

Have BIKE, will TRAVEL

UNLESS YOUR TOUR BEGINS AT YOUR FRONT DOOR (AND KUDOS TO YOU IF IT DOES), EVERY LOGISTICAL FORK IN THE ROAD BEGINS WITH A SINGLE QUESTION: "WHAT BIKE AM I GOING TO RIDE?" WHILE RENTALS MIGHT AN OPTION, THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT BRINGING YOUR OWN TRUSTED STEED. HERE'S HOW.

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fly



ride



ship



pack



misc.



Airline Rules and Fees

Travel Bikes

So you want to travel with a bike? You've got your travel buddies, you've got a destination in mind, and now you have an important decision to make: what bike to bring? The easiest answer is: bring the bike you already have! It'll cost you money, but what doesn't these days?

If you're looking to save a little coin when checking your bike at the airline, or if you just want something smaller to haul around, there are options.

FOLDING BIKES

Most folding bikes are intended for commuting, but that doesn't mean they aren't suitable for touring. There are a lot of different kinds of folding bikes out there, but the commonalities are small wheels (usually 16 or 20 inches) and a hinge mechanism. Here are a few that might fold up small enough to help you avoid airline fees.

Bike Friday

The New World Tourist takes front and rear racks and fits into a suitcase that, with an available kit, turns into a trailer.

Brompton

The British grandpappy of folding bikes, the Brompton folds up quickly into a tidy package. There are many travel cases available.

Tern

Tern offers several models suitable for travel, including an eBike, as well as bags and cases for transporting your folder.

COUPLED BIKES

If folders aren't your flavor, but you still want to try to avoid paying the fees, there are several S&S coupled bikes (see page 37) to choose from. Many custom framebuilders can include couplers or retrofit them into an existing frame. Some manufacturers offer couplers as an option.

Surly Travelers Check

Essentially a Cross-Check ready for overseas travel, this Surly is likely the least expensive new option if you want S&S.

Ritchey Break-Away

Break-Away is Ritchey's take on how to split a frame. It's available in several models and includes a soft-side case to help you ninja your way through the airport.

Ibis Tranny 29 and Trans Fat

If you prefer to ride off road (or on the snow), Ibis offers two models in which the rear triangle separates from the front. Ibis's system, dubbed Slot Machine, doubles as the tensioning device for singlespeed or belt-drive builds.

Train Travel

AMTRAK

Carry-on bike service

Available only on select routes, and with a limited number of bikes per train, you can hand your bike off to an Amtrak employee who will hang it up on a hook for you. Folding bikes are allowed on all trains.

Checked bikes

Your bike box can be checked as luggage for \$10, as long as it's under 50 pounds and adheres to Amtrak's size requirements. Many locations sell bike boxes for \$15.

INTERNATIONAL TRAINS

Rules for bringing bikes on trains in Europe vary wildly. Do your research, but the basics are: local, low-speed trains may accept fully assembled bikes, but for high-speed trains, be prepared to box your bike and make reservations with your ticket.

Consider this a disclaimer: airlines, domestic and international, all have different rules and charge fees of varying amounts when it comes to flying with your bicycle. These rules and the applicable fees are easily found on the airlines' websites, but in the end it's the ticket agents who hold the power. You should probably make a point of being nice to them. You could do everything right — your bike box could be two pounds underweight, you show up three hours early to check in, and you act as politely as possible with a giant smile on your face — and yet you could still be charged the full gamut of fees. We cannot predict your fate when you travel with your bike, but we can tell you what to expect.

DOMESTIC CARRIERS

American Airlines

Bikes must be in a hard-side case, a bike bag, or a box. Linear dimensions of less than 62 inches is considered a checked bag; more than 62 inches is \$150.

Delta Air Lines

Bikes must be in a hard-side case, a bike bag, or a box. \$150 within U.S. or to Europe.

JetBlue

Bike can be in a cardboard box for domestic flights only;

hard-side cases are mandatory otherwise. \$50 domestic and international.

Southwest Airlines

Airline claims "limited release" for bikes in cardboard boxes. Linear dimensions of less than 62 inches is free in place of one checked bag; greater than 62 inches is \$75.

United Airlines

Bikes may be in cardboard or hard-side boxes. Linear dimensions of less than 62 inches goes for the normal checked bag fee; more than 62 inches is \$150 for North America and \$200 elsewhere.

INTERNATIONAL CARRIERS

KLM

Bike must be "in suitable packaging or bike box." Bike flies for \$150 and requires a special reservation.

British Airways

Bike must be packed in a case or bag up to 75 inches in length. Bike flies free as part of checked baggage.

Lufthansa

Bike flies free if registered beforehand. If the airline decides the bike is of excess weight or considered "bulky," they'll charge either \$300 or \$400.

Ryanair

Bike must be in a protective case or bag. The maximum weight for a bike is 30kg and costs €60 if registered online and €70 if registered at the airport.

Shipping Bikes

If you don't want to fool around with a giant box in an airport, but you must have your own bike on your trip, you can always ship it ahead of time. It'll cost you, but at least you'll know your bike will be safe and sound.

There are many different ways to ship your bike; we've listed a few.

UPS and Fedex

Both UPS and Fedex will gladly ship your bike for you (in a bike box,

naturally). Fedex will insure your bike case, but UPS will not.

Bikeflights.com

Bikeflights ships domestic and international via UPS and Fedex, will pick up your packed bike and ship it for you, and will even sell you a box. Their website is full of all kinds of helpful tips.

Shipbikes.com

Shipbikes operates similarly to Bikeflights in that you can buy a box from them (they have a few different kinds) and schedule a

pickup (or you can drop it off at a Fedex location).

Local Bike Shop

Looking for the least amount of hassle? Ship your bike the old fashioned way: wheel it into your local bike shop (ask around, there's bound to be a shop near you that ships a lot of bikes), and they'll disassemble and pack it into a box for you and get it on its way. Even better, have them ship your bike to a shop at your destination so you can have a professional mechanic build it back up for you.



Cases

You've chosen a bike to take with you on your overseas adventure, now you have to find a way to transport your bike safely to your destination and back (hopefully while incurring as few fees as possible), and for that you'll need some kind of box.

Brand-specific cases

If you have a coupled or folding bike, chances are there's a case specifically designed for it. Bike Friday specs a wheeled Samsonite case that turns into a trailer with an available kit. Ritchey includes a soft-side travel case with each Break-Away model. Co-Motion sells their Co-Pilot travel case. And S&S produces both soft-side and hard-side cases of varying sizes for coupled bikes.

Cardboard boxes

Assuming your bike neither folds nor comes apart (at least not intentionally), you may consider going the old cardboard box route. The benefits of using a cardboard bike box are: (1) bike boxes are generally

free, and (2) they can usually be found at just about any independent bike shop. The downsides are many. For example, (1) dragging a full-sized bike box into an airport increases the likelihood of you paying all the fees for flying with a bike, (2) a bike box is huge and difficult to store if you intend on reusing it (or you've got to find another box for your return trip), and (3) cardboard tends to disintegrate in the rain, which could leave your precious cargo with little protection.

Aircaddy (aircaddy.com) sells a triangular cardboard box that requires minimal disassembly of your bike, but an airline may charge you more because of its nonstandard size. Crateworks (crateworks.com) sells heavy-duty cardboard and plastic bike boxes that, while expensive, are tough, well designed, and reusable.

Hard-side cases

There are about a zillion different kinds of hard-side bicycle cases on the market, and they vary in features and protection.

Thule's Roundtrip Transition (thule.com) is burly and comes with an integrated work stand. BikeBoxAlan (bikeboxalan.com) offers a seven-year warranty and can include all the custom stickers you want. And Buxum (buxumbox.com) offers beefy, industrial-looking aluminum cases that look like they could withstand any kind of calamity.

Soft-side cases

There are just as many soft-side cases out there, and they vary quite a bit in features and protection, from floppy things that aren't much more than rectangular bags to rigid cases with built-in plastic and foam for added durability. Biknd (biknd.com) makes wheeled cases with inflatable protection. Orucase (orucase.com) makes the Airport Ninja, which, while small and discreet-looking, requires more extensive bike disassembly than larger cases. If you have no desire to be discreet, Evoc (evocusa.com) makes a well-regarded case that comes in retina-stretching colors.

Couplers

S&S Bicycle Torque Couplers

S&S couplers are the Coca-Cola of the bicycle coupler world — they're everywhere. They're available stock from a few manufacturers, custom from a framebuilder, or as a retrofit to an existing frame. It's a simple idea realized in exquisite detail, and on many bikes the couplers look like polished jewels. S&S licenses the couplers out to qualified framebuilders and manufacturers — no, you can't buy them yourself — and stipulates where the couplers are to be located and how they're bonded onto a frame. Only circular tubing can be used, and the frame material must match the coupler material (chromoly couplers for chromoly tubing, etc.). Aluminum frames cannot be retrofitted because they can't be re-welded, but they can be manufactured with couplers.

An S&S coupler features interlocking teeth on either end of the split tube, and a threaded sleeve locks the two together. A special spanner wrench is required for assembly and disassembly. An S&S-coupled bike will typically see one coupler on the top tube and another on the downtube (couplers tend to multiply when you're looking at a tandem or a recumbent).

Santana oval and Z couplers

Santana, which is known mainly for its tandem bicycles, offers S&S couplers in its builds but has also developed couplers of its own. The oval coupler is, well, just what it sounds like. Santana builds its tandems with oval bottom tubes, and, since S&S couplers are round tube only, Santana came up with its own solution. The oval coupler has interlocking ramps and a single bolt to hold it together.

Santana's Z couplers are similar to its oval couplers in that a single bolt is used, but that's where the similarities end. The Z couplers are used in round tubes and feature a very detailed interlocking design that, on an unpainted titanium



frame for example, is nearly invisible. We saw the Z couplers in person at last year's Interbike trade show, and they are beautiful to the eye and seem incredibly stout. A 5mm Allen key is all you need to assemble and disassemble your Z-coupled frame.

Ritchey Break-Away

Ritchey's Break-Away system — which mountain bike pioneer Tom Ritchey invented after deciding that he needed to have a bike with him while flying his ultralight aircraft that he built himself — is unique in that there is only one coupler, and it's on the down tube. Elsewhere, the seatpost becomes a structural member as it joins the top tube to the seatstays with two collars. It's an elegant system, although the down tube coupler doesn't look nearly as pretty as an S&S coupler.

Ritchey offers the Break-Away system on two road models, carbon and steel, a cyclocross model, the Ascent do-anything bike, and a tandem. **AC**

Dan Meyer is the Copy/New Products Coordinator for Adventure Cyclist.



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