



Warren Asa's

Pack Right for

Bike Touring



So it's no big thing if you contract a minor infestation. But don't scratch it! The secondary bacterial infection will be much worse than the fungus.

Winter walking in Florida produces very sharp contrasts in weather. On many occasions, I have gone to sleep lying atop my sleeping bag, only to pile on every piece of clothing I could grab well before dawn. A temperature drop of 30 to 50 degrees can occur. Careful attention to weather maps just before you start walking aids in choosing the appropriate clothing for the length of hike you plan on any segment of the Florida Trail.

Rain should be anticipated. During

the winter months the rain is primarily frontal. It seldom rains otherwise. The weather begins with wind and thunder. It gets cold and it stays wet for a few hours. Then the front passes, the sun is out, and the temperature is lower and crisp. You'll have to dry only your boots and poncho.

The most effective arrangement for sleeping is the use of a mosquito bar with a urethane-treated nylon floor. Over the bar stretch a urethane-treated nylon rain fly. There's no need to carry poles; trees are always available to tie onto. A 50-foot length of parachute cord will provide all the rigging you should need. This "tent" won't

weigh more than two pounds — a welcome relief to anyone who has lugged a mountain tent for a few days!

An insect repellent makes life more pleasant up and down the Trail. Insects are rarely a problem except at dawn and dusk. In the southern section, of necessity, you'll be camping near water at all times. Therefore, avoidance isn't really possible. However, in the central and northern sections, camping either near flowing water, or away from the edge of still water or swampy areas, will avoid 80 percent of the hungry evening pests. A good repellent will render the rest of the insect population of no consequence.

Footwear can be as you like it, but in the southern section Vietnam-type combat boots are hard to beat. You will have wet feet in this section. Even in "dry" times the segments of the Trail to the north and south of Florida Highway 84, "Alligator Alley," are ankle to knee deep for many miles on end through the fascinatingly beautiful cypress sloughs which predominate here.

Much of the Florida Trail, particularly the southern portions, can only be ranked as "strenuous" on a scale of hardship. Even people in top physical condition, experienced in subtropical walking, will not attempt Big Cypress Swamp in the hot months of the summer. But by pacing carefully, a tremendously rewarding three or four day winter walk can be made on any section of the Trail without undue exertion. Remember, walking isn't a contest of endurance, but rather a celebration of the spirit. □



THE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

For maps of completed sections of the Florida Trail, write Florida Trail Association, Inc., 4410 N.W. 18th Place, Gainesville, Florida, 32605, sending a stamped self-addressed 9 1/2" envelope and \$2.00. For another \$3.00, you can join the Association, and receive the periodically published "Trail News," listing the many canoeing and hiking activities of the Association. Every weekend, somewhere in Florida, something interesting is happening for Florida Trail members! If you're unwilling to attack Big Cypress Swamp on your own, there are always several trips in January or February of each year conducted by qualified members of the Association.

The four basic points to remember when packing a bike are given below. However, the finer points are much more subtle and require a bit of explanation.

1. Pack all of your duffel in tough waterproof, dustproof panniers that can be firmly attached to your bicycle, and easily removed.
2. Keep the total weight and bulk as small as possible.
3. Keep the weight low on the bicycle to keep the center of gravity low, and distribute some of the weight to the front wheel.
4. Hang your front and rear panniers from sturdy carriers that are fastened positively to your bicycle.

Before you can start packing, you must select what you plan to take, and your selections will depend on whether you'll overnight in motels, hostels or a tent. I'd recommend the following gear for each type of trip.

MOTEL

1. Shorts and top for cycling
2. Slacks or knickers and long sleeve top for cool weather cycling or evening wear.
3. "Dress" clothes
4. Windbreaker
5. Rainwear
6. Several changes of underwear, socks and handkerchiefs
7. Sun hat
8. Cycling gloves
9. Bike repair kit
10. First aid kit
11. Toilet kit
12. Two pairs of shoes: one for cycling and walking and one for "dress."
13. Maps
14. Swimwear
15. Money pouch
16. Optional items: pajamas, sun glasses, warm sweater, writing material, camera, sewing kit and such.

In addition to the items on the "motel" list, the hosteler will need the following gear.

HOSTEL

1. Valid AYH pass
2. Sheet sleeping sack or two sheets and a pillow case for use with hostel blankets.
3. Mess kit or plate, cup, knife, fork, spoon and dish towel

The camper will need the items on the "motel" list plus the following gear.

CAMPING

1. Sleeping bag
2. Groundcloth
3. Cook set
4. Flashlight
5. Day pack
6. Swiss army pocket knife
7. Plastic containers for food
8. Tent or tarp
9. Foam pad or air mattress.
10. Stove and fuel.

If you camp, you may elect not to carry dress clothes. Even if you are not camping you may look upon dress clothes as excess baggage, but many bike travelers like to have clothes that are appropriate for any restaurant, cathedral or museum. And it's a great boost to morale after a hot dusty day on the road to clean up and dress up for an evening in town.

The ideal fabrics for your clothes are ones that look good, don't wrinkle, and that launder well. Double knits, drip-dry fabrics and various others meet these criteria. Coordinate the colors so you can mix and match your outfits. Darker colors with a pattern offer the advantage of spots not showing.

Be sure to test all of your cycling clothes while actually cycling. Some look good but turn out to be uncomfortable because of scratchy material, seams that irritate, turtle necks that tickle, or legs that bind. Short shorts that allow the inside of your legs to rub on the saddle are real losers.

The various places where duffel can be carried on a bicycle are limited. The best way to carry your equipment is in panniers suspended from carriers mounted over the front and rear wheels. Rear panniers are readily available at bike and sports shops, but front panniers are a bit harder to find. A handlebar bag is very convenient as you can pull out a snack while riding. It's also ideal for items often used along the way. If it has a map case on the top you will fall in love with this useful item. There are three general ways of attaching handlebar bags: strapping directly to the handlebars, using an adapter made of heavy steel wire, or employing a special bracket attached to the bicycle. The first type eliminates

many comfortable hand positions on the handlebars and is not recommended. Of the other two I prefer the latter because of the ease with which it can be removed from the bicycle.

Don't put too much weight in your handlebar bag or your bike may develop a shimmy at higher speeds. A good general rule is to limit the weight placed in the front panniers and handlebar bag to one fourth of the total. Caution must also be exercised in the amount of weight placed on top of the rear carrier. This is the most obvious spot to carry duffel on a cycle, but too much weight there causes the bike to become topheavy. It's best to reserve this spot for something light and bulky like a sleeping bag and/or sleeping pad.

About the only other places where duffel can be carried on a bicycle is in a bag suspended from the back of the saddle (be careful about getting your load topheavy) or in a thin bag suspended from the top tube. If you get overly zealous in stuffing things into such a bag it becomes too thick and your knees hit it with every pedal stroke. So use restraint or you will have the sorest knees in the business. A backpack is not recommended. It places the weight too high and puts an extra strain on your body. You may, however want to have a small day pack with you for hiking use or to carry food purchased for the evening meal or for carrying your camera. Cameras are not forgiving of the bouncing inherent to a bicycle so using your body to cushion their ride is a fine way to protect them.

The carriers that are required to hold front and rear panniers should be sturdily constructed of a non-rusting metal. Ones made of aluminum alloy have proved themselves over the years. Rear carriers are easy to find but front carriers are about as hard to find as front panniers. One problem with many rear carriers is that their forward ends slip down when loaded. This occurs because the forward end of the carrier is attached to the seat stays of the bicycle by a clamp that depends on friction. Wrapping the two seat stays with cloth tape before attaching the clamp may help, but the permanent answer is to devise some sort of nonslip device. This will be a strip of rigid metal about three inches long that connects the carrier to the bolt

that holds the rear brake in place.

Carriers for the rear wheel come in two general styles, namely those with one and those with two braces. The braces are the rods that attach the carrier to the rear hub area of the bike. The two-brace model is definitely stronger and is better at keeping flapping panniers (for shame!) out of the spokes, but unless you plan to haul very heavy loads the one brace models will do nicely and will last for years. Carriers for the front wheel sometimes do double duty in that they hold the front panniers and also offer support to the bottom of the handlebar bag.

A clever method of packing that is used by many of the old hands at bike touring is to place the most often needed items where they are easy to get at, and to place all items so they can be reached without a tug of war. Games of tug played with something jammed into the bottom of a pannier bag are both counterproductive and frustrating. The secret, then, is to place snacks, rain wear, first aid and bike repair kit in the handlebar bag, in side pockets or on the top of the panniers so they can be in hand in a matter of seconds.

A very good system for actually packing your panniers is to file things vertically, with the top of each item visible. This makes everything easy to identify and easy to reach. For extra protection you can place each item in a plastic bag and secure with rubber bands. A rain cape or windbreaker jacket can be tightly folded and placed horizontally across the top of the vertically filed items. Try to balance the weight between the left and right panniers so your bike won't take on a list to port or starboard. And be remorseless about cutting out frills and extras. You don't need a pound tube of toothpaste!

A well packed pannier will not get tangled in your spokes—because the equipment fills the panier snugly with no loose corners to flap in the breeze. Buckles, zippers and snaps have all been successfully used to close panniers. My preference runs to buckles, with zippers as a second choice. Panniers are secured to the bicycle's carriers in a wide range of ways. A favorite design simply drapes across the carrier like saddlebags across the back of a horse. Others are held in place by the rat-trap on the carrier or by straps, pins or clips. Even the kind

that drapes across the carrier should be firmly attached. Before buying any panniers be sure you understand how they attach to the bicycle. Also see how long it takes you to remove them as this will be necessary on some trips as when shipping the bike or staying at hostels. If a sleeping bag is carried on top of the carrier it can be held in place with web or elastic straps. I like web straps because they hold the load in a positive manner that is not likely to come undone under stress or wiggle fretfully as you ride. Be sure your sleeping bag is in a waterproof bag.

Carrying complete camping equipment on a bicycle is perhaps the greatest challenge. If three or four are traveling as a group, split up the community items like the cook set and stove to reduce the weight per individual. Unless you are pedaling in remote areas, it's best to purchase food every day or two. You will, however, want to carry a few staples like sugar, salt and drink powder in well-sealed unbreakable containers. It's also a good idea to carry a few emergency food items for the devastating day when you ride up to the only store along your route to dis-

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American Youth Hostels believes the best way to see the outdoors is to travel outdoors "Under your own steam!"



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cover that it's closed. Emergency foods could include any favorite dehydrated or freeze dried back packing foods or supermarket items that are light in weight, nourishing, and nonspilling.

The total weight of your duffel depends on a multitude of factors. If you go the motel route; aim to keep your weight well under 20 pounds. The hosteler will need to add a few pounds to that total. The bicycle camper has the hardest time with weight and bulk. Three major variables for the camper are whether a tent is needed, whether a heavy sleeping bag is required, and whether food for several days must be carried. Depending on the answers to these questions, your panniers will weigh from 25 to 40 pounds for a cycle camping trip.

Your first attempt at packing your bike may not be a rousing success, but take heart. As you get experience, refine your equipment and discover what things can be left behind you will find your panniers will get smaller, lighter and neater. Then you will be ready to pedal away the miles with panniers as light as your heart.

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