

Participating in a Weekend Away

As with any sport, mountain biking can be dangerous and this can be amplified when riding on rough, unfamiliar terrain and in bad weather. A combination of some or all of these factors is likely to be encountered during our weekends away. Regrettably, CUCC or its members cannot take any responsibility or be liable for accidents of any nature, howsoever incurred, during these trips. It is advisable to have a comprehensive personal accident insurance that is valid when doing any 'dangerous' sport. So as to minimise risk, there is a set of guidelines which we heavily encourage people to follow and an example of typical equipment which will be necessary to take. If you read through and think it all sounds a bit serious and that fun is off the agenda, then that is certainly not the case! If you look at some of our previous rides, it'll become apparent why we like to be as thorough as we can be!

Recommended Equipment

This is by no means exhaustive, and is not meant to be so. All it is meant to do is serve as a framework around which you can plan what to take.

IF YOU DON'T OWN A HELMET, OR YOU FORGET IT, OR YOU CHOOSE NOT TO WEAR IT, YOU WON'T BE RIDING. It's as simple as that.

- A well maintained mountain bike that you are used to riding.
- Spare inner tubes, basic tools, and a pump. Enough to ensure you could be self-sufficient if you had to be.
- Any medication you may be taking (Ventolin for example). If you are on any medication, ensure that you inform the group leader before we leave.

Riding kit consisting of, as a minimum:

- short and long sleeved synthetic base layer
- warm fleece
- waterproof and windproof top
- riding shorts/bib tights
- thermal tights
- riding shoes
- helmet

Other items such as clear glasses or sun glasses (!) are helpful. Use your common sense, if it's the middle of winter in Wales then take as much kit as you can lay your hands on, since it's better to have slightly too much with you than find you are lacking when you most need it. In some of the places we stay, drying may be an issue, so ensure you have both spare riding kit and a COMPLETE change of clothes for when we're not riding. Again, use your common sense with this.

- Water bottles/ Camelback. Having an energy supplement such as Hi5 or SIS is a good idea, esp. in winter.

- Snacks to eat whilst riding, with spare left over if we out longer than expected. Again, be practical with this!
- Iodine tablets. A bit of a personal favourite, but it means you have drinkable water wherever you find a water source.
- Space blanket. Takes no room in your pack and could save you if all goes wrong. If you like carrying stuff then bung a few hot pads in as well.
- Warm sleeping bag. Again, some places we stay in are not heated and are up at around 1000ft. Cold in the snow in winter.
- Mobile phone if you have one.
- Washkit and towel. Useful!
- Torch / bike lights. Not that we usually ride in the dark, but we usually arrive where we're going pretty late and with little light.
- Small daysack you are comfortable riding with to put kit in to take with you riding. We're not talking 50 litres+ here, 20-30 will do. Just enough to make sure you can fit your tools, inner tubes, spare clothing and food into.
- Map. Not essential since there will be a minimum of 2 in the group anyway and if riding etiquette is roughly followed you probably won't need one. But always useful and I would always encourage it.
- Compass to use with map if you know how to and you have on. Highly unlikely you will need to use it, but again, you never know.
- Small 1st aid kit. Again, the group leader will have a small one on him, but the more the merrier.
- A sense of humour!

As ever, if you think and use common sense then you should be able to cover most eventualities that could happen!

Riding Guidelines

This is not meant to be a draconian list of do's and don'ts made up for no particular good reason, but just a general code of behaviour that will ensure that (a) everyone has a good time (b) people don't end up annoying anyone unduly (c) everyone comes back and with the same number of active limbs that they went away with.

- All riders will be briefed on the route before departure.
- We ride as a GROUP! I know this can be potentially annoying for faster members in a group, but this is an exercise in group-riding, not racing.
- There will be a minimum of 2 riders with maps and a detailed knowledge of where we're going. One up front and one near the rear. The guy up front tends to get a bit narked off if people who don't know where they're going overtake him and ride off into the wide blue yonder. At a minimum ensure you don't get further ahead of him than a loud talk/low shout. If you are, stop and wait.
- If the guys at the back of the group with their respective 'guide' are getting a long way behind, the front group either stops and waits (if in sight of each other), or stops and sends a minimum of two riders down if for some inexplicable reason they are no longer in sight.
- IMPORTANT one this, in hill fog, reduced visibility and adverse weather conditions (heavy rain, snow, gales etc), everyone remains within sight.

WITHOUT EXCEPTION. The group leader's decision is final at this stage if the ride has to be cut short or terminated.

- Be courteous to other trail users. A cheery 'hello' or similar greeting can turn a potentially grumpy rambler into a friendly person! Take care with your speed on downhills and attempt not to mow anyone down.
- If another trail user starts giving you a hard time for no good reason, try to take the diplomatic approach. Attempt not to return any abuse doled out in equal measure, however tempting it may be. Sad truth still is that MTBers still have a 'bad' reputation in some people's eyes, and it is sometimes these people that can lobby us off trails. Any excuse you give them to bad mouth us, they will probably use. HOWEVER we have yet to have anything other than interest in what we're doing!
- Think ahead. Hitting a sheep at 30mph is messy and expensive. Esp. when your brakes have faded.
- Attempt not to take undue risks (at all...!) if we're a long way from home. Your group will NOT thank you if you're the one who attempted a 5ft drop off 3,400ft up a mountain and broke both your legs.

In the unlikely event of an emergency situation occurring, keep calm. Your group leaders will take control of the situation and delegate out tasks/jobs to the group. Be alert and helpful in any way you can. If you have useful expertise (e.g. first aid training) make sure your group leader knows this. If it's your group leader that's incapacitated and you have sufficient leadership experience and know what to do, step in and take charge if the matter. A word of warning though; too many chiefs and too few workers are one sure way to make a bad situation ten times worse.

Finally, HAVE FUN and ENJOY your riding. After all, that is why we do it!