

Columbia Gorge Explorer FAQs

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

\$15/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 arrangements 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's approved use of your bike. Mountain bikes can be fitted for a more comfortable touring geometry.

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

Each bike should be minimally equipped with head and tail lights, cycle computer with accurate mileage calibration, Each rider should have a minimum of two water bottles, two inner tubes, spare tire, patch kit, pump, tire "iron", chain lube, multi-tool, (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 the same as a back-country backpacking camping trip. There are many web sites to assist you. But a bare bones list might be: tent, sleeping bag and pad, stove/fuel, eating/cooking supplies, bike clothing, camp clothing including shower sandals, head-lamp or flashlight, towel(s), toiletries, medication. Remember this is the PNW and it could be wet and cold, so bring layers of clothing that are water-proof and warm. And misc. like hat, sunglasses, portable camp chair/pad, swimsuit if you are planning to deviate from the tour and stop at the hot springs spa at Bonneville.

Do I need to pack four days worth of food?

No, there are markets to buy food each day. 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. See "Where do I eat and buy food?" below. Because food is so readily available along this route, if you really want to travel "lightweight" it is possible to leave stove & cooking gear home & travel with nothing more than a cup, bowl and utensils.

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 sight seeing stops, terrain, and stamina. A few veterans and/or strong riders will be by themselves. The ride leaders and PWTC club members are sensitive to dropping riders and will provide the needed "escort" to keep your enthusiasm and tires pumped up. On day 3 there is usually a strong headwind and we suggest leaving camp early as possible in a small pace-line. Trailer pullers have an advantage as they get to be the caboose of the train.

What SAG is provided?

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.

Where can I eat and buy food?

Most riders follow an itinerary similar to the following for food, pack many snacks and an emergency “cook-in-the bag” meal.

Day 1: Breakfast before starting, lunch in one of several restaurants in Stevenson (mi 47) and buy food for dinner (and breakfast if needed) in Stevenson, WA., camp is Home Valley mi 51.2

Day 2: Breakfast in camp or last year a diner across the street from the camp site. Bingen (mi 15.2) has a few restaurants, Lyle (mi 28), has the last real grocery store and restaurants. Lunch at Maryhill Art Museum access to the cafeteria requires museum entrance fee, or at Maryhill Winery (mi ~51). Biggs (mi 58.6), has several small markets and a restaurants and fast food, camp in Deschutes SP mi 63.

Day 3: Early start is recommended as headwinds increase as the day goes on. Light breakfast in camp, brunch in The Dalles, Cousins (mi ~19) is a common choice, late lunch/snack in one of the many restaurants in Hood River (mi ~46), and buy food for dinner/breakfast, camp in Viento SP mi. 53.7

Day 4: Light breakfast in camp, brunch in Cascade Locks (mi ~13), lunch/snack in Troutdale (mi ~45), dinner at home or in Vancouver, WA. (mi ~60)

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. And you need to notify ride leaders of your plans so 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.

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 trailer load.