



What to bring on a trail ride

Trail riding, desert racing and just riding for exploration or animal scouting pose a need for back country riders to bring and carry items not required when you are at the track or close to your base camp. I am often asked what do you bring? “Well, that depends on where I am going and for how long,” is my usual answer. The area we are riding has weather and environmental extremes, geological extremes, and animal extremes plus we are adding our expensive mechanical horses to the mix. Let’s start with the basics for just a casual hiker that does not want to get lost and wants to live if they do.

Before we examine the lists, note that none of the lists mention the importance of telling someone where you are going and when to expect you back first and foremost! The rangers make you fill out a permit form at least. I think a whistle should be added to the lists too.

The Boy Scout manuals lists the 10 essentials for wilderness explorations are as follows:

1. A pocket knife (multi-function knife is best)
2. First Aid Supplies
3. Extra Clothing
4. Rain Gear
5. Water Bottle
6. Flashlight
7. Trail Food
8. Matches and Fire Starters
9. Sun Protection
10. Map and Compass

Nowadays, if you want to file for a climbing or back country permit for Rainier, St Helens or other national parks for example, the issuing ranger will ask you if you know their version of the “10 essentials” which is as follows:

1. Map
2. Compass
3. Sunglasses and Sunscreen
4. Extra Clothing
5. Head lamp or flashlight
6. First Aid Supplies
7. Firestarter
8. Matches
9. Knife
10. Extra Food





(the rangers will still let you go out even if you get some wrong if you argue with them)

That list is pretty similar to the list created years ago by the scouts. Now, the newest and modern terminology lists the essentials by system and by using bigger words like this:

1. Navigation (Map and Compass)
2. Sun Protection
3. Insulation
4. Illumination (head lamp or flashlight)
5. First Aid Supplies
6. Fire (Waterproof matches/lighters/candles)
7. Repair Kit and Tools
8. Nutrition (extra food)
9. Hydration (extra water)
10. Emergency Shelter

No matter which survival outline you subscribe to, the general consensus is to try and be prepared as best you can. I have seen the best and newest armored bikes get taking down by small twigs through the radiator or a razor sharp rock under the water you would never see. Others have had to abandon their bikes 25 miles into the woods because they only needed a simple wrench or pliers. The following list is a list compiled over time mostly from experience and observing other riders' ingenious ways of overcoming the challenges of balance, weight and essentials when riding. I have used back packs, bike packs and hip packs plus made compartments on my bikes. Whatever you use, it seems our load comes down to no more than a smaller loaf of bread if you are a jumper. If you are a diesel like Dungy, then you can carry more. I archery hunt and fish with my bike no problem. I divided the list into essentials and luxuries. Sometimes we can even break up the tools amongst a group to lighten the individual load. This list is in no particular order of importance and is always changing for me. It is only a suggestion. If you come and just want to ride our track, then you can leave most of this stuff in your truck or in the shop.

1. JB Weld, 1 hour or instant dry version. Great for plugging radiator or case holes and cracks.
2. Small hand air pump. (tire stuff is only really needed if you care about reusing your rims and even tires in some cases. Usually you can get home with flats. We have even stuffed grass into flat tires before successfully.)
3. Mini Tire Irons (see #2)
4. Snacks (things that hydrate you seem to be nice, oranges survive the beating)
5. Spark plug wrench and plugs (most water dunked bikes can be saved on the trail with these tools, not to mention 2 strokes regularly eat spark plugs)
6. Inter-tube repair kit (see #2)





7. Small vice grips and zip ties (can be used to replace broken levers on the trail, you can save your cracked or broken moto's plastics with zip ties)
8. Lighter(s). Although I have not had to sleep in the wilderness with my bike but I still bring 2 and they work way better than matches and fire starters)
9. Mini Flashlight, headlamp or bike light
10. Tow rope (Don't lose the person carrying this!)
11. First Aid (with emergency trauma diagram and basics)
12. Some carry Front/Rear tubes (I have carried them on high speed rocky terrain races)
13. Small screw drive (tiny flat head and Philips for carb adjustments and prying caps and grommets)
14. Tiny channel locks (I have found more uses for these than the needle nose, personal preference)
15. Some kind of small clippers (You made need to cut a brake line, cable, zip tie or something else, some needle nose pliers have this ability)
16. Master link for chain (always carried this one but have never used it on the trail, ever)
17. Hex key set with flat head and Philips. (My bike comes apart with hex keys and a 10 mm. lol. This tool is designed to use with bicycles but it works and fits my bikes)
18. Crescent wrench (mainly needed for axle nuts) (see #2).
19. Spare gas or 2 stroke oil may be needed
20. Drinking Water – In addition, it is a good idea to carry an empty dry clean water bottle. You can get gas from a fellow rider or get water out of a creek for cooling system. I ride with a bladder and mouth piece tied by my helmet for hydration and stuff an empty water bottle into a space on the handlebars somewhere.
21. Emergency blanket
22. Maps, GPS, compass, etc. (some mount this on the handle bars)
23. Pepper spray * See note below

Luxury or other items

1. Altimeter, fishing pole and gear, handle bar mounted rifle or bow, an old cell phone, Cord in place of zip ties or both
2. Cameras, Go Pros, maybe game cameras for deployment, extra batteries and memory sticks as needed. Ipods or other music devices.
3. Two way radios, intercom systems, electronically heated by the bike apparel.

*-Note. This area is known to have predatory native wildlife. Many people carry side arms legally during certain seasons and activities. Although most animals run from bikes, it is possible I guess to startle an animal into aggression. Nevertheless, it is highly discouraged to ride a dirt bike with a side arm or loaded pistol (maybe unloaded in a back pack). I have seen two riders crash and shoot themselves or their equipment when they impacted the ground. One right through the leg, Mike... and the other were a couple of twins where one crashed and the gun managed to shoot both their bikes dead





with one shot. The twins were fine but had to push their bikes for 5 miles much of the way through sand. Pepper spray will make giant bears cry like babies and is highly recommended for this activity if you worry about this sort of thing.

This list changes slightly for SUVs and ATVs which are welcome.

One last note on clothing. People always call helmets and pads “safety gear”. I grew up during an age where it was not required plus it was so hot we could not stand the heat of our ancient Bell Helmets. Gear is way better now. I teach the kids and folks new to the sport that this is not safety gear but “crash gear”. There is not too much safety in off road riding. If you are growing or trying new stuff you will probably crash. I never ride without my boots, gloves and my helmet. If I wear shorts in extreme heat, I will wear knee pads. Short sleeves = elbow pads, etc. Layering is essential for comfort as we climb up into and back down from the various mountain ranges and when on one of our high altitude back country tours. You will also need a way to carry the extra clothing. I usually tie something to the handle bars, but items get pretty muddy there. A lot of packs have ways to bungee clothing to them. Tie them around your stomach as long as they don't hang in the wheel well or chain and sprocket zones.

Join us where the pavement ends and the fun adventures begin.

