

## Cycling Essentials

*So you're going to ride. Not just around the block, but really ride - as in long distance cycling. As with any sport, there is an array of equipment available to maximize your experience and it can be fun to ponder the endless options. But what do you really need and what's just taking up extra room and adding unneeded weight?*

We've narrowed down the essentials for long distance cycling:

**Bike:** That's an obvious one, of course. But don't be fooled into thinking you need a brand new fancy bike. For the MS150 it is recommended you have a road bike, however if you have a hybrid or mountain bike, you can use these as well. If you are riding a hybrid or mountain bike, consider using road specific (slick vs. knobby) tires, to reduce rolling resistance and ensure a more comfortable ride. One requirement of your bike should be the way it fits you. Have a professional at your local bike shop help you find the best fit, ensuring that the bike fits your height, from the pedals to the seat, and distance from seat to the handle bars.

**Cycling Clothes:** At first this may seem like a frivolous extra. They are, after all, just clothes. But proper riding gear can mean the difference between comfort and protection and complete misery. Cycling gear today is very highly technical and designed to maximize comfort when you are on the bike. Cycling clothes, made with lycra and other modern materials, stretch and move with your body, are breathable, and designed specifically to wick away sweat, and usually include padding in essential locations. Keep in mind you should not wear underwear with cycling specific clothing. An investment in a good pair of cycling specific shorts or bib shorts and a cycling specific jersey will make your training and the trip to Austin go by much easier.

**Helmet:** You know not to ride without a helmet, but it's not just a matter of sticking any helmet on your head. In order to be effective, a helmet needs to fit properly. This means finding a helmet that is a comfortably snug fit, and with adjustable straps to keep the helmet in place, especially in the event of a fall. A proper fitting helmet should sit level on your head (not tilted). Your local bike shop is a good place to choose a helmet and to have assistance in ensuring the helmet meets current safety testing standards, and fits properly. Take good care of your helmet, storing it indoors and where it can't be inadvertently dropped. Helmets are designed to absorb one blow, so dropping a helmet usually means a new one is in order.

**Cycling Shoes:** Cycling shoes are designed to promote power transfer to the pedals, are usually vented to help keep your feet cooler on warm days, and their design can also help protect your feet. Cycling shoes are designed to work with a variety of today's pedal systems (Look, Keo, Shimano, Speedplay, etc). You should make sure the shoes you select will work with your specific pedal system and that you have the proper cleats to fit with your pedals. Cycling shoes and clipless pedal systems are a good investment and will add to your comfort and overall safety.

**Water Bottle:** Staying hydrated is essential for every athlete. Road bikes are designed to carry two water bottles. It is a good idea to carry at least two water bottles on rides lasting more than one hour. Another option is to carry water in a Camelback (or similar-type system).

**Saddle Bag:** You probably won't want to wear a back pack on long distance rides, but you will need to pack a few items with you. The tendency of many cyclists is to carry too much. Here are the basics for a typical day in the saddle: snacks, such as gels, PowerBars, or CliffBars, to make sure you keep your energy stores topped



off (which you can carry in one of the pockets of your cycling jersey); a small bike pump or CO2 inflator system (and at least two CO2 cartridges), one or two spare tubes (a small patch kit can prove handy) and tire “irons” (they are made of plastic or composite material so as to not damage your rims) to remove your tire in case of a flat tire. Some will carry a small multi-tool which can come in handy for simple road-side repairs. Usually these items will fit nicely in a medium sized saddle bag. The good news is there will be mechanical support during the MS150. Carry what you need and need what you carry.

There you have it: the pared down version of what every cyclist needs on the road. Of course you can opt for more, and sometimes other items become essential depending on weather or time of day; for example a light if you're riding at night. But for basic daytime riding, the old saying is true: less is more.