

Enjoyable touring is planned

A number of years ago, I stopped to help a cyclist who had a flat tire in Wallace, Idaho. It was getting dark. He said he was riding from Spokane, Wash., to Butte, Mont. He had no plan – except for misery. He had one spare tube. Worse yet, he had an uncommon tube size – 26x1 instead of 700/23 or 26x1.95.

Whether we take our single bikes, tandem or Bike Friday fold-up bicycles, we go prepared to have fun. We take a number of issues into consideration, including:

- Time of year (daylight, temperatures, rain, snow, wind)
- Number of days available/distance/elevation gain, road surface
- Distance between towns that have food/lodging
- Type of equipment needed
- Knowledge of route, traffic levels, width of road shoulder
- Cell phone service
- Preparedness of rider/bicycle (if inviting others)



One also needs to check possible activities along the desired route. Don't assume that a small town will be unpopulated. Should you arrive during their eagle, frog, coyote, tulip (insert animal or flower of choice) days, the town could be swarming with visitors.

Knowing ferry schedules can be critical during late fall when there is reduced daylight/ferry trips. I started checking on road construction projects after heading into Casper, Wyo., on a warm day as road crews laid down gooey asphalt.

We choose non-supported touring. It's a lot less expensive. We can go at our own pace and stay an extra day somewhere if we choose. On the other hand, if one lacks sufficient bicycle mechanical knowledge or one lacks a high level of physical fitness, it's wise to go on a supported tour where you pay someone to haul your gear, appear periodically with snacks/mechanical support.

A checklist can prevent being stranded along a route or possibly ending a trip before it starts. We use our Bike Fridays and fly into airports. You can't magically create a cart wheel or the aluminum cart rack if you left items at home.

Our checklist is long but here are some basics:

- Passport, e-ticket, maps of routes, put phone on call forwarding, give route to contact person
- Jerseys (short, long), shorts, leg/arm warmers (where needed), windbreakers, vests, gloves
- Helmets, lights (front/rear), rain gear, head coverings, flashlight
- Bike shoes, walking shoes, socks
- Sunscreen, aspirin, allergy pills (other medicine, if needed)
- Cell phone, camera, chargers, credit card, photo ID
- Repair equipment – multi-tool, pump, tubes, patch kit, spare tire, tire levers, zip ties
- Carts or panniers
- Water bottles and/or hydration packs
- Energy bars, gels, Cytomax powder
- Lube, brake/shifter cables, electric tape