

HOW TO TRAVEL IN A GROUP

Stefan Amato has been organizing and leading bikepacking trips for the last decade, namely for the outfit he founded in 2012, Pannier.cc. Stefan runs through the ins and outs of bikepacking as a group.



Bringing the outdoors and people together is what cycling is all about. “Time in a group, however big or small, is a reminder that riding bikes is fun. Add a multiday bikepacking route and you’ve got a recipe for adventure, challenge, and memorable times,” says Stefan. Sharing is a big bonus of having companions: sharing motivation, confidence, experience, and what and how others ride, pack, cook, eat, camp, or even wheelie. “If joining an organized bikepacking tour or event is not your camp mug of tea, try joining a local cycling club or national organization like Rough-Stuff Fellowship, or finding other like-minded bikepackers online,” says Stefan. Already got a group of pals that are keen for a local overnighter or an escape in the mountains? Great. Here are some things to consider.

The right vibe is fundamental. Make sure everyone is on the same page regarding distance, terrain, challenge, accommodations, roughing-it level, budget, and bike setup.

The size of a group affects social and riding dynamics, transport and accommodation options, “faff” time, and trail impact. Riding as a group is naturally more leisurely with a social focus, with a kind of “pack your swim kit and catapult” mindset. While it also offers collective skills, knowledge, decision-making, and safety in numbers, every extra person increases the chance of accidents and mechanical issues. If riding as a bigger group of six or more, things like avoiding big, busy main roads or built-up areas, splitting up into two easily passable groups, and being considerate and welcoming to

other trail users are a must. Make sure start and end points are accessible for everyone. A circular route definitely simplifies logistics for groups.

On the road, “you’ll likely end up pedaling within a snack’s throw of each other, but it is natural to ride and pause at your own pace, especially off-road,” says Stefan. “Sure, stick to the ‘ride as fast as your slowest rider’ ethos, but a good rule is to never lose sight of the person behind you.” Make sure everyone is briefed on the route, and that they have it on a phone, GPS device, or scribbled in a sketchbook, alongside some checkpoints for each day. “Regrouping tends to work out naturally anyway at pinch points: high points, low points, swim plunge pools, and resupply points. We’ve definitely had it where the faster road cyclists have had their eyes opened to the slow, social bikepacking way,” says Stefan.

While it is best for everyone to be as self-sufficient as possible when it comes to packing, knocking helmets together to streamline kit and share the load is well worth doing to avoid having 12 pumps and no carbs. Make a communal list of

tools and spares, cooking kit, shelter, and food and drink supplies, and leave space on your bike. Assigning roles, like camp chef, barista, or route master can help reduce dawdling in a group. If cooking as a group, check dietary requirements and allergies. “Vegetarian meals are the way to go for bikepacking, simply from a hygiene perspective,” says Stefan. “Make sure to do a great job, but don’t do too great of a job, or else you’ll be making coffee for everyone, every day, every trip!” ☉

GOOD TO KNOW

TYPICAL GROUP RIDING DAY:
50–120 km at 10–12 kph
(30–75 mi at 6–8 mph) over
decent terrain

GOLDEN RULES—GROUP:

- Fixed dates. Clear the calendar for pals, or book onto an organized tour/event
- Share mindsets, the same bike. setups, the load, and routes. Factor in varied paces by outlining checkpoints and regrouping rules.
- Test and challenge. Integrate big climbs, unknown tracks and trails, or bigger distances. Venturing out of comfort zones always bonds a group, and makes memories.

THREE THINGS TO TAKE—GROUP:

- The best snacks, drinks, and bikepacking hacks. It’s a competition—you know that, right? B. Y. O. M.—bring your own mug—and spork for shared meals and snack stops.
- A smartphone for contact, navigation, and documenting the trip
- Specific spares for your bike
- Earplugs

