Welcome to The Women's Guide to Mountain Biking (and mountain bike travel!)

Whether traveling to a far off land with a company like Sacred Rides, or to your local singletrack with your best girlfriend, the pages of this guide have been developed in efforts to educate, inspire and humour women of all ages and skill level.

Having ridden my fair share of trails, I have also taken my fair share of spills, encountered my fair share of on-trail mechanicals, attire related mishaps and even emotional breakdowns. With every epic adventure, there is often (at least) one epic fail. Some of my trials and tribulations as a female mountain biker have been directly related to just that: being a female (and sometimes a solo and/or single) mountain biker.

I have tapped into some of our industry's finest folks for this guide, who have shared tips and tricks on everything from mountain bike lingo, to peeing like a pro (as a woman!).

At Sacred Rides, we know mountain bike travel opens the doors to beautiful places, fascinating cultures, wonderful friendships and life-affirming moments. Grab this guide, your best girlfriend and an open-mind, and start planning your next adventure today!

Life is better on a mountain bike!

Meagan Broughton and the Sacred Rides Team (Mike, Nate, James, and Mark)

P.S. 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).
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MOUNTAIN BIKING 101
10 Reasons Mountain Biking Will Make You Awesomer

By Nate Lessnick, Operations Director at Sacred Rides

You’re already pretty awesome – you love the outdoors, getting out and being active, and the thrill of new adventures. But you haven’t really sunk your teeth into mountain biking – just yet. Here are 10 reasons why jumping on the helmet-clad, funky-shoe-wearing bandwagon will kick your level of awesomeness up a few more notches.

1) It’s a great workout... And it sure beats a treadmill

When was the last time you heard someone say: “I just killed it on the treadmill, and had such a blast!”? In all likelihood... never. One of the main reasons people give up their exercise routine is because they’re just not having fun with it. And understandably so - after givin’er on the stationary bike, you’ve watched a rerun of Seinfeld and shed a bucket of sweat, and that’s about it. Go mountain biking and you’ll find that for every leg-burning hill you climb, you’re rewarded with the oh-so-sweet decadent descent you’ve been craving.

2) It’s therapeutic

Had a rough day? Feeling like doing this to your printer? Those who take up mountain biking have an effective and positive outlet to turn to when needing to blow off some steam. Throwing a leg over your steed and hammering it out for an hour can have the same (if not heightened) remedial effects as lying on a couch while relaying your childhood sorrows, without the hourly bill. Your problems may not have changed, but your outlook on them most likely will.

3) You’ll get closer to nature

As Rachel Carson once put it, “Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts”. Indeed, research shows that those who are able to distance themselves from the noise and havoc of daily life to find reprieve in the tranquility of nature are happier, less stressed and more energetic. One look at mountain bike pioneer Brett Tippie is evidence enough to support this.

4) It’ll bring adventure into your life

Mountain biking is by nature a pretty adventurous sport, the mere mention of which evokes a certain spirit of exploration and risk-taking. And being adventurous inevitably makes you a much more interesting person. When asking a mountain biker about their weekend, instead of small talk you’ll often hear glorified tales of darting across bridges, scaling peaks, dodging branches and awkwardly returning to civilization covered in mud and dirt... and grinning from ear to ear.
5) You'll discover new parts of the world
Traveling by mountain bike opens the door to a world of possibilities; you'll gain access to places often too remote for the tourist hordes and engage with locals in a more meaningful way than from the seat of a tour bus. And the great thing about mountain biking is that no matter where you find yourself in the world, chances are you're never too far away from a thin line of dirt snaking its way through a forest, field or desert. But heck, you don't even need to go very far... A mountain bike can help you discover hidden gems in your very own city, opening your eyes to what you never thought existed in your concrete jungle.

6) It'll teach you how to meditate
Leave your gadgets at home on your next ride and you'll find yourself fully living in the moment. It's not like you're given much of a choice either, what with all the roots and rocks and tight corners along the way. It's all about being present in the here and now. Rolling with it. Going with the flow. Everything else, all the crap life throws your way, is magically blurred out. And that's the beauty of the ride.

7) You'll get outdoors
Want to feel alive? Studies show that a 20-minute dose of fresh air promotes a sense of vitality and rejuvenation equal to that provided by a cup of joe, minus the jitters. Just imagine what a 2-hour bike ride will do for your well-being and overall sense of kicking ass at life. You'll also get in touch with your inner-child, bringing you back to the days when life wasn't about crunching numbers or furiously typing away in a cubicle, but of making the most of simple pleasures.

8) You'll meet some great peeps
Mountain bikers tend to be a pretty happy-go-lucky breed. Perhaps it's all that exercising. Or the fresh air. Or the nature-loving. Regardless, happy people naturally tend to flock towards other happy people. So join a fat-tire club and you're bound to meet good-natured, like-minded folks with a propensity for laughter and a penchant for good brews.

9) It'll teach you a lesson or two about self-sufficiency
In a world of comfort and convenience, there’s something deeply satisfying and rewarding about relying on your own wits and two mitts to fix the inevitable trailside breakdown. Being able to diagnose and repair mechanical mishaps is as much a part of mountain biking as benchcutting a trail or picking the right post-ride ale. And if knowing a thing or two about bike repairs means lending a helping hand to those less mechanically-inclined, consider it a healthy deposit into your karma account.
10) **You’ll boost your confidence**
The feeling of making it up a big climb, balancing your way across an obstacle or clearing a technical bit of trail is a pretty incredible one. And luckily, most mountain bike trails offer heaps of challenges and personal Everests, no matter your skill or fitness level. All you need is a bit of practice, some determination and a kick in the butt to face your fears and push your limits... which happens to be a pretty good analogy for just about anything in life worth accomplishing.

**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.*
Intro to Mountain Bike Speak
By Nate Lessnick, adapted from the “ABC's of Mountain Biking: www.abc-of-mountainbiking.com/dictionary.asp

There’s so much mountain bike jargon out there that anyone new to the sport can easily feel like they’re joining a fraternity or becoming a pirate. It’s pretty easy to feel confused - I remember going on my first mountain bike ride at 15 and being asked by another rider how I was faring with rigid forks. “Huh…I’m not carrying any form of cutlery” was my response. Yes, the learning curve was steep.

Check out this list to learn the basics of mountain bike terminology. To be sure, it’s far from being a complete lexicon of all mountain bike related lingo, just a quick overview of commonly used terms any beginner may encounter when fraternizing with other mountain bikers. For a comprehensive list of mountain bike parts, take a look at the “Anatomy of a mountain bike” below.

**ATTACK POSITION**
the alert and well-balanced position you ride in when you approach, or ride on, rough terrain. It is characterized by bent knees, rear above the saddle, elbows slightly bent, and a raised head.

**BERM**
an embankment on a trail.

**BONK**
when you run out of energy.

**BUNNY HOP**
a hop that you incorporate into your riding technique so you can clear obstacles such as logs without stopping.

**CHAIN SUCK**
the dragging and jamming of your chain that occurs in sloppy conditions, or when little burs occur on your chainrings that cause the chain to bunch up.

**CLEAN**
a perfect ride through a tough section.

**CLIPLESS PEDAL**
a pedal that has spring-loaded cleats that clip to a riders shoe.
CROSS-COUNTRY
a traditional mountain bike race that mixes many types of riding conditions into one coarse.

CYCLOCROSS
an off-road race that involves riders having to dismount and run over obstacles, carrying their bikes.

DIALED IN
when everything on your bike is running smoothly, you are said to be "dialed in"

DOUBLETRACK
two trails that run parallel to each other (also called tractor trail or Jeep trail).

DOWNHILL
a type of racing held mostly on ski slopes - fastest rider to the bottom wins.

DOWNSHIFT
shifting to a lower gear.

DROPPING IN
Dropping in a steep single track when other riders are around.

DUALIE
a bike that has both front and rear suspension.

ENDO
a crash that involves going over the handlebars of your bike.

ENDURO
a form of mountain bike racing in which there is a greater proportion of downhill sections, which are timed, to uphill and cross country sections.

FIRE ROAD
a back country dirt or gravel road wide enough for emergency vehicles to use.

FORK
the part of the bike that attaches the front wheel to the frame.

GNARL
extreme technical sections. Characterized by very rough, rooty, slippery, or rocky sections. Commonly found in the Pacific Northwest and New England. "He has got some great bike handling skills and can really scream through the gnarl."

**GRANNY GEAR**
the lowest gear available on a bike, which only a grandmother would need to use; designed for steep uphill climbing, but extremely easy to pedal in on flat ground.

**GRINDER**
a long uphill climb.

**GRUNT**
a very difficult climb, requiring use of the granny gear.

**HARDTAIL**
a mountain bike that has no rear suspension.

**IMBA**
International Mountain Biking Association. An organization for trail advocacy.

**IN VOLUNTARY DISMOUNT**
a crash.

**KNOBBY TIRES**
the all-terrain tires that are used on mountain bikes.

**LID**
helmet.

**LINE**
the desirable path or strategy to take on a tricky trail section.

**MTB**
Short for mountain bike.

**MUD DIVING**
what happens when a bike slows abruptly in mud, throwing the rider into wet goo.

**NORBA**
(National Off-Road Bicycle Association) - USA Cycling's mountain bike racing division.

**OFF-CAMBER**
sloped ground that makes handling difficult.
PINCH FLAT
a tire flat that is caused when the tube is pinched against the rim internally.

PRESTA VALVE
the narrow valve found on most mountain bike inner tubes. A metal cap must be unscrewed before air can enter or exit.

PSI
The units of tire inflation measurement. It stands for “pounds per square inch”.

RATCHET
a riding technique in which you pedal in partial strokes in order to clear obstacles.

ROCK GARDEN
This refers to a section of trail covered with big rocks.

SCHRADER VALVE
the type of valve used on most cars and trucks. They are found on less expensive bicycle tubes and are spring-loaded to release air or let it in.

SHRED
negotiating trails with a higher-than-usual level of expertise.

SINGLETRACK
a narrow mountain bike trail that must be ridden single file.

SNAKEBITE
same as a pinch flat, but has two holes. (same causative mechanism)

STANDOVER CLEARANCE
the distance between the top tube and the rider's crotch.

SWITCHBACK
a turn on a hill that is too steep to be climbed without zig-zagging.

THE ZONE
a state of mind experienced while riding. You don't think, you just do. A truly mystical experience that can't be fully explained, but when you get there you'll know it and strive to reach it again.

TRACKSTAND
a riding technique that involves the rider stopping completely without putting a foot down.
TRAVEL
the distance a suspension fork or a shock can compress.

UPSHIFT
to shift into a higher gear.

WASH OUT
to have the front tire lose traction, especially while going around a corner.

WASHBOARD
small, regular undulations of the soil surface that make for a very rough ride.

WEIGHT-WEENIE
a MTB owner (not even necessarily a rider) who is more concerned with how many milligrams a certain component saves off the bike's total weight than with how to be a better rider.

WHEELIE
lifting the front wheel off the ground, usually with some combination of pulling on the handlebars, pedaling harder, and balance.

WIPEOUT
a crash. v. ("wipe out") to crash.

WONKY
not functioning properly. "I bailed, and now my wheel is all wonky and all I hear are wild pigs."

XC
Short for "cross country" – see above.

YARD SALE
a horrendous crash that leaves all your various "wares" -- water bottles, pump, tool bag, etc. -- scattered as if on display for sale.
Anatomy of a Mountain Bike
Here is a visual list of parts you’ll typically find on a full-suspension mountain bike (from Triangle Bicycle Works)
HOW TOs
6 Ways to Make New Riding Pals
by Jeff Barber, (Singletracks.com founder) and Nate Lessnick

Going out for a solo ride can be great, but sometimes it’s just more fun to go out with a group. Here are 6 ways to share in the fun of mountain biking with friends.

Head out to the local trail!
This is the easiest way to find mountain bikers with similar interests and abilities and definitely the most fun way to do it. Hit up the trailhead on a Saturday morning (or whenever things get busy) and ask folks if you can ride with them. Nine times out of ten they’ll say yes and you can get to know them as you ride. If things go well, ask for contact info afterward and try to schedule another time to meet up.

Join your local MTB club
Mountain bike clubs exist for a number of reasons, not the least of which is for socializing. Pay your dues and show up at the next group meeting or work party and introduce yourself. Many clubs also host group rides at the local trails so check your local club’s website / Facebook group to get the deets.

Sign up for a race or MTB festival
Some races can be pretty competitive so try to find one that attracts beginners and folks looking to have fun. During warm ups and after the race is a great time to introduce yourself (don’t try to do this during the race – you might get some dirty looks).

Get active online
While some mountain bikers would like to have an automated tool that randomly connects them with similar riders, we think there’s a lot of value in developing friendships online first. What does this look like? For starters, post a bit about yourself and where you like to ride on a biking forum where folks from your area tend to hang out. Chat back and forth a bit before asking to meet up for a ride – some people may be uncomfortable with getting together before they feel like they know you. Also check social networking sites like Meetup and Facebook to find groups in your area. These online groups often exist for the sole purpose of connecting mountain bikers so take advantage!

Pop into your local bike shop
Some bike shops host their own group rides and they’re always a great resource for learning about the local scene. Chat up the employees and they should be able to help you find ways to get connected.
Introduce a friend to mountain biking
We’re going to go out on a limb here and assume you already have a few good friends – why not introduce one of them – perhaps one who already fits the mountain biker profile (enjoys being outdoors, in decent shape and thirsts for cold beer) – to two wheeled fun? Find, rent or borrow a fat tire bike that fits them, and take ‘em out for a leisurely spin on a nice and easy trail (with few obstacles and no scary drops!). Show them a good time, hand them this guide and we’re sure you’ll convert them!

Conclusion
The great thing is that once you meet one or two mountain bikers they’ll introduce you to their friends and friends of friends. Before you know it, you’ll have a network of riders you can call up at a moment’s notice to meet up at the trail. Over time you’ll narrow in on those with similar skill levels and riding styles.

About Jeff
Jeff co-founded Singletracks.com with his wife Leah in 1999. Today he works out of Singletracks World HQ in Decatur, GA as the publisher.
How to Wear a Mountain Bike Helmet with Long Hair
By Meagan Broughton, Business Development Director at Sacred Rides

If you have long hair, fitting and wearing a helmet can often be tedious, as the smoothness of your hair acts like a slip-and-slide for the helmet. For snowboarding, I have determined wearing a headband over my ears allows the helmet to grip, minimizing slippage. On a 30 degree Celsius day ripping the dirt, a headband is not an option.

So now what? The Helmet Hair Hole. Say what?! Most XC cycling helmets come with a hole at the back of the helmet, most often where the size adjuster is. I like to refer to it as the Helmet Hair Hole.

Step by step:
- Put hair in a ponytail, approximately mid way up your head. Make ponytail into a braid.
- Adjust the circumference dial to its widest setting.
- Pull braid through the "Helmet Hair Hole".
- Connect the chin strap.
- Adjust the helmet so it sits level on your head, an approximate 1 inch above your eyebrows. If most of your forehead is showing, the helmet will not protect you if you fall (also - see section on Mountain Bike Fashion Don't and Do's!)
- Tighten the circumference dial until the helmet fits snug around your head.
- Adjust the chin straps so only 1 finger fits between the strap and your chin, and the V straps sit just under your ears.
- Shake your head back and forth and from side to side confirming there is no movement. Adjust if necessary.

Bonus Tip: How to wear your sunglasses on your helmet without them falling off
- Turn your sunglasses upside down.
- Tuck them into the (front) vents in your helmet.
- Voila!

Safety Tips:
- Look for one of these certification stickers from the CSA, EN, ASTM, CPSC or Snell B90/B95.
- Retire your helmet after 1 major hit.
- Retire your helmet after 6 years, even if it took no major hits.
Mountain Bike Fashion Don’ts and Do’s
By Meagan Broughton

When this topic came up in the Sacred Rides office, the responsibility of authoring such an article was tossed around. We discussed: “whose right is it anyway to tell you what you should and shouldn’t wear from a fashion perspective while mountain biking?” To each their own, right? Right. So, my approach for this article on fashion choices for mountain biking is based around function, not fashion. The best part is, functional fashion will have you looking like a pro in no time (and not like a total gong show).

DON’T WEAR:
Underwear with a chamois. Along with the dreaded underwear line, wearing underwear in your padded bike shorts will increase the likelihood of rubbing, chafing and pressure points where the sun don't shine.

DO WEAR:
Chamois commando style. Chamois are designed for this!

DON’T WEAR:
A helmet not meant for cycling. You risk not being properly protected. Bike helmet manufacturers design helmets to take impact on the most common areas hit when crashing on a bike.

DO WEAR:
A certified bicycle helmet. Look for one of these certification stickers from the CSA, EN, ASTM, CPSC or Snell B90/B95.

DON’T WEAR:
A helmet incorrectly. “Beginner Gap” is a real thing, and if you rock an open uncovered forehead, you are not protected.

DO WEAR:
A helmet correctly. See section on “How to wear a helmet”.

DON’T WEAR:
A see-through chamois. Do the squat test in a mirror - can you see your umm...crack? If so, so can everyone else when you are stretched out on your bike. If you can, it is likely you need a new pair of padded bike shorts anyway.

DO WEAR:
A non see-through chamois. If that is not in the budget, toss on a pair of trail riding shorts and save the x-rated riding for home.
DON'T WEAR:
**Cotton or down.** Save the cozy attire for chill time at post ride beers. Cotton and down soak up sweat like a sponge and once its wet, it will stay wet, risking rubbing, chafing and chills at rest stops. Cotton and down are both extremely heavy when wet as well - why shave off grams on components, and add 2 lbs of sweat to your ride?

DO WEAR:
**Breathable layers.** Synthetic or wool is your best bet for quick drying materials offering comfort and style.

DON'T WEAR:
**Baggy jackets and pants.** Baggy tops and jackets risk getting snagged by branches, either ripping your shirt or you off the bike. Baggy pants will - not might - get caught in your chain ring wrecking your pants, possibly you and your chain depending on how fast you were going when it snagged.

DO WEAR:
**Form fitting clothing.**

DON'T WEAR:
**Sandals or flip flops.** With rocks, roots, and branches coming at you - or you at them - protecting your feet and toes is important.

DO WEAR:
**Closed toed shoes with some traction.** If just starting out, a pair of flat skate shoes or running shoes will do the trick. Make sure your laces are tied tight, as they can easily get caught up in your chain. Bike shoes with clipless pedals would be the next step and will avoid the shoe lace conundrum.

DON'T WEAR:
**An unfit backpack.** A swaying, lopsided pack will quickly throw you off balance on that ladder bridge you have been eyeing.

DO WEAR:
**A good utility pack.** Look for packs with adjustable chest straps, waist straps and a cinching feature allowing you to tighten up a half full pack. A bladder slip with hole for the drinking tube would be an added bonus feature. We’re big fans of Osprey Packs. Check them out at [www.ospreypacks.com](http://www.ospreypacks.com)
DON'T WEAR:
**Aviator sunglasses.** Or any other sunglass not meant for sweaty activity. Why you ask? A few reasons: they will fog up, likely slip off your face from sweat and will eventually get beat up.

DO WEAR:
**Sunglasses designed for activity.** Save the Top Gun look for the beach, Maverick. Pick up some cycling shades with vents to minimize fog and rubber arms to keep the shades in place even if you do eat dirt for dinner.

**About Meagan**
Meagan lives in Collingwood, ON, Canada, a few pedal strokes to the areas most technical singletrack, longest downhills, and picturesque country roads. Meagan is an Ambassador for Oakley Canada, TREK Women and the YMCA, and also happens to be Sacred Rides super rad Business Development Director. Meagan strives to create, build and foster a community of women dedicated to learning, progressing and conquering new skills on the bike and in the kitchen.
Pee Like a Pro
By Meagan Broughton

No no, its not you, it's a fact: Women urinate more than men. An annoying fact for those who spend serious time in the saddle - hunched over, adding even more unwanted pressure to the never-ending nag that’s impossible to ignore. Skinny jeans to nylons, women are bombarded with lower body garments that add more pressure on our already active bladder.

Enter the bib short! A short that is free of waist cinching bands and buttons, smoothed out by a piece of material attaching the short up and over your shoulders with straps. If skinny jeans came with a bib, I would so rock them.

One common misconception about bib shorts, is the struggle they come with to pee, having to completely undress your top half. Thanks to Peter Glassford who caught up with 3 Rox Racing Pro XC Mountain Biker Amanda Sin for Episode #34 of his Bike Skills Project - I was quickly convinced otherwise and now use this brilliant technique on every single ride I head out on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVEwILPaUy8

For more on women and urinating (who wouldn't want more?), check out Dr. Oz’s video: http://www.sharecare.com/health/overactive-bladder/women-go-bathroom-often

About Peter
Peter is a Registered Kinesiologist, professional cycling coach with SmartAthlete, and Professional XC Racer with Trek Canada. While he loves talking about the science of performance, his passion is in movement and bike skills. Find out more at peterglassford.ca
The Tampon vs. Pad Debate
Adapted from "Saddle, Sore: A Women-Only Guide to You and Your Bike" by Molly Hurford

Is it better to ride with a tampon or pad during your period?

From Heidi Grissom Bell, MD:

Likely a tampon, with the string tucked enough inside to ensure there are no “pressure points” created by it. Pads tend to wrinkle and become irritants to the skin over time, especially if pressed closely to the skin by the bike saddle. If you are uncomfortable inserting a tampon, you can ask your own gynecologist for help/instruction. If pads are used, they should be unscented. Perfumes that are used in scented pads can be really irritating to the skin over time!

From Gynecologist Esther Yun:

This is a very personal issue for many women, as some women are not comfortable with using tampons. At the end of the day, you should use what you are most comfortable with. That said, there are some advantages to using a tampon:

First, there is no object fixed to your chamois with sticky tape, which is certainly not designed to withstand the rigors of cycling. Wearing a pad also changes the padding of your chamois and may cause more chafing. So using a tampon also means no additional chafing from a loose object moving around inside your chamois.

Second, wearing a tampon will decrease the moisture present in the area and therefore decrease irritation to the sensitive skin in the area. The string should also be tucked in to minimize chafing. With both however, it is essential that you change them on a regular basis, especially if you are having a heavy flow day.

Retained tampons and leaving tampons in for extended periods of time predispose you to risk of infection, specifically toxic shock syndrome. Leaving a pad in for extended periods of time, especially during and after exercise, and especially while wearing a chamois, will hold and trap moisture, discharge, and bacteria. This can predispose you to bacterial vaginosis and/or yeast infections. Because both these infections can manifest with similar symptoms, it is important to contact your gynecologist if symptoms persist so that you receive the appropriate treatment. Change your pad or tampon as soon as possible after a ride.
Saddle Sores: Diagnosis, Prevention and Treatment Tips
Adapted from "Saddle, Sore: A Women-Only Guide to You and Your Bike" written by Molly Hurford.

**Diagnosis**
From Coach Peter Glassford:

A saddle sore is like a pimple, a mound. It may seem similar to an ingrown hair. If you get a sunburn, that’ll be similar to a friction rash you might get on your inner thigh, and isn’t a saddle sore.

In the saddle contact area, that’s the most common area—between your genitalia and your anus—where you’ll end up with it most often. You’ll be more likely to get rashes or simple breakouts on your thighs or butt cheeks. Saddle sores are from really abusing the tissue while riding and bacteria gets in there, and the best way to describe it is a big pimple.

Doing a Daily Check is a great way to prevent a major sore. The first thing you should do is shower when you get off the bike, and do an inspection. See when things are starting to get red, starting to get swollen.

**Prevention**
From Gynecologist Kristi Angevine:

Post-ride care of the perineum is important for men and women alike. For perianal health and happy riding, do the following:

1. Change out of your bike shorts as soon as you are done riding. If you are prone to vaginal irritation or infections, this is particularly important. If you’re sensitive, don’t drive home in that soggy chamois!
2. Get clean as soon as you can. Shower or bathe to get everything clean. If you can’t, use something like a baby diaper wipe or towelette, or even just rinse with some water.
3. Keep in mind, don’t douche or use perfumed spritzers. Plain soap and water are all this area needs. Perfumes or douches can alter the pH of the vagina and disrupt the typical balance of the natural vaginal flora. This imbalance leads to vaginitis, bad smelling discharge and itching.
Treatment
From Gynecologist Kristi Angevine:

Saddle sores start when friction causes the surface of the skin to break enough for bacteria (that normally lives on our skin’s surface), to get underneath. This defect, plus bacteria, forms a sore that can be difficult to care for given its location.

Prevention of sores is best, but if you get one, here’s how to care for it:

1. When off the bike, keep it clean and dry. Wash it with plain soap and water. Let the area breathe by avoiding underwear made of satin or silk. Opt for cotton, wool, any breathable fabrics or no underwear at all.
2. Warm baths and hot compresses can be soothing.
3. Don’t squeeze it! That prolongs healing and increases the chances of a larger infection.
4. If it gets really irritated or is very painful when riding, take a few days off the saddle.
5. For general perianal and vaginal health and not just when there is a saddle sore: wear only clean shorts, not ones that have been worn on a ride before and haven't been washed. Also, after doing any exercise, change out of your workout clothing and get clean soon. This means, get out of that chamois before you drive home!
6. See a doctor if the skin around the area gets red, hot, or swollen or if you get a fever.

Last Words
Are you noticing a trend? This is key especially when you're on group rides or traveling on a trip and it's tempting to kick back immediately post-ride. Time to give up that habit of stopping by the coffee shop on the way home from a long ride and lingering in your bike shorts. Change first, then hang out. (I sometimes ride with a spare pair of running shorts in my jersey pocket for when I make stops longer than a few minutes.)

MOUNTAIN BIKES AND TOOLS
Hardtail vs Full Suspension Mountain Bikes
By Corey Maddocks, Singletracks.com contributor

Hardtail or full suspension? This question comes up all the time on the Singletracks Forums so hopefully this quick list of the pros and cons of each of mountain bike style will help you decide which one will work better for you.

My Perspective

I will be 40 this year, and although I've ridden bikes all my life, I've been a serious mountain biker since I moved to Colorado in 2004. I started out on a Specialized Rockhopper hardtail, which I rode for 4 years. Then I got a Giant Trance full suspension bike and rode it for 3 years. Now I'm riding a hardtail again, but this time on a 29-inch wheels.

What is the difference?

Those of us who have been riding for a while take this for granted, but for those who are new to the sport the differences may be a little hazy. Here's the quick and dirty info:

A hardtail is a bike with a solid frame and it usually has a suspension fork on the front. Here is a typical hardtail model:

A full suspension (FS) bike has the same fork out front, but it has a frame that consists of two pieces, a front triangle and rear triangle, that are joined by pivots. This allows the two sections of the frame to move independently, and the rate of that movement is controlled by a shock absorber. At right is a typical full-suspension model:

Okay, so which is better?

The answer is: it depends. It comes down to personal preference, riding style, average terrain encountered, and other factors. With that being said, however, we'll go over what each model excels at, as well as some limitations of each. This should help you
decide which model better fits your riding style, or perhaps it will convince you to buy one of each! Here goes...

**Climbing**
Hardtail bikes transfer pedaling power to the rear wheel more efficiently. On non-technical surfaces, this results in better acceleration and makes it easier to sustain higher speeds over a long time. Once the terrain turns technical, rear suspension allows more of the available rear wheel power to actually reach the ground by allowing the wheel to better articulate over obstacles. This helps to maintain traction and mitigates “spinning out.” Also, with FS it is generally easier to stay seated while climbing.

**Downhill**
On bumpy, technical downhill trails, FS bikes have a clear advantage – but don’t count the hardtail out just yet. I’ve ridden plenty of technical stuff on a hardtail and it handles just fine. The difference is that the “suspension” is your legs. The net result is getting tired faster, but if you’re conditioned to it, it’s not a big deal. In my opinion, technical downhill on a hardtail also makes you choose a better line, and in the long run can make you a better overall rider.

**Maintenance**
There is no disputing that hardtails require less long-term maintenance. All of those pivots and linkages on the FS will need periodic servicing, and the rear shock will need new seals every season or two. Frame articulation causes cables to rub on the frame, and the chain has to work harder to keep up with everything. If you enjoy simplicity and want to keep your maintenance costs low, a hardtail is a good choice. (Or a rigid singlespeed for that matter, but that’s a topic for another post.)

**Weight**
Advancements in modern frame design are constantly shifting the meaning of “lightweight” in mountain biking. In general a hardtail can be built lighter than the average FS bike, but there are also some seriously lightweight FS bikes now too. Whichever type you’re considering, as long as the weight is reasonable, I wouldn’t worry too much about it. How well it fits and the overall ride quality are more important.

**Price**
The basic hardtail bike design has existed for over 100 years. FS design is a hotbed of innovation and various patents have been granted, resulting in license agreements between some of the bike manufacturers. Guess who ultimately pays those R&D and licensing costs... you do! The point is that if you are on a strict budget, you can probably get more bike for your buck with a hardtail.
Comfort (These Old Bones)
As I mentioned, I’m almost 40. It didn’t used to bother me to bomb down miles of rough downhill, holding my rear off the saddle all the way. The older I get, the nicer it is to be able to sit down on all but the roughest stuff. I also find that I can go faster over rough stuff with the FS. On the other hand, the hardtail 29er that I’m currently riding has a much smoother ride than my old 26er hardtail. It’s like a magic trick!

The Bottom Line
If you’re just starting out, on a really tight budget, or just enjoy simplicity, you should definitely consider one of the great hardtails on the market today. It can get you out there riding without costing a lot of coin up front and saves on maintenance costs down the line.

If you know you want to huck drops or ride rough, technical trails most of the time or if you’re an older rider and just want a smoother ride, then you’ll likely be happier on a full suspension bike. As I’ve outlined, each type of bike excels in different areas, and it really does come down to your preference and the type of riding you like to do.

About Corey
Originally from Maine, I discovered mountain biking after moving to Colorado in 2004. Since then I have ridden a variety of bikes on trails in five states. I prefer fat biking, XC riding, and all day epic trails, with the occasional gnarly downhill run thrown in to spice things up. When not riding, I enjoy wrenching on bikes and I have designed a line of 650b hardtail race bikes that are going into production in 2014.
7 Essential Mountain Bike Tools
By James Fedosov, Rider Happiness Manager at Sacred Rides

Shortly after purchasing your first bike, you’ll notice that there’s what seems like a specialized tool for every tiny nut, bolt, shock, brake, and tire valve on it. Gathering a garage’s worth of tools takes time (and money!), so here are the essentials.

The Floor Pump

The foot pump is a no-brainer for your home shop– you can’t ride without air in your tires, right? Function, looks, and (of course) branding will play into how much you’ll drop on your new pump. Having one with a dual-head, that is – there’s no configuration change needed to switch from filling a Schrader to a Presta valve – is very handy. Many pumps come with a head that needs to be unscrewed, flipped, and tightened again, which means more time spent fiddling around between filling your and your friend’s tires.

- **What it does:** fills your tires with air quickly and accurately.
- **What to look for when buying:** Presta and Schrader compatibility, foot-placement areas for stability, a gauge showing psi, what your mechanic uses (he does use them day in and day out, after all).
- **What you should expect to pay:** $45-$140 (CAD)
- **Our recommendation:** The Topeak Joe Blow Series: A pump with the ease of dual-head functionality for both types of valve, an accurate gauge, and a build that feels like it will last more than a few seasons. The Max II is a sturdy entry-level option that can be found at a reasonable price at your local bike store.
The Hex Key Set

Your bike is held together by what might seem like a hundred different bolts. Some are large and some are small, and you'll need a set that turns them all "ba-dum-tiss". You can choose between a more portable set that come fixed together, multi-tool style, in a standard mechanic's set, or even with handles for extra leverage.

- **What they do**: loosen or tighten the various Allen bolts on your bike.
- **What to look for when buying**: Metric or Imperial– most bikes are assembled with Metric (measured in millimeters) bolts. If you're taking them on the go, the functionality of the multi-tool set will do you well. If you're looking to ensemble a set that will last you forever, go with the handled variety. If you're strapped for cash, head to your local hardware store's sale rack.
- **What you should expect to pay**: $10 from the aforementioned sale rack – $80 for the best of the best.
- **Our Recommendation**:
  - For the fellow on a budget: they're all made of metal– whatever you can find!
  - For the rider who wants to carry them around with him: Wrench Force's Multi-tool-style hex key set (what a mouthful!) is small enough to stuff in your pack, and won't break your budget.
  - For the rider who means business: a plastic molded P- or T-handled set from Park Tool (or similar) is for those looking for serious torque in a pretty package.

The Adjustable Wrench or Wrench Set

Whether you bought them, or your friend left theirs on your workbench last year, or you inherited them... Wrenches almost seem to come with garages– you just don't find a garage without a wrench in it. You already need a set for around the house, but especially if your bike doesn't have quick-release wheels, you'll definitely want to have an adjustable wrench around.

- **What they do**: tighten or loosen nuts.
- **What to look for when buying**: Similar to hex keys, you can pretty much spend what you'd like on these. Just remember, the longer the wrench, the more leverage you'll get. The smaller it is, the more maneuverable it will be.
- **What you should expect to pay**: $5-$50, depending on size and bling-factor.
- **Our recommendation**: Bigger is better when it comes to loosening pedals and axle-bolts, so anything in the 10”+ range that fits your price.
The Tire Lever

There’s nothing that will get you hot, sweaty, and flustered on a hot summer’s afternoon like…fighting with a tire that you can’t get off your rim. With the right tire lever, you can take the frustration out of swapping your tube when you’re in a time crunch. Wedge the flat end between your tire and rim, push down to bring the bead over the tire, then use the second lever to slide the bead off one side of the rim all the way around the tire.

• **What they do:** Remove your tire from your rim without giving your thumbs rubber-burn.
• **What to look for when buying:** Sturdy-sized plastic levers. There are metal ones on the market, but in using them you risk scuffing your purdy black rims.
• **What you should expect to pay:** Well less than $20.
• **Our recommendation:** Pedro’s Tire Levers or Park Tool Tire Levers. Both have been sitting in our toolboxes for years, and we can confidently reach for either without the fear of one busting in half.

The Chain Breaker

If you haven’t already experienced it, you will one day learn that major bike break-downs often seem to happen when you’re at the furthest possible point from your house, or trailhead, or any form of civilization at all. Here’s the tool that will save you from getting to the bottom of a descent and not being able to pedal back up again.

• **What they do:** Drive pins into, or push them out to repair or remove chains.
• **What to look for when buying:** You’ll have to decide between a breaker driven by an Allen key or turned by hand, depending on if you’re carrying it in your pack or not. You’ll be grateful for your breaker having a replaceable pin (the part that drives the pin holding two chain links together), should you ever snap it.
• **What you should expect to pay:** $5-$60, depending on make and size.
• **Our recommendation:** The Park Tool CT-5 is a lightweight chain breaker with a replaceable pin and hand-turned driver.

Sacred Rides Mountain Bike Adventures

[www.sacredrides.com](http://www.sacredrides.com)
The Compact Scissors and Cable Cutters

Somewhere along the line, you’re going to need to cut a cable, or cable-housing, or zip-tie on (or off) your bike. That’s where these come in. Just for clarification, these are two different tools, but they’ll find themselves next to one another in your toolbox.

- **What they do**: Cut cables, cable housings, zip-ties, or free your kid’s new toy from the fifteen-ply plastic packaging they put them in.
- **What to look for when buying**: A good feel in your hand, and a spring between the handle, like a pair of garden shears.
- **What you should expect to pay**: As little as $15 for the Scissors, and as much as $65 for the Cutters (on the very high-end).
- **Our recommendation**: A pair of Fiskars Micro-Tip (~$20) scissors, and Park Tool or Pedro’s cable cutters ($30-$55, depending on where you find them) will do you well.

About James
For me, growing up in Canada was exploring on my bike in the summer and hockey in the winter. Moving to Niagara while I was in grade school introduced me to cross-country racing and riding in a club, which I loved. Cycling is now my lifestyle– from racing and commuting on a fixed gear, to riding the North Shore and Whistler while visiting my father in Vancouver.
Making the Switch to Clipless MTB Pedals
by Greg Heil, Singletracks.com contributor

For those of you new to the sport of mountain biking, seeing other people ride around with their funky looking shoes clipped in to their odd-shaped pedals may look A) weird and/or B) like a death wish! Actually, there are a number of very good reasons to use these special shoes and pedals... which is why almost everybody who's serious about riding singletrack does.

What are the benefits to using clipless pedals?

Clipless pedals were originally developed primarily to increase pedaling efficiency in order to help riders go faster. With a standard set of flat pedals, you are only able to put power into your drivetrain on each downstroke of the pedals. But when your feet are clipped in, you're able to provide constant power with both legs by utilizing the upstroke as well.

Of course it's not physically possible to generate as much power on the upstroke as on the down, but being able to add power to the system constantly does make you a significantly more efficient machine. As an added bonus, this constant power (as compared to the surges of power that come from just mashing the pedals) helps you to maintain better traction on loose, steep climbs.

While all of these things are very true, none of them are my personal favorite reason for using a clipless system. For me, the advantage of being “locked” into my bike made me fall in love with clipless pedals. When you're clipped in, your feet will never slip off of the pedals, even when the going gets rough! I've met hardcore downhillers who claim that if you've got the right pair of flat pedals and shoes, your feet will be as rock solid as if you were riding clipless. Maybe that's true – but the downhill skier in me doubts that even a pair of DH flats can beat the feeling of being mechanically connected to your bike.

Not only do clipless pedals increase your efficiency and keep your feet from slipping off, but they offer increased control as well. It is much easier to put “body English” on the bike when you're be in a sticky technical situation, easier to ratchet the pedals and provide partial strokes when needed, and clipless pedals force you to try harder to stay upright because you don't want to constantly be clipping in and out.
Clipless Pedals and Shoes

First, you need to buy the right gear: a pair of clipless pedals and a pair of shoes. As you can see from the photo, the number of pedal options can be pretty intimidating. Two of the most popular types are Crankbrothers’ Eggbeater pedals and Shimano’s SPD pedals but be sure to check out the MTB pedal buyers’ guide to understand all your options.

Naturally, there seem to be even more mountain bike shoe options than there are pedal options! Whichever pair of shoes you buy, make sure they have a place to attach the “cleat” for your pedals. The cleat is the metal piece that actually clips in to your pedal, and a pair of those should come with whichever pedals you choose to buy.

I personally wear a pair of Specialized shoes on the trail. Some mountain bike shoes feature a flat bottom skate-style sole with a cleat option thrown in for good measure. Others sport a more relaxed, casual design that would look pretty normal off the trail.

While they may look geekier, I recommend going all-out and buying a pair of legitimate cross-country style mountain bike shoes. Going with a cross-country oriented shoe provides you with the benefits of a snug fit for power on the upstrokes and a hard sole for even force distribution on the downstroke.

In short, XC shoes ensure the best pedaling performance possible.

Skill #1: Clipping In and Out

If you have never ridden with clipless pedals before, the thought of being mechanically attached to your bicycle may seem scary… until you realize how easy it is to get in and out of the pedals. Here’s how to get comfortable with clipping in and out:

- Find a big, grassy field to practice in. That way you won’t have to worry about navigating, and if you take a fall or two the consequences won’t be nearly as bad as on pavement or rocky trail.
- Place the front of the metal cleat into the pedal. It may take a little while to get the feel of where exactly the cleat is at, but it should be positioned right under the ball of your foot.
- Press down so that the back part of the cleat clicks into place. Your foot is now connected to the pedal.
• To get out, simply press down with your big toe and turn your heel outwards, as if you are squashing a bug.
• Make sure that you do not pull straight back when you try to disengage the pedal. One of the main goals of clipless pedals is to increase pedaling efficiency. They will not disengage unless you turn your heel outward.
• Practice this motion over and over with both feet until the motion feels completely natural.

Over time, these steps will truly become second nature. You will undoubtedly fall a few times as a result of not being used to the new gear, but don't worry – you'll catch on quickly! The video below demonstrates the basic clip in/clip out motion. (Don't worry – the third clip in the video is demonstrating pedal “float” – this is not the result of a stuck cleat.)

**Skill #2: Pedaling in Circles**

I will be the first person to admit that I'm not good at pedaling in circles. I tend to just mash the pedals and go. Personally, I need to get a road bike and spend about 6 months focusing on spinning efficiently. While I'm not the most efficient pedaler myself, I at least understand the basic concept.

As the subtitle says, it is important to think about pedaling in circles. As I mentioned previously, one benefit to clipless pedals is the increased speed and power generated by using the entire pedal stroke instead of just the downstroke.

**While you're pedaling, consciously consider these steps:**

• Push down like an average pedal stroke.
• Pull your foot across the bottom of the stroke as if you are trying to wipe poop off of the bottom of your shoe.
• Pull your foot up and thrust your knee hard toward your handlebar.
• Push down... and repeat smoothly.
• As with any other mountain biking skill, perfecting the art of the pedal stroke takes time and practice. As you begin to master the art, try unclipping one foot and pedaling with just the other. Doing this will help you realize how beneficial a smooth cadence can be.
MOUNTAIN BIKE SKILLS
Climbing, Descending, and Braking
By Meagan Broughton

CLIMBING:

Head to toe check:
• **Head** still, looking forward and ready to react to change gears at base of climb and beyond.
• **Shoulders** down and back.
• **Elbows** relaxed, with a slight bend.
• **Hands** relaxed.
• **Back** straight and still.
• **Hips** forward, touching the tip of the seat.
• **Legs** rotating smooth and consistently in a circular motion.
• **Feet** flat, or heels slightly up.

DESCENDING:

• **Head to toe check:**
  • **Head** still, looking forward and ready to react to change gears at top of climb and beyond.
  • **Shoulders** down and back.
  • **Elbows** relaxed, with slight bend, some refer to it as the “attack” position.
  • **Hands** holding the bars firmly, using only the index finger in the brake ready position.
  • **Back** flat.
  • **Hips** back, lifted and hovering. Distance back will be dictated by braking and steepness of pitch.
  • **Legs/ Knees** slightly bent and ready to absorb any bumps or drops.
  • **Feet** still and hovering level at 3 o'clock and 9 o'clock.

BRAKING:
Remember! **Left Hand**: Front Brake, **Right Hand**: Back Brake (think “Right for Rear”).
• Use front and back brake equally.
• Transfer weight/hips back. Steepness will dictate how far back.
• Feather breaks, oppose to jamming them.
Gearing and Cadence
By Meagan Broughton

GEARING / SHIFTING
Left Hand:
- Front gears (think “Left for Large” chain ring and large adjustments)
- 2-3 gears
- Coarse tuning changes in your gearing
- Used for hills: climbing and descending
- “Granny” gear (easiest gear) is only used for climbing steep pitches – try to avoid it when riding flats or downhill

Right Hand:
- Rear gears (think “Right for Rear” chain ring)
- 7-10 gears
- Used for fine-tuning your gearing
- Used most often and in constant change

TIPS
- Shift while pedaling, choosing the “soft pedal” approach
- Avoid smashing or hammering down into a gear change
- Maintain a smooth, consistent pedal stroke
- Predict the terrain, adjust gears proactively, i.e. easier gear at base of climb, harder gear at top of descent
- Coordinate the front and back gears - this will improve with practice
- Avoid cross chaining – inside in the front, outside in the back (or vise versa)

CADENCE:
- Cadence is the number of crank revolutions per minute. a.k.a. RPM (Revolutions Per Minute)
- Recreational cyclists typically cycle around 60-90 RPM – aim for 90 RPM
- Climbing will decrease your RPM. Aim to keep your RPM as high as possible when climbing (as opposed to pushing slowly and painfully a hard gear)
- No matter the terrain, it is most efficient to maintain the same cadence.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT RPM?
- Set a 1 minute timer, pedal as you normally would, and pick one foot to count how many times it revolves in 1 minute.
- If less than 90 RPM, you are likely in too hard of a gear, or you can work harder!
Cornering
By Meagan Broughton

**Head to toe check:**
- **Head** still, looking forward and ready to react
- **Arms** relaxed, with slight bend and used to give the bike a slight lean into the corner
- **Hands** relaxed, in brake or shift ready position
- **Trunk** upright keeping weight over lowest, outside foot
- **Hips** centered. The more aggressive the turn, could be slightly lifted
- **Legs** still (not pedaling)
- **Feet** inside foot up (to avoid hitting the ground), outside foot down (to create stability and traction)

**TIPS:**
- Brake just before you enter the corner
- Avoid braking in the corner
- Accelerate out of the corner—often accompanied by standing, shifting and getting back up to speed and your desired cadence

Check out this quick video on cornering from Coach and Trek Canada XC Pro Racer, Peter Glassford: [http://peterglassford.ca/3-drills-for-better-cornering/](http://peterglassford.ca/3-drills-for-better-cornering/)

**About Peter**
*Peter is a Registered Kinesiologist, professional cycling coach with SmartAthlete, and Professional XC Racer with Trek Canada. While he loves talking about the science of performance, his passion is in movement and bike skills. Find out more at peterglassford.ca*
The Pre-Ride Meal
By Meagan Broughton

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).

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.

5 MINUTE BLUEBERRY BREAKFAST BOWL

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

Sacred Rides Mountain Bike Adventures
www.sacredrides.com
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.

This recipe –and the two following it– were developed and tested by Meagan, Sacred Rides’ very own food-loving cyclist. Check out her website for more awesome food, training, and adventure info: www.meaganbroughton.com
The Ride “Meal”
By Meagan Broughton

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.

Tips on Ride Fuel, Hydration and Timing

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 contains 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!

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www.sacredrides.com
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 did 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
By Meagan Broughton

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 this colourful, flavourful and macronutrient filled recipe sure to please every hungry rider!

**PAD THAI WITH FRESH LIME & 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
- ½ cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 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

MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAVEL PRIMER
Emily Batty on Women’s Mountain Biking and Mountain Bike Travel
by Meagan Broughton

*Canadian Olympic XC Mountain Bike athlete, Emily Batty, shares her thoughts with the Sacred Rides Team on the sport of women’s mountain biking, and mountain bike travel.*

**SR:** Could you suggest 3 ways other fellow female mountain bikers could encourage more women to give the sport of mountain biking a try?

**EB:** “Great question. At the beginning, the biggest thing for me was the social side of the sport. While it was a blast riding, it was also the before and after, getting to and from the trails that make the experience that much more enjoyable. Getting your lady friends (ALL AGES!! that is the important part - cycling doesn't have an age bracket - just a skill limiter so young can ride with older easily).

1. Getting ladies to events or out to the trails so they can visually see other women doing it, "If she can do it, then so can I" sorta speak, is a good start. Seeing others do something helps with envisioning ourselves doing something and not want to be left out.
2. Start small. Doesn't matter age or gender, we all like to achieve success at what we are working at so by starting with smaller objects, small hills we will naturally build self confidence and motivation.
3. Keep it fun. Meet up afterwards and go for a swim, dinner or a glass of wine.”

**SR:** Intimidation and fear are a couple of common reasons women shy away from the log hop, the drop or the sport of mountain biking in general. How have you overcome these obstacles?

**EB:** “While we don't need the flashiest, lightest, fastest components to ride with our friends on nice double track trail or sidewalk, a big advantage to learning obstacles is having proper equipment. Weight does make a difference ladies so while riding our neighbours old clunker is a great start, taking it to the next level means having proper fitting clip-in shoes, the lighter the bike the better, and doing those pushups and core workouts off the bike. Best of all worlds, the stronger you are, the more strength and coordination we will have on the bike, AND a healthy, smokin’ body.

We could never just start doing pushups and expect ourselves to do 50 our first day, [and] cycling skills are the same. It takes coordination - learning how to move the bike under you, how to lift the front wheel and then the rear wheel in one motion, and strength to do so, it takes practice and a little time.
Women are way stronger than we give ourselves credit for, so just start by watching someone, and then DOING. Naturally, we know what's too much at the start but work up to bigger objects as time goes on. Go outside your comfort zone once you have smaller things dialed. You will surprise yourself as to what you can do.

Sometimes having someone more skilled then you to break-down the steps, or ride you into the drop is a way to fast-track so they are showing you the speed to enter with. Personally, seeing a guy do something technical is enough for me to want to do it right away.

Be patient with yourself, but especially the one helping you. Trust me, the person that got you out on the trail is happier to have you on your bike with them then you could ever imagine. Be patient and open minded to your friends or spouse trying to help. And never get overwhelmed. Relax, it's just fun.”

**SR:** The 29’er height/weight debate. Can you please **please** remind us of your height and weight and give us your thoughts and experience riding and racing on a 29’er? (I really want to kibosh this myth!)

**EB:** “5’3 and 106lb. The bigger the wheel, the smaller the object [under it]. 29” is a big advantage in my opinion. Less work to “pull up” when climbing and rolling over things because of more tire tread contact with the ground. More traction as well.”

**SR:** To best prepare for your mountain bike trip, what 3 things do you do the week leading up to flying?

**EB:** “-Make lots of lists
-Know your luggage weight, as it’s limited if flying!
-know your itinerary (have it handy on your phone, computer and even print it) “

**SR:** Besides your bike, gear, and tools, what 3 items are essential on your trip packing list?

**EB:** “I always seem to max my luggage limit because I want to bring everything but most important other than bike gear is my foam roller, headphones, coffee (coffee filters and cone).”

**SR:** Where in the world have you not ridden (haven’t you ridden like everywhere??), and would love to one day?

**EB:** “Ha, the list is never ending. Every new place has so much to offer. This fall I would like to go back to Moab, Utah”

Sacred Rides Mountain Bike Adventures

www.sacredrides.com
SR: Any final thoughts to share with the women out there thinking of buying their first mountain bike, hitting their first drop, or traveling the world in search of the best single track?

EB: “Be open minded, be patient, take risks, give yourself credit.”
7 things to think about when you’re traveling abroad to mountain bike
by Mike Brcic, Sacred Rides Founder

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 (http://www.visahq.ca/) or Project Visa (http://www.projectvisa.com/).

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 MD Travel Health website (http://www.mdtravelhealth.com/) 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 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 (http://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!

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!
Renting a Bike Vs. Bringing Your Own
By Nate Lessnick

So you're planning your next big adventure and you want to go mountain biking. Amazing! Now you need to decide whether you'll be renting a bike or bringing your own. We've laid out some of the most common arguments for and against both options in the hopes they'll help you choose the one that best suits your needs and fits your plans.

Renting

**Peace of mind**
Not having to worry about taking your bike apart, packing it up nicely in a bike bag or case, lugging it half-way across the world and building it back up again. And most of all, knowing you won't be running the risk of damaging your bike while in transit.

**Testing out a new ride**
Renting a bike invariably means getting to test out some new wheels. Whether you've been itching to try a 29er race machine or an all-mountain shredder, renting a bike gives you the perfect opportunity to try something new. And if you're already considering purchasing a new ride, what better way to assess compatibility than on a mutli-day trip?

**Freedom and flexibility**
If you're planning on traveling before or after the biking portion of your trip, renting a bike allows you to get up and go as you please without having to worry about carrying a cumbersome case around with you or finding safe storage space for your bike.

Bringing your own

**Tried and tested**
Bringing your trusty steed along with you means you'll be saddling up on the bike you know is perfectly suited for your riding style and fits you like a glove. Opt for a rental and you may find yourself on a bike you just aren't as fond of or doesn't fit you as well. You'll already be riding on foreign trails, do you really want to be riding an unfamiliar bike?

**Cheaper**
Despite all the fees associated with airline bike travel, you'll still end up saving money by bringing your own bike (in most cases). Depending on the country you're visiting, the duration of your trip and the bike you end up with, you should expect to pay anywhere from $50 to $90 a day for a rental, whereas airlines will generally set you back roughly $50 - $150 each way for oversized luggage.

**Shit happens**
Accidents can happen whether you're riding your own bike or a rental - only difference is you could be hit with a hefty price tag if your rental shows signs of damage, much more so than if you were to get your own bike repaired.
Conclusion
Opting to rent a bike or to bring your own on your dream mountain bike trip will very much depend on your destination, the length of your trip and your overall travel plans.

If you're leaning towards bringing your own bike, keep in mind that oversized luggage policies vary drastically amongst airlines. Before booking your flights, we strongly suggest looking up the contending airlines' bicycle policies to inform your decision. Once you’ve booked your flights, we recommend contacting your airline to let them know you’ll be carrying a packed bike.

Alternatively, if you're thinking of renting, keep in mind that rental costs will likely be higher and availability much slimmer in remote areas such as Argentina or Nepal. Which is why we'd recommend basing your decision on your destination: heading to Utah of BC for 5 days? Treat yourself to that nice plush ride you've been dreaming about by renting. Heading on an epic journey to Peru or New Zealand? Consider bringing your perfectly tuned all-mountain rig.
Questions to ask when renting a mountain bike
By Mike Brcic

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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).

4. 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.

5. 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!

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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!
What to pack for a mountain bike trip
By Meagan Broughton

So, you have finally booked your flight to that epic mountain bike destination you have always dreamed of, read about and drooled over in your favourite mountain bike movie. It's happening and its time to pack. Unlike the slothing beach vacation your college buddies are trying to convince you of, your speedo and baby oil won't cut it for this trip of a lifetime.

We have gathered this comprehensive list for you, in efforts to make your trip safe, memorable and enjoyable:

On the bike:
- jersey tops
- cycling shorts with a quality chamois (padding)
- bike gloves with padding under the palm
- cycling socks (synthetic or lightweight wool)
- arm warmers
- leg warmers
- helmet
- cycling shoes

On and off the bike:
- rain jacket (Gortex with pit-zips)
- wind jacket (lightweight and form fitting)
- sweater (fleece and form fitting mid layer)
- top and bottom base layer (synthetic or lightweight wool)
- sunglasses (clear lense and polarized lense)
- backpack with hydration system (2-3L water capacity)
- cycling water bottle (with squirt lid)
- camera (phone, GoPro, point and shoot)
- ear warmer (toque or headband)

Chill time:
- swimwear
- flip flops
- towel
- cotton t-shirt
- cotton hooded sweater
- jeans
- down-filled coat
• trail shoes or boots
• backpack (for day hikes)

Personal and First Aid
• toiletries i.e. toothbrush and toothpaste, shampoo and conditioner, soap etc.
• sunscreen (oil-free for sport)
• insect repellent (with deet)
• anti-bacterial wipes
• anti-bacterial gel
• toilet paper (depending on the country you are visiting, this could be hard to find!)
• chamois creme
• first-aid kit (ibuprofen, band aids, polysporin, tweezers)

Random stuff you don't realize you need, until you're in the Amazon jungle of Peru or the mountains of British Columbia:
• electrical tape (tape your bike tube or pump to your bike, without leaving a sticky residue)
• duck tape (tape up holes in a bug net and/or everything else duck tape fixes!)
• solar panel battery charger with USB adapter
• international travel adapter and converter
• zip-lock bags
• grocery bags
• zip ties
• foam roller (travel size)
• tennis ball (for rolling out knots in your worked muscles)
• elastic bands