



If you're considering travelling by bicycle, then you should realise that you're limited on space and you will have to choose to live without many comforts.

All cycle tourists are different in what they choose to bring and what not to bring on tour. We know of cycling minimalists who are famed to have cut their toothbrushes in half to reduce weight. Then there are cyclists who pretty much carry their entire home with them. We even know cyclists who carried a USB chargeable blender for mixing sauces and dressings.

There are basics which are necessary for most cycle tourists including such things as a tent, cooking pot, bowl, utensils, or multitool, sleeping mat, sleeping bag, bike panniers and of course a bicycle.

However, there is optional gear which can make your tour more comfortable and tailored to your needs. A few of the following are our favourite optional gear for cycle touring.



These are the non-essentials we recommend for cycle touring.

Water bladder

A water bladder is not essential for all cycling tours as many people buy bottled water or just drink straight from taps or springs. However, a heavy-duty water bladder like our MSR Dromedary can make carrying water considerably easier, particularly for long tours.

An additional benefit for the MSR Dromedary is that it has a threaded opening that we can screw our water filter onto.



We use a water bladder because it's more convenient for us.

Filtration devices

It can be argued that this is an essential item, but we have met long term tourers who don't travel with a filter and either risk drinking unfiltered river water or instead buy bottled water. So, we have put this in our optional gear, and we find it very useful to make sure your river water is safe to drink.

We use the Sawyer Squeeze Micro-Filter that fits perfectly with our MSR Dromedary but there are many options including UV filters, Life Straw, Ceramic Pump Filters and Grayl Bottle Micro-Filter. The latter would be our preferred filter if we had to get another due to its weight, functions also as a water bottle and its speed at filtering.



Some tourers go without, but we would recommend taking a water filter with you.

Laptop or e-reader

Imagine, you're at the end of a long day. It's been a busy road you've travelled on and your campsite is just an old quarry. You had dinner early and have nothing to do. Luckily you brought your e-reader /laptop and you can immerse yourself into a nice book or watch an episode of your favourite show. This might make you feel like your home again, at least for a little while.



Your laptop will provide entertainment after a long day.



Thermos

A thermos is a pretty straightforward item... It keeps hot liquids hot and cold liquids cold. We would nearly argue it's essential because for us it's been a mental lifesaver during the extreme heat and freezing cold. A hot coffee in minus 15 degrees or iced cold water in the tropics is the difference between a good and bad day in those climates. Don't travel without a good thermos!



A thermos gives you the luxury of a hot drink when you need it.

Multi-fuel stove

It's common for cycle tourists to cook only with wood but there are a few downsides of not travelling without a multi-fuel stove. First, the wood turns all of your pots black and, in turn, everything inside your panniers too. Second, some places have barely any wood such as Tajikistan in the winter.

They use yak dung for their fuel most of the time and this is hard to find if you don't own a yak. Petrol can be found nearly anywhere, and the multi-fuel stoves are lightweight, packable, easy to maintain and use plus it cooks food very quickly.



Your multi-fuel stove will be a lifesaver when one supply runs low.

Solar panel

Need to charge your power bank, smartphone or head torch? A foldable solar panel with around 10W to 20W will be super helpful. We travel with the Black Wolf 20W solar panel and it has been working perfectly for over a year now.

Power bank

If your travelling remote areas in winter, then a solar panel just might not be enough to charge all your electronics. That's where a power bank comes in handy. There are many types out there and I'm sure the technology is even better than when we bought our power bank which charges our smartphone 10 times!



You can keep your smaller electronics charged with a power bank and a solar panel.

Bungee cord or cam buckle

It's simple but versatile. Bungee cords and Cambuckles can be used to strap down your gear, hang out the washing and tie down parts of your tent when you can't peg it into the ground. We have even used a bungee cord to hold our panniers to our bicycle racks after they broke a little on very bumpy roads.



In terms of comfort, and air pillow will make a huge difference.



Air pillow

Cycle tourist can use various types of pillows, we even know one cycle tourist who uses a loaf of bread as his pillow before eating it the following day. We have tried different types of pillows like compression pillows and the old stuff your clothes in a bag trick, but we finally found that the best option for us was an air pillow.

When we finally spent the minuscule amount of money on an air pillow, after 1 year of travelling, we were dumbfounded as we didn't know why we weren't travelling with one before. They pack to absolutely nothing and they are lightweight and comfortable. What else could you want!



If you need a caffeine boost in the mornings, pack a coffee press.

Coffee press

A travel coffee press is our 'over the top' comfort item, which is totally unnecessary, but we couldn't bring ourselves to travel without a good brew. We use the Aeropress Coffee Press but there are many different travel coffee presses out there to choose from.

If you're like us and enjoy the smell of a good bean brew, then this is what you'll need as most countries are unfortunately tea drinkers.

What are your non-essentials for cycle touring?