

Planning & Leading a Bike Overnight



Karla Robles



**Adventure
Cycling
Association**

adventurecycling.org
bike-overnights@adventurecycling.org
(800) 755-2453

A Guide for Bike Overnights Ambassadors

Thank you for volunteering to lead a short (one- to three-night) Bike Overnight as an Adventure Cycling Ambassador. Planning a great trip, especially for those who've never toured before, opens the door to a lifetime of short, impactful adventures.

This guide has a TON of information and covers how to ensure everyone on your trip has BIG FUN! First, we'll give you an overview of things to think about when planning your group overnight. That's our Quick Look immediately below. Then, the rest of this document will go into detail about how we hope you'll approach each of these topics. Beyond this guide, know that we're always here to help, answer any questions, and set you and your group up for, like we said, BIG FUN!

Contact us any time at:

bike-overnights@adventurecycling.org

or (800) 755-2453

Quick Look

First of all, there is no one right way to lead a Bike Overnight. You are the captain of creating a welcoming, fun experience, and however you choose to do it will be great. The only rules are:

- 1 | It's not a race.**
- 2 | Everyone is welcome and should be made to feel welcome.**
- 3 | Respect the land, communities you meet, and leave no trace.**



Here are some key factors to think about:

Your Intention

Why do you love bicycle touring? Has it brought you peace, excitement, clarity, or a deeper connection to nature or the culture you're traveling through? Start with the intent of what your group Bike Overnight could bring to people and let that intention help you make decisions in the planning process.

Who Will Join

Unless you already have a group of people you know and who want to go on this trip (which is great! Do that!), you'll want to get the word out about your Bike Overnight so that people sign up. You can partner with a local bike shop, co-op, advocacy group, or outdoor club whose networks will likely include some stoked future adventurers. We can help you find partners and create promotional materials. Email us at bike-overnights@adventurecycling.org.

Where to Go

Picking a route will depend on your group's experience and the intent of the trip. Err on the side of lower mileage, ease of access, and fun things to see. Take into consideration the group's needs around accommodations, self-support versus van-support, food preferences, and water availability. Start by using one of our free short routes (coming in 2022) with suggested itineraries or similar routes on your favorite platform.

Safety

The biggest risk to traveling cyclists is traffic. With this in mind, choose low-traffic routes and bike paths when available. Other risks include weather and exceeding the skills and abilities of

your participants. Personal safety concerns loom especially large for BIPOC and Queer communities. Start open-minded and empathetic conversations with your participants to get a sense of their emotional and physical safety concerns and discuss ways to make everyone in the group feel safe.

Budget

Decide ahead of time what your budget will be and consider how things will be paid for: food, accommodations, transportation, etc. Provide clear costs before participants sign up to join your ride or discuss with the group if filled with people you already have a relationship with.

Communication

Early, often, clear, and empathetic communications is key to Bike Overnights. Your job as a ride leader is to help riders feel prepared and psyched for the short trip. A clear and thorough understanding of the route, schedule, gear, and plan will ensure the event is smooth sailing. A clear understanding of the needs, fears, and concerns of the riders will ensure a better experience for everyone. Confirm participants understand the plan, and provide all aspects of the ride in plenty of time prior to the event. Consider holding in-person or virtual meetings to go over gear, route, bike maintenance, and logistics.

Debrief

After the trip, ask participants how things went. Note things that went well or could be improved. And let us know how we can provide better support for your next Bike Overnight.

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All the Details

There is no one right way to go on a short bicycle trip. Ride five miles or 50 miles each day. Camp or stay indoors at a hotel, hostel, B&B, or friend's house. Carry everything you need on your bike or get your group's luggage and food delivered in a vehicle. How you decide to organize your bike trip will depend on your group's level of experience and their available equipment. It will also depend on whether or not you can enlist other Ambassadors* to help with transporting luggage and other responsibilities. Think about your group and organize a trip everyone is comfortable with taking!

*After you read this guide, please contact Adventure Cycling at bike-overnights@adventurecycling.org and we'll help connect you with other volunteers and businesses in the area that you can potentially work with to make your event a success. We'll also help you promote your trip to people in your community.

Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



Adventure Cycling Association believes in the power of bicycle travel to open minds and change the way the world explores. We envision a future where this organization draws staff, tour leaders, members, board members, and riders from the whole of our society. For this to occur, bicycle travel has to be available for everyone.

We acknowledge that systemic racism and sexism impact the ability of BIPOC and LGBTQ peoples to travel by bicycle safely. While the threat of injustice exists, it is unlikely that the vulnerability of traveling by bicycle through unfamiliar communities and cultures will feel safe and enjoyable. We take ownership of the fact that Adventure Cycling is new to this conversation and that we have not

shown up on these issues. As an organization, we have a lot of work to do to support, empower, and create safe spaces for underrepresented communities. We are taking action to build an equitable bicycling community and ask for support from our members and followers in our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

We are committed to listening to BIPOC, LGBTQ, and other marginalized peoples and understanding the systems contributing to oppression while also working to provide more resources and support for these communities.

Our beginning steps focus on widening the experience of bike travel for all. We are enlisting BIPOC consultants to help us evaluate our policies and review communications, routes, and educational resources. We are making connections with local communities and building partnerships with organizations and individuals from marginalized communities who want to inspire and empower others to bike travel. In our print and digital publications, we are sharing personal stories from riders who don't typically get the spotlight but who are important mentors, leaders, and exemplars for our entire community. With our Bike Overnights Ambassador program, we provide stipends to BIPOC, LGBTQ, and other marginalized peoples to lead community workshops and tours for anyone curious about bicycle travel and weekend adventures.

We are driving toward a future where Adventure Cycling and our industry reflect a wider, more inclusive community of adventure cyclists. The Bike Overnights Initiative is one external starting point for equity, diversity, inclusion, and access. Over the next year, we are committed to advancing it across all of our programs, internally and externally, and sharing our progress as we become a better and more just organization.

We hope every Ambassador leading trips in their community stands with our statement and takes some time to reflect on their role in fostering a welcoming and reciprocal environment for Bike Overnights.

Who Will Join

You're a Bike Overnights Ambassador for Adventure Cycling because you want others to enjoy adventuring by bike. Awesome! Not only will you have fun on your bike, but you'll also be sharing that joy with others.

You can certainly invite your family, friends, and people in your circles, especially those already interested in cycling. But the idea of using your own human power to spend the night may be more convincing to people interested in outdoor recreation. You may find them at your local bike shops, bike co-ops, bicycle advocacy groups, and other groups or businesses focused on outdoor recreation.

Another way to find future bike adventure enthusiasts is by organizing a ride with an intentional audience who may not find themselves accurately or adequately represented in the larger bicycling community. In many metropolitan areas, some grassroots bicycling groups support and represent a specific demographic such as the disabled community, LGBTQ folks, or Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color. You may want to reach out to partner with them to organize a ride together, or offer your support if these groups already conduct similar programming within their mission. These groups may also help promote the ride should you decide to join efforts.

Adventure Cycling Association will promote your ride on our website and share it with others in your area if you'd like. We also encourage you to use social media to promote your event. As always, we're here to help by providing advice, resources, and connections.

Where Will You Go?

Who will join you for the ride? What would you all like to get out of your adventure? Where you choose to ride could be challenging for some and easier for others.

Look to [Adventure Cycling's Route Network](#), the [U. S. Bicycle Route System](#), [Rails-to-Trails Conservancy](#), [Ride with GPS](#), [Komoot](#), [Bikepacking.com](#), and [Bikepacking Roots](#) for short bicycle routes. Sections of the longer routes can be used to make short trips.

If you have a group of riders already identified, keep in mind:

- ▶ Your group's skill levels.
- ▶ Group transportation to the start of the Bike Overnight.
- ▶ The surface of the route, the elevation, and how many miles you'll ride.

Find out more about your participants' experience level before deciding on a route. You can always adjust the suggested itineraries and make the trip shorter if that works better for your group.

HOW FAR CAN I RIDE IN A DAY?

SURFACE	GEAR	TERRAIN	AVG. SPEED	RIDING TIME	DISTANCE
ROAD	20ISH POUNDS	FLAT	13 MPH	5 HOURS	65 MILES
		HILLY	10 MPH	5 HOURS	50 MILES
	40ISH POUNDS	FLAT	11 MPH	5 HOURS	55 MILES
		HILLY	8 MPH	5 HOURS	40 MILES
OFF-ROAD	20ISH POUNDS	FLAT	10 MPH	5 HOURS	50 MILES
		HILLY	8 MPH	5 HOURS	40 MILES
	40ISH POUNDS	FLAT	8 MPH	5 HOURS	40 MILES
		HILLY	5 MPH	5 HOURS	25 MILES
RUGGED	20ISH POUNDS	FLAT	8 MPH	5 HOURS	40 MILES
		HILLY	5 MPH	5 HOURS	25 MILES
	40ISH POUNDS	FLAT	5 MPH	5 HOURS	25 MILES
		HILLY	3 MPH	5 HOURS	15 MILES

For a Bike Overnight, choose a location and route that is most accommodating to beginners. Aim for the easier end of the spectrum as far as distance, elevation, and terrain. You'll want to consider bail-out options and proximity to amenities should your group need them. You can always plan a series of rides that vary in difficulty and terrain to meet all levels of comfort and fun

Important points to include in your route:

- ▶ Meeting location (starting place)
- ▶ Any grocery markets or stores to restock
- ▶ Potable water sources (parks or even gas stations are good for this)
- ▶ Transit locations near the route just in case
- ▶ Shortcut, side single-track, or bail-out routes
- ▶ Bike shops
- ▶ Any fun or historical places of interest to stop by

Find out if participants have any mobility needs to help them get to the starting point of the ride. Ask the group if anyone can offer carpools for participants coming from a distance. Or find out if there are any transit options to support participants in arriving at the start location.

Traveling Through Indigenous Lands

As people who recreate on Indigenous Land, we are responsible to learn the ancestral territories we travel on. Anyone who is not a member of the First Nations People is a guest. As guests, we want to respect the original caretakers of the outdoor spaces we cherish. Riding through Native territories is an immense privilege afforded by the continued stewardship of the land by Native Peoples.

Wherever you choose to camp, research the Native Peoples of the region. [Here's an excellent resource](#) that helps visualize the current and ancestral areas of Indigenous Peoples and provides information about their history and Nations' websites. You can find information about Indigenous Land Acknowledgement and more ways to support Indigenous communities from the [Native Governance Center](#).

You may also consider consulting with Nations to seek consent before embarking on your Bike Overnight. Much as visas are required for traveling to different countries, seeking consent applies to Indigenous communities as a means of recognizing sovereignty and respect for the First Nation People. Many Nations have visitor centers with detailed maps and information on tribal historical sites so you as a ride leader have the details you need to model good relations and support the longevity of the land.

When Will You Go?

The best time of year to go on a Bike Overnight depends on where you live! Winter may be ideal throughout the South while the summer months can be best in the northern United States. Consider leading a trip during [Bike Travel Weekend](#) (first weekend in June) or [Bike Your Park Day](#) (last Saturday in September), joining many others. Weekends work best for people who work during the week.

Some of the best times to go on a bike overnight are during off-seasons and non-holiday weekends when there are fewer crowds and more campsite availability. Depending on the state, hiker/biker campsites may be available on a first-come-first-serve basis, so you don't need a reservation. It is always a good idea to call the park before arrival so they know to expect your group. [Adventure Cycling has compiled a list of State Park No-Turn-Away policies you can print out for your trip!](#)

Be mindful of the impact traveling on major U.S. holidays has on Indigenous communities. The busiest holidays for outdoor recreation and travel places a strain on Indigenous communities to access the land for traditional practices and stewardship of local flora and fauna. Be a responsible ride leader and encourage your group to leave the land better than you found it.

Personal & Bodily Safety

Throughout U.S. history, freedom of mobility has always been afforded to those with the means of personal transportation and privileges of bodily autonomy. Marginalized peoples are still targeted and harassed going about their day - on a quick ride, in the bike shop, or while locking up their bike. We must recognize the systemic and social risks and challenges individuals must take and face, respectively in order to participate in activities where racial and gender representation is inequitable across the board.

For many Black, Indigenous, People of Color, (BIPOC) and members of the LGBTQ (Queer) community, safety can be most felt within their respective communities. The risks of bicycling as a non-white or non-cis-gendered person can range widely from hurtful microaggressions from travel partners to violent (or fatal) interactions from strangers. As a ride leader, you must understand the potential for these risks based on the power dynamics of your own identity, the demographics of your group, and the area you are traveling in. Have an intentional plan for how to best approach interpersonal conflicts that may arise during the trip either with outside aggressors, and (hopefully not) between participants.

One simple way of understanding the challenges that BIPOC and the Queer community face is by reading and listening to their own stories based on their personal experiences. The appendix at the end of this document contains a list of links to resources and other organizations that focus on uplifting BIPOC, queer, and other undervalued voices in the bicycling community. Being aware of these issues as a ride leader is the first step in making bicycling, as a liberatory activity, a more welcoming environment for all. See the "Ride Leadership" section for more on this topic.

Finally, don't assume the skill level of your ride participants. Review group riding etiquette and rules of the road. Every state has slightly different bicycling laws so be familiar with them if you are feeling extra cautious. Many local bike organizations offer free skill-building classes for inexperienced riders. Research what is available in your area (or ask Adventure Cycling) and encourage participants to enroll in a class prior to your trip. This can be an important risk mitigation factor for anyone not used to riding in traffic. Peep this article on [bicycling.com](#) for a deeper dive into road riding and [feelsonwheels.net](#) for a primer on gravel grinding. More tips on safety while riding and touring can be found in the "Logistics" section.

Budget

Decide ahead of time what your budget will be. This is also tied to decisions about where to stay and whether you'll be cooking yourselves or eating out.

Also, consider how things will be paid for. Will each participant pay directly for their own expenses or will you charge a fee to cover expenses like the campsite, food (if provided), and luggage transfer (if provided)? How will people pay you— cash, checks, or electronic payments? Is “sliding scale” a feasible option to help cover any expenses you incur as a ride leader? Discussing these questions openly with your group before the trip will avoid problems.

If you're leading a Bike Overnight ride, Adventure Cycling offers stipends of \$150-\$500 to Ambassadors identifying as part of a marginalized group. The stipend depends on the needs of your event, as well as work involved in organizing an event. You can find more information [here](#):

[Policy to Provide Stipends to Ambassadors](#)

Food

At the end of a long day, mealtime is a time for coming together and sharing the day's experiences. On your Bike Overnight, you have the option to cook all your meals at your campground, have all of your meals at restaurants, or mix it up! Your food options will be determined by what's available on your route, as well as the budget and preferences of your group.

Cooking your own meals requires you have all the gear necessary to do that. This includes camp stoves and fuel, pots, cooking utensils, and personal eating utensils. This gear will also need to be carried by participants if you plan not to use a support vehicle.

However you intend on handling food, keep these things in mind:

- ▶ Food is fuel and is needed to survive, and riders will be hungry.
- ▶ We can burn 5,000 calories/day when riding.
- ▶ You must have enough to eat, so having a little left over is better than running out.
- ▶ When buying food, count servings. Halve the number of servings on the package for touring cyclists – we eat twice as much while riding.
- ▶ Make sure you take into account any food preferences or allergies (vegetarians, vegans, gluten-free, low-sodium, etc.).
- ▶ Your participants should snack throughout the day to keep their energy up.
- ▶ Eat a snack before you get hungry
- ▶ Hydrate before you get thirsty
- ▶ If foraging for food, be mindful of how much you take. Gather only what you need and do some homework to find out if there are any endangered plant species that are sacred to the Native People of the area. Leave endangered plants be.

Risk Management & Liability

As an Ambassador leading a bike overnight, it's important to empower your group to take accountability for themselves and other people's safety.

Whether traveling long or short distances, there is a level of risk inherent in riding a bike. Leading a group on a bike overnight means ensuring everyone departs and arrives safely, and preparing for obstacles or events that can be dangerous. Life happens. This may mean rescheduling your bike overnight in case of inclement weather. In some situations, that may mean even a smaller amount of rain if you have folks who aren't as comfortable riding when it's wet, or it may mean asking for participants to think about if they're prepared to ride in less than ideal conditions. It can also mean ensuring your ride and event are accessible and simple.

As adult participants, ensure that everyone is aware of the risks involved in your trip and comfortable with your itinerary. Remind people they are responsible for the condition of their bikes as well as communicating any trouble that may arise. Avoid complicated repairs, especially depending on your mechanical experience and skill level. Assess, often, how everyone is doing. And remember: there's no shame in turning around if a trip seems like it's not going to be fun, safe, or fairly painless!

Bike Overnights are meant to be short and accessible bike trips for everyone. Think about whether a singletrack route or a hot/rainy weekend is the right entry into bike trips. Ensuring that the worst obstacles you may encounter have easy exit strategies and solutions means taking a lot of risk out of people's first experience of adventuring on a bike.

All bike trips associated with Adventure Cycling's Bike Overnights Initiative, including Bike Travel Weekend and Bike Your Park Day, are independently and voluntarily organized by individuals, businesses, or groups and are not under the control of Adventure Cycling Association, including Adventure Cycling staff or contractors. Ambassadors/trip leaders are volunteers and are 100% responsible for their trip and for working with all the participants on the trip. If you have concerns about being responsible for individuals who you do not know on your bike overnight, you can do one of three things: you can limit participants to known friends and family members; you can research and use a liability release form applicable in your state; or you can work with a club, shop or other entity that has liability insurance and would be willing to use it to cover your trip.

Ride Leadership

As a ride leader, your responsibility is to be informative so all riders will feel comfortable and safe on a journey that requires mental and physical stamina. Remember to set a good example for others by modeling what reciprocal and empowering relationships look like between people from all backgrounds.

On First Nation Relations...

Be mindful of your use of language when referring to Native Peoples and speak in present terms. Native Peoples have always been the original stewards of the land we recreate on and continue to be at the forefront of Indigenous land preservation and conservation. Consider the harmful legacy of the outdoors industry and its ongoing practices such as identifying trails or

places with culturally appropriative names, renaming places from an Indigenous language to a settler language, and erasing the deep ancestral knowledge Native People hold in terms of taking care of the land.

As non-Native people who recreate on Indigenous lands, respectful reciprocity means challenging status-quo social norms that effectively erase Native histories. Do not shy away from having conversations about these issues with your group and make a point to learn from the leadership of Native People to honor the land as you travel through. You may also want to consider inviting a leader of the local First Nation to speak with your group and make sure to compensate them for their wisdom and time.



On BIPOC Relations...

Action guided by empathy is an act of solidarity: a skill that requires time, energy, and a willingness to learn how our own biases get in the way of understanding the deeper impacts of harmful behaviors and language. Take some time to interrogate your own biases and how they show up in difficult interpersonal situations. We want to remind you that reading this resource alone will not make you an “ally” to communities of melanated bodies. To start this life-long journey of unlearning and learning, there are simple tools that you can utilize to be better prepared when faced with or witnessing a conflict, such as free bystander intervention training and conflict de-escalation:

[Hollaback! Free Anti-harassment Training](#)

You are expected to set the tone for the group dynamic. Consider leading the group through an exercise to collectively develop a set of group norms, values in practice, or community agreements to follow as guidance for staying accountable to each other’s well-being. Below is an example of the principles the Radical Adventure Riders abide by and encourage the bike industry to follow.

[RAR - Guiding Principles](#)

Last, but not least, on the topic of leadership, consider ways you can support other BIPOC or LGBTQ riders get into the world of bike camping. All the knowledge in this resource can be shared widely to empower others to lead their own rides or collaborate to strengthen the community at large.

Pre-Trip Communication

Communicate with your participants before the trip to ensure they understand what to expect, what kind of gear is needed for the trip, information about the route, and logistical information like where and when the trip starts. You can email everyone or post your pre-trip communication in a Facebook event page, a Google Group, MeetUp Group, or Slack. It's helpful to select a communication method that allows you to send multiple messages and lets participants ask questions as needed. Think about including:

- ▶ A clear description of your route. Include a link to the map in a navigation tool (Bicycle Route Navigator, RideWithGPS, Komoot, etc.) AND a verbal description of your ride. Newer cyclists may have never used mapped routes or cue sheets. They may not understand how to interpret the elevation profile, for example. Be clear about riding conditions, elevation, and services along the way. Aim for no surprises—that will come in the serendipity that happens along the way.
 - ▶ Your schedule and future meetings. Remind everyone very clearly of the start and end times and dates of your trip. Be clear on the meet-up location and what the vehicle parking situation is if needed. Clearly state where and when your pre-trip meeting will be held. Include a link to the Adventure Cycling's [How to Go on A Bike Overnight webinar](#) and provide a date by which people need to watch it. The video will give your participants a better understanding of bike overnights. Share a link to some of our Bike Overnights Ambassadors virtual event recordings — you can also watch them for inspiration!
 - ▶ Ask for some kind of confirmation. Assume participants won't read your email until right before they leave, if at all. You can reach out to folks to make sure they have all the information they need for a successful and fun trip.
- ▶ Set the vision and expectations for your Bike Overnight. What is the intent of the tour and what are participants' responsibilities to the group? Where will you be going? What will you see and do? What is planned for off-bike time? Be clear and specific.
 - ▶ Find out what type of bike each participant will be riding and consider if the bike is suited for the environment you will be riding in. Encourage them to get their bikes checked where it's a safe, affordable, and comfortable experience for the participant.
 - ▶ Provide the [list of community agreements](#), values in practice, and review them as a group

Pre-trip Meeting

We recommend meeting with your group once before your trip, either in person or virtually. If meeting in person, ask participants to bring their bikes and gear so you can check them out ahead of time and determine if they need to do any bike repairs or borrow different gear. You can do an activity like a fix-a-flat lesson, setting up a tent, a packing demonstration, or inviting everyone to go on a short ride.

Knowing what is considered acceptable to the group will help everyone have the best experience possible. Discuss group rules and norms, at least briefly, at this pre-trip meeting. Just as with budget, this is up to the group to decide. Here are a few suggestions:

- ▶ Will alcohol and legal drugs be allowed?
- ▶ Will certain topics, such as religion and politics, be off-limits?
- ▶ Ask group participants to introduce themselves at the pre-trip meeting, including their pronouns and their previous experience traveling by bike.

Preparing the Bike for Touring

You can take a Bike Overnight on any type of bike, but remember the bicycles your participants choose should be suitable for the trip's terrain. The main factors to consider are comfort and function.

Types of Touring Bikes - Use the Bike you Have

Your participants may not have much choice on what type of bike they will be riding. It could be the one in their garage they bought long before they considered bike touring. Stress the importance of having their bike checked thoroughly at a local bike shop, especially for bikes that have been stored and unused for long periods of time. Tires and inner tubes need special attention as they can become brittle and holey without use.

Bike Check-Up



Gear to bring and where to get it

What gear and how much you will need on tour depends on many factors, including the length of your tour. If you are staying in indoor lodging, you probably will not need much in the way of camping gear. If you plan to eat all of your meals out and buy lunch/snacks along the way, you will also not need any cooking equipment. And if it is a relatively short tour, you can probably get by with a limited supply of tools and spare parts for your bike. In fact, a spare inner tube or patch kit, tire levers, and a small pump may be all you need unless your tour takes you on rugged trails in the backcountry.

Check out the gear list below and adapt it for your trip, including any items specific to the season you're traveling in. Always bring a first aid kit on your trips, and share your gear checklist with participants.

Gear Checklist for Bike Overnight

Once you have determined what gear you will need, the next step is to figure out how you will carry it with you if you plan to do a self-contained trip. Below are some resources.

[What to Take and How to Pack](#) - [How to Pack Your Panniers](#) - [All About Racks](#)



Be Prepared to Talk about DIY Solutions

Between readily available tutorial videos on YouTube and access to 3D printers, people cobble together their own unique designs and twists on just about everything under the sun. Be aware of any devices or contraptions that can potentially become safety issues such as homemade trailers, racks, and panniers, or other bike-mounted gear. Look for things that may pose a risk to the rider and share your concerns. Ultimately it is up to the rider item's creator to address the issues.

How to Borrow or Purchase Gear Inexpensively

If you live in one of the metro areas, Adventure Cycling may be able to connect you to resources in your area like local bike co-ops and bike shops that will let you borrow or rent bikes and gear for free or inexpensively. There are also deals to be had on eBay and Craigslist, and enthusiast forums around the internet feature lively classifieds sections, but it's hard to beat a local bike shop. Find a good one and you have a partner in adventure, a trusted mechanic, and — in many cases — a like-minded community of riders orbiting around the shop.

No local bike shop in your neck of the woods? Direct-to-consumer options are widespread and offer very competitive pricing. For biking, camping and outdoor gear check out sites such as [Cyclosource](#), [Steep and Cheap](#), [REI Outlet](#), [Geartrade.com](#), and others. A lesser known but potentially equitable option is to check if there are gear libraries nearby that loan out equipment to their members (typically a paid or sliding scale membership).

How to Travel with Luggage

Your participants may not be able to find all of the gear necessary to bike with your luggage or your participants might not be ready to invest in gear before trying out bike touring. In this case, consider enlisting another local Ambassador to help drive a SAG wagon to carry participants' luggage to the end destination. What needs to be transported by the SAG wagon? You may take advantage of the support vehicle by carrying extra water or food if these resources are harder to come by during the bike trip.

Get Down To The Details

As the leader, planning a Bike Overnight requires pre-planning. The more attention you pay to the details prior to your trip the fewer surprises and a more enjoyable experience for everyone.

Day of Trip — the Map Meeting

You've shared a link to the route ahead of time, but it's also helpful to hand out paper maps as a backup. Share some basic safety rules. We call these the "Adventure Cycling Absolutes":

- ▶ No paceline — it's dangerous to ride that close to one another
- ▶ Always stop 10 feet off the road
- ▶ If your butt's on your bike, your helmet is on your head
- ▶ Use hand signals as much as possible and call out hazards on the ground

Review with your group your riding plan. Consider having a ride leader in front and in the back (or "sweep"). It's helpful to have a second experienced rider to ensure no one gets accidentally dropped. If you are the only Ambassador on your trip, consider riding sweep yourself to make the slower riders feel more comfortable. Let your participants know the plan in the event of a mechanical problem, extremely bad weather, or other issues during their ride. Sharing your cell phone number and gathering participant phone numbers will help everyone stay in contact as needed. Communicate clearly whether or not you want participants to meet up at lunch or other points along the way.

It may be helpful to bring a couple of walkie-talkies to take on the ride in case the group splits up and there is no cell reception to connect back with each other. Communication is key for managing expectations and check-in points along the route to make sure no one gets lost or left behind.

Safety While Riding & Touring - What to Do When Bad Weather Strikes

Addressing Health Concerns

Despite what we see in bike industry media depicting able-bodied riders having a blast on their bikes, many riders may suffer from invisible health conditions and disabilities that can make biking challenging. Ask your participants if anyone has any access needs that they would like you, as the ride leader and organizer, to know about. Let folks know that they can share their needs with you in private if it feels safer to do so. Your role as a responsible ride leader is to make sure all participants feel included as much as possible in the logistics of the trip so that everybody's needs are met.



Check in with yourself and encourage your group to think about their bike travel capabilities in regard to physical health. If your tour includes long mileage days, a lot of elevation change, or the potential for extreme weather, all of these can lead to health issues and stress on the body. Take extra care to check in with the group periodically to see if anyone needs to take a break for a snack, stretch, restroom run, hype circle, or anything else that may come up.

Make sure to note where there are public/ available restrooms along the route and at your destination. Bring a toilet kit if no restrooms are available and encourage the group to use safe and hygienic practices when relieving themselves. Get important information from this guide: [How to Go to the Bathroom in the Woods](#). Follow these guidelines as closely as possible even if your trip does not go deep into nature.

Remember, while we're all excited to be able to travel together again as the U.S. shifts COVID-19 rules and regulations, it is still important to take care, especially depending on where you travel. Adventure Cycling has created some event-specific COVID Guidelines which you can find at [the bottom of this page](#).

Domestic and Wild Animals

Discuss bear safety and how to use bear spray if you are planning to ride in bear country. Dogs can be equally scary and may require pepper spray or other tactics in certain situations. It's good to know whether there are mountain lions where you are going. They are less likely to show themselves but have been known to enter campsites as their habitats become strained.

[How to Stop a Charging Dog](#) - [How to Be Bear Aware When Bike Camping](#)

Never store food inside your tent or sleeping apparatus! Rodents and other critters will seek them out and you do not want to wake up face to face with a raccoon.

Responsibilities

To the Land

- ▶ Leave no trace principles, leave it better than you found it.
- ▶ Stick to riding on trails.
- ▶ Be self-sufficient.
- ▶ Respect the flora and fauna of the land and waters.
- ▶ Learn about local land and cultural stewardship efforts and solidarity actions on the land you recreate on.
- ▶ Make a land acknowledgement and statement of accountability.

To Each Other

- ▶ Understand bicycling and/or camping can be stressful and frustrating, but everyone is there because they want to be and the group will support each other to safety.
- ▶ Recognizing Indigenous peoples as the original stewards of the lands means supporting their efforts to protect the waters and lands that we recreate on.

To Yourself

- ▶ Listen to your body
- ▶ Hold yourself accountable to being a good guest on Native lands

At Your Destination

Once you have reached your destination for the day, whether at a motel or campground, arrange a time for the group to come back together. If eating meals out, try to get everyone to the same restaurant location. Meals are a great social bonding time and an opportunity for you to check in with participants. How are they doing? How was their ride? Are they having problems with their bikes or experiencing health issues?

If staying at a campground, be aware that this might be a new experience for participants. Look for anyone struggling to put up their tent or sorting their gear. As an Ambassador and trip leader, your goal is to teach and inspire others how to travel by bike. Camping is as much a part of the experience as pedaling the bike.

Take some time to process what your group shared during the check-in and make any changes to the next day's itinerary if necessary. Make sure to always tend to your needs as well. If you need help, don't hesitate to recruit a rider for support the next day.

After the Trip

We hope everyone had a great adventure and is stoked to travel by bike again. Adventure Cycling will follow up with you after your trip to get your feedback so we can make improvements to the Bike Overnights Initiative. We'll also send a post-ride survey to your participants to gather feedback about their experience.



Invite the group to share their reflections with you if they'd like. Be open to receiving feedback on what went well and what could have gone better. Being a good ride leader also means adapting to the group's needs so that everyone has a good or better experience next time. Hold yourself accountable to doing things better or differently next time and upholding the responsibilities of being a good ride leader, such as following up with your group with resources on Indigenous issues.

For the folks who loved the trip and want to head out on their own, there are numerous online resources. Send them to adventurecycling.org for more resources in addition to the ones in this guide.

[Bike Touring 101](#)

As a leader, reflect on the whole experience from the positive, negative and neutral things that occurred (or didn't). Adventure Cycling wants to hear about the short trip experience. Are there additional resources or support Adventure Cycling could provide, especially to those just starting out or to people such as yourself who want to lead less experienced riders? We'll follow up with a survey to gather your feedback.

We hope you'll post about your trip on social media and use the hashtags **#adventurecycling** and **#bikeovernights**. Most of all, we hope you'll want to lead another short bicycle trip again soon.

Thank you to the following contributors of this guide:
Jess Kim, Joyce Casey, Tony Docal.

Resources

On Native Relations

- + Within & Without Podcast - Riding on Turtle Island
- + Ride Outside Responsibly mini-Zine - Cyclista Zine
- + [Guide to forming an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement](#)
- + [Toolkit and resources to hold yourself accountable to solidarity in action for Native sovereignty](#)
- + [Guide for terminology](#)
- + [Article on the consequences of erasure of Indigenous ancestral knowledge](#)

Gear

- + [Mountaineers Gear Library](#)
- + [Geartrade](#)

Access Needs

- + [REI - How to Go to the Bathroom in the Woods](#)

Race & Social Justice

- + [Responding to Everyday Bigotry](#)
- + [Nonviolent Communication PDF](#)
- + [“How Compassionate Language Can Enrich Our Lives”](#)
- + [“14 Microaggressions LGBTQ People Deal with All the Time”](#)

Instagram Accounts to Follow

- + @allbodiesonbikes (All Bodies On Bikes)
- + @blacktransbiketour (Black Trans Bike Experience)
- + @native_women_ride (Native Women Ride)
- + @trans_cyclist_collective (Trans cyclist collective)

Bicycle/Outdoor Publications & Resources to Follow

- + [The Black Foxes](#)
- + [Bici del Pueblo](#)
- + [The Brown Bike Girl](#)
- + [Cyclista Zine](#)
- + [Gears for Queers](#)
- + [Melanin Base Camp](#)
- + [Planning Tips for LGBTQ+ Cyclists](#)
- + [Radical Adventure Riders](#)
- + [Spokesperson.bike](#)



**Adventure
Cycling
Association**

150 East Pine Street
P.O. Box 8308
Missoula, MT 59807

adventurecycling.org
(800) 755-2453