



Getting a Bike Guide

Cyclists on Journey of Hope and Gear Up Florida are required to provide their own bike and maintain it during training and throughout the trip. If you have not figured it out already, cycling is an expensive sport, but there are ways to cut down the costs. Buying a \$3,000 bike will not get you across the country any quicker. In fact, many times someone who spends a lot of money on a bike will realize they don't want to keep riding or that the trip is incredibly hard on a bike. **The important thing is to get a bike that is the right size for you and that is dependable.** Finding a bike with the right fit will make all of the difference when riding 70+ miles per day. You don't have to spend thousands of dollars either. There are many ways to get your bike at a reasonable price.

What to Look for When Getting a Bike

Bikes are made up of many different parts. Some last for the entire lifetime of the bike, others need to be replaced regularly, and others you might even want to upgrade on your own. So, let's learn the basics.

The Frame is the most important thing when deciding on which bike to get is that it fits you well. The size of the bike is determined by the frame. You can get "sized" at a bike shop for free. Most bike manufacturers size their bikes by the height of the seat tube (typically 50-62 cm). Some use a system of S-XL, though. There is no industry standard, so it's important to always take it for a test ride before buying.

Most bikes today are made of either aluminum or carbon fiber, each have their own pros and cons. Aluminum bikes are more affordable. They are durable and will definitely get the job done. Aluminum bikes tend to weigh more and have a slightly rougher ride than the carbon fiber, though. Carbon fiber will provide a smooth, more responsive ride and is lighter than aluminum, but it is much more expensive. Carbon fiber is also more fragile, which leaves it vulnerable to being damaged. If the frame cracks or becomes compromised, it will be unusable. Either will work well but realize that the more you spend on your bike, the more you are investing in biking long after your trip.

Components, also known as a groupset, include your shifters, derailleurs, cogs/cassette, bottom bracket, crankset, and brakes. Shimano Tiagra or 105 groupsets will be the most common and are definitely good enough to do the trick for

your trip. They are relatively-low cost, reliable, easy to fix or replace in bike shops across the country. Top of the line components would include Shimano Ultegra or Dura-Ace, SRAM Red, and Campagnolo Chorus. These will be more expensive and more difficult to find on the road. They are more reliable and have better performance, but replacement costs will be more expensive if something breaks. The type of **Brakes** on your bike is also a big decision. There are two types, rim disc brakes. Rim brakes simpler to adjust and maintain and typically cheaper. Disc brakes are newer technology and have greater stopping power and performance in the rain but are more difficult to fix and aren't always compatible with top bike racks. The industry is trending towards more disc brakes, but we see plenty of both on our teams and many people prefer rim brakes for their simplicity.

Wheels are also available in aluminum and carbon fiber. Most stock wheels that come with new bikes are aluminum to keep the price down and allow customers to upgrade their wheelset at their own discretion. Buying better, lighter wheels is considered the biggest upgrade you can make to a bike because they account for so much of the weight. However, it is not a good idea to bring expensive "race" wheels on the trip. They are less durable and more difficult and expensive to fix. For our purposes, you will be better off using stock wheels and buying a nicer set of tires that are puncture resistant and meant to last for thousands of miles in many weather conditions.

Pedals, Shoes, & Cleats also necessary to get when you begin riding. Believe it or not, new road bikes do not come with pedals - so you will have to buy them separately. The most important choice comes between the two types of clip-in (aka. Clipless) pedals, which are road and mountain bike style. There are many advantages between road pedals and mountain bike pedals. Road pedals are more efficient by transferring power better. Mountain bike pedals are more durable, and the shoes allow you to walk around more without wearing down the cleat on the bottom. Most cyclists on our trips prefer road, just be careful not to walk around in your cycling shoes off the bike as they will wear out faster. Shimano SPD is the most common pedal/cleat system and they offer many choices at different price points. There are also other options from Look and Speedplay. The important thing is that your cycling shoes are compatible with your pedals and cleats.

As you can see, our advice is to buy a reliable bike with commonly-available parts to help prevent you from missing any miles on the road. You don't have to break the bank to make it happen either.

Other Equipment

- **Cycling Shorts** - You will need a good pair of cycling shorts to train in, trust us, and you'll thank us later. It's also a good idea to get a cycling jersey with pockets in the back to keep your phone, wallet, or snacks safe and secure while riding.
- **Helmet & Sunglasses** - Make sure it's the correct size helmet! Never get on your bike without it. We encourage MIPS certified helmets. Sunglasses will make your ride more comfortable and keep dust and bugs out of your eyes. See this [Helmet Buying Guide](#).

- **2 Water Bottle & Bottle Cages** - Most bikes don't come with bottle cages or bottles, so don't forget to add them before your first ride and stay hydrated.
- **Bike Pump** - It's very important to pump up your tires to the proper pressure (typically between 90-120 psi for road bikes) before every ride. The skinny, high-pressure tires on road bikes require a pump with special valve called a presta valve. It's dangerous (and slower) to ride on tires that aren't inflated correctly.
- **Saddle Bag with Spare Tube, Tire Levers, and CO2 or Frame Pump** - What happens if you get a flat during a training ride? You need to be self-sufficient. There are plenty of videos on YouTube to teach you how to change a tube on the road. We make sure everyone on our teams is able to do so before starting a trip.

When buying equipment, we recommend buying **high-visibility designs** whenever possible to help improve your safety on the road while training and during the summer. These are just the basics, the things you will need to go on your first ride, but they will get you a long way. For a more complete list of things you'll need for the trip, check out the Packing Guide in your Participant Center.

Where Do I Get My Bike?

Bike Shop

Bike shops are a great place to start because you can see a large selection of bikes available and get sized. Not all bike shops focus on road bikes or carry all the different brands of bikes. You may have to do some research or drive to a different city to find a bike you're looking for.

Go to different bike shops, tell them about what you are doing this summer and ask if they would be willing to donate a bike or sell it to you at cost. The margins in the bike business are pretty low and this is more of a rarity to get an outright donation, but it's worth a try.

Ask Family and Friends

As long as people know they are giving you money for your bike and not for your fundraising, feel free to ask family and friends for an early birthday or holiday present by giving you money to put towards your new bike. While the gift is not tax-deductible, it will have a huge impact on your summer.

You never know, someone might even have a connection to getting you a bike for a great deal. Cycling is known for having a strong and generous community.

Borrow a Bike

Here is a dirty little secret of cycling events - most guys don't continue to ride, which makes borrowing a bike a really smart move. Even if you fall in love with cycling, you can then buy a nice bike after the trip that isn't beat up from all those miles.

Some chapters have bikes that are passed down or you can connect with family and friends who have unused bikes that could be perfect.

If you go this route, it is important to get a tune up and make sure the components are in good order. Sometimes you get a cog set that needs to be replaced which can cost a lot. Most of the time, there are easy fixes like new cables, repacking the hubs and getting a new chain.

If you borrow a bike and return it to a friend or family member, you should take it in for a tune up to make sure it is returned in good condition.

Look Online

Seeking a bike online is another way to find a great deal on a bike when starting out. Join the "Ability Experience Bike Market" on Facebook where you can purchase cycling gear from Pi Alphas. Craigslist and other local buying/selling platforms usually have good deals on bikes available too. Be sure check that the bike is in good condition and that it is the right size before you buy. It's a good idea to find someone with more bike experience to see it in person with you.

How Much Should I Spend?

You should easily be able to find a quality bike capable of getting you thru your training and event for \$800 - \$1,200. You will also need to determine how often you think you will ride after the trip; if you don't think you will ride again, then you don't want to spend over \$1,000. You should also expect to spend at least an additional \$300 on other equipment.

Bike computers, rain gear, new tires, gloves, etc. There's a lot that goes into cycling. You won't need it all right away. Likely, you will want some of these things down the road. So, budget a couple hundred dollars for them or ask for them during your birthday or the holidays.

Should I Get a Bike Fitting?

The short answer is, yes! Having the correct size bike is one thing but making sure it is set up for you correctly is just as important. It may sound as simple as raising or lowering your seat, but there is a lot of science and skill behind bike fittings. Many bike shops will include this with the purchase of the bike. If they don't, then ask them if they would donate that service to you.

If you have bought or borrowed a bike, it is tougher to get the bike shop to donate this service, but you can always ask, especially if you buy the rest of your equipment from them. A certified bike fitting runs between \$100 and \$200. It could save you lots of pain down the road. An improper fit will can cause chronic pain in your hands,

arms, shoulders, back, and knees. It's one of the biggest causes of injury from cycling. Often, your bike will feel strange or even more uncomfortable after the fit, but it's important to keep riding and allow your muscles to adjust.

Before you pack your bike, it is important to mark the following locations of your equipment: seat height, handlebar angles, and stem height. This will make a tremendous difference when you go to put your bike back together at orientation.

Bike Insurance

During the event, you are responsible for the care and maintenance of your bicycle. However, occasionally things happen out of your control. Insurance will protect you in case of an incident such as a car accident, theft, other mishap that could put your bike at risk.

The Ability Experience will reimburse up to \$1,000 to repair or replace a bike for an incident in which we are at fault for the damage. While these are extremely rare instances, we cannot absorb the risk of hundreds of thousands of dollars of bikes on our trips. More often than not, damage to bicycles is caused by common cycling incidents such as a bike falling over and breaking a component or a fall while riding. While there are things everyone can do to mitigate risk, accidents still happen. This is why we encourage everyone, especially owners of more expensive bikes, to purchase bike insurance. [Velosurance](#) offers coverage on a monthly basis for \$10-15 or annual plans based on the replacement cost of your bike.

Often times, bikes are covered in your family's homeowner's or renter's insurance policies as well. We recommend that you research the details of your coverage, paying special attention to the deductible in case of a claim. While we cannot require insurance for your bike, we strongly recommend that you protect yourself, not only financially but also to ensure that in the case of an accident you are able to replace your bike in a timely manner and preserve the experience of cycling on your trip.

