

HOW TO BECOME A **BICYCLE TOURING PRO**



WRITTEN BY
DARREN ALFF

WELCOME TO THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF BICYCLE TOURING

Hello... and welcome to the wonderful world of bicycle touring!

This free report is designed for people who are:

1. New to bicycle touring and are looking for information on how to get started.
2. Experienced bicycle travelers and are looking to take their bicycle touring experiences to the next level.
3. Or the friends, parents or spouses of bicycle tourists who want to get more information on "bicycle touring."

Whatever the case may be... WELCOME!!!

"Bicycle touring" (also referred to as "cycle touring, bike touring, bike travel, bicycle travel, cyclo-camping and bike-packing") **is the act of riding a bicycle for days, weeks, months, or even years on end, as you travel across entire cities, states and countries under your own power** (without the assistance of a motor).

While bicycle touring is typically an overnight activity, a bicycle tour can be a long, single-day bike ride; a multi-day event where your gear, food and clothing is carried for you in a vehicle that meets you at various checkpoints along your route; or a solo or group adventure where all necessary clothing, equipment, food and tools are carried on your bicycle.

Thousands of people of all ages, incomes and demographics are traveling by bike... and you can be one of them!

This free report and the website at www.BicycleTouringPro.com was created to not only inspire you with incredible bicycle touring stories from all around the world, but more importantly, to teach YOU how to travel by bike, remain comfortable while out on the road and have the time of your life on your very own bicycle touring adventures!

In other words, ***Bicycle Touring Pro* gives you the inspiration, confidence and resources you need to conduct the bicycle tour of your dreams!**

ABOUT DARREN ALFF

THE BICYCLE TOURING PRO



Darren Alff is the founder of www.BicycleTouringPro.com – the world’s most popular bicycle touring website and how-to information source for bicycle travelers all around the world.

BicycleTouringPro.com is a website dedicated to helping people of all ages, incomes and backgrounds get their start in the wonderful world of bicycle touring.

What started as a small online resource for how to plan, prepare for, and execute a self-supported bicycle tour has quickly grown into the most recognized name in the bicycle touring world. Since its creation in late 2007, *Bicycle Touring Pro* has inspired thousands of people and given them the confidence and resources needed to conduct the bicycle tour of their dreams!



Darren Alff shot to fame in the bicycle touring world when he went from being a 17-year old high-school kid riding across America on a dusty old mountain bike, to the *Bicycle Touring Pro*, after having cycled across North America six separate times, and after having traveled by bike through more than 50 different countries all around the world!

Over 500,000 readers a year come to *BicycleTouringPro.com* in order to read Darren's tips, reviews and advice about bicycle touring. On his website you will find more than 1,000 free articles, 250+ videos and thousands of additional bicycle touring photos. Plus, new content is being added all the time!

Darren Alff is the celebrated author of "[The Bicycle Touring Blueprint: How To Plan, Prepare For, And Execute The Bicycle Tour of Your Dreams](#)" and now coaches individuals from all around the world who are new to bicycle touring so they may have a safe, successful and enjoyable experience while following his teaching, tips and shortcuts.

"The Bicycle Touring Blueprint" has sold over 5,000 copies since it's release in 2009 and the information contained inside this unique how-to system details everything you need to know in order to conduct a self-supported bicycle tour of your own.

"The Bicycle Touring Blueprint" is a modern, step-by-step guide to bicycle touring, written by the world's most prominent bicycle touring expert - handed to you on a silver platter. Simply follow the steps in this trademarked bicycle touring system... and then hit the road on the bike tour you've been dreaming about! Save time, money and effort by following *Bicycle Touring Pro's* expert guidance inside this one-of-a-kind bike tour training manual.

Over the years, Darren Alff has been regularly featured in magazines, newspapers, radio interviews and other online publications. He has worked as a guest writer for the *Adventure*



Cycling Association, Cycling Utah, Adventure Monkey Magazine and countless online publications.

In addition to his work at *BicycleTouringPro.com*, Darren Alff is also the founder of GoBicycleTouring.com, a website where people from all over the world can quickly and easily find the best guided and self-guided bicycle tours on the plane

Alff is also the author of three additional cycling-related books:



GoBicycleTouring.com

This unique website allows you to search for guided and self-guided bicycle tours all around the world.

Search for bike tours by location, price, difficulty, and a whole lot more!

More than 500 bike tours from dozens of different touring companies are featured on the website.

If you're dreaming of a holiday by bike, there isn't a better place to start your search.

www.gobicycletouring.com

- [The Essential Guide To Touring Bicycles](#) – a buyer's guide designed to help first-time bicycle tourists find the type of bike they need to conduct their very own bicycle tours.
- [Stretching for Cyclists](#) – a short and beautifully photographed how-to book designed to help you prevent injuries and stay limber on your bicycle touring adventures.
- [Winter Cycling](#) – the definitive guide on how to keep cycling the whole year round – regardless of the cold, wet or snowy weather you may encounter in your part of the world.

Darren Alff has dedicated his life to helping others conduct the bicycle tour of their dreams. His websites, books, email newsletter, products and public appearances now inspire and assist more than 150,000 people each and every month.

That's an impressive resume Darren. But how exactly did you get started with bicycle touring? You weren't always a *Bicycle Touring Pro*, were you?

Absolutely not. I started at the very beginning, just like everyone else. The thing that's made me different, however, from so many others in the bicycle touring world, is that I started at a very young age and have stuck with it for years and years.

You see, it all started in 2001, with what I call, a *defining moment* in my life.

I had just graduated from high school and had been accepted into a 4-year college, majoring in what I thought would be a successful career in the film and television industry. I was seventeen years old at the time and even though I was excited about the career path I had chosen, there was something that was bothering me and keeping me up at night.

I saw what so many of my friends and family members were doing (going to college, graduating, getting a job, getting married, buying a house, having kids, and then only after they had retired, being able to go and travel the world), and frankly, it frightened me.

I didn't want to have to wait until I was 50 or 60 years old to travel the world and live the life I wanted. I wanted to do all those things as soon as I possibly could.

So, that's when I decided that before going off to college I was going to do something big, challenging and memorable! I didn't know what that thing would be at first, but I knew I was going to do something I would remember for the rest of my life before I started my college career.

That's when one of my friends from school suggested I run the length of California, kind of like *Forrest Gump* did when he ran across the United States in the popular 1994 movie. I was a huge *Forrest Gump* fan in high school, so the idea of running from Oregon to Mexico sounded like a good one. It would be a big, challenging and memorable way to spend my summer vacation!

But after conducting a painful three-day test run near my home, during which I ran a marathon (26.2+ miles) every single day for three days in a row, I came the realization that

running the length of California would be an unattainable goal for my short two-month summer holiday.

Instead of giving up on my goal, however, my Uncle Tom suggested that instead of running the length of California, I should ride a bike instead. This was an “ah-ha” moment in my life.

My Uncle Tom had just returned from a two-month-long bicycle tour in Ireland and he was able to explain to me that with a bicycle I could travel long distances each day and I would be able to carry all the food, clothing and camping equipment I would need for the trip with me on my bicycle. The idea was incredibly simple... but it exactly what I needed to hear.

So, before I started my first year of college, I mounted my father’s dusty old mountain bike (which had been sitting unused in our family garage for years) and slowly pedaled my way more than 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers) from Oregon to Mexico along the California Coastline.

I didn’t know a thing about “bicycle touring” at the time and I made a ton of mistakes along the way, but I muscled my way through it and thirty days later eventually made it to my destination. That first trip by bike changed my life forever!

I thought that once I reached Mexico at the end of that first trip, my bicycle touring days would come to an end. But reaching Mexico was really just the beginning. I was hooked on bicycle touring! For the following four summers, after finishing my college classes, I set out on my bicycle to explore some new and distant part of the world. And after I graduated from college, I just kept going further and further away from home - traveling by bike in dozens of different countries all across the planet.

That first bike tour down the California Coastline was a defining moment for me. It taught me a lot about both myself and the world in which we live... and it taught me even more about the fundamental basics of bicycle touring.



17-year-old Darren Alff on his first long-distance bicycle tour - cycling from Oregon to Mexico down the California Coastline.

It taught me that riding on an old, dilapidated mountain bike was not the best type of bike to be riding. It taught me that the bags I was carrying all my belongings in needed to be more functional and waterproof. And it taught me that if you carry too much “stuff,” cycling becomes quite difficult.

More importantly, it taught me that the world isn't nearly as scary as people make it out to be.

I learned that YOU CAN have big goals and do amazing things... and it doesn't matter where you are from, how old you are, or how much money you have in your bank account. You can push yourself beyond what you thought you were capable of... and succeed!

During my early bike tours I began to notice that there were other bicycle travelers who were learning these things as they went along as well. I would land in campgrounds each night and mingle with fellow bicycle tourists. We would sit around the campfire for hours each night and talk about the problems we were having out on the road, which gear was best for long-distance touring, how to plan out a safe and enjoyable cycle touring route, and a whole lot more.

So, is that how *Bicycle Touring Pro* got started?

Yeah, sort of. But, let me fast forward to the year 2007, because I had been bicycle touring for more than six years at this point, when one of my old college roommates contacted me and told me he was planning his first long-distance bicycle tour.



For years, I had been trying to get this guy to join me on my cycling adventures, but I could never make it happen. But then, several years later, the thought of going on a bike tour suddenly struck him as an appealing venture, so he called the only person he knew who had actually ever done it!

So, it was with the intention of helping my old college roommate plan his first bike tour that I started the website at www.bicycletouringpro.com.

Darren's college roommate, Brandon Roesler, enjoys his first bike tour in Iceland.

At the time, I didn't really think anyone else would care to read what I had to say, but each and every day the website began to grow. My how-to articles, product reviews and inspirational stories were all extremely popular... and I soon had thousands of people contacting me each month and asking for help. My website began to grow exponentially with large numbers of people looking for information on how to plan, prepare for and execute their own bicycle tours.

One of the things that has attracted people to *Bicycle Touring Pro* since the very beginning is the fact that all the information needed for bicycle touring success is in one location. People can visit this one website and find everything they would ever need to know about traveling by bicycle. As a result, *Bicycle Touring Pro* saves people a lot of time, effort and money... and has helped thousands of people from all around the world conduct their own bicycle tours.



There are dozens of different ways to go bicycle touring. In this photo a young couple from the United States and the Netherlands pose for a photo while traveling through Belgium on a tandem touring bicycle equipped with front and rear panniers.

Was this when you decided to create “The Bicycle Touring Blueprint?”

Yes, it was!

There are other books out there that talk about bicycle touring, but they are all very basic, with information about what to pack and where to ride, but almost no information on how to plan out a safe and enjoyable bicycle touring route, how to create a daily budget, or what to mentally and physically expect once you hit the road.

That’s one of the many things that separates The Bicycle Touring Blueprint from the other bicycle touring books and websites out there. In my book I pay special attention to not only preparing you physically for a long-distance, multi-day bike tour, but also preparing you mentally as well.

As I found out myself during my early bicycle tours, the hardest part about bicycle touring is not figuring out what to pack or how to get in shape for the tour, but how to conquer the psychological challenges that come up when you spend days on end riding your bicycle through what can often times be difficult and challenging terrain.

So, The Bicycle Touring Blueprint is special in this regards. It not only covers how to plan and prepare for a bicycle tour of any length, but it has an entire section dedicated to on-the-road bicycle touring tactics you can use to ensure you have a safe and successful bicycle tour. It’s aim is to save people time, effort and money by teaching them to avoid common bicycle touring mistakes and by getting them to purchase the proper gear, clothing and equipment the first time around.

At over 400-pages, The Bicycle Touring Blueprint is truly the world’s best bicycle touring information source and I am extremely proud of it.

Great! But why would anyone want to go bicycle touring in the first place? What are the benefits of traveling by bike?



A young couple stops to check the map during a bike tour in the resort town of Park City, Utah, U.S.A.

That's a great question... and an excellent place to start.

Bicycle touring is a unique activity because it attracts people from all walks of life. You can be rich or poor, young or old, a man or a woman, an experienced cyclist or a first-time bike rider... and you can enjoy the benefits of bicycle touring. You can choose to ride just a few miles/kilometers per day or cycle hundreds of miles/kilometers. You can choose to sleep in a fancy hotel each night or you can sleep for free in your tent in the middle of the woods. And you can travel alone, with friends, or in a large group. There are so many different ways to go about it!

As for why people choose to go bicycle touring in the first place, **people go bicycle touring because they want to...**

- Do something new and exciting.
- Experience new parts of the world.
- Try new foods and drinks.
- Meet new people.
- Make new friends.
- Have time to themselves.
- Challenge their way of thinking.
- Get into nature.
- Share a unique experience with their traveling partner(s).
- Accomplish something physically and mentally challenging.
- Get physically fit, lose weight, tone muscles, train for a larger bike ride or race.
- Recoup and rethink their lives.
- Ride a bicycle for hours on end.
- Participate in a life-changing experience.
- Plus, a whole lot more!

There are so many wonderful reasons to go bicycle touring. But each individual is different. What motivates one person to go bicycle touring will be different for the next person. And that's one of the many great things about bicycle touring - there are so many different ways to go about it.

Which brings up my next question. Are there different types of bicycle tours?

Yes. Believe it or not, there are actually a number of different types of bicycle touring (and bicycle tours). However, the main branches of the activity can be broken down into three major categories: *guided bicycle touring*, *self-guided bicycle touring* and *self-supported bicycle touring*.

Guided Bicycle Touring

A guided bicycle tour is a type of bicycle touring in which you pay to be escorted along a pre-designed path by an experienced bicycle touring guide or company, and your belongings (such as your food, clothing, toiletries, etc.) are carried in a vehicle that meets you at various checkpoints along your route.

Guided bicycle tours range in size from 2 to 20+ people, with tour participants often times coming from a number of different countries all around the world.

Support and personnel vary by tour and tour company, but one guide typically rides with the group on his or her bicycle each day, while a second tour guide drives a support van carrying your luggage. Larger tour groups may have as many as three or more guides working to escort you along your route each day. In addition to carrying your belongings from one point to the next, the support van provided by the touring company also makes it possible for tour participants to bridge less attractive and/or more challenging sections of a route, if need be.

While bicycles used for the duration of the trip may or may not be included in the tour's overall cost, most tour operators will provide you with a bicycle of some kind if you choose not to bring your own (although the cost for renting a bicycle from the company may be extra). Most tour companies will also provide you with a comprehensive packing list, route/mapping details, and an information package containing details on the sights you can expect to see along the way, cultural highlights and scenic stops (although the extent of information varies from company to company).

If you enjoy traveling with a group, meeting new people, riding with an experienced bicycle touring guide and having a structured daily schedule, then a guided bicycle tour is probably the best fit for you. The guides will point out places of interest, organize activities and excursions, and are there to help in case of mechanical, mental or physical breakdowns.

With all the tour details sorted for you and almost everything paid for in advance, guided bicycle touring allows you to simply show up for the start of the tour and enjoy the ride!

A group of cyclists rides together during a 2-week-long guided mountain bike tour in Africa.



See my website at www.gobicycletouring.com to search for amazing guided bicycle tours in dozens of different countries all around the world.

Self-Guided Bicycle Touring

A self-guided bicycle tour is similar to a guided bicycle tour in that the route, lodging and meals have all been taken care of for you by an established bicycle touring company. The difference, however, is that on a self-guided tour you will not be joined by an experienced bicycle touring guide. Instead, you must navigate a pre-designed course on your own, while carrying whatever belongings you might have with you on your bicycle (although some self-guided bicycle tours will transport your luggage each day from one hotel to the next).



A Canadian cyclist enjoys a week-long self-guided bicycle tour in France's Loire Valley.

While a guided bicycle tour is typically conducted with a large group of people, self-guided bicycle tours can be done alone or with a group of almost any size.

While meals may or may not be included with your tour, bicycle tours of this type are generally far less expensive than guided bicycle tours (because you aren't paying for a guide to accompany you along your route). Self-guided bicycle tours also offer more freedom to stop and smell the roses (or take a detour, if you so wish) along the way.

If you choose to conduct a self-guided bicycle tour, you should consider your level of comfort with navigating through a different country, communicating in a foreign language, reading maps and signs, ordering food, and dealing with flat tires or other minor emergencies. While some tour participants would rather avoid these types of situations, others will find these challenges to be an enjoyable part of the bicycle touring experience.

If you're looking to participate in a relatively inexpensive bicycle tour where all (or most) of your tour details are taken care of for you in advance, but you want the freedom to choose your own travel companions, cycle at your own pace and come up with your own schedule each day, then a self-guided bicycle tour might be in your future!

Be sure to visit the website at www.gobicycletouring.com to find that incredible self-guided bicycle tour you've been dreaming about.

Self-Supported Bicycle Touring

Finally, there is the self-supported bicycle tour, which requires you to travel alone (without a guide) and carry all the clothing, tools, and gear you need to survive for days, weeks, or months on end. This type of bicycle travel is also commonly referred to as "traditional bicycle touring" or "fully-loaded bicycle touring."

While your food, route details and lodging are all taken care of for you in advance by a touring company on both guided and self-guided bicycle tours, self-supported bicycle touring require you to figure out all of these details on your own – either in advance or once you get out there on the road.

By far the least expensive means of traveling by bike, self-supported bicycle touring requires the most amount of planning, preparation and skill. Knowing how to navigate, find food and water, interact with locals, repair and maintain your bicycle, ride in all types of traffic (while carrying a heavy load) and secure lodging for the night are all important skills that the self-supported bicycle tourist must possess.

Despite the education that is required to successfully conduct your first self-supported bicycle tour, this type of touring continues to be one of the most popular means of traveling by bike.

The Bicycle Touring Blueprint is a book designed for people who want to conduct their own self-supported bicycle touring adventures, but want or need assistance in planning,



Darren Alff during a 3-month-long bicycle tour in South Africa.

preparing for, and/or executing the tour of their dreams. The book walks you through each and every step that needs to be taking before your bicycle tour can begin, and then takes you even further by helping you mentally and physically prepare for your time on the road.

Is there a special type of bicycle used for bicycle touring? Or can you use any type of bike?

The truth is, almost any type of bicycle can be used for bicycle touring, but the longer the bicycle tour, the more important it becomes to use a proper touring bike.

A touring bicycle, as its name suggests, is a type of bike made specifically for long-distance bicycle touring... and there are a number of different types of touring bicycles on the marketplace - each designed with a specific type of bicycle touring in mind.

While many touring bicycles look similar to the road or mountain bike models you are likely familiar with, there are actually are a number of small differences that make a touring bicycle better equipped for long-distance riding.

Here, for example, are some of the features that almost all touring bikes have in common:

- Touring bicycles have wider tires than road bikes, enabling them to support more weight and ride in rougher conditions. Most touring bikes are designed to be ridden on paved roads, but can also handle a fair amount of off-road riding.
- Touring bikes are usually made of heavy-duty steel. Because touring bikes need to carry more weight, they need to be made of stronger materials.
- Many touring bikes have extremely low gears so you will have an easier time climbing hills and mountains while carrying a heavy load.
- Touring bike makers know that you are going to be spending a long time in the saddle, so they design the bikes to be more comfortable on your back, butt, hands and neck. On a touring bike you are in a more upright position than you would be on a traditional road or mountain bicycle.
- Touring bikes are also built to support racks on the front and back of the bicycle, allowing you to carry up to four panniers (or bags) on your bike at a time.

There are a bunch of other little features that make touring bikes better suited for bicycle touring adventures, but it should be noted that the bicycle you select for your travels is the most important piece of bicycle touring gear you'll ever need to purchase.

Pick the right bicycle for your trip and you'll be sure to come home with those wonderful bicycle touring memories you've been dreaming about. But pick the wrong bicycle – a bicycle that wasn't built for the kind of bike tour you were participating in – and your bike tour might come to an end a whole lot sooner than you had hoped for.

* * *

If you read my book, "[The Essential Guide To Touring Bicycles](#)" before you make your bicycle purchase, you can be certain you've purchased the best touring bike for your specific needs.



This is the Co-Motion Pangea touring bicycle - a bike designed for both on-road and off-road bicycle touring. Note the front and rear racks and the drop handlebars, which allow for multiple hand positions.

After you decide on which bicycle you are going to ride, how do you carry all the things you will need for the tour on your bicycle?

That's another good question!

If you know absolutely nothing about bicycle touring, you might think that bicycle travelers carry their belongings (i.e. tools, clothing, camping gear, food, etc) in a backpack. I know that's what I thought when I started planning my first bicycle tour! But carrying your things in a backpack is not the typical approach for most bicycle tourists.

The reason you don't want to carry your gear in a backpack is because using a backpack is going to make you hot, sweaty and sore! When you spend 4 to 12+ hours a day riding your bicycle, the last thing you want is to have a big heavy bag on your back. It just makes things a whole lot harder!

So, instead of using a backpack, there are two main ways you can carry your gear on your bicycle, and thus, eliminate any excess pressure to your back, neck or body.

The two main ways that bicycle tourists carry their gear is with the use of panniers and/or a trailer.

- **Panniers** are backpack-sized bags that attach to the front and rear racks of your bicycle. They are shaped very much like a small backpack... and a standard touring bicycle can hold up to four panniers (two on the front of your bicycle and two on the back). Therefore, they are capable of carrying a whole lot of gear!
- A **trailer**, on the other hand, is a one or two wheeled metal cart that you pull behind your bicycle. Inside the trailer you store your belongings and, like panniers, the weight of your equipment is placed off of your body and onto the frame of your bicycle.

Now, with two different ways to carry your gear, I bet you're wondering to yourself, "What is the best way to carry my stuff?"

Well, this is a topic that's quite controversial amongst many bicycle travelers. Some claim that panniers are the best, while others think that trailers are the only way to go.

To settle this debate, I surveyed my readers at www.bicycletouringpro.com and asked them, "If you are an experienced bicycle tourist and you've conducted at least one bicycle tour in



A BOB IbeX bicycle touring trailer is pulled behind a mountain bike on a narrow single-track trail.

the past, which method did you use to carry your excess equipment - panniers, a trailer, or a backpack?"

More than 10,000 people filled out that survey and the results indicate that of those who toured in the past, 92% used panniers, 7% used a trailer and only 1% used a backpack.

While there is much debate over whether or not panniers or trailers are best, I think the numbers speak for themselves. Panniers are the #1 pick for most traveling cyclists!

Panniers are great for bicycle touring because:

- They place the weight of the gear off your body and onto the frame of your bicycle.
- They allow you to organize your gear into separate, easy-to-access pockets.
- They can be waterproof (although not all of them are).
- They are easy to transport off the bike (on planes, trains, boats and buses).
- They make your bicycle very compact (which makes it easy to navigate in narrow terrain).

The downside to panniers, however, is that:

- They can only be used on bicycles where front and/or rear racks can be mounted.
- The price of panniers range greatly depending on quality.
- Steering a bicycle with front panniers takes a little getting used to. Most cyclists need 1-3 days of practice riding with front panniers before conducting a long-distance bicycle tour.
- Learning to pack them correctly takes some training.
- They are difficult to carry for long distances off the bike.

While panniers are clearly more popular in the bicycle touring world, there are some good reasons to use a trailer.

For example, trailers:

- Can be used with almost any type of bicycle.
- Are low to the ground, which makes it easier for you to steer your bike.
- Are easy to pack because everything is stored in one large container.
- Are usually (but not always) waterproof.
- Are usually better than panniers in rough, off-road conditions.

But the downside to using a trailer is that:

- It adds 1 or 2 more wheels to your rig. The more wheels you have touching the ground, the more resistance you are creating and the more you are going to have to work to get your bike and gear up and over the hills you are sure to encounter on your travels.
- They are NOT easily transported on airplanes, buses, boats or trains.
- They require you to carry an extra, smaller spare inner-tube for the trailer's wheel(s) in the event of a flat.
- And as soon as you attach a trailer to your bicycle, you are suddenly twice as long as you normally would be on a regular bike.



Two fully-loaded touring bicycles mounted with front and rear racks, panniers and handlebar bags.

As you can see, there are benefits and drawbacks to each method of carrying your gear.

That's why I spend so much time on my website and inside The Bicycle Touring Blueprint reviewing the different types of panniers and trailers that are available to you... and helping you determine which method of carrying your gear is best in varying circumstances.

The type of bicycle tour you choose to conduct, where you go in the world, how long you plan to be traveling and a whole host of additional factors will ultimately determine which type of bicycle you should be riding, how you need to carry your gear, what to pack, and a whole lot more!

Now that we have a bike and either a set of panniers or a trailer, what other equipment does one needs to get started with bike touring?

The basic equipment needed for bicycle touring is really rather simple. To get started you will need:

- A bicycle
- Some way of carrying your belongings (whether it be in a trailer or a set of panniers)
- Camping equipment ((if you choose to camp) such as a tent, sleeping bag, etc.)
- A stove and the appropriate fuel ((if you choose to cook your own food) plus utensils and a cooking pot)
- Bicycle tools (such as a multi-tool, spare tube, patch kit, etc.)
- Clothing (i.e. shorts, shirts, rain jacket, shoes, etc.)
- Safety gear (such as a helmet and light)
- Technological devices (such as a cell phone, camera, GPS, etc.)
- Food and water
- And any personal items you might choose to bring along.

If you'd like to see an example of what I carried with me on a recent 14-month-long bicycle tour in Europe and Africa, visit the link below and watch the video you find on that page:

- <http://bicycletouringpro.com/blog/how-to-pack-your-panniers/>

Full and detailed packing lists for any size bike tour can be found inside [The Bicycle Touring Blueprint](#).

Is there anything specific one needs to know about bicycle maintenance or repair before attempting a bicycle tour?

The truth is, I'm not a bicycle mechanic and I don't really enjoy fixing up or cleaning my bicycle.

But even though I don't like repairing flat tires, adjusting my brakes or cleaning my chain, I still know how to do all of these things... and if you're planning to conduct a bicycle tour of any length, you need to know a few basic bicycle maintenance and repair skills.

Before you head off on your first bike tour, you should be able to:

- Install a new tire
- Replace a flat tube with a new one
- Patch a bike tube with a patch kit
- Adjust your front and rear brakes
- Install new brake pads
- Adjust the height and position of both your seat post, saddle and handlebars
- Install your front and rear racks (if you are using racks and panniers)
- Attach your trailer (if you are using a trailer)
- Clean your bike chain
- Adjust your front and rear derailleurs
- And install/remove your pedals

If doing any of these things frightens you, then you definitely have some work to do.

The good news is, all of these things are pretty easy to do... and if you practice doing these things just a few times before you leave home, you will really save yourself some grief once you get out on the road.

If you have no idea how to do one or more of the repairs/adjustments I just listed, then I suggest you either find a friend who can teach you, or you get a book that will teach you how to make these repairs and adjustments to your bicycle.

There are a lot of great books out there that deal with basic bicycle maintenance, but one of the best places to start is with "[The Bicycling Guide to Complete Bicycle Maintenance and Repair.](#)"

This book covers everything mentioned above... and a whole lot more. I have advised people to purchase this book, learn the basic repairs, and then photocopy some of the more advanced repairs to bring with them on their travels - just in case! It's a good idea if you are less than confident about your repair skills. But don't worry! You don't need to become a certified bike mechanic in order to go on a bicycle tour. Just learn the basics and you'll feel so much more confident once you hit the road.



Would you know how to repair this bicycle's flat tire?

How do you select a location for your travels? Are there popular bicycle touring routes one should know about?

The best place to start bicycle touring is where you are right now! Explore the places close to your home first, and as you become more comfortable with the basic bicycle touring principles, then start expanding your reach and going to places further and further away.



The location you choose for your bicycle tour will determine which type of bicycle you will need to ride, what kind of gear you are going to need to carry, how many miles/kilometers you plan to cycle each day, where you should plan to sleep each night, how much money you should expect to spend and a whole host of other factors... so location is important

There are a number of different ways to find excellent bicycle touring locations:

If you are interested in participating in a guided or self-guided bicycle tour, be sure to check out the website at www.gobicycletouring.com. On this website you will find hundreds of different guided and self-guided bicycle tours offered by dozens of bike touring companies all around the world. Note the locations of the bicycle tours of offer and consider traveling to

these areas yourself, either as part of a tour group or on your own as a self-supported bicycle tourist.

There are a number of books that have been written about established bicycle touring routes as well. The website at www.bicycletouringbooks.com is a good place to find an assortment of texts about bicycle touring locations all around the world. These area-specific cycle touring guidebooks usually come with maps, food and lodging recommendations, and details on what you can expect to see and experience along the way.

Finally, you can spend days searching online for information on bicycle touring routes and possibilities. Here are some of the websites I suggest you try when seeking out routes for your own bicycle touring adventures.

- Adventure Cycling Route Network
<http://bicycletouringpro.com/blog/adventure-cycling-route-network-map>
- The National Cycling Charity
<http://www.ctc-maps.org.uk/>
- EuroVelo: The European Cycle Route Network
<http://www.eurovelo.org/routes/>

Personal and corporate travel blogs/websites are another good place to look for local bicycle touring information, as are national tourist boards websites.

And of course, you can search through the archives at www.bicycletouringpro.com to learn about the dozens of bicycle tours I have done myself in various locations all around the world. I have written articles about many of the best bicycle touring locations on the planet and my articles are almost always accompanied by photos and videos from the region.

There are countless bicycle touring locations you can choose from... and thousands of different ways you could go about determining which place YOU want to experience most.

You could choose to go to:

- The easiest location.
- The most difficult location.
- Some place a friend or family member of yours has been to before.
- A place that was recommended to you in a book, magazine or website.
- A place you learned about in a film or documentary.

- A place that no one else has been to before.
- A place that everyone seems to have been to.
- A place of historical significance.
- A place of personal significance.
- A place you are interested in learning more about.
- A place that very few people in the world seem to know anything about.
- A place that is safe.
- A place that is dangerous.
- A place where there are lots of people.
- A place where there are hardly any people at all.
- A place where bike shops, restaurants and other modern services are easy to find.
- A place where you will be entirely on your own.
- Or a place picked completely at random (by throwing a dart at a map of the world, perhaps?)

The first step to any type of trip by bike is deciding where you want to go. For some individuals, having no destination at all is part of the adventure. But for most of us, we want to at least have a general idea of where we will be going on our trip... and this is where the planning process should begin!



After years and years of traveling the world by bicycle, I've come to the conclusion that **the secret to a successful bicycle touring adventure begins with picking a destination that YOU are most drawn to.**

Let me rephrase that, because this is very important: **If you want to have fun on your bike tour and return home having accomplished the journey you set out to complete, you need to pick a location for your tour that YOU are most interested in.**

Over the years I have been asked hundreds, if not thousands of times, where some of my favorite bicycle touring destinations are. And every time I get this question I hesitate to answer because I know that:

1. My favorite cycling destinations may not appeal to others in the way that they appeal to me.
2. My favorite travel destinations have almost always been places that no one ever told me about - but I discovered on my own because I was passionately interested in the area.

You see, if you really want to have a great time on your bicycle tour, you need to pick a location that YOU are most passionate about.

If you choose a location that you are not 100% excited to visit, there is a good chance you will end your tour prematurely. When you hit that first big hill, encounter your first full day of headwinds, or you suddenly get hungry and your next food stop isn't for at least a couple hours up the road, you are going to be tempted to stop, turn around and go home.

But when you pick a location for your travels that you are excited about, those temporary inconveniences simply don't matter. When you find yourself traveling in a location that you are excited to be in, you won't quit because you know that the temporary pain of that hill, that wind, and that hunger is something you can push through in order to get to that location you have so been looking forward to experiencing.

One of the many wonderful things about bicycle touring is that it allows you to go to the places in the world that are of most interest to YOU... and you can combine your bicycle tours with other things you personally enjoy.

Before you even begin to look at purchasing a touring bike, planning out a budget, or searching for travel partners, I recommend you think long and hard about where you most want to go in the world.

You could go bicycle touring along a pre-established bicycle touring route and have a great time. Or you could choose to travel with a group of friends or strangers on a guided or self-guided bicycle tour. But you'll have an even better bicycle touring experience if you choose to travel in a part of the world that YOU are most interested in.

The only question left to ask yourself now is:

“Where in the world do YOU most want to go?”



Is bicycle touring really something anyone can do?

In almost all instances, yes. Bicycle touring is an activity that almost anyone can do. Young or old. Rich or poor. In shape or out of shape. Men, women and children. Even people who have never ridden a bicycle before can go bicycle touring!

Since 2007 I have not only been traveling all around the world on my own bicycle touring adventures, but I have also been working with people all across the planet to help them plan, prepare for and execute the bicycle tour of their dreams and I've helped thousands of people from all walks of life conduct their very own bicycle touring adventures.



One of the things I like most about running the website at *BicycleTouringPro.com* is hearing from all the people who have taken the information I've made available and gone off and executed their own bicycle tours. In the end, that's really what it's all about... and that's why I have dedicated my life to helping others make their bicycle touring dreams come true!

"Your blog is the motivating factor in my decision to tour. I've ridden for several years, but never toured self-contained. With your help I toured solo for 712 miles in 7.5 days, averaging 94 miles per day. I also have 3 other tours planned for next year. Thanks so much for your help." - **Bob Hopkins**

"*Bicycle Touring Pro* helped my daughter and I prepare for a 42-day bike tour across the United States and a 6-week bike tour in New Zealand. We learned that it really wasn't difficult if you just take one day at a time." - **Michael Rice**

"I wish you had been around years ago when I started cycling. I learned much over the years, but the trial and error method is a slow process. Within a month I have ridden 1,400 miles for the year. Thanks again." - **Bernard Parker**

"*Bicycle Touring Pro* showed me the most common mistakes people make on tour, without me having to make those mistakes myself while on the road. I'm really grateful there's something like this site for people like me. Without it, I know my trip wouldn't have gone as well as it did." - **Spencer Holmes**

"We relied heavily on The Bicycle Touring Blueprint. Not only for its technical points about how to prepare for a bike trip as long as ours, but also things like what to wear and eat. It contributed to us having no question and no fear about tackling the task before us." - **Jon & Earline Blumhagen**

"I would just like to thank you for all the help you have given on your site over the last couple of months. I live in London and am planning a round the world bike ride leaving Britain in September. It will be a 2-year trip of a lifetime. I have had so much information from your site. You have helped with tent selection, pannier packing and just general information that has been amazing. Thank you once again. You have helped to make a dream come true." - **Robert Halkett**

"*BicycleTouringPro.com* has been a huge help for me – a beginning wannabe tourer. The information I have received has been invaluable, not only in preparation, but in building my confidence to a level where I know I can complete a tour with confidence. Darren's willingness to personally respond to my questions has led me to view this site as one of my most important bicycle related resources." - **Chris Kmotorka**

"There is a wealth of information on your website. I am grateful that you put the time and effort into sharing it. I have learned a great deal." - **Brenda Waller**

"Now that I have actually had an opportunity to put your wisdom to use on the road with a tour I did with my son, I can say that all the information you have given on your website is useful. My tour with my son was very fun and successful thanks to your helpful information! In fact, I was just mentioning your site to a friend of mine who just bought a touring bike. I told her she should check it out because your information is very good and practical. Us newbies need people like you!" - **Colleen Welch**

"I'm training for a cross country ride in honor of my 60th birthday and I found your website while looking around the web for all the good advice I can get. Your site looks great! Thanks!" - **Joe Golden**

"Thanks for your wonderful website. I am planning a bike trip from Scarsdale, NY to Canada and around Vermont. I enjoy reading material on your site because it is immensely practical. It gives me a sense of what is possible and has built up my confidence to take longer trips. Keep up the good work!" - **Peter F. Mathias**

"Thank you Darren. I'm new to touring so I have learned a lot from you! I've just finished building my new touring bike and I'm hoping to take it around Ireland this summer. Thanks for all your help through your website. The video section is great and it gives a much clearer insight on how to do things right. Thanks for a great site!" - **Anthony**

"Darren, I just wanted to say that I've been traveling by bike for a number of years... but I love the way you give a more age-appropriate approach to traveling by bike. I'm looking forward to what you have planned for the site in the future. Good work!" - **Richard Barton**

"Hey Darren, I am a big fan of your website. It has been so helpful for the planning of my first bike trip this summer. My friends and family are starting to check out your website too. The more they know the more they feel better. I decided to go all out on my first trip. I want to go coast to coast in Canada. It is a big and long trip, but I have the time and determination. Your website has made me so excited to start my trip. Thanks!!!" - **Shawn Corey Wright**

"Thanks Darren for taking the time to share your experiences. It really does help me to prepare and you have a great resource for that. And thanks too for your personalized reply to my email recently. Keep up the great work. You are making your mark on the planet!" - **Grant Southam**

“Hey Darren. I just wanted to tell you how much I appreciate your taking the time to sit down and go over what actually goes into the all the touring bags and how to pack them. Your commentary on placing all the bags in the same place both on the bike and off (in the tent) as well as putting everything inside the same bag every time has helped me a lot!! Please keep up the good work. I am anxious to see what you will do next.” - **Tom**

“I am continuing to enjoy your site/blog. I have viewed many, if not all, of your videos on touring and packing panniers, etc. for bike touring. You have definitely succeeded in getting me excited about this touring season. Thanks for all of the work that you do to video your trips and the excellent website that you have. It is truly one of the best that is out there.” - **Malaika Sharp**

“I just arrived home from my bike trip today. It was my first tour, from San Francisco to Washington D.C., and it was one of the greatest experiences of my life. I’m looking forward to the next one. Thanks again for your help! Your advice proved invaluable on my tour and I hope you continue to inspire future generations of touring cyclists.” - **Boris Grogg**

“I just wanted to tell you how much I’ve enjoyed your website and how useful I’ve found it to be. I’m embarking on my first cycle tour in May. It will be from Victoria, BC to St. John’s, Newfoundland. I’ll be camping and hosteling most of the way with a fair bit of stealth camping thrown in as well. All the best and keep up the good work! Happy Travels.” - **Jim Marsh**

“I’m writing this to let you know that I’ll be going away for a while. I’m finally setting off on my bike trip, hooray! After a rather prolonged series of mishaps and setbacks everything seems to be in order. I’ll be leaving some time tomorrow afternoon or on Sunday morning, at the very latest. I’ve been giving the matter some thought and I think that it’s safe for me to say that hadn’t it been for your site and the tons of invaluable information therein and of course our meeting itself, perhaps I wouldn’t be taking this trip at all. So here’s a big thank you! And congrats for setting a goal and achieving it my friend. If inspiring and encouraging others to take steps forward is what you set out to do (alongside taking the road less traveled and leading a meaningful life) then allow me to say, mission accomplished. I salute you.” - **Nick Parker**

“The most comprehensive, down to earth information from a guy who lives it!” - **Tom Magnone**

"*Bicycle Touring Pro* is the most comprehensive of all sites hit on for detailing the preparation for touring for a first timer. Great stories, pictures, informational videos, links to other websites - awesome! Wish I could have been along with you on some of your tours. You are "the man."" - **Dave Fuller**

"I am in the midst of planning my first tour and had no idea where to start. I found www.bicycletouringpro.com and now feel like I know what questions I need to ask and how to plan so I am ready. I feel like I'm ready to take the next step. Thanks so much for sharing your experiences with us all and making the information easy to digest. Thank you!" - **Justine Pattantys**

"*Bicycletouringpro.com* is my only trusted source on bicycle touring. I regularly check the site for updates and trust the information more than other sources." - **Jarin Marocco**

"I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate what you do with *Bicycle Touring Pro*. The emails, The Bicycle Touring Blueprint I purchased and the helpful videos (YouTube) have given me insight into making the proper preparations for a tour this summer, and for that I thank you!" - **Dale Wahowiak**

"*BicycleTouringPro.com* is a comprehensive site for any individual interested in learning about every aspect of bicycle touring. It's obvious that Darren Alff works hard at making it easily accessible and useful for cyclists of any age or experience level. Darren is also responsive and informative in answering specific questions you may have. *BicycleTouringPro.com* is really a "One Stop Shop" for all your bicycle touring needs." - **William Miller**

"Hey Darren! I just wanted to thank you for creating a site like this with all its resources. I'm 17 and have always wanted to ride across America, but only recently started to really look into it. My inspiration comes from my father who, when in college (1970's), rode across the States and ever since then has been an avid cyclist. I plan to make the trek in summer 2013. Thanks again for this website. It will no-doubt be a tool in making my touring dreams a reality." - **Michael LaMacchia**

"You're amazing Darren. Thanks so much for all your energy and generosity. Your weekly emails are like having a non-invasive, super chill and equally supportive personal coach! Just checking in to keep you on track while you're preparing for the road. Thanks so much - invaluable!" - **Jenn**

"BicycleTouringPro.com is the ultimate website for the bicycle touring enthusiast, whether traveling 5 miles or 50,000." - **Kris Torrey**

"Your informal way of delivering information to a varied audience is so thorough and well-planned that nothing is left to chance. *BicycleTouringPro.com* is the equivalent of one-stop shopping for touring information. From the basics of short, local trips to extended touring expeditions, Darren lays it all out with an easy-to-read format as well as interviews packed with information. Bookmark this site, because you'll be back!" - **Donna Gatz**

"Your website has given me the knowledge and confidence to know that I will be successful in my future touring days. I find you and your readers to be insightful and helpful to those of us who are less experience in bicycle touring. I will continue to visit and learn from your site, which has provided me with a rich education in long-distance touring." - **Jim Presely**

"Darren, what a great website! I had a crazy idea of taking my son on the Transamerica after he graduates high school in two years. Your site has helped with the planning big time, from what kind of bike to ride to how to pack panniers. Thanks a lot!" - **Eric Benjamin**

"The main thing that I have learned from you is that it is possible. I am 56 years old and have a back problem resulting in terrible sciatic pain. I can, however, cycle without any problems. You have inspired me to start preparing for a retirement of world travel which can be not only affordable, but possibly profitable. You have shown me that I can experiment to find the best equipment for me. You have demonstrated that I don't need to limit myself to bicycle routes, and that almost any region of the world is open to me. You have helped me believe that it's not the arrival at the destination that is important; the journey is the important thing, and the time-frame should be flexible. I could go on, but really, thanks to you, I now know it's possible, and I'm about to start. Thanks." - **Geoff Shannon**

"My wife and I have talked about touring for several years (we are both 50 yrs. old). With the help of your fine website, we have planned our first trip. Next month we will set off from San Francisco to Los Angeles with a mix of camping and hotels. Your advice has aided in the planning and we have total confidence that this will be a wonderful first journey. Thanks!" - **Robert Earle**

“Thanks Darren for the radical and well-planned perspective of life lived outside the office, on the road and with two wheels underneath you. I am 23 and will be embarking on a long-term, non-traditional life plan in the coming months. What you have given me, in addition to a COMPLETE background in bike touring... is some security in the little voice in the back of my head - telling me that my dreams (of bike trips of course) are not only 100% doable but are the essential next step in understanding myself as a person of knowledge, leisure, adventure, hard work, creativity, self-sufficiency, integrity, commitment and beyond, beyond, beyond. For the A-Z’s and the mental support, thanks for your dedication to helping people figure out how to make life one epic and righteous journey! Travel on.” - **Jennifer Kehoe**

“Once upon a time I was a fat couch potato. I stumbled upon *Bicycle Touring Pro* and read through it’s articles like mad. It was because of this website that I bought a bike and started cycling. Now I have a bicycle tour of my very own approaching fast and I would of been lost without this website. I learned everything I could ever have wanted to know about bicycle touring. When my concerned friends and family asked about specifics like how I would sleep without paying a for hotel, I was able to give them a good answer. With the giant library of information you have made available, I eased my loved ones into being alright with the idea of a bicycle tour. For anyone even remotely interested in bicycle touring, *Bicycle Touring Pro* is the best site out there for sparking that interest and teaching you everything you need to know. I’ve now been on countless trips to far off places I never thought I would be at by bicycle, and it’s only the beginning.” - **Bryan**

“I found your website while surfing the net for bike touring info. Boy, did I ever strike gold! So much information to go through. My wife and I might never tour across Europe, but your experiences have shown me that there are indeed adventures to be found wherever and whenever I choose, be it a couple of nights out from home, or a month in another country.

Thanks, and keep it up!” - **Kevin M.**

“I wanna thank you Darren for making such an informative, encouraging, and fun website for us to learn and enjoy. I learned so many things from you, such as how to properly pack my panniers, what to expect while on the road, potential dangers and how to deal with them, and most importantly the inspiration you’ve delivered us through your stories and pictures of your trips. This has become my no.1 source for all the bike related stuff and will continue to visit. Thanks for the positivity you’ve delivered! We all really appreciate it.” - **Paul Kwon**

“Darren, I started biking at age 50 and I weighed 300lbs. At age 53 I now weigh 205lbs. I’m not built for speed, but I can go the distance. I have followed you around the planet with your trips to Europe, the Katy Trail and other off the beaten path trips that you’ve taken. You have inspired me to go farther. This fall I will be riding from San Diego to Cape Coral, Florida. Godspeed my friend and ride safe. Don’t stop doing what you’re doing. Thank you.” - **Donald Arbeene**

“I thoroughly enjoy reading your stories, reviews, etc on bicycle touring and that has inspired me to take up the sport. To be frank, I didn’t have any interest in anything before I discovered your website, but this sport has given me a new lease of life and I look forward to travel long distance with my bicycle. You have helped open another path for me and taught me to stop and smell the roses along the road. Thanks!” - **Yan Cheang**

“I figured, at my age, doing a bike tour was just a dream. Although I’m a grandmother, I had hopes of doing a long-distance tour. I had been training even up to 50-miles some days – so exciting! Then I became ill and had to quit riding a few years ago. I’d just about given up. Now, thanks to you, you’ve helped me believe dreams can come true, even for grandma’s. With some training, planning, and motivation from *Bicycle Touring Pro* (thank you), my dream has once again become more than just a dream – it’s become my reality. Thank you, thank you!” - **Sandi**

“I’ve been home for 5 days from my first tour. I flew to Pittsburgh PA arriving on 9/10 back home from Washington DC to SF on 9/26. I biked around Pittsburgh – then hit the Great Allegheny Passage, C&O Canal trails and more – pedaling a total of 502 miles, with 7,600 feet of climb. I averaged 9.85 mph with an 87 pound load (bike, gear and water). I toured solo and had a total blast. I really appreciate your articles and all the information you share with us. I look forward to hearing more from you – and to planning the next tour. This one was a mental, physical, and spiritual challenge – I can’t describe what a marvelous experience it was. Blessings to you on your travels.” - **Cinda Weisgerber**

“Going to turn 67 this April and will do my first cross USA solo bike tour this spring. Thanks so much for your continued guidance. On those occasions when you may feel down – please know that your words of wisdom and encouragement really do make a positive meaningful impact.” - **Colin Kenney**

"I am still recovering from some health issues in 2009 and just recently advanced to where I can ride again. It is hard to realize how such a simple joy like preparing for a ride can become an addiction and an overwhelming desire when you find yourself in the precarious position of losing that opportunity. I wish I could express how much your enthusiasm for biking has driven me to exceed the Doctor's expectations of my recovery and driven me to accept that there will be limitations in my abilities, AND that that is OK too! When I start to become stressed out or plateauing or feeling depressed that I can't go now or I'm not the same as I was before, I take some "me" time and travel a little with you. I don't think you realize the very real value you impart with your site, books, emails, and photos that inspire and uplift people like myself who may never be able to travel as you do physically, but through your eyes, words and experiences we have a much fuller and hope filled life. You truly have changed and helped me as much as any of my other therapist, Dr's, nurses and family. NEVER short change your impact on others' lives." - **James Neal Pipes**

"I am so grateful to have a comprehensive A-Z resource for planning and executing a successful bike tour. Following the guidelines and advice now available to me in a systematic format, I am confident that I will be prepared for success in my first solo bicycle camping tour (in June). Now that I have a plan that's in black & white, a successful bicycle tour is that much closer to being a reality! Thank you Darren for all the work that you've done to create a guide for safe, successful and satisfying bicycle touring adventures." - **Rosemarrie Nadelen**

"I came across your site and I have to tip my hat to you for providing one of the most comprehensive biking sites I have come across. Your wealth of knowledge and expertise shows in the high quantity and excellent quality of cycling articles and advice." - **Adam Bruk**

"My turn to say thank you! So happy you could put out this wealth of information. Certainly, I gained much from all of your newsletters, articles and resources. Even if I had only gained one thing, it would have been worth it. I'm not young anymore and I needed all the help and encouragement I could get. Thanks again for making this public." - **Richard Welch**

"Thanks again for writing the great books (and site and podcasts/interviews/videos). Most books I've found are really aimed at athletes trying to improve their time or distance or learning how to fix bikes. There is not nearly enough info out there about how to travel by bicycle. Thank you!" - **Erik Ribeiro**

"I truly appreciate everything I have learned from your website and am so astonished that there are still great people out there who sincerely take joy in helping others out. My trip is still in the very early stages of being planned and is very intimidating, but the excitement I am feeling from just thinking about it is incredible and I know it will be life changing and that I will learn a lot about myself on this tour. I cannot thank you enough for all I have learned from your website and emails. Without these I would still be pretty clueless and may have given up on attempting this tour." - **Mark McGee**

"You've been, and continue to be, such a source of inspiration and knowledge for me. It was because of all that I learned from *Bicycle Touring Pro* that I had the confidence and knowledge to complete my first solo bike tour last summer (495 miles round trip from Northern NY to northern NJ). Thanks again for the excellent resource that you are providing for us! It's so fun to be able to follow your own adventures too. - **Mari**

"I just wanted to tell you, you are my hero, and have inspired me FULLY. I am planning my very own bike tour across America, and if all goes well, I plan to continue in Europe for a very extended amount of time! Thank you for paving the way and giving realistic hope to those dreams. You are, for lack of a better term, epic." - **Bobby Weaver**

"I thought you might just like to know that I've just recently returned from a 10-day trip from my home here on the south coast of England to Switzerland. I left from the Channel port of Dieppe on a Thursday afternoon and rode into the resort town of Interlaken on the Saturday, 10 days and about 500 miles, later. Thanks for all that you do to encourage bike touring and keep up the good work." - **Paul Jenkins**

"I have been a fan over the past few years, have purchased some of your books and have appreciated the tons of info on cycle touring you have created. You have been an inspiration to me over this time. In Sept. 2012 I did a five day tour from Pittsburgh to DC and back to WV of the GAP & C&O Canal. That got my feet wet Darren and on January 7th, 2014 I just finished a 53-day, 2,441 mile fall/winter tour from Fort Kent ME to Key West FL through all kinds of weather including snow (thank you for the book on Winter Cycling tips). The cold bit my hands and feet, but cycle touring has bit my heart. Thanks again for all you do to help us out with great reviews, info and inspiration. I so enjoy your site. God Bless!" - **Carl Lussier**



If you are searching for a bicycle touring expert to guide and assist you as you go about planning and preparing for your dream bike tour, you won't find too many other people who have traveled by bicycle more extensively than I have. I don't sit in a cubicle and write about bicycle touring. I actually live the life of a full-blown bicycle traveler. I have years of on-the-road bicycle touring experience, have written for both large and small media outlets about cycling all around the world, and I have helped thousands of people make their bicycle touring dreams come true.

So Darren, what's in store for *Bicycle Touring Pro* in the future?

Well, I continue to travel the world by bike each and every year. And as I travel, I am constantly blogging about my adventures - sharing both stories from the road and photos from my travels.

As I do this, I am constantly writing about the lessons I've learned along the way, experimenting with new products, testing new technologies and revamping existing bicycle touring strategies. I do all this and share my findings on the website at

www.bicycletouringpro.com in hopes of inspiring and assisting others in their bicycle touring endeavors.

Since starting *Bicycle Touring Pro* in 2007, I have made a commitment to dedicate the rest of my life to serving bicycle travelers all over the world... and I'm working hard to share the joys of bicycle travel with this generation, and the next generation, and the next!



Summary Of Important Points

- Bicycle touring is the act of riding a bicycle for days, weeks, months, or even years on end as you travel across entire cities, states, and countries under your own human power. A bicycle tour can be a long, single-day bike ride; a multi-day event where your gear, food and clothing is carried for you in a vehicle that meets you at various checkpoints along your route; or a solo or group adventure where all necessary clothing, equipment, food and tools are carried on your bicycle.
- While “bicycle touring” is the most popular name for this unique mode of travel, the act of traveling by bike is also commonly referred to as: bike touring, cycle touring, bicycle travel / bike travel, bike-packing / bikepacking, and cyclo-camping / cyclocamping.

- There are three major types of bicycle touring: guided bicycle touring, self-guided bicycle touring and self-supported bicycle touring.
- Bicycle touring is a great way to do something new and exciting; see and experience places you've never seen or experienced before; learn about new parts of the world; try new foods and drinks; meet new people; make new friends; get away from people (should you wish) and spend some time alone; challenge your way of thinking; get into nature; discover new ways of doing things; connect on a deeper level with your traveling partner(s); accomplish something that is both physically and mentally challenging; push yourself beyond your limits; get physically fit, lose weight, tone muscles and/or train for a larger bike ride or race; and/or rethink your life.
- There is no one correct way to conduct a bicycle tour. Depending on where you plan to go on your bicycle tour, what kind of roads you will be cycling on, how long you plan to be traveling, how much gear you choose to carry, who you decide to travel with, and what your overall goals are for the tour, your equipment, route, daily distances, and overall plan will vary from person to person.
- The bicycle you choose to ride is your most important piece of bicycle touring gear. Choose the right bicycle and your bike tour could be a dream come true, but choose the wrong bicycle and your trip by bike could be over before it has even had a chance to begin.
- There are specially-made bicycles called "touring bicycles" designed specifically for long-distance bike tours. While touring bicycles may look similar to the road or mountain bike models you are likely familiar with, there are actually a number of minute differences that make a touring bicycle better equipped for long-distance riding.
- The two main ways that bicycle tourists carry their gear is with the use of panniers and/or a trailer.
- You don't want to carry your things in a backpack because a backpack will make you hot, sweaty and sore. Instead, you want to carry your belongings off your body and on your bicycle.

- The basic gear for most self-supported bicycle tours include:
 - A bicycle
 - Some way of carrying your belongings (whether it be in a trailer or a set of panniers)
 - Camping equipment (such as a tent, sleeping bag, etc.)
 - A stove and the appropriate fuel (plus utensils and a cooking pot)
 - Bicycle tools (such as a multi-tool, spare tube, patch kit, etc.)
 - Clothing (i.e. shorts, shirts, rain jacket, shoes, etc.)
 - Safety gear (such as a helmet and light)
 - Technological devices (such as a cell phone, camera, GPS, etc.)
 - Food and water

- Before you head off on your first bike tour, you should be able to:
 - Install a new tire
 - Replace a flat tube with a new one
 - Patch a bike tube with a patch kit
 - Adjust your front and rear brakes
 - Install new brake pads
 - Adjust the height and position of both your seat post, saddle and handlebars
 - Install your front and rear racks (if you are using racks and panniers)
 - Attach your trailer (if you are using one)
 - Clean your bike chain
 - Adjust your front and rear derailleurs
 - And install/remove your pedals

- There are a number of established bicycle touring paths all around the world. For some of the most popular bicycle touring routes, please see the following websites:
 - Adventure Cycling Route Network
<http://bicycletouringpro.com/blog/adventure-cycling-route-network-map>
 - The National Cycling Charity
<http://www.ctc-maps.org.uk/>
 - EuroVelo: The European Cycle Route Network
<http://www.eurovelo.org/routes/>



- The website at www.bicycletouringbooks.com offers some inspirational reading for those who are interested in bicycle touring and also lists a number of popular bicycle touring guidebooks you can use to help you plan and prepare for your own bicycle touring adventures.
- If you are planning a self-supported bicycle tour, the best place to plan on going is to a location in the world that you are most interested in. You will have better success on your bicycle tour and find more enjoyment in the ride if you choose to go cycling in a part of the world that you are most passionate about.
- To search through hundreds of guided and self-guided bicycle tours that are on offer all around the world, visit the website at www.gobicycletouring.com.
- To learn everything you need to know about planning, preparing for and executing your own bicycle tours, be sure to order a copy of [The Bicycle Touring Blueprint](#) - Darren Alff's trademarked bicycle touring system that walks you through the basics of bicycle touring and by its end transforms you into a *Bicycle Touring Pro*.





How can I help you make your bicycle touring dreams come true?

We've now reached the end of this free report. I've done my best to put together a short, but informative array of bicycle touring information for you, so I hope you've learned a little something in the process.

But there is still a lot to learn about bicycle touring and I will continue to provide you with valuable information over the weeks and months to come. I send out a new email every week with additional information about bicycle touring and world travel. These weekly emails contain bicycle touring news from around the world, free tips, amazing videos from bicycle travelers all across the globe, updates on my own bicycle touring adventures, and a whole lot more!

Make you put my email address (contact@bicycletouringpro.com) into your email provider's address book so you don't miss any of my messages... and if you ever have any questions about bicycle touring that you think I might be able to answer, please don't hesitate to contact me.

I am thrilled to hear that you are interested in bicycle touring and I hope that the information in this free report has helped you in some way in making your own bicycle touring dreams come true.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Darren Alff". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Darren Alff
Bicycle Touring Pro

P.S. - If you haven't done so already, be sure to follow *Bicycle Touring Pro* on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#) and [Pinterest](#) for even more free updates and information.