

Columbia Gorge Explorer FAQs

What is the cost to participate in the ride/tour?

\$20/rider pays the camping fee for all three nights. If you are not staying at any of the three designated sites, you need to make for your own reservations and fees.

What kind of bike do I need?

We have had all sorts of bikes on the tour, road bikes, mountain bikes, folding bikes, and of course bikes designed for loaded tours. Your bike needs to be able to be fitted for racks that can carry about 40 pounds of gear or pull a trailer. Your bike should be in good condition, with up-to-date maintenance performed. For carbon fiber road bikes pulling trailers, please be sure this is a manufacturer approved use of your bike.

Mountain bikes can be fitted for a more comfortable touring geometry. Road bikes can certainly be used successfully. Road bikes, however, are typically geared a bit high, so the hills might be a challenge. Also, the frame, wheels, and brakes tend to be lighter and may not handle the stress.

What bike gear, tools, and parts should I pack?

Each bike should be minimally equipped with head and taillights, cycle computer with accurate mileage calibration and fenders. Each rider should have a minimum of two water bottles, two inner tubes, maybe a folding spare tire, patch kit, pump, tire levers, chain lube, multi-tool or metric Allen wrenches, and spare spokes if yours are of the specialty variety. Your bike should be in good condition with up-to-date maintenance performed.

What gear should I bring?

Basically, it is the same as for a back-country backpacking camping trip. There are many web sites to assist you. Here is a barebones list: tent, sleeping bag and pad, stove/fuel, eating/cooking supplies, bike clothing, camp clothing including shower sandals and towel, headlamp or flashlight, toiletries, and medication. Remember this is the Pacific Northwest and it could be wet and cold, so bring layers of clothing that are waterproof and warm. Also bring miscellaneous items like a hat, sunglasses, portable camp chair/pad, and swimsuit. If you bring a down sleeping bag or jacket, make sure you can keep them dry.

Do I need to pack four days' worth of food?

No, there are markets to buy food each day (although limited at Biggs). Most riders carry food for breakfast and snacks, eat lunch or brunch on the road, buy food on the road for cooking dinner in camp. Many riders pack a "cook in the bag" meal for emergencies as well as energy bars.

Where can I eat and buy food?

Because food is so readily available along this route, if you really want to travel "lightweight" it is possible to leave stove and cooking gear at home and travel with nothing more than a cup, bowl and utensils. Groceries and restaurants are available in Stevenson, Lyle, Biggs (limited), and Hood River. There is even a convenience store directly across the road from Home Valley, our first stop.

Will the group ride together?

No, it has been our experience that riders will find other riders that ride at a pace very close to their own. Usually 4-8 riders in each group, which riders join and change depending on sightseeing stops, terrain, and stamina. A few veterans and/or strong riders will ride alone. The ride leaders and Portland Bicycling Club members are sensitive to dropping riders and will provide the needed guidance. You should find a tempo that is comfortable and sustainable and then find the gear combinations that will give you that. Your speed will be whatever it is depending on your conditioning and the terrain. We strongly suggest small groups along Washougal River Road and Highway 14. You will encounter a fair amount of traffic, so make it easy for cars to pass. On day three, there is usually a strong headwind and we suggest leaving camp as early as possible in a small paceline. (Trailer pullers have an advantage as they usually get to be the caboose of the train.

What SAG is provided?

None. Absolutely none. This is designed to be a self-supported tour. It is the responsibility of each rider to have an emergency back-up in case of severe injury or mechanical failure. Gear and food (which may be purchased along the route) is expected to be carried by bike. There will be several riders with a few tools to assist in getting you to the next town with a bike shop if further repairs are needed. Your bike should be in good condition, with up-to-date maintenance performed.

Are there other options besides tent camping?

Yes, there are motels on the route within 8 miles of the camping locations. You must book these yourself. You also need to notify ride leaders of your plans so that we do not send out a search party.

What precautions need to be observed if towing a trailer?

New trailers often come with the manufacturers warning NOT TO EXCEED 25 MPH which is the speed where the trailer sometimes "fishtails" causing loss of control and a crash. Keep speed under 25 mph, especially on downhill stretches with sharp curves. Extra distance needs to be allowed for safe stopping.

Do not exceed recommended weight, the lighter the better. Keep weight distribution heavier on the forward half. When towing a trailer, for convenience in getting to items commonly accessed during the day, a handlebar bag or rack trunk is helpful. Otherwise pack such items in a large plastic bag or appropriately sized duffel and place on top of the load in the trailer.