



Traveling with Your Bike

Post COVID, many members are traveling, and some may choose to travel with their bikes. We take for granted the availability of parts and services for our bikes, but a recent trip to several of the former Soviet countries reminded me of how much we believe that access to parts and services are universal. So here are few of the things I've learned over time.

Interac is everywhere . . . isn't it?

No, if you think that you can access your bank accounts with your debit card - good luck. Credit cards are more accepted, but small businesses and street vendors may show you the hand. Check into getting a Wise Card and charging it with Euros or American Dollars. The card is widely accepted (175 countries currently) and does automatic currency conversions when you make purchases.

Parts and service for Shimano, Campagnolo and SRAM are available everywhere . . . not!

Although you may find Shimano components on rental bikes, the groupos often aren't the same as in the North American market. So naturally the parts for your Dura Ace, Ultegra or Altus equipped bike may be hard to come by. Campagnolo and SRAM are, if anything, more difficult to source.

Bikes are accepted on trains, water taxis, and ferries in Europe, Asia etc.

Although bringing your bike onto trains is certainly more accepted there are some rules that may pose a challenge. Here are some examples:

In Scandinavian countries, in some instances, you will be required to bring your bike and any luggage onto the designated carriage in one go. They won't allow you to roll your bike on, then go back onto the platform to retrieve any other articles. Their train arrival and departure times are very exact for a reason.

In many countries you are required to stay with your bike in the Bicycle Carriage for the duration of the trip. That area of the carriage may or may not be heated.

Check to see if there are restrictions as to times that a bicycle can be brought onboard. Peak commuter times and express trains may restrict how many bicycles are accepted.

In some cases, your bike may be designated as freight and may not necessarily travel with you.

Lithium Ion and Lithium Polymer batteries used for electric bikes may or may not be accepted. If accepted, they will almost certainly be required to be in your carry-on luggage NOT in your checked luggage. Air Canada's policy is:

A maximum of two (2) individually protected spare lithium-ion batteries with a rating of 100 Wh but not exceeding 160 Wh may be carried per passenger in carry-on baggage only*, pending approval by Air Canada airport agents.

Since most electric assist bike batteries range anywhere from 250 Wh to 600 Wh, it's clear that "officially" you can't even board with the battery even in carry-on luggage. Practice due diligence and check with all the airlines that you will use during your entire trip. Since the airlines have entered partnerships with each other, your flight may originate with one airline but may switch to other alliance equipment on succeeding legs of a trip.

How do you prepare my bike for travel?

There are several options for the way in which your bike travels.

1. If you are travelling to do a hub-and-spoke tour or a circuit, then the safest way to travel will be with either a hardcase or padded soft-side case. Check to see before your trip to see if there is a way of storing your case while you are away on a circuit. Some hotels will store your case, but determine this before you leave on your trip. In some instances, you may be able to store the case in a large locker at the airport or at rail stations. You may also want to check in with a local bike club to see if they would be willing to store your case for you.
2. Partially disassemble your bike and ship it in a cardboard bicycle box on a through-trip. Be certain to remove the rear derailleur and zip-tie or wire it to the wheel so that it sits inside of the chain-stays. That way it is less likely to get bent or broken. The cardboard box would be discarded at your destination, which means sourcing a new cardboard box at the termination of the trip. In spring, when new bikes are shipping, boxes are plentiful. However, later in the season sourcing a new box for the return flight may prove challenging.
3. Wrap the bicycle in bubble wrap or cellophane and request that the bike be hung in the cargo hold. Again, it is recommended that some disassembly be done such as turning the handlebars to align them along the centreline of the frame, remove pedals, and remove the rear derailleur and wire or zip-tie it to the wheel inside of the chain-stays.
4. Be sure to deflate the tires. Your bike may be in a pressurized cargo hold, but if it isn't pressurized, the tubes may burst due to the altitude (reduced atmospheric pressure).

It may be less expensive and more convenient to purchase a bike at your destination, ride it and donate it at the end of your trip. Of course, renting a bike at your destination is also an option. However, in many instances you won't be able to cross borders with a rental, and it locks you into doing a hub-and-spoke or circuit tour.

The nuts and bolts of traveling with your bike.

Nuts, bolts and screws.

Be sure to remove, clean, reinstall and torque items such as rack mounting screws, water bottle screws, derailleur mounts, brake pad nuts, fenders – essentially anything that mounts to the bicycle frame. Be sure to perform the same service to your step-in pedals. Be sure to apply Blue Loctite™ to the threads so there is less likelihood of the component rattling loose in shipping or while on the road. Bring a small kit of replacement screws, nuts, bolts, washers and cotter pins. Carry them in an old prescription vile.

Carry extra spokes for your bike.

You will need one or two for the front wheel, the drive-side rear, and the non-drive side rear. Since rear wheels are dished to accommodate the rear cassette, the spokes are different lengths. This is especially important in the case of unusual spokes such as carbon spokes, bladed spokes, and single/double-butted spokes.

Carry an extra Derailleur Hanger.

Derailleur hangers are very specific to bike brands and models. They are available from your dealer or can be custom machined or purchased from derailleurhanger.com. Be sure to carry with the spare hanger the tiny screws that are used to mount the hanger to the frame – tape them to the hanger.



Cleats

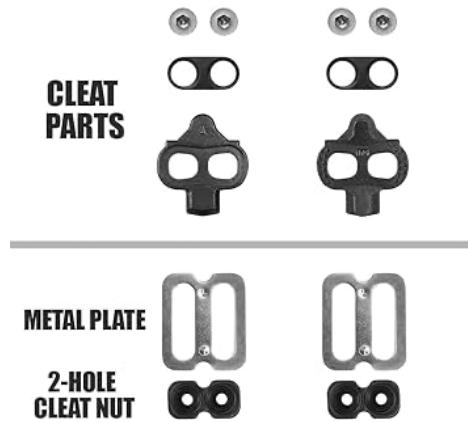
Remove clean and reinstall the screws that hold your cleats on your shoes. It's also a good idea to carry some spare parts as well. As with all fasteners, use of Blue Loctite™ is highly recommended to prevent the fasteners from coming loose.

Lights

You don't necessarily plan on cycling after dark, but a flat or mechanical can set you back on the day's planned arrival time. Pack lights and use them when dark arrives before you're home for the day. You can, of course, use them as daytime running lights for extra safety as well.

Other bits and bobs

1. Zip-ties. These are indispensable for temporarily attaching loose components.
2. Duct Tape. This is good for temporarily attaching loose components, as a boot for a badly cut tire, as a barrier to prevent windburn or frostbite, patch ripped rain gear and so on.
3. Bring along more tubes than you think that you'll need, as well as a patch kit. Check to be sure the cement in the patch kit isn't dried out.
4. A couple of master links for your chain. These are worth every penny should your chain break, or if you need to remove some links because of a twisted chain. They come in different widths for 5,6,7 speed, 8/9 speed, 10, 11, 12 speed.
5. A Schraeder to Presto adapter. Put the adapter on a safety pin and attach them inside to your seat bag or pannier.



6. A zipper-pull compass. Yes, your phone is very good for navigating, but its battery operated and electronic, so you know that it's prone to failure precisely when you need it most. A compass always works – adding paper maps just make it work better.



Tools

Bring every tool that you need to put your bike back in order when you arrive at your destination, as well as a multi-tool that has tools for all of the fasteners on your bike – so Blade, Philips, Hex, and Torx drivers – 8, 10, 12-, 13-, 14-, and 15-mm wrenches. The tool may also have spokes wrenches and a chain break tool – if not, bring along separate tools. A broken spoke is impossible to replace (in the field) without a spoke wrench, and a broken chain is also impossible to change without a chain break tool. Either could have you walking.

Eye Glass repair kit

It never fails – you've ridden 20K over some of Northern Europe's finest cobbles and the arm of your glasses/sunglasses falls off. Riding blind isn't an option – get one of these!



So, I'm sure that I have missed some items here, but this inventory is a good start. Like Santa, make a list and check it twice, so that your tour overseas is a happy one.