

Choosing your Route

- I. Resources (using multiple sources is prudent)
 - A. Maps
 1. Detail maps oriented to cycle touring such as those offered by Adventure Cycling [combines point to point distances, support facilities and overnight stay options]
 2. State road maps show good overall view but skimpy on detail
 3. County maps such as Delores which also show topographical features
 4. City maps for navigating cities with population exceeding 50,000
 5. Electronic maps on laptop and/or GPS
 - a) If no electronics on board, visit a library for internet access of mapquest.com, etc
 - b) Be sure to print out or take notes on point to point mileage you desire
 - B. Guidebooks
 1. Seek out detailed route descriptions
 2. Some include difficulty rating systems
 3. Identification of steep climbs, dangerous cross winds or other hazards
 4. Support services along the route (essential information)
 5. For northwest Canada and Alaska, the Milepost is excellent
 - C. Cycling Magazines
 - D. Books on cycle touring and touring adventure stories (riders who have been there, done that)
 - E. Travel Agencies (AAA, etc.)
 - F. State D.O.T. for details on local road construction projects (usually posted online)
 - G. Online weather history and forecasts
- II. Factors to consider
 - A. Proximity to civilization, support and supplies
 - B. How many miles to cover daily
 1. Defines your tour
 2. Ride almost non-stop or check out the scenery and smell the roses
 3. Wind and weather can play havoc with a tight schedule
 4. The type of overnight accommodations you desire will dictate or inspire the extent of the day's ride
 - C. Terrain
 1. Consider a longer alternate route if it helps avoid extreme grades
 2. The weight of your gear versus your physical endurance and your tandem's strength
 - D. Traffic
 1. Among most significant danger to tour
 2. Pursue routes on secondary-use roads
 - a) Consider suspect quality of lesser-used roads
 - b) Although off-the-beaten paths often offer superior scenery, they are not always well-maintained

3. If high volume highways are planned
 - a) Confirm that there's a shoulder and that bicycles are allowed
 - b) Or, avoid peak traffic times of the day (or the year)
 - c) Have a parallel road as a contingency
 - d) This is an adventure but its not meant to be constantly stressful
- E. Road Hazards
 1. Avoid narrow tunnels and bridges
 2. If unavoidable, timing is everything
 3. Some construction sites offer transport through rough areas
- III. Map tips
 - A. Round lakes tend to be in flat areas
 - B. Long lakes tend to be in hilly areas
 - C. In mountainous regions, more roads follow the mountains than cross them
 - D. Right angle versus stair step, consider which is
 1. Shorter
 2. Safer
 3. Faster
 - E. Watch for landmarks such as water and railroads
 - F. Roads that are diagonal (not east/west or north/south)
 1. Are generally more scenic
 2. Make good landmarks for orientation
- IV. Consider the logistical challenges at the start and ending points of your ride
 - A. Point A to point B tours require extra transportation coordination
 - B. Out and back
 - C. Loop
- V. Keep it Simple
 - A. Use popular known routes used regularly by touring cyclists
 - B. Skirt or avoid large cities
 - C. Minimize turns
 - D. When planning, some prefer high detail while others want the freedom to make decisions as they ride
 1. If you find on-tour route decision making too stressful, then add more detail
 2. No matter how much route information you have prior to a tour, unexpected trip variables can force you to reevaluate
 3. So in effect, route planning is inevitably an ongoing process
 4. Stay flexible with your plan
 5. When chatting with the locals, ask them about road construction, traffic congestion, etc. [remember than most people's perspective is vehicular travel]
 - E. Avoid mileage problems – attempting to cover too much ground can result in sore muscles, bad moods and missed opportunities along the way
 - F. Include time for rest and relaxation
- VI. Lastly, once your plans are confirmed, leave a tour plan with a friend

The route you choose will determine the challenges you face, the obstacles you encounter and the experiences you enjoy along the way