

CUSTOM TOURS // PRE-TRIP INFORMATION

TRIP GRADING

Your custom trip will be pitched according to your fitness and technical ability.

We've developed a trip grading based on our experience riding the terrain that features on our trips, as well as meeting and learning from riders from all over the world and understanding their expectations. Below is a summary of our trip gradings. If you are unsure if a trip is right for you, please contact us.

TECHNICAL RATINGS

The goal of the Technical Rating is to understand the ability of the rider as it pertains to obstacles, conditions and trail design. This means it has nothing to do with your physical endurance, but is instead strictly a measure of your technical ability. Making sure you accurately rate your Technical Ability will ensure you have an exciting ride, while remaining within your ability level to keep you safe.

Please note, we also use '+' to designate when a trip is at the top of a grading e.g 2+ is just below grading 3; and '++' when a trip grading subsumes all other higher gradings e.g. 3++ would be suitable for 3+ riders as well as grading 4 and 5 riders.

Rating: 0

You have never ridden a bicycle off-road before. You have no mountain biking skills. Maybe you are a roadie, or you have some mountain biking friends that want you to have as much fun as them and keep pushing you to come out riding with them. This will be your first introduction to the world of Mountain Biking.

Rating: 1

You are still new to mountain biking but have ridden off-road a few times before and have basic bike handling skills. You are comfortable on a mixture of double tracks and estate roads, and trails approximately 36 inches wide or more that are firm and stable, with mellow gradients, some rocks and roots but nothing too severe. You are comfortable traversing unavoidable small obstacles such as roots and rocks that are up to 2 inches tall.

Rating: 2

You have been riding a mountain bike off-road for a season or two. You have consolidated

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basic bike handling skills and an appetite to progress to the next level. You are comfortable on a mixture of singletrack and landrover track, on uneven, loose and occasionally steep gradients, with some variation in trail surfaces from rocks to roots. You are comfortable on narrower trails approximately 18 inches wide that are mostly stable with some variability. You are comfortable traversing unavoidable obstacles such as roots, rocks and logs that are 8-10 inches tall.

Rating: 3

You are a confident mountain biker and have been riding technical terrain for at least 2 years including exposed singletrack and rough landrover track, on uneven, loose and frequent steep gradients, with frequent variation in trail surfaces from rocks to roots. You are comfortable riding on trails approximately 12 inches wide that vary greatly in their stability and may be unpredictable including loose rock. You are comfortable regularly traversing unavoidable obstacles such as roots, rocks, logs and drop offs up to 15 inches tall, and some obstacles encountered may exceed that.

Rating: 4

You are an expert mountain biker and have been riding expert level trails for at least 5 years. You think of yourself as a 'mountain biker' and you already know that the more competent a bike handler you are beforehand, the more you'll get from the trip; you're confident riding unpredictable terrain and using bunny hopping and front/rear wheel lifting techniques and relish unpredictable, varied natural ungraded trail surfaces including a mix of flowy and loose rocky or rooty singletrack, landrover tracks, steep technical climbs (including hike-a-bike sections) and descents, frequent rocks, slabs and water bar drainage features.

You are comfortable riding on trails of any width that are highly unstable and are completely unpredictable including loose rock. You are comfortable regularly traversing unavoidable obstacles such as roots, rocks, logs and drop offs well over 15 inches tall, and many obstacles encountered will exceed that. You are comfortable riding any technical trail features that may be present on the trail.

Rating: 5

Level 5 is reserved for our Level 4 Expert riders who live and breath mountain biking and take every opportunity to manual, nose-wheelie and bunnyhop the trails. You love the biggest, most technically challenging trail features – up or down. Speaking of which, you also know that in order to go down, you must pedal (and carry) up and can handle any trail conditions or obstacles identified in Level 4.

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ENDURANCE RATINGS

The goal of the Endurance Rating is to understand the ability of the rider as it pertains to overall physical endurance. Riding on the road or in “Spin Class” is great and all, but mountain biking is a completely different animal (ask anyone who has made the switch). The reason being is that the terrain is changing every second, which forces your entire body and your mind to be involved in the exercise process. This exertion will cause exhaustion to set in a lot quicker than you think. Be sure you read the descriptions carefully because we want you to have fun out there, not think this is a form of cruel and unusual punishment.

Please note, we also use ‘+’ to designate when a trip is at the top of a grading e.g 2+ is just below grading 3; and ‘++’ when a trip grading subsumes all other higher gradings e.g. 3++ would be suitable for 3+ riders as well as grading 4 and 5 riders.

Rating: 0

Cycling (on any surface) is not something you do regularly, but you find yourself on a bike a few times a month in the summer. You have never ridden a bicycle off-road before, and after reading the preface for this section, you are probably wondering why you have even considered doing this. Activities involving exercise are not a priority in your life.

Rating: 1

You will likely be caught on your mountain bike a few times a month or on your road bike once or twice a week when the weather is decent. You are at an average fitness level, and occasionally do other activities that qualify as exercise. You usually find yourself riding for 2 hours on the road, or 1 hour on the trails, and you ride at a relaxed pace.

Rating: 2

You are a mountain biker riding once a week, or a roadie riding twice a week or more when the weather is cooperating and some days when it's not. You are at an average fitness level, and regularly do other activities that qualify as exercise. You can ride on consecutive days and usually find yourself riding for 3-4 hours per day on the road, or 2 hours per day on the trails, and you ride at a relaxed or moderate pace.

Rating: 3

You are an avid mountain biker riding twice a week or more, and the weather isn't a big factor for you. You are at an above-average fitness level, and regularly do other activities that qualify as exercise. You usually find yourself riding for 3 hours on the trails, you'll ride on consecutive days, and you ride at a moderate pace.

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Rating: 4

You are a very avid mountain biker, who is considered an 'athlete' by friends and only getting out on the trails twice in the week is a bad week for you. Riding and exercising is a frequent part of your weekly routine: you relish sustained challenging riding including long rides of 4 – 6 hours at a moderate pace for four or more days in a row. The weather is never a factor for you, rain or shine – you are riding.

Rating: 5

You are fit! You devour 6 – 8 + hour rides for five or more days in a row. You are an XC or Enduro racer who probably missed their flight to the World Cup / Enduro World Series this year because you were too busy training so you opted to come for a ride with us instead. You train on your mountain bike daily, and you are comfortable riding on trails for distances in excess of 60km per day and climbing vertical in excess of 7000 feet in a day. You ride your bike everywhere, in all weather conditions, and would likely enjoy riding in a hurricane.

SUITABLE BIKES

A fully serviced 3 - 6 inch travel full suspension bike with dropper seatpost and hydraulic disc brakes is recommended.

It's entirely possible to take part in our trips on more modest setups or hardtails but we find that over the course of several consecutive days riding, the added comfort and confidence of a full suspension trail bike is a real asset, and enhances the overall experience.

RENTAL BIKES

If you've hired a bike, for your safety and comfort we always recommend bringing your own helmet and pedals.

ESSENTIAL GEAR

Our recommendations are based on many years experience of riding in Scotland, and regardless of season we recommend that you prepare for a wide range of conditions and temperatures – that way you'll be fully prepared and get the most from your trip. Please also note that mechanical failures do happen and spares are sometimes limited (if you're prone to breakages, please bring spares) - so here are our kit suggestions (please note the list is not exhaustive):

- 16 - 20 litre+ backpack (i.e. sufficiently large for you to carry your gear and foodstuffs, plus any group shared kit that will be divided up e.g. storm shelter, long-range radios) e.g. [EVOG](#) Enduro
- Fully serviced bike in good working order with fresh brake pads
- Cash and credit card (access to cash machines is limited in some locations)

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- Cycling glasses / protective eye wear
- Cycling gloves
- Cycling shoes (with cleats) or flat pedal trainers (hire bikes come with flat pedals; if you want to use spd's please bring your pedals with you)
- [Helmet](#) is essential
- Inner tubes (Presta valves x 4 minimum) or spare sealant if running tubeless tyres
- Leggings or long trousers (not cotton) for riding
- Padded cycling shorts
- Personal first aid and medication you require (guide must be informed of relevant medical history prior to the tour)
- Protective Gear ([knee/shin pads](#)): we wear soft knee pads as a precaution
- Pump & shock pump
- Riding socks
- Snacks / energy bars / drinks
- Sufficient base layers including long sleeved tops
- Tools / spares / lubricants specific to your bike (including wet lube, brake pads x 2 sets minimum, chain power links, gear cables, replacement gear hangers, puncture repair kit, and tyre boot for repairing torn tyres)
- Tyres: dependable robust all-mountain tyres are a must (not flimsy/lightweight XC tyres); tubeless recommended
- Warm clothes: fleece top, lightweight fleece jacket or gilet, warm fleece hat or buff
- Warm cycling gloves e.g. Sealskinz
- Water bottle or hydration system
- Waterproof [jacket](#)
- Waterproof [socks](#)
- Waterproof trousers / [shorts](#)

DESIRABLE GEAR

- Dropper Seatpost
- Camera (waterproof case is a good idea)
- Sun protection
- Lip balm
- Insect repellent (we suggest 'Smidge') and midge net (hood)
- Torch or head torch
- Waterproof overshoes
- Earplugs (especially useful in group accommodation)

LUGGAGE / BIKE TRANSPORTATION

- For all trips, there is allowance for one large holdall plus riding backpack per person
- In our vehicles, we do not generally have provision to store/carry bike bags and boxes during trips but we're happy to assist with arrangements
- Bikes are securely carried (fully-assembled) and attached to our custom Burtech trailer

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- We always recommend guest bikes are fully insured - we have negotiated a 5% saving on policies from [Bikmo \(use code: GOWHERE\)](#)

ACCOMMODATION

We use the best accommodation available to suit your trip. Depending on the trip, and the optional upgrades available/selected - we use a mix of rustic group accommodation, hostels, self catering cottages, high quality inns, hotels and guest houses, and a range of luxury options are available upon request. For those requesting single or private accommodation – in some instances, where this is available – an additional supplement may be chargeable.

FOOD & DRINK

Your trip offers up many opportunities to enjoy great fresh Scottish fayre and of course a dram or two and a fine ale!

- **Breakfasts** For self-catering trips supplies will be purchased in advance; for Bed & Breakfast accommodation breakfast is included
- **Lunches** There will be opportunities to buy packed lunch provisions to carry on the rides, or depending on routes we may enjoy a great cafe stop!
- **Evening Meals** Meals can be enjoyed in the local bars / restaurants, or depending on accommodation type, may be prepared in our self-catering accommodation facilities
- **Budget** We estimate a budget of £25 to £30 per person per day is adequate for lunches and evening meals depending on accommodation type and how much partying you enjoy!

DAILY SCHEDULE

Over a beer in the bar, after dinner or breakfast we'll discuss what's in store for the day ahead. Because the weather plays such a big part in which routes we ride, and for how long we'll be out riding in the hills and mountains, sometimes we have to modify the itinerary.