lonely planet

"Holiday of your lifetime"

Forbes

"Adventures that could change your life"

Outside

"Blood, sweat, and cheers"

Velo news

"TDA Global Cycling sells epics"

"Specialist in long-distance trips"

TDA STARTER KIT

FEBRUARY 2024

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TDA GLOBAL CYCLING – TOUR D'AFRIQUE LTD.

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tdaglobalcycling.com

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1.0 WELCOME

Welcome to the TDA Starter Kit. We believe there is no better way to experience the amazing scenery, history and cultures of the world than from the seat of a bicycle.

Once you have registered for one of our tours this should be the first document you read. The information below is designed to help you prepare for your cycling adventure of a lifetime. It explains the logistics of the tours, the services provided, and what is required for you to complete your journey safely. All registered riders will also receive a series of bulletins in their online registration portal (MyTours) at our website, in the months leading up to the start of their tour. These bulletins will include more details on and updates to the information in this kit – so please check MyTours on a regular basis.

If you have any questions regarding any of the information in this kit, please don't hesitate to contact our office by phone at +1 416 364 8255 or info@tdaglobalcycling.com.

From all of us at TDA Global Cycling – WELCOME! We appreciate your business and look forward to providing you with what we hope will be an experience you will remember for the rest of your life.

1.1 PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

Participants must:

- be at least 18 years old
- have completed our health & fitness questionnaire (if you are 75 years of age or older, there is an additional health form to be completed by your doctor)
- have signed all the required documents, read all the bulletins and completed all the forms in MyTours
- have purchased travel medical insurance for the trip
- have paid their entry fee in full

1.2 REGISTERING FOR A TOUR ON OUR WEBSITE

The registration fee is US$150. Since our tours do sometimes sell out, the registration fee is the best way to hold your place on the tour until the entry fee payment deadline.

We recommend registering 4 to 6 months prior to the start of a tour. This way you take full advantage of our support and our bulletin system. These rider-only bulletins contain important information to help you get started on your journey with us. From travel insurance and travel visas, to what to pack and what to expect, there is a lot to prepare for and educate yourself on in the months leading up to the tour.

Of course for some people there are reasons that they may not be able to register this early. The payment deadline is 90 days before the start of a tour and so this is also the deadline for registration. We do accept late registrations after this date as long as there are spaces still available.

Click here to see the step by step process to registering on our website.

1.3 PRE-TOUR COMMUNICATIONS

MyTours and Email Bulletins

After registering, the first thing you should do is to set up your MyTours account (if you haven't already). This is your online portal where you will have access to all the forms required for the tour. Once logged into MyTours, your dashboard will display copies of all the bulletins to be read, forms to be completed, as well as payment information, Terms & Conditions, your Release, and your Confirmation of Terms & Conditions - all to be signed.

We start sending out the information bulletins to registered riders six to eight months before the start of the tour. These arrive in your email, but are also available in your MyTours account. Once you mark them as read in MyTours, they are moved to your Past Bulletins tab to help you keep your Dashboard up to date and clutter free. This is also true for forms you have completed – they get moved to the 'Completed Forms' tab.

Facebook Group

Our office will set up a private Facebook group for the registered riders of your tour. This is an excellent way to meet your fellow riders and to share ideas and knowledge with each other. Often the questions you have can be answered quickly by your fellow cyclists in the group.

For any questions your fellow riders can't answer please feel free to call or email our office.

Office Support

From what types of tires to bring, to helping you decide what insurance to choose, or why you are getting an error message on MyTours, we are here to help. If we don't have an immediate answer to a question, we will check with our friends, and local support crews around the world to get you the best answer we can. For example – being based in Canada, we may not know who the best travel insurance provider in Germany, or Australia is, but we can connect you with someone in your area who probably knows – either a former rider or a travel professional.

1.4 IMPORTANT DATES

- **6 Months** prior to tour departure: end of the full tour early payment discount. The amount varies by tour. Please see the respective tour page on our website for details.
- **5 Months** prior to tour departure: Health & Fitness Questionnaires due.
- **3 Months** prior to your tour start (full tour and sectional riders): Rider entry fee due. All forms must be completed online in your MyTours registration portal.
- **7 days** - for late entries (those registering after the payment deadline), payment is due within 7 days of registering.

"Your tours are for the independent, adventurous and fun seeking riders who thrive on being thrust into many unknown situations." – Ruth Grathwohl (Canada)

2.0 FEES

Registering on our website with a credit card is the first step to committing to joining a tour. Registration costs $150 US. The registration fee is non-refundable and non-transferable.

Registration holds your place on the tour until the final payment deadline, and gives you access to all the important information found in MyTours.

Full tour and sectional entry fees and discounts can be found on the respective tour's web page. Most full tours offer an early payment discount. For sectional riders, there is a 10% discount for those who do two or more sections of the same tour. On some of our tours with hotels, a single supplement is available for an additional fee if you wish to have a room all to yourself.

To recognize and reward our returning clients we offer generous alumni discounts:

Alumni Discount	
2nd Tour	5% off
3rd Tour	6% off
4th Tour	7% off
5th Tour	8% off
6th Tour	9% off
7th and all future Tours	10% off

These discounts apply to both sectional and full tour riders. For example, if you have taken part in three tours with us in the past, then you qualify for a 7% discount on your next tour.

Your entry fee is refundable up to a certain date, as shown in the table below:

Days Before Start	Refund	Credit
90+	90%	100%
30-90	25%	50%
0-30	0%	25%
after start	0%	0%

Please refer to the terms & conditions for all the entry fee rules.

"This adventure was the most remarkable experience of my life." – Tom Bell (Canada)

2.1 PAYMENT OF ENTRY FEE

Please note that our legal name is Tour d'Afrique Limited, and this must be used as the beneficiary's name on all wire transfers. Should you have any questions regarding your payment please do not hesitate to contact us at: info@tdaglobalcycling.com.

Your tour invoice shows your exact entry fee with any additional charges and/or discounts applied. You will be notified by email when your invoice is ready, and it will also be available in your MyTours dashboard.

Each of our tours is priced in either US Dollars ($) or Euros (€), and this will be the currency used on your invoice. However, you may pay your entry fee in any of the following currencies:

- Canadian Dollars ($)
- US Dollars ($)
- Euros (€)
- British Pounds (£)
- South African Rand (R)

Please use the instructions in our 'How to Pay' document (found on your MyTours account) to arrange payment by one of the following methods:

- Bank wire transfer to Tour d'Afrique Limited (in CAD, USD, EUR, or GBP)
- Bank wire transfer to our South African account (in Rand)
- Personal cheque payable to 'TDA Global Cycling' (in US or Canadian dollars only) – all cheques should be mailed using tracking
- Interac e-transfers or direct bank deposit (for Canadian clients only) – please alert us by email once completed

Unfortunately, due to high credit card processing fees, we do not normally accept entry fee payments by credit card. When we do, we have to charge a 4% fee to cover the transaction costs.

2.2 WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE ENTRY FEE

Here is a general overview of what is included and what services we provide to you on all TDA tours. Make sure you review all the related specific tour information found on our website:

- Pre-tour information bulletins and customer support
- Accommodations throughout the tour plus one night accommodation prior to the first day of cycling
- Food on cycling days except for dinner on the night we arrive at our rest day locations, and no meals on rest days
- Staff typically include a tour leader, chef (on camping tours), bike mechanic, and other support staff as needed. Tours that in areas without reliable and easily accessible health care facilities also have a medic on staff
- Additional local support staff such as drivers and translators are hired as needed
- 'Sweep' rider (more about this below)

- Vehicle support to carry baggage and to transport sick/injured/tired riders
- Daily description of the route with navigational aids (GPS tracks) as well as a pre-ride briefing
- Tour-specific cycling jersey at the end of the tour or section
- Assistance at the start and end with unpacking/packing your bike (we supply the bike box at the end of your tour)
- Celebratory final dinner and slideshow

2.3 WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED IN THE ENTRY FEE

- Flights
- Airport transfers
- Extra nights accommodation before the tour start
- Visas and any related border fees (requirements vary by tour and rider's nationality)
- Bicycle, spare parts, gear & accessories
- Equipment such as a tent, camping mattress and sleeping bag (for camping tours)
- Travel insurance
- Personal medical supplies (Expedition level tours will have a supply of emergency medical equipment maintained by the tour medic)
- Meals on rest days plus dinner on the nights before rest days
- Side trips on route and souvenirs (optional)
- Hotel upgrades along the route (optional)
- Gratuities for field staff (optional)

3.0 TOUR PREPARATIONS AND PAPERWORK

3.1 PASSPORT & VISAS

You must have a regular (not a temporary) passport that is valid for at least six months following the end of your tour, with several blank pages available to be filled with visas as required (up to six blank pages required for the Silk Route for example). Always safeguard your passport. Make copies of the ID and visa pages and keep these separate from your passport.

Visa requirements for each country that your tour passes through depend upon your nationality. Information on specific visas required will be included in the rider bulletins.

We will be there to assist you in this process, but it is the responsibility of each participant to verify and obtain the visas required as they pertain to their nationality. Many residents of western countries will not need visas for most European and other 'western' countries, but will require them for many countries in Asia, Africa, and South America. Some visas must be obtained in advance, while others can be obtained online (e-visa), or on arrival at the border (again depending on your nationality and the country in question). This information can be confirmed through the nearest embassies representing the countries you will be travelling through. When applying for visas in advance, make sure that the dates and validity cover the time when you will be in each country. Embassy staff do make mistakes.

Read more on everything you need to know about travel visas. https://tdaglobalcycling.com/2020/10/getting-visas-for-your-cycling-tour-everything-you-need-to-know/

3.2 TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is required that all riders have proper travel insurance that covers medical treatment and other costs associated with accidents and illnesses, including repatriation back home. There are a wide variety of policies available. Make sure that your policy includes cycling as an activity, and that your policy is for all the countries on your tour and includes the entire period that you will be away from home. We highly recommend that your insurance also covers trip interruption and cancellation. This is in case you are forced to cancel after the payment deadline (cancellation insurance) or if you have to leave the tour before the end of your ride due to medical or other reasons (interruption insurance). We also recommend baggage insurance to cover any lost or damage to your bicycle or gear. Some policies specifically exclude bicycles so check your policy carefully.

You should always purchase your chosen travel insurance as soon as possible and ideally the same day when you pay your entry fee and/or airfare for the tour, in order to ensure you are covered in case of unforeseen circumstances. More information on travel insurance will be included in a bulletin sent to registered riders.

Read more about travel insurance in this blogpost. https://tdaglobalcycling.com/2020/10/travel-insurance-for-cyclists-everything-you-need-to-know/

3.3 MEDICAL - BEFORE DEPARTURE

In the months leading up to your tour – especially for our longest tours – it's important that you deal with any lingering medical or dental needs that you may have. Visit your doctor and dentist to make sure you are in good health. If you wear glasses or contact lenses, take a spare pair along with your written prescription. If you take prescription medication, ensure you bring an adequate supply. For your own safety, take time before the trip to educate yourself on the health and safety issues of each of the countries we are passing through. Buy the necessary medications, and get the needed vaccinations. Make sure to pay attention to the detailed medical bulletin that we send to the registered riders on each tour.

Immunizations (for Adventure and Expedition level tours)

It is of utmost importance that you protect yourself against preventable diseases. Every participant should visit their local travel medical clinic or doctor's office at least two months before your departure to determine which vaccinations you require, based on where you are traveling. There are some countries where tropical diseases are common, and your doctor may recommend other vaccinations or medications for you as well. So wherever you are cycling with us in the world, be sure to have a chat with your medical provider(s) first.

"It's a cyclist's utopia. These trips are about being on your bike and experiencing far off lands one pedal stroke at a time while creating lasting friendships through shared experiences and some hard work. Good Times!" – Robb Hickey (USA)

3.4 ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

The start and end dates indicated for the tours are always the first and last cycling days. Riders should plan on arriving a few days before the start of their ride. This will give you enough time to recover from your flight, attend the important rider orientation meetings, organize your stuff, reassemble your bike with the assistance of our mechanic, have a warm-up ride, and explore the local tourist sites.

Further details on how to book your personal nights at the hotel in the start city will be included in a bulletin to registered riders, as will information on the name and location of the group hotel.

All sectional riders joining later in the tour will be given instructions on where to meet the tour. Our staff will provide you a cardboard bike box (or suitable alternative) upon your departure from the tour and the tour mechanic will assist you in packing your bike into the box.

You might want to watch this helpful video we put together on boxing your bike:

https://tdaglobalcycling.com/2016/07/how-to-box-your-bicycle-for-your-next-cycle-touring-adventure/

We do not provide airport pickups since riders arrive throughout the week before the tour starts and on a variety of different airlines from many departure points around the globe. In most cities where you are arriving the simplest thing to do is to arrange an airport transfer in advance so that a car large enough for you and your bike box is waiting for you. Please feel free to check with us for advice related to the city where you are arriving.

Flying with Your Bike

We have had many hundreds of cyclists fly with their bikes in a disposable cardboard box to the tour start location year after year, and with a bit of planning and preparation it should be a breeze. You will be glad to be on your own bike exploring new environments, as opposed to a bike supplied by a tour company that hasn't been properly fitted to you.

Here is further information on travelling with your bike:

https://tdaglobalcycling.com/2020/09/traveling-with-your-bicycle-everything-you-need-to-know/

We do not recommend shipping your bike ahead. This is much costlier and will require time to process it through customs; significant import duties may also be applied by the local authorities.

4.0 ON TOUR

4.1 TOUR TYPES

Our wide range of tours are divided into three main categories: *Touring*, *Adventure*, and *Expedition*. As you move up from *Touring* the cycle tours become more challenging both in physical exertion, but also in environmental factors.

It is important to understand the general differences so that you can set your expectations appropriately. These categories are a rough guideline and there are many unique characteristics on each of our tours. We encourage everyone to research each option carefully and choose the tour that appeals most to you.

Tours in the *Touring* category typically average around 100km per day and language and cultural differences are usually not as challenging to overcome. Modern amenities are usually close at hand.

Adventure category tours tend to have more cultural and language challenges and longer daily distances.

The *Expedition* category includes our most ambitious and challenging adventures where access to amenities is often limited, living conditions can be basic, and daily challenges are the norm.

You can review the different tour types in more details on our website.

"If you have an adventurous spirit and enjoy cycling, then TDA Global cycling is for you. See the world and make new friends. The experience will change you forever." – Cindy Smith (USA)

4.2 DAILY ROUTINE

"This was my first bike tour I was really worried I would be too slow. I was also nervous about joining the group not knowing anyone else. I found there were riders of all speeds and I was never the slowest. All the riders were friendly and it was easy to make friends, a number of who I am in regular contact with. The tour staff were all fantastic, friendly, supportive, knowledgeable and helpful." – Kaye Hudson (NZ)

On cycling days, wake up times will be early but will fluctuate with the changing time zones, hotel breakfast times, climates and hours of daylight. Each evening before dinner, the staff will host a rider meeting. This will cover the following day's route, including navigation, hazards, interesting sites and accommodations.

After dinner it is your choice to retire for the evening, to socialize with the group or to explore the local community.

On rest days, you will be staying in a variety of hotels or campsites depending on the tour. We plan our rest days in destinations that have cultural, historical and natural significance wherever possible. While taking in the splendors of the rest day sights, riders will also be busy dealing with laundry, internet, shopping, eating and, of course, getting a good night's sleep.

Camping Tours

While breakfast is being prepared riders will pack up their tent and other personal belongings and load it into the support vehicles. Then breakfast is typically open for 30 minutes after which riders can depart for the day's journey. Approximately half way through the day's ride our lunch vehicle will provide simple and nutritious ingredients for riders to make sandwiches. There will also be water, fresh fruit and, on select tours, energy drinks or juice. Riding into camp at the end of each day, you will find our support vehicles and kitchen. Locate your equipment and set up your tent.

Hotel Tours

Your bags should be packed and loaded in the support van before heading to breakfast. After breakfast at the hotel, it's time to set off for the morning's ride. If your tires need pumping, or bike needs adjustments, riders should try to do this before breakfast so that the support vehicles are able to get on the road promptly.

When you finish a day's ride and arrive at the next hotel, you will find a white board with instructions for checking into your room, time for group meals, and other important info. The remainder of the afternoon can be spent exploring the sites, local restaurants, catching up on the internet or your laundry or just relaxing.

"I had the time of my life - felt well taken care of by a very competent, young, laid-back crew who worked very well as a team. I laughed a lot, both with the staff and with the other riders, and made fast friends as well. Also, these TDA trips are an excellent way to manage weight and stay fit."

– Yvonne Goldsmith (USA)

Sweep Rider

Each day one of our staff is assigned as the 'sweep' rider. That means they will be on their bike, riding behind the very last riders in the group throughout the day.

Sweep riders are instructed to stay no more than five minutes riding time behind the last rider(s). Typically, they keep their space so that the rider(s) do not feel pressure to cycle at a certain speed. This system is useful so that the rest of our staff know where the riders are along the route, but it is not a perfect system. The sweep can easily ride past and not notice if you are stopped off route, therefore whenever it's safe to do so leave your bike near the roadside making it easy for the passing 'sweep' to spot.

What to Expect While Riding

"Just go for the adventure. Epic, emotional, intense, rewarding, enjoyable." - Francois-Louis Comyn (Belgium)

Our tours provide a framework of services to keep you safe and healthy as you travel while also allowing you the freedom to cycle and explore each day as you wish.

These are not fully guided tours.Most of our tours will require you at some point to step out of your comfort zone and deal with a variety of challenges. This philosophy not only allows us to keep our tour cost reasonable, but, more importantly, it also adds an element of freedom and adventure that is often missing on other guided trips.

Daily routes, distances, and other stage details are not definite and can be changed on short notice by the tour leader. All riders must accept that the route of the tour is on an open course. There are no guarantees that the route will be immune from traffic mishaps, unexpected deviations or potentially dangerous unknowns.

The need for patience and flexibility is essential. There will be days that do not go as smoothly as you might have hoped as well as days full of frustrations, unexpected difficulties and challenges.

On some of our *Expedition* level tours like the South American Epic or the Silk Route, don't be surprised if you find yourself in one of the following predicaments:

- A herd of camels or cattle blocks the road.
- You are cheered on by a group of school children one day, only to be pelted by stones from a similar gathering the following day.
- You miss a turn and end up having to cycle an extra 10 km, backtracking in order to reach the finish.
- You slow down to a near standstill as you navigate through the crowds in a village on market day.
- The support vehicle containing your bags gets stuck and after a long day in the heat, you are forced to wait for hours in your cycling gear until the support vehicle finally arrives at camp.

Riding Rules

The emphasis on our cycling tours is always on safety and fun for all those involved. In addition, respect for the staff, your fellow cyclists, and the local people, at all times, is essential.

Here are the riding rules for our tours:

1. Number plate must be visible on your bicycle.
2. You must wear a helmet whenever riding a bicycle.
3. You are not allowed to start cycling before dawn or continue riding after dark.
4. You should not make a purposeful deviation from the set route of the stage.
5. You are not allowed to hold onto or draft a vehicle at any time while cycling.
6. You must obey the local traffic regulations at all times.
7. You must not ride while under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs.
8. It's never ok to litter.
9. Verbal abuse or physical violence directed towards staff, fellow riders or local citizens is never acceptable.

Navigation

We typically have a rider briefing prior to dinner to discuss the turn-by-turn details of the following day's route, as well as highlights to look out for on the route, any hazards to expect, road conditions, accommodation information for the next day and other topics which will keep you on route and prepared for the ride.

In the weeks before the tour, you will receive the GPS tracks for each stage through the Ride With GPS app (RWGPS), which you can use on your smartphone or GPS device. These GPS tracks also include the turn by turn directions, and these can be printed and brought with you to the tour, as well as copies of each day's route in map form, along with elevation profiles.

RWGPS is the main navigational tool during the tour. In addition, having the printed turn by turn notes, and a basic bicycle computer measuring distance is also beneficial in case the battery on your smartphone or GPS device runs out or stops working.

4.3 MAKING THE MOST OF EACH DAY

"The TDA team has been very professional and went out of their way to assist us riders. The tour was brilliantly organised and executed. I felt safe at all times and well looked after." – Katja Steenkamp (South Africa)

Our tours are designed to take you to places that you're unlikely to visit on your own, to places off the beaten track, in a way that most people will never experience.

Your aim should be to make the most of each day's adventure. You've likely invested a lot of thought, planning and money into your trip. Once you've landed at your starting point, take a moment to reflect on the incredible experience that you are about to embark on. You will be amazed at how fast it goes by!

Among the real joys of traveling by bicycle are the freedom to determine your own pace and to immerse yourself in new surroundings, taking in the sights, smells, and sounds of the fascinating locales you will pass through. Try not to get so caught up in making it to your day's destination that you miss the pleasures of the journey. Stopping in villages to meet the people or to visit a celebrated local attraction will only add colour and flavour to your overall experience. Often the unexpected surprises and speed bumps turn into the best memories.

Adventure travel is all about being spontaneous and relishing the unexpected.

Expedition Behaviour

Expedition Behaviour does not only apply to our *Expedition* level tours. NOLS – the renowned outdoor leadership school – created this term that is very relevant to all of our cycling tours. It is important that both the staff and riders understand that there is a lot about our cycling tours that can be uncomfortable, if not difficult at times, and that through working together it becomes easier. These points by NOLS are an excellent way to help set your expectations appropriately and to get the most out of the group and the experience.

- Serve the mission and goals of the group.
- Be as concerned for others as you are for yourself.
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- Support leadership and growth in everyone.
- Respect the cultures you contact.
- Be kind and open-hearted.
- Do your share and stay organized.
- Help others, but don't routinely do their work.
- Model integrity by being honest and accountable.
- Admit and correct your mistakes.

You can also read this helpful blog on the topic:

https://tdaglobalcycling.com/2020/11/how-to-thrive-on-group-cycling-adventures-developing-good-expedition-behaviour/

4.4 **FOOD**

"The landscape, scenery, great cycling and people! We had an amazing group and I made such fast and good friends that I can't wait to see again. The staff were incredible. I've never eaten so well." – Rana Freedman (USA)

Proper nutrition and a well-balanced diet are particularly important in staying healthy, especially when performing strenuous activity. If you are part of a tour with camping, we will be providing you with cooked meals prepared on site using as many local fruits, vegetables and other ingredients as are available. We serve meals that satisfy the appetites and nutritional needs of hungry riders. On cycling days, riders will be given breakfast, lunch and supper, as well as drinking water. On some *Expedition* level tours, a replenishing soup is also provided in the afternoon upon arrival at camp.

As part of their documentation each rider must make the company aware of any food allergies they have prior to the start of the tour. We try hard to accommodate dietary restrictions but at times it can be difficult in regions where supplies may be limited. There are some limitations to what diets we can support and we will be glad to discuss these with you prior to the start of the tour.

We will always ensure that there is enough water for drinking. We do not monitor the level of food intake of each rider, so we encourage all riders to eat properly and to supplement their meals with locally purchased foods or their favourite cycling snacks as they deem necessary.

On tours where we stay in hotels, dinner and breakfasts are included on cycling days and will be eaten together as a group at the hotel restaurant or a restaurant nearby. Lunches will be provided on route around the halfway point in the day. Riders are responsible for their own food on the rest days as well as dinner on a riding day prior to a scheduled rest day. This is your opportunity to sample the local cuisine.

4.5 ACCOMMODATIONS

On tours where rest days are spent in hotels the style of rooms and services provided will vary depending on the location. They are chosen to provide convenient access to necessary facilities and tourist sites. All accommodations are based on double room occupancy which is shared with another rider of the same gender. On some occasions, on our Adventure level tours, there may be more beds in a room.

Reservations are booked well in advance. For those who come as couples or with a friend, please let us know in advance who you wish to share your room with and we will be happy to arrange that. Any roommate requests must be made to the office 60 days before the beginning of the tour.
Single room supplements may be available at an additional charge, with prices determined for each section. To request a single room or to inquire about the cost of a single supplement please contact the office 90 days before the beginning of the tour.

For all tours hotel accommodation is included for the night before the tour departs and the night we arrive in the destination city. For sectional riders, accommodation on the first and last night of their section is also included but may be camping or hotel depending on the tour.

On tours where we camp on riding days, the quality of campground facilities and amenities vary. Some camping nights can be quite comfortable with a wide variety of amenities, while others will be more basic or have no facilities beyond what we supply.

Wi-Fi quality varies greatly between the various hotels on the tours. In some cases, you will have good free connectivity in your room, but in many places, this is not the case. Often smaller hotels in more remote regions will have no Wi-Fi or a very slow connection. As soon as one or two people access it and start streaming content or downloading files the internet connection quickly grinds to a halt. In these instances, be respectful of your fellow cyclists and the other hotel guests by using the Wi-Fi sparingly. When it comes to Wi-Fi be patient or better yet, unplug, head out and explore the local environment.

More tour specific accommodation information will be included in a bulletin sent to registered riders.

Read more expert tips about how to be a fantastic roommate on your cycling tour

4.6 FIELD STAFF

"Very good tour. Excellent organization all along, lots of professionalism on the part of the staff. Excellent judgement, outstanding tour director. I felt I could see the most important attractions in the countries we were crossing, which shows how well the rest days were used. I was impressed by the food." – Alain Gauvin (Canada)

Each tour's supporting infrastructure has been designed to accommodate cyclists of different abilities. Staff will include a tour leader, bicycle mechanic, a chef (on camping tours), and sometimes medics and others as needed. The total number of staff will depend on the size of the group.

Please remember that some of the staff are doing this tour for the first time and will also need time to adjust to their new lifestyle and responsibilities. Support and encouragement of the staff inevitably makes the tour a more enjoyable experience for everyone.

Tour Leader and Tour Leader Trainee

The designated tour leader has the overall responsibility for the route, the schedule, and the safety of the riders. The tour leader is typically one of our returning staff with significant leadership experience. They will often work alongside a tour leader trainee who is a more junior staff or an assistant tour leader who may also have previous tour leading experience. The evening rider briefings are usually run by the tour leader and tour leader trainee.

Chef (for camping tours)

Tour chef is one of the most demanding staff positions. It's quite a challenge to shop for and prepare all the food needed by a large group day after day. While the chef is often assisted by other staff members any help that riders can provide them, from chopping onions to bringing them a beer, will be very much appreciated!

Mechanic

All participants are expected to be capable of basic maintenance and repair of their bicycles. At the very least you should be able to change a tire, fix a flat, and clean and lubricate your bicycle. The bicycle mechanic is there to assist with more involved repairs and to ensure that everyone's bicycle is in good working order. The mechanic will be available at designated times most evenings.

Medic

On our tours in more remote or rugged environments, we have one or even two medics on staff. They are primarily there to deal with medical emergencies, but are also available on a set schedule for consultation, to assist with dressing of wounds, and other basic medical needs.

The medics will expect you to also be involved in redressing wounds, and buying your own supplies and bandages along the way as needed. The medical equipment and supplies the tour carries are for emergency use only. The tour medic cannot prescribe any medication and is only able to make suggestions based on the medications and advice you have received from your doctor.

Content Creator / Videographer

Content Creators are people with a talent for videography, photography and creative writing that travel alongside the cycling group capturing photo and video content for our website and social media accounts, and writing blog posts for our website. Depending on the scope of their project they are sometimes exempt from the other staff duties to give more time for content creating.

The Content Creator would love to sit down with you during the tour for an interview. This can be a fantastic memento of the time you spent on this cycling adventure.

But we also respect everyone's privacy and there is no obligation to be involved. Any videos produced are always posted to our YouTube channel for you to view and share. We gladly share a curated set of the photos taken during the tour for you to use however you like.

Gratuities for Field Staff

TDA prides itself on having incredible staff who become an integral part of the success of the tour. They are part of a service industry where tips are an expected way of receiving thanks. At the end of your adventure, and after seeing them work hard day after day, you and your riding colleagues might be thinking about what sort of tip would be appropriate.

Tipping is something the whole group of riders may wish to discuss together as the end of the tour draws near or it might be something you prefer to do on your own.

As a general guideline, you could consider tipping an equivalent of 5% or more of your entry fee, to be split between the different staff on the tour.

4.7 SUPPORT VEHICLES

The total number of vehicles and the types of vehicles on a tour varies and is dependent on factors such as group size and difficulty of terrain. In general, you can expect there to be at least two vehicles. In Europe, North America and on the Silk Route there will typically be two cargo vans; one of which will carry the riders' daily bags and act as the lead van (checking the route, and running errands). The other vehicle will carry the permanent bags and serve as the lunch vehicle.

> *"TDA really has their act together. The trucks, the kitchen, and the route were amazing and the staff were inspiring in how hard they all worked, yet retained their sense of humour."* – Steven DeGroot (USA)

In Africa and South America we have our own overland and 4x4 vehicles (pictured above) that will transport all baggage, food and water. In Asia we typically sub-contract local vehicles and drivers. Space on the support vehicles is always limited and so we expect the riders to respect our baggage policy and understand that we do not have room to fit all the riders in the vehicles.

Should anyone be unable to cycle due to injury, illness, fatigue or mechanical failure, the support vehicles will transport the rider and their bike. However, it is generally expected that every rider will be on their bike each day for a least a portion of the day.

The vehicles are essential not only for what they carry, but also for the security they provide. They are able to move the tour away from a potentially insecure situation, respond to emergencies in remote regions, transport sick or injured riders to the nearest medical facility, and provide first aid equipment if needed.

"What better way to escape from the living reality than to have someone prepare your delicious nutritious meals, send you out on your bicycle every day with a printed list of directions to your destination offering a fresh challenge and whatever surprises found en route! Bliss. Beware, you may have to return home at the end." – Sally Hough (UK)

5.0 HEALTH & SAFETY

Staying healthy and safe while traveling in a group through a variety of environments requires you to plan ahead, listen to the staff advice, and to address any issues as soon as they arise.

5.1 STAYING HEALTHY

Hygiene

When travelling with a group of this size, who live and eat together, hygiene is crucial. Hand washing before meals and after using a bathroom is imperative to prevent the transmission of communicable illnesses among the group – especially at our roadside lunches and on our camping tours. It is recommended that riders bring a small personal supply of hand sanitizer. Thoroughly cleaning dishes (on camping tours) and having a heightened awareness of your personal hygiene is important for your own health and that of your cycling friends. Listen to the advice of your tour leader and wash your hands often.

Environmental

Use a sunscreen that is sweat and water resistant with an SPF of 30 or more and reapply it several times during the day. Check the label to make sure your sunscreen protects against both UVA and UVB exposure. Remember to apply sunscreen to ears and neck, and to use lip protection as well.

On hot days, it is also important to hydrate frequently to prevent heat stroke. Take breaks in the shade and don't push yourself too hard whenever possible. Use common sense and remember that you need to pace yourself.

In contrast, there will inevitably be some cold and wet days during the tour. Be sure to pack the appropriate gear for all occasions. On cold days, you may not be as thirsty, but you must remind yourself to keep hydrated.

Tour specific weather and environmental info will be included in a bulletin to registered riders.

Illness

It is not uncommon to experience gastro-intestinal problems at some point during the trip as your body adjusts to the new microbial-environments, new food, new lifestyle and increased levels of physical activity. On some of our longer, tougher tours fatigue related illnesses can occur. It is important to pay close attention to what your body is telling you. Work in conjunction with the staff medic and take appropriate decisions regarding your personal health. On our tours without a medic, speak with our staff as soon as you feel unwell and they will decide with you whether to take you to a local hospital or clinic. As the tour is moving to a new location daily, it's important to be proactive and deal with illness at its onset.

"This was the hardest but most fulfilling challenge I have ever undertaken. I loved it." – Richard Salmon (United Kingdom)

5.2 STAYING SAFE & DEALING WITH EMERGENCIES

Part of safety in an unfamiliar place is having respect for the local culture and its people, and abiding by the local laws and customs. During the tour, always follow the safety advice given by the staff. As with all cycling on shared roads, your greatest hazard is motorized vehicles, therefore wearing appropriate safety/visibility gear is recommended. Be vocal and use hand signals to warn others riders of vehicle and other dangers you encounter.

Riders are responsible for their own safety during the day. While the tour route has been deliberately chosen to avoid fast and heavy traffic as much as possible, there will be stretches, especially around larger towns and cities, where the other users of the road can pose a real danger.

Be sure to slow down when you are starting a steep and/or rough descent, and when entering a village or urban area. Pedestrians may wander across the road in front of you without looking or they may not anticipate your speed correctly. Many of the accidents that happen on tours are due to riders not cycling defensively.Unless you are an exceptional athlete, riding hard and fast every day will eventually wear you down and detract from your overall experience. It is very important to listen to your body when it's telling you to take it easy or even to take a day (or half day) off your bike.

Injury

Injuries resulting from falling off the bike are typically superficial abrasions and bruises. Such injuries can be dealt with by our staff. In the event of a more serious injury requiring hospital or long term care the rider may be required to leave the tour to ensure proper recovery. Our support staff do their very best to assist you after an injury and get you to care but their responsibilities for the rest of the group must be kept in mind. This means at some point in the event of an extended hospital stay after our staff have made appropriate arrangements, you may be left in the care of hospital staff or with a family member who comes to stay with you.

Each rider must bring and ride with a small personal first aid kit to deal with minor injuries and ailments that occur while cycling.

In the Event of an Emergency

The tour will usually be within reasonable distance of a hospital or clinic. Our staff and vehicles will respond to emergencies and transport any injured persons. In some areas we will also utilize local ambulances and emergency services when necessary.

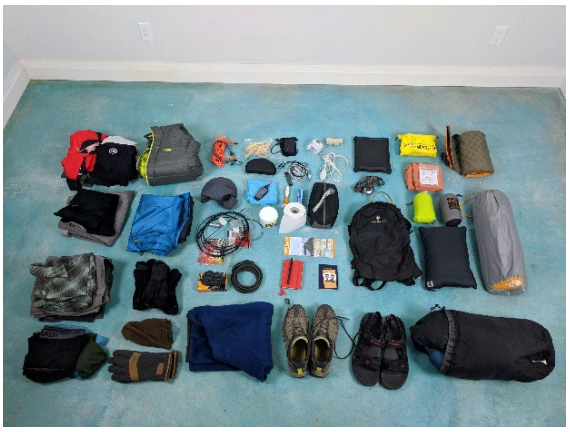
In the event of an emergency, having the proper supporting documentation will ensure that the proper care is administered quickly. Keeping a digital copy and a hard copy of your passport and visas, your health insurance and your vaccination booklet(s) will provide a failsafe should the originals be misplaced or lost. It is also very important to provide the tour accurate information regarding your next of kin and insurance who we can contact during an emergency.

Read our 8 Basics to Health & Safety on a Long Distance Cycling Tour:

https://tdaglobalcycling.com/2020/12/8-basics-to-health-and-safety-on-a-long-distance-cycling-tour/

6.0 PACKING

In deciding what to bring, please use common sense and consideration for the other participants as the support vehicles have limited space.



Our bulletins will provide details on:

- How to get your bike and gear to the start
- Daily and permanent bag system (for camping tours)
- How to organize your stuff on tour
- Tour-specific packing list
- Tour-specific weather and how it relates to your packing needs.

In the meantime, you may want to read this blog and watch the video which gives an overview of How to Pack for a TDA Tour.

Here is a general list of what you typically need to bring on a TDA tour:

- Clothing (including casual wear, and cycling specific items)
- First aid (supply of general medications, any prescriptions, bandages, and a small first aid kit to carry while riding)
- Toiletries
- Other (unlocked smartphone, e-reader or books, camera, etc.)
- Cycling accessories, spare parts, basic tools
- For tours with camping: camping gear (tent, sleeping bag & mattress, headlamp, repair kit)

Here is a sample packing list for a camping tour and a hotel tour.

6.1 BAGGAGE LIMITS

Our baggage limits are as follows:

- **Camping tours**: two duffel bags
- **Hotel tours**: one duffel bag
- **Recommended bag size**: 90-100 litres, 15-18 kg
- **Weight and size limit**: Each bag must weigh no more than 23 kg, and be no larger than 110 litres

We will do a brief baggage check for weight and volume at the start of the tour, and the start of each section.

The items you carry on your bike, and a spare set of tires (allowed on certain tours) are not counted in the bag limits.

TDA recommends the Patagonia Black Hole 100L duffel – this is the ideal bag for all of our tours.

All duffel bags must be soft sided. Your bag should be water resistant.

6.2 WHAT NOT TO BRING

Here is a short list of some unnecessary equipment that sometimes people have mistakenly brought. With tight baggage limits, it will be important to only bring with you what is absolutely necessary.

On all tours:

- Laptops
- Dishes and cutlery
- Bike cases or bike bags
- Floor pumps
- Hair dryers, curling irons
- Bike tools (besides those on our list)
- Excess toiletries (bring enough for a week, and then re-supply throughout the tour)
- Snacks, energy powder, energy bars (beyond a 5-7 day supply)
- Excess spare parts
- Spare wheels

On camping tours:

- Full size pillows, and blankets
- Bulky sleeping bags
- Mosquito net
- Camping chairs
- Metal hammer (for pegs)

"Life is splendidly simple on tour. You ride, eat and sleep. If these are three of your favourite things, then you'll have a blast. If larking about and being hot, sweaty and a bit grubby are your thing, you'll have a blast. If new experiences, sights, sounds and challenges are your thing, you'll have a blast." – Sally-Anne Dunn (United Kingdom)

7.0 BICYCLE AND ACCESSORIES

Make sure you bring a bicycle that is appropriate for your tour, and in excellent working order. If you intend to use your current bicycle, it needs to be fully tuned, cleaned and ready to go. Ideally, get your bike shop to do an overhaul of your entire bike three to four weeks before your departure. Have them inspect, and if necessary replace, the drive train, pedals and bottom bracket for wear. You should ideally be starting the tour with a new cassette, chain and chainrings.

Choosing a bike is never an easy choice. A good starting point is this blog post: Choosing a Bike for a Supported Cycle Tour. Registered riders will receive more information on the terrain they will encounter on their tour. This will help in making your bicycle choice.

7.1 SEAT

Seats are a highly personal choice. If the wrong seat is chosen,it can make the trip very uncomfortable or even painful. We recommend that you test a few different seats in the months leading up to the start of the tour until you find the style that best fits your body shape and riding style. Your comfort on the seat is dependent upon four things: the seat, the seat post, your positioning on the bicycle and the padded cycling shorts that you are wearing. It is very important to take all these criteria into account when deciding on a good seat.

7.2 TIRES

On some of our tours the route is all paved, though some of the pavement may be rough including odd sections under construction. Other tours have anywhere from 10% to 40% off road, from groomed gravel to washboard, from sand to incredibly rough dirt tracks. Therefore, the most important factors in choosing a tire will be versatility and durability. A long lasting rubber compound, with deep tread depth and a Kevlar puncture resistant liner is ideal. You don't need an aggressive mountain biking tread or a high-pressure, slick, racing tire. The Schwalbe Marathon series is highly recommended, and is available for nearly all wheel sizes. On some tours you may wish to bring one set of tires for pavement sections, and a different set for off-road sections. On other tours it might be more practical to have one style of tire you use every day and a spare set of the same in the event the tire gets damaged. You will receive a bulletin containing the recommendations and the limit for spare tires for your specific tour.

Tubeless Tires

While our recommendation is that the simpler maintenance of tubed tires still makes them preferable for touring, we recognize that many riders are now using tubeless tires, including on TDA tours. If you are considering this option, we encourage you to do some reading and make sure you will be comfortable installing and repairing your tubeless tires – and always bring spare tubes regardless. This blog is an excellent starting point to deciding to go tubeless or not.

7.3 GEARING & BRAKING

Climbing and descending successfully (and safety) depends on having the right gears and brakes. We recommend that your bike is outfitted with disc brakes – either hydraulic or cable. Make sure to pack at least 2 extra sets of disc brake pads as well - and possibly more if you think you will be braking heavily on descents.

Before joining a tour, you should speak to your bike shop about your gear ratios. Do you have a wide enough range of gears to tackle the steepest climbs and fast descents? What is the largest gear range your bike can accommodate? You should aim for an easy gear ratio of 20-30 gear inches. And for riding downhill, a gear ratio of 100 inches will allow you to pedal at high speed. Your local bike shop can help you with this.

7.4 HYDRATION

You should be carrying at least 2-3 liters of water with you at all times when riding. Whether you choose to use a hydration pack, or two or more water bottles in cages, you must be able to stay properly hydrated. We generally do not provide what can be termed 'cycling industry supplements,' beyond juice or similar fluids at lunch, and carrying a very limited supply of energy drink powder or ORS (oral rehydration salts). Therefore riders who are accustomed to consuming electrolyte tablets, energy bars, gels and protein powder when cycling are advised to bring a small supply of their favourite products with them and then finding suitable substitutes during the tour. Due to our strict baggage limits, we recommend bringing no more than a one-week supply and restocking along the way. These sports energy products are readily available in many of the regions our tours traverse, including Europe, North America, Australasia and select other countries. You can also stock up on dried fruit, nuts and similar snacks and drinks when the opportunities present themselves along the route.

8.0 THE TDA FOUNDATION

The TDA Foundation is an important part of our company. The Foundation was set up at the same time as the original Tour d'Afrique cycling tour in 2003 to fulfill key elements of our mission, including raising awareness of bicycles as an alternative means of transportation and, more importantly, giving back to the communities that we cycle through.

TDA Global Cycling, through the TDA Foundation and its local partners and organizations, donates one bicycle for every full tour rider on the Tour d'Afrique.. These donations are typically made to schools, rural and peri-urban community development and health care workers or to bicycle related charities in east and southern Africa.

All told, the TDA Foundation has now donated more than 2300 bicycles to more than 70 grassroots organizations and communities in 8 African countries and India since 2003. While the TDA Foundation isn't currently accepting outside donations, we are most grateful to all our past clients and donors who enabled us to have such a positive impact on the lives of so many.

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