

## **BIKEPACKING**

### **APPLICATION**

This standard applies to Mountaineers sponsored trips regardless of length, time or distance of tour. This standard applies to any committee sponsoring a Bikepacking trip as part of a course or not.

### **DEFINITION**

In this context “Bikepacking” refers to using a bicycle in conjunction with camping (backpacking with a bicycle). It does not include other cycling activities like road touring. Conditioners or other training trips that do not include an overnight stay are permissible but the focus is on using a bicycle in as part of an overnight backpacking experience.

### **TRIPS**

Bikepacking trips are restricted to maintained and unmaintained roads and trails with the following exceptions:

- Trail or road must be approved for bike travel, regardless of land manager.
- Parties may make off-trail excursions, on the bike or on foot, as long as party follows LNT and the route does not expose any party member to terrain that is unreasonably hazardous for them to cross, given their skills and experience. Avalanche terrain should be avoided whenever possible during snow traveled biking activities.

### **DIFFICULTY RATINGS**

The difficulty of a Bikepacking route will be rated using this scale as a general guide, and the rating must be entered on the activity listing with the specific distance and elevation gain communicated to participants in pre-trip communications. To clarify the definition of each term and facilitate participant’s trip selection, it is recommended that the bikepacking trip classification below is linked in the trip posting.

Trips will be classified either as Gravel or Mountain Bike (MTB) based on the predominant terrain travelled on the trip.

### BIKEPACKING GRAVEL

Travel predominantly on unpaved maintained and unmaintained roads or doubletrack trails. Gravel biking experience required. Skills depending on route difficulty.

A gravel bike required; Tire size minimum depending on route (please check within each route rating). Note that even for Gravel 1/beginner rides minimum tire size is 38 mm

Rating	Miles (per day)	Elevation Gain (feet per day)	Physical Difficulty	Technical Difficulty
Gravel I	<20	<1500	Relatively level riding; gentle graded hills; 2-4 hours/day (excluding stops)	Smooth riding surface with few obstacles on mostly hard-packed trails with mostly good gravel (i.e. "Champaigne gravel"). The routes are generally devoid of obstacles such as rocks and roots but may occasionally feature some coarser gravel, potholes or wooden debris that can be avoided paying close attention to the trail surface (e.g., graded dirt roads, rail trails); suitable for beginner gravel riders. Tires 38+ mm ok.
Gravel II	20-40	1500-2500	Moderately hilly terrain with climbs up to 20 min each; 3-5 hours of riding per day (excluding stops).	Occasional obstacles and/or steep sections (e.g., maintained forest roads, mellow singletrack); any technical features can be rolled over or avoided; suitable for gravel riders with beginner mountain bike skills. Tires size 38-42 mm ok.
Gravel III	40-60	2500-3500	Hilly terrain with frequent long hard climbs, some of which may be steep and unrelenting; loose and steep descents; up to 6 hours of riding per day (excluding stops).	A mix of smooth and rocky, loose terrain with periodic rock features, roots and other obstacles, that can often be avoided or maneuvered around with some mountain bike skills. Some sections of route may feature rocky, loose, and/or steep ascents and descents; (e.g., 4x4 roads or singletrack in rugged/rocky terrain). Hike-a-Bike sections possible based on skills and weight of bike/gear; suitable for intermediate mountain bikers or intermediate gravel riders who are able to choose lines and focus on navigating obstacles.
Gravel IV	60-80	3500-5000	Very hilly terrain with abundant climbing; some steep and loose climbs, some very steep and unrideable (hike-a-bike required); 6+ hours of riding per day (excluding stops).	Significant sections of the route include narrow (singletrack) trails with frequent obstacles such as drops up to 10 inches, steep and loose climbs and descents; (e.g., un-maintained forest roads, 4x4 roads or singletrack in rugged/rocky terrain). suitable for riders with intermediate to advanced mountain bike skills.
Gravel V	up to 100	>5000	Extremely hilly terrain with very steep loose climbs some requiring bike-pushing (hike-a-bike) and/or carrying. Frequent long climbs lasting 30 min-2 hours; up to 10 hours of riding per day (excluding stops).	Very challenging route with large obstacles (such as rocks, roots and drops over 10 in), exposure, very steep and loose climbs and descents (e.g., un-maintained forest roads, 4x4 roads or singletrack in rugged/rocky terrain); suitable for riders with advanced mountain bike skills

### BIKEPACKING Mountain Bike (MTB)

Travel dominantly on singletrack mountain bike trails. Mountain bike skills required. Skills depending on route difficulty.

A mountain bike with front suspension required; Tire size minimum is 2.2 inches. Wider (>2.2 in) and knobbier tires recommended for intermediate-advanced routes; streamlined minimalistic bikepacking bags required for more technical (intermediate to advanced) routes.

Rating	Miles (per day)	Elevation Gain (feet per day)	Physical Difficulty	Technical Difficulty
MTB I	up to 20	<1500	Short climbs of low to moderate grade; 2–4 hours of riding per day (excluding stops).	Avoidable and unavoidable obstacles. Low grade, wide, consistent surface texture with minimal features. A few unavoidable obstacles such as rocks and roots (2-inches or shorter), which are small enough for mountain bike tires to simply roll over. Suitable to riders new to mountain biking.
MTB II	up to 30	1500-3000	Some steep climbs: some sections may require hike-a-bike based on rider's skills and weight of bike; 3 to 5 hours of riding per day (excluding stops).	Narrow single-track trails, unavoidable obstacles such as roots, rocks, and drops that are up to 8-inches tall. Solid understanding of the fundamentals of mountain biking including body positions, powerful braking, cornering, riding on varied terrain and experience riding trails that requires line choice. Significant hike-a-bike sections if not able to negotiate obstacles.
MTB III	30-50	3000-5000	Hard, long, steep climbs; some unrideable and hike-a-bike sections; some lifting of bike over obstructions; 5-6 hours of riding per day (excluding stops).	Steep trails of varied surfaces. Steep, loose climbs and descents; Unavoidable obstacles such as ledges, drops up to a 1 foot, rock gardens, steep loose descents, off-camber; continuous singletrack requiring focus and fast reactions developed from extensive mountain bike experience; falls can have severe consequences.
MTB IV	>50	>5000	Hard, long, steep climbs; significant sections of the route include narrow trail with frequent obstacles, steep and loose climbs and descents; (e.g., unmaintained forest roads, 4x4 roads or singletrack in rugged/rocky terrain)	Steep trails of varied surfaces. Steep, loose climbs and descents; Unavoidable obstacles such as drops up to a 1 foot, rock gardens, steep loose descents, off-camber; continuous singletrack requiring focus and fast reactions developed from extensive mountain bike experience; falls can have severe consequences.

### REGROUP

Indicates how often the leader stops to regroup. In most situations, groups will stay together or within shouting/whistle distance avoiding to ride too close to one another which creates an unnecessary risk. In the case of larger groups, groups may split for part of the day based on speed if the trip leader deems this is advisable and safe and there is a sufficient number of assistant leaders on a trip. Frequent regroups are still recommended.

**REPAIRS**

All riders are expected to carry the equipment necessary to fix a flat (tube, patch kit, pump). Ride leaders are not responsible for mechanical problems, but should be capable of fixing most trail maintenance issues. Mechanical failures beyond the capability of the team to repair should be considered as emergency situations.

**LEADER RATING**

In addition to the route classification, a **Leader Rating** must be specified for each activity. This provides the leader with a way to modify the baseline route difficulty based on specifics of how they will lead the trip or for whether it is a hike or a backpack. The following are examples of criteria a leader may consider in setting the **Leader Rating**.

- For Beginners: Easy pace on mostly flat terrain, with 1-day overnight gear, no technical challenges or special skills needed
- Easy: Easy pace on rolling terrain, with up to 2-days overnight gear, some technical challenges or special skills needed
- Moderate: Easy to moderate pace with some hills or hilly terrain, with up to 2 or more days of overnight gear, minor technical challenges or special skills needed (e.g. on trail bike maintenance, rough trail, single track, steep climb, log crossings, steep terrain)
- Challenging: Moderate to strenuous pace on hilly terrain with up to 4 or more days of overnight gear, some major route challenges (e.g. on trail bike maintenance, very rugged terrain/trail, single track, steep terrain, log crossings, bear canister requirement, carrying water to a dry camp)

It is recommended that the leader clearly specify the distance and elevation gain for the route as well as their planned pace, any special technical challenges and special gear, skills and conditioning requirements of the trip in the trip posting within the activity summary and/or the leaders' notes.

**PARTY SIZE**

The minimum party size for a bikepack is 3 and the maximum party size is 12 unless other party limits apply. For trips with 5 or more participants it is recommended to have at least one assistant leader or co-leader

**LEADER MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS**

Leaders must be Mountaineers members, at least 18 years old, with an up to date waiver on file. New bikepack leaders are strongly encouraged to go on a minimum of 3 activities with The Mountaineers, preferably with different leaders, before becoming a bikepack leader themselves. Individual committees have the discretion to require more or fewer activities based on the applicant's experience and skills. Leaders must be approved to lead a Bikepacking trip by a Mountaineers branch bikepack committee and entered on their committee's leader list. Once approved by one branch committee to lead Bikepacking

trips, the leader is qualified to lead Bikepacking trip for any branch but must request the committee chair to be added to another branch's leader list.

Leaders must demonstrate basic competency in each of the following key elements before being approved to lead a Mountaineers Bikepacking trip. Leaders must have overnight backcountry camping experience to demonstrate competency in basic camping skills. Ideally this is reflected on their Mountaineer's profile from backpacking trips, overnight scrambling, climbing, kayaking or snowshoeing trips. Under each key element, bullets highlight examples of the skills, behaviors, or knowledge factors expected of a Mountaineers bikepack leader within that element.

**KEY ELEMENT 1: Group Leadership – examples of expected competencies**

- Planning and organization
- Screening of participants (as appropriate)
- Communication (clear and effective)
- Ensures that all party members are accounted for periodically and at the trip conclusion
- Respectful, caring, considerate
- Sound judgment and decision-making skills
- Establishes trust
- Focuses on group well-being and success as a whole
- Adapts as required / situational leadership
- Teaches / coaches and also learns from others

**KEY ELEMENT 2: Technical Skill – examples of expected competencies**

- Has experience and physical abilities commensurate with the trip being led
- Practical on trail bike maintenance skill
- Practices Minimum Impact Procedures / Leave No Trace 7 Principles
- Practices good Trail and Road Etiquette
- Knowledge and use of 10 Essentials

**KEY ELEMENT 3: Navigation– examples of expected competencies**

- Effectively navigates trail routes with map and compass and any other appropriate tools to “stay found” (altimeter, watch, GPS)

**KEY ELEMENT 4: Ride Safety Skills– examples of expected competencies**

- Shows good understanding of major Bikepacking hazards and how to assess the level of risk
- Shows good understanding of methods to prevent, mitigate or manage major risk factors

**KEY ELEMENT 5: First Aid and Emergency Preparedness – examples of expected competencies**

- Able to handle common first aid situations likely to be experienced on a bikepack trip.

- Know the “7 steps of Emergency Response” as described in Freedom of the Hills, or an equivalent emergency management process
- Exhibits a good understanding of how to handle emergency situations such as late return/after dark/lost biker/off route/lost
- Demonstrates problem solving and leadership skills relating to medical emergencies or unexpected weather and trail conditions
- Knows how to communicate /summon help

**KEY ELEMENT 6: Knowledge of Standards and Policies– examples of expected competencies**

- Familiar with applicable Mountaineers standards or procedures such as carpools; liability; waivers, postings and closings; ratings
- Knows Incident reporting expectations
- Familiar with maximum group size, permitting, camping, food storage, and other applicable land management agency regulations

**PROCESS TO QUALIFY AS A MOUNTAINEERS BIKEPACK LEADER**

Sponsoring committees must have a documented and transparent process, available to any interested member, by which a prospective leader can qualify as a Mountaineers bikepack leader. Committees are responsible to verify that prospective leaders are competent in the key elements listed above using a structured, objective method. The following are examples of avenues that could be used:

- Data from application form and/or activity /course history
- Other leader badges (e.g. Climb or kayak leader or other)
- Documented completion of and graduation from a Wilderness Navigation, “Staying Found” or equivalent course.
- Documented completion of and graduation from a Wilderness or Remote First Aid, MOFA, WFR or equivalent course.
  - To maintain status as a Bikepack Leader, documented completion of or recertification from a Wilderness or Remote First Aid, MOFA, WFR or equivalent course every 5 years from date of prior completion of course or from date being awarded WFA/MOFA/WFR badge.

Structured interview with Committee Chair or designated member to validate knowledge.

Mentored bikepack in which the mentor evaluates against the standards to the degree possible. Committees have flexibility to use different combinations of the above methods appropriate to individual leader candidates, maintaining flexibility to recognize experience and training from another activity or from outside the club where it directly applies to the key leader competency requirements.

However, the committee must maintain a mechanism to document their evaluation of a leader candidate against the key criteria so that any outside party can understand the objective method used to qualify the person. It is strongly recommended that each bikepack leader attend a bikepack leader

course, clinic or seminar including an overview of the minimum standard and all the key leader criteria and expectations, even if they have led other activities for the Mountaineers.

### **PARTICIPANT QUALIFICATIONS**

Unless specified by the leader there are a few prerequisites for signing up for a bikepack clinic, course or tour:

- You must be a member of the Mountaineers.
- You must own a bike, or have the capability to rent or borrow a bike capable of riding over an extended period of time/miles, on pavement, gravel and dirt.
- ~~You must have a backpacking badge on your Mountaineers profile.~~  
You must have overnight backcountry camping experience.
- You must be capable of riding up to 20 miles in a given day, trip and terrain dependent.

Participants are responsible for signing up only for trips that are within their capabilities, wearing suitable clothing / bringing suitable equipment as specified by the leader, and carrying the ten essentials.

### **BADGE CRITERIA**

#### **Bikepacking Skills Badges**

Anyone desiring a Bikepacking Skills badge needs to submit a request for the badge in writing to their branch's Bikepacking chair, along with all of their pre-requisite experience – unless the badge is directly awarded from a Bikepacking course or clinic. That chair then has the lead responsibility to review the applicant's information, follow up as needed, and make the decision to grant the appropriate badge, assuring that the qualifications are met.

#### **Basic Bikepacking Skills**

Grant this badge if the student can demonstrate that they've attended a lecture or series of lectures/seminars that have delivered the following information at an introductory level:

This assumes that the student already knows the fundamentals of the Ten Essentials, biking safety, Leave No Trace and trail/road etiquette, wilderness travel and hazards.

Fundamentals: Have a good understanding of the types of Bikepacking bikes; Choosing the type of bikepack trip that suits your style, experience and conditioning (technical vs. non-technical routes, short vs. longer, relaxed vs. intense, single vs double track, etc.), Bikepacking weight (bike weight, bag weight and total weight), balancing trail and camp comfort, knowing the weight of your gear and bringing only what you need for the conditions (using a checklist)

Planning a Bikepacking trip: Finding info on trail/road conditions, expected weather, choosing camps, locating water, pacing, daily distance, gear and clothing for the trail:

1. Choosing and packing bags for Bikepacking
2. Footwear: bike shoes, trail runners, clipless vs flats – how to choose based on the trip
3. Choosing the right clothing; layering concepts
4. Wet, cold or hot weather considerations

- Staying comfortable while Bikepacking in wet weather: rain jacket or poncho, pants or skirt; pack cover, pack liner concepts; gaiters; keeping your gear dry
- 5. Hydration, carrying water, purifying water
- 6. Food: Bikepack food options, basics of how to obtain and/or prepare your bikepack food, how much food to carry, calorie density, how to package and carry food
- 7. Mealtime: Stove and fuel options, fuel efficiency, pots, dishes and utensils, etc.
- 8. Food storage: Various options and their pros and cons
- 9. Sleep system: Shelter options and how to decide, basic sleeping bag/quilt options and how to decide, sleeping pad options and how to decide, night-time clothing; how to consider your whole sleep system and the expected conditions to pack what you need
- 10. Miscellaneous: Light, camp/water shoes, first aid gear for Bikepacking
  - Awareness of permits and rules: What permits are needed, bringing your dog, rules for locating camps, food storage requirements and use of fire
  - Etiquette and Leave No Trace related to backcountry biking and camping – choosing a camp, keeping a clean camp, leaving no trace behind, disposal of garbage and waste, trail and camp behavior, interacting with wildlife, use of fire

#### Advanced Bikepacking Skills

Requires the basic skills badge or equivalent as a prerequisite. Grant this badge if:

1. The student has planned and participated in at least 3 successful Bikepacking trips within the previous 2 calendar years, of which at least one is two nights or more and over 75 miles in riding distance.
  - a. Trips may be Mountaineers or private trips (but The Mountaineers do not take responsibility for members' private trips).
  - b. May NOT be a trip with an outfitter or guide service in which the food and gear and route planning is done by someone else.
2. The student has completed a field navigation class and an outdoor-oriented first aid class within the past 3 years, or can clearly demonstrate these competencies from other sources.
  - a. Navigation could include the Mountaineers Wilderness Navigation, "Staying Found" or equivalent – if person only can show classroom or eLearning training, needs to show practical field experience applying the principles.
  - b. First aid could include a Wilderness or Remote First Aid, MOFA, WFR or equivalent course.