



## Bicycle Touring Tips from Bo Edwards and Pivo Pub

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### Tour Planning

Your chances of having smooth, minimum-hassle, enjoyable bicycle tour are best if you plan the journey well in advance. An important aspect of planning is *flexibility*—the itinerary should not be cast in concrete. A spreadsheet, such as Excel or Quattro, is an excellent way to plan a tour. You can change it easily, and e-mail it to touring partners. An example of an itinerary for the Missouri and Kansas portions of the TransAmerica Trail is shown below.

In the Lodging row, CG = campground, SP = state park, NP = national park, YH = youth hostel, and so forth.

The Deviation row is used to indicate both deviations from the standard route, and any tourist attractions along the way worth visiting. Taum Sauk Mountain, for example, is the highest point in Missouri, and its summit can be reached by bicycle.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Miles
Date	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Begin	Farmington, MO	Eminence, MO	Marshfield, MO	Pittsburg, KS	Eureka, KS	Hutchinson, KS	Ness City, KS	
End	Eminence, MO	Marshfield, MO	Pittsburg, KS	Eureka, KS	Hutchinson, KS	Ness City, KS	Leoti, KS	
Route	MO-32, 21, 106	MO-106, 17 & 38	MO-38, US-160, MO-126	KS-146, 105 & 99	US-54; Co-570 & 556	KS-96, US-183	KS-96	
Lodging	ABC Motel	XYZ Inn	Comfy CG	Sister's house	Hutchinson YH	Cedar Bluff SP	Heartbreak Hotel	
Distance	98	105	108	122	117	132	81	763
Deviation	Taum Sauk Mtn				Kansas State Fair			

The beauty of the spreadsheet for trip planning is that the day's distances can be read off a map and added together in a formula in the cell, as shown below. The daily distances can be summed up at the far right for a weekly distance. A factor (e.g., 1.0 mile = 1.609 km) can be inserted in a formula to convert miles to kilometers, as needed. Internet links can be embedded in each cell, such as the web site of the fictitious ABC Motel.

	<b>Sunday</b>
Date	<b>2</b>
Begin	Farmington, MO
End	Eminence, MO
Route	MO-32, 21, 106
Lodging	<a href="#">ABC Motel</a>
Distance	=14+9+3+2+9+9+4+9+12+14+13
Deviation	Taum Sauk Mtn

### **Bicycle Maintenance on a Tour**

A touring cyclist should always be prepared to make the most common repairs on the road. In descending order, the most likely problems are...

1. Flat tire
2. Broken spoke
3. Broken or lost rack screw or cleat screw
4. Broken cable

### **Flat Tires**

#### Punctured Tube

Flat tires are by far the most common bicycle problem encountered by cyclists. Always carry at least one *virgin* tube, a pump and at least two tire levers. A glueless patch kit for tubes, a tire patch kit and a second spare tube are always good to have. Patches are always the weak spot on a tube, which is why the never-used spare is essential. Glueless patches are never in danger of dried-up glue, but are also less durable than glued-on patches. A pump with a built-in pressure gauge and foot pedal is highly advantageous.

#### Tire Damage

A spare *tire* is a good thing to carry when touring a region or country where tire damage is likely or a bicycle dealer is improbable. Minor tire damage can be repaired with a tire patch kit, which is not the same as a tube patch kit.

#### Prevention

Gelatinous tire-liner strips are very effective at preventing flats. A morning inspection of the tire tread for embedded glass shards, thorns and wire is always a good idea. Replacement of bald tires, and regular inflation to recommended pressure help, too.

### **Broken Spoke**

Spoke failures are not at all unusual on a tour, especially under the additional stress of loaded panniers or a trailer. Be prepared to replace a spoke immediately. Ordinary stainless steel spokes are the easiest to replace, which is why wheels with fancy spokes and spoke patterns are best left to racing or in-town riding. Most spoke failures occur near the rivet head at the hub end, where the spoke bends 90°. Fatigue is the most common cause.

#### Tools

Two tools are essential—(1.) a spoke wrench for multiple spoke-nipple sizes, and (2.) a cluster remover. The cluster remover is needed to replace spokes on the drive side of the

rear wheel, which is where most spoke failures occur. The front or rear fork of the bicycle can be used as a makeshift truing stand. A dab of grease, oil or Vaseline on the threads makes truing easier.

### Spare Spokes

The spokes on the front wheel are not necessarily the same length as on the rear wheel, and the spokes on the drive side of the rear wheel are not necessarily the same length as on the opposite side. Therefore, know the lengths of all three spoke types before the tour, and carry several spares of each length. Spare spokes cost ~\$1 apiece.

### **Broken Cables and Screws**

The derailleur and brake cables are not interchangeable—carry a long one of each. An 8-9-10 mm socket wrench or set of combination wrenches, and a small pliers, are needed to replace a broken cable. A coating of axle grease on the cable improves its performance and reduces premature wear.

Rack screws break occasionally, usually from fatigue. Both rack screws and cleat screws on cycling shoes are prone to work their way loose and fall out. Carry a few extras of each, and a multiple hex key set to tighten them.

### **Other Tools and Repairs**

A small can of aerosol chain lube is a must on a tour. WD-40® will do in a pinch. A pedal wrench, heavy though it is, is needed if the bicycle is to be crated at the end of the tour for airline or railroad transport. A Swiss Army knife or equivalent is as necessary as your wallet and cell phone. A multipurpose bicycle tool can substitute for some of the other tools. Moistened towelettes or baby wipes are useful for degreasing fingers and hygienic purposes.

### **Foul Weather Preparation**

Wet weather or sunburn can make the best-planned tour miserable if the rider is unprepared. Plastic fenders make riding on wet pavement bearable. A Gore-Tex® (or equivalent) parka and shoe covers are indispensable. I pack my clothing and other gear into coated nylon stuff sacks before I put them in my panniers, as panniers tend to leak in heavy rain.

### **Rider's Health**

Chamois shorts and padded open-finger gloves are standard equipment for cyclotourists. Saddle sores affect even the toughest buns after a few days on the road. I carry Desitin®, A+D® or equivalent diaper-rash ointment, and use it in the morning before I begin riding, and again at night after a shower. These all contain zinc oxide and cod liver oil, and soothe a whole lot of other skin ailments too. Some folks treat saddle sores with hemorrhoid ointment.

High-SPF sunscreen and sunglasses are the obvious preventive measures for sunburn. I also use removable sleeves during the midday sun to protect my arms, and a bandana

under my helmet to shade my ears and neck. The bandana can be soaked in water to provide extra cooling on a hot day. You can increase your UV protection by washing your cycling clothes with SunGuard™.

[\*Live to Ride\*](#)

by Bo Edwards

[\*Mad Dogs and an Englishman\*](#)

by Derek L. Jensen

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