

## **INTO THE RIDE #18**

### **One for the Road: Touring Light by Randy Schlitter**



The summer touring season is upon us. Hopefully many of our bikes will be hitting the road for some epic tours. The recumbent bike is perhaps one of the most prolific bikes for this purpose. The gentleness it offers a body encourages daylong rides. The pace you can keep when you are not hurting is amazing. All through our history at RANS we have received letters from people who have achieved personal goals never before reached, until cycling with a recumbent.

If you have been planning a tour the choices in racks, bags, and bikes is daunting. Of course we have several offerings that can be tailored to your needs. In general any bike that is easy for you to maintain a decent cruise on, is a good touring bike. There are a lot of opinions on what touring bikes should be, but the number one aspect is how comfortable are you riding a particular mount.

Traditionally touring bikes are a little heavier in the frame, and therefore tougher to take the mounting of lots of gear. For my style of touring extra gear is a big no no. Carrying less weight will make it easy to maintain 12 to 15 MPH, which is a nice pace that gets you down the road. Too much gear is the trend these days, and for the life of me I cannot understand it. Here is a list of what I would take on a two to four week tour:

1. One man tent unless riding with a partner then the lightest two man I could find. Tent should have ground cloth and rain fly.
2. Very light sleeping bag, rated for in the 45 to 35 Fahrenheit ranges. you can control the time of year you ride, to avoid the cold weather. You should stow the bag on top of your rear rack so it is easy to get to. I stuff things in the center that I want to keep cool.
3. Two water bottles. I do not believe that at any point I would be so far from water that carrying more would be a benefit. If I cross a desert then maybe I would pack on the water.
4. To carry extra water, use a collapsible water jug 1-gallon size. This is handy around the camp for cooking and making tea. You will shower wherever you can score a shower, which can be a garden hose, or the real deal.
5. A reverse osmosis water filter. This can be handy when camping close to a natural water source. These filters are pretty good about cleaning the water, but please read up on what they will and will

not do. Be careful where you pull water.

6. Riding shoes that you can walk in. Depending on your taste, power straps or toe clips work too, I rode 3400 miles wearing Redwing work boots! Just make sure you have some method of pulling with the pedals, your legs will love you for it.

7. Three pairs of short socks, you can always have one set washed and drying while you ride.

8. Two pairs of polyfiber fast drying zip off pants, that can be shorts, swimsuit and general below the waist cover.

9. One long sleeve cotton shirt, button front or pull over type.

10. Two fast drying polyfiber short-sleeved shirts, or cotton T-shirts, I like the feel of cotton over the fast dry shirts.

11. Three pair of underwear, the skimpier the better, bikini style works fine.

12. Light Gortex rain jacket, doubles as windbreaker use long sleeve shirt to layer up if cold. No rain pants, the fast dry shorts will work, and no big deal if your legs are wet. Use common sense, stay out of a cold rain. Touring is supposed to be fun not the end all endurance contest.

13. Small, very small white gas or natural gas stove. I prefer white gas, and take a small quart sized fuel bottle. The natural gas is lighter, but may be harder to find charged bottles. The stove is important only if you are cooking. You can always find food, it may not be the best or within your diet, but sustenance is out there. So taking the equipment to cook or not is a personal decision.

14. Pot to boil water, shallow pan to cook in. Eating utensils. Go with the sturdy stainless steel type, you may end up using them for tools!

15. My road diet is extremely boring, but easy to carry. Brown rice, black beans (buy canned just before your camp) molasses or creamed honey, butter, salt, pepper, loaf of wheat bread, raw or roasted nuts of all sorts, dried fruits, thin pasta (cooks faster) and pancake mix. From this the main dish is brown rice for supper. Lunch is usually nuts and fruit, or purchased. Breakfast, take a slice of dried out bread and dip it in pancake batter, this makes it easy to cook and flip in those light pans. We call it road toast, and somehow it is great with a little butter and creamed honey or molasses. I stay away from the power bars, most taste like sawdust disguised as candy; if I stoop to that level I buy an old-fashioned candy bar. Notice no animal protein, you will get that every so often when you stop at a great steak house, besides with all the road kill you will see, your hunger for meat diminishes.

16. All-purpose soap, for washing you and dishes, take a small 5 oz. tube it goes a long way.

17. Road map, can be cut down to just the strip you are going. No need for the whole map of the US if you are only covering a small patch of it.

18. Spare parts and tools: This is tough; I usually rely on bike shops for anything more than tire patches. Some shops will let you wrench on your bike a few minutes if not too busy, but if you are not a good bike wrench then two things: Maybe you should stay home, or take enough funds to pay for the work. Most bikes will go to hell and back before really getting too bad to ride. You can limp into a shop in most cases. If you are in country that lack shops, then you need to take a small crescent wrench, several Allen wrenches for brakes and such, flat and Phillips screwdrivers; tire irons, and a Swiss army knife. There are a lot of fancy tool kits, most of which I can improvise with all the above, and still be lighter.

19. To round it off a travel size of toothpaste, with toothbrush, handle missing, comb, nope, just get a buzz cut or let it flop. Other toiletries to your liking, something to make you smell nice may take up considerable space and weight, so shower often, if you can.

20. Helmet is a good idea, I hate the heat, sweat, and other restrictions, but it is still better than being seriously hurt. I have done most my touring less helmet, but that was when I was young and dumb, and supposedly bullet proof.

21. Lights? A small flashlight that can double for a bike light is ideal, Riding at night is fun, cool and not too dangerous if you are in Wyoming, but be darn careful. I have done it plenty and kind of like it, everything seems to rush by, but when autos do pass you, it is always touch and go until you are sure they see you. I have simply stopped and got off the road to let them pass. Again if it is a lonely road, and the stars are out, it is one cool experience, but try it at your own risk.

As you may suspect this is not an average equipment list. It is for those who like to run light, cheap, and make 80 to 100 miles a day, depending on terrain and weather. I can get into camping and not spending a lot of dough. It is fun to live really low sometimes, and then splurge on occasion. Of course there are the credit card tourist, which is a very light and powerful device. Imagine packing only a few clothes, toiletries, some water and snacks. No camping or cooking gear...hmm that doesn't sound so bad!

As said earlier, a touring bike should be tough, especially if you load it with lots of gear, despite my effort here to keep it light. It should be a little cushy on the ride, and yet efficient. Holding 12 to 15 MPH all will get the job done, and fully loaded, such speeds are going to be the norm. Long stints on the bike will mean comfort is a top concern. Some of our best machines for touring are the Stratus, Velocity Squared, Formula, V-Rex, and Force -5.

We have rear racks, under seat racks, and front racks, so there are plenty of ways to overload the bike. Speaking of which, rider weight on our bikes is typically 275 pounds, so consider that when loading up with gear. Sure it will take more than 275 pounds, but at least attempt to keep you gear weight under 20 pounds if at all possible. I cannot overstress how packing light enhances the trip. If you are having a hard go at it, you will start to resent that extra fancy gear you thought you had to have, and start donating it to the next roadside Goodwill.

Touring on an epic scale, for instance, a month or two, will shape you into this road beast, with the risk of never returning to your cherry wood desk and wainscoted office, but one more " middle-aged in crisis road warrior" won't hurt the world much, in fact you may end up doing more good out there, then in that stuffy office. Either way short or long tours can be adventures forever and fondly remembered, and something any avid cyclist should endeavor towards at least once. Until next month, ride safe and stay into the ride! -RJS

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