same
28. Just when you think you are exhausted and have had enough, you always find one more burst of energy to complete the ride to your satisfaction
29. What goes up must come down
30. It’s definitely slipperier in the wet
31. It’s safer if you wear protection
32. It’s safer with the right rubber
33. If you do it in the forest, bring bugspray
34. It takes more skill to go slower
35. You can increase your endurance with practice
36. You can fit in a quickie during lunchtime
37. The best bits are really hard

Thanks for reading – we hope to share a trail with you one day!