

Bicycle Touring: Take the Kids Along

By Mary M. Alward

One of the advantages of bicycle touring is that you can stop to explore whenever you wish. Be sure to take that fact into consideration when planning your next vacation. Cycle touring is an activity that the entire family can participate in. It helps families bond and cycling tours are a lot of fun.

Children who are too young to ride can be taken along in a child seat. Older children love the feeling of independence they encounter while riding under their own steam with adults nearby for a feeling of security. The entire family gets out in the great outdoors to enjoy fresh air, awesome sights and plenty of exercise. Everything about a cycling tour with kids is positive.



Whether you decide on several day tours from a base camp or an extended cycling tour is up to you. With careful planning you will be able to take camping gear along on longer tours. If you already have your vacation planned, rent bicycles once you've reached your destination and spend a day or two exploring the area.

Set a Reasonable Pace

When taking kids along on a cycling tour, let them set the pace. After all, it's not the Tour de France. A rigid itinerary will not be possible and will only make everyone's life miserable. Enjoy the trip. If you get stressed out about getting to the next stop it will ruin the tour.

Get an early start. Remember that cycling is harder for little ones and if you have a youngster in a seat behind you, a leisurely pace will allow you to enjoy the tour more. Take frequent short breaks in lieu of longer ones. Stop to enjoy the sights, sounds and fragrances along the way. Memories are made from taking mini adventures. Stop to explore a trail, pat a horse, chat with a farmer or enjoy a picnic.

Safety

Safety is a priority when cycling and more so if you are taking a cycling tour with kids. Be sure your bicycles are well maintained and that you have the best helmets and child seats on the market. Always ride with traffic and be sure your kids know how to signal properly. Obey the laws of the road and be certain that kids are aware of all the safety rules.

Buy each child a disposable camera to take along in order for them to record their own special memories of the tour on film. If a child likes to write, take along a journal so he can keep a written record.

Attach a water bottle to everyone's bicycle and take extra along. Pack light snacks and juice boxes. Everyone on the tour needs to be well hydrated.

Other Touring Advice

Touring with young children makes it necessary to take a favorite toy or two to keep them busy during breaks. If older children want to take a hand-held video game, have them carry it in a bag hung from the handlebars.

Dress in layers if mornings are chilly. By mid morning you will most likely have to shed jackets and sweaters. Be sure to carry rain gear and extra jackets in case of inclement weather. Include sunscreen

and hats for everyone in your backpack and rest frequently if temperatures soar. Avoid sunburn and sunstroke by taking appropriate measures and don't forget a first aid kit in case of scrapes, bites or stings. Include bug repellent and meat tenderizer for bee stings.

If you follow the tips in this article, your family cycling tour will be a great success. Enjoy and remember to explore and have fun.

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