

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 as long as party follow 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.

Easy (E) Up to 50 miles round trip with less than 1500 feet of elevation gain

Moderate (M) Up to 150 miles round trip, with 1500-2500 feet of elevation gain

Strenuous (S) Up to 250 miles round trip, with 2500-3500 feet of elevation gain

Very Strenuous (VS) Over 500 miles round trip or with over 3500 feet of elevation gain

Group Ride Classifications

To help Mountaineers select a ride that suits their style, skills and energy level. Group riders can choose a ride with a pace and terrain that they feel confident about, and with a location they are comfortable with. If it is too easy, they can look for a faster paced ride next time, and if they can't finish, it's better to be in an area you are familiar with and know how to get home from.

Pace (Moving Speed)

Pace classification indicates the intended range of speeds on level ground without breaks. This means downhill sections of the ride may be faster, and uphill sections slower.

- **Easy:** Under 10 mph
- **Leisurely:** 10-14 mph
- **Moderate:** 14-16 mph
- **Brisk:** 16-20 mph
- **Strenuous:** 20+ mph

Note: For rides with a “hilly” terrain classification, consider choosing a pace one step down from your usual comfort level.

Terrain

Terrain indicates the most common or average terrain type of the ride and should be considered relative to the length and overall difficulty of the ride. For example, a long-distance ride with a lot of elevation gain will be overall less challenging than a short ride with equal elevation gain. Consider the pace and frequency of regroup as well to understand how advanced a ride may be.

- **Mostly flat:** Trails and/or mostly flat roads with a possible gentle uphill
- **Rolling:** Climbs are short and easy, not too numerous
- **Some hills:** A few short, steep hills, some moderate upgrades and/or longer gentle climbs
- **Hilly:** Consistent or continuous climbing

Off-road travel classification:

	Easiest White Circle 	Easy Green Circle 	Blue Circle 	Black Diamond 	Double Black Diamond 
Trail Width	72" or more	36" or more	24" or more	12" or more	6" or more
Trail Surface	Hardened or surfaced	Firm and stable	Mostly stable with some variability	Widely variable	Widely variable and unpredictable
Average Trail Grade	Less than 5%	5% or less	10% or less	15% or less	20% or more
Maximum Trail Grade	Max 10%	Max 15%	Max 15% or greater	Max 15% or greater	Max 15% or greater
Natural Obstacles and Technical Trail Features (TTF)	None	Unavoidable obstacles 2" tall or less Avoidable obstacles may be present Unavoidable bridges 36" or wider	Unavoidable obstacles 15" tall or less Avoidable obstacles may be present Unavoidable bridges 24" or wider TTF 2' high or less, width of deck is less than 1/2 the height Short sections may exceed criteria	Unavoidable obstacles 15" tall or less Avoidable obstacles may be present May include loose rocks Unavoidable bridges 24" or wider TTF 4' high or less, width of deck is less than 1/2 the height Short sections may exceed criteria	Unavoidable obstacles 15" tall or less Avoidable obstacles may be present May include loose rocks Unavoidable bridges 24" or narrower TTF 4' high or less, width of deck is unpredictable Many sections may exceed criteria

*United States, Bureau of Land Management’s Guidelines for a Quality Trail Experience, dated January 2017.

Regroup

Indicates how often the leader stops to regroup. Generally faster-paced and longer-mileage rides regroup less frequently. In most situations group will stay within shouting/whistle distance. It is hard to say with the difference in terrain where a member will be guaranteed to be in ear shot. Riding to close to one another creates an unnecessary risk. "None" and "occasional" regroup categories generally expect experienced riders who can fix their own minor mechanical problems and follow a map or cue sheet if they get separated from the group.

- **Stay together (preferable method of regroup)**
- **Occasional**
- **Frequent**
- **None**

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 or leisurely pace, with 1-day overnight gear, no technical challenges or special skills needed

Easy: Slow pace, with up to 2-days overnight gear, some technical challenges or special skills needed

Moderate: steady, moderate or brisk pace, 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: vigorous, strenuous or super strenuous pace 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.

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 a backpacking skill badge in their profile to demonstrate competency in basic camping skills. 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 classes (Red Cross First Aid, Wilderness First Aid, “Staying Found” or Wilderness Navigation or equivalent external class)

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 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 Skills2

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 the Mountaineers WFA or MOFA class or "Trail Emergency Preparedness" or equivalent– if person only can show classroom or eLearning training, needs to demonstrate good understanding of the principles as they apply to a backcountry emergency.