



# Bicycle Times

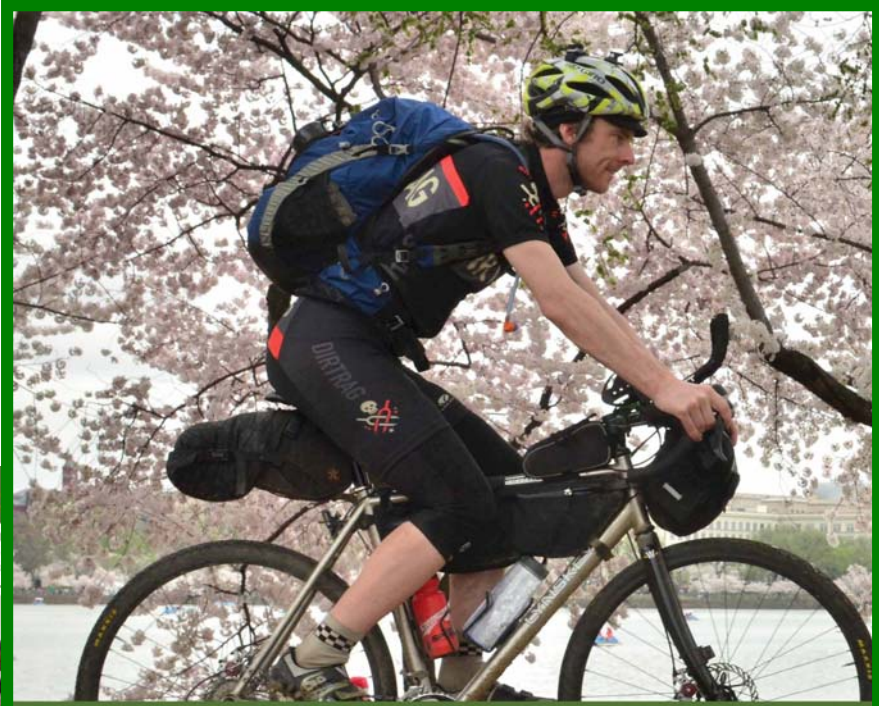
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A Bikepacking Adventure

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## LONG DISTANCE TOURING

There are all kinds of touring styles, from "ultra-prepared, pack everything, credit card." The touring set-ups that the four of us used fit into two primary racks-and-panniers set-up, and "ultralight," made popular by ultra-endurance



## ULTRALIGHT

This style uses bags that fit directly onto the bike's frame, rather than racks and panniers, to save as much weight as possible: a frame bag inside the main triangle, a large seat bag, and a handlebar bag, and sometimes a small bag for snacks behind the stem. Carousol Design Works makes saddle, handlebar, snack, and stock frame bags; Revelate Designs makes saddle, handlebar, snack, and stock frame bags (read reviews of both brands online at [www.bicycletimesmag.com](http://www.bicycletimesmag.com)). Gear must be minimalist to fit into these bags' restricted space: a bivvy sack or tarp, a light and highly compressible sleeping bag and pad, a few

extra clothing for convenience, cooking gear as shelter at Adam fit two frame bag, v a Platypus c to use locky backpack fo

## TRADITIONAL

This touring style makes use of front and rear racks with a pair of panniers on each, often with additional gear stored on top of the racks. The Surly racks, Ortlieb racks and panniers, and Brooks panniers all shown here are reviewed on the following pages. The center of the frame is left open for water bottle cages. It's best to pack panniers with heavy items at the bottom, to keep your center of gravity low. This set-up can accommodate more comfort, with a small tent (atop the rear rack), full-size sleeping bag and pad, clothing for temperature extremes plus camp extras, and plenty of food. However, it's tempting to fill all the space and end up carrying a lot of unnecessary weight—pack wisely. A backpack should be unnecessary, unless you're traveling somewhere hot and need a hydration pack for lots of water. It's not a bad idea to use thread-locker on the rack bolts when installing, to prevent them from rattling loose on rough roads, and to bring some extra bolts just in case.



Back in November, we began planning an adventure: to ride from our headquarters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to the National Bike Summit in Washington, D.C. (For more about the Summit, turn to page 18.) One of the premier rail-trail networks in the country links the two cities—the Great Allegheny Passage and the C&O Canal Towpath—so why not travel the whole way traffic-free? The goal was to "walk the walk" for bike advocacy, while getting a chance to test some bikepacking gear and several bikes in the process.

The Summit happens in March, not exactly tourist season, but fortunately the weather smiled on us for the most part. We set a fast pace on the way down, three-and-a-quarter days, and took our time coming back over five days. For advice on what to bring and how to prepare, we referred to an article in issue #4 by Justin Steiner, "Lounging in the Laurel Highlands." We also got tips on the route from Kevin Brooker's article "Touring With Kids" from issue #13 (although we didn't bring any youngsters).

What follows is a bit of advice about our route and how we packed, and a cache of thumbnail reviews on the gear we used. To help you plan your own tour, this feature, and our other touring advice articles, are collected online at [www.bicycletimesmag.com/touring](http://www.bicycletimesmag.com/touring).

## THE ROUTE

**The Great Allegheny Passage:** from outside Pittsburgh to Cumberland, Maryland, currently 141 miles in length

The Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) is a true rail-trail, meaning it is built on abandoned railway corridors. Construction began in 1986 and continues today. Construction and maintenance is handled by a coalition of seven trail organizations that together form the Allegheny Trail Alliance.

**Trail conditions:** The trail surface is crushed limestone, and the grade is never steeper than 2%. The surface can get soft in places, but is generally wide and smooth.

**Amenities:** Small towns with bed-and-breakfasts, restaurants, and convenience stores are plentiful along the trail. Be aware that many small businesses are not open on Mondays or in the off-season (November through March).

**Camping:** There are campgrounds along the trail, but you may need to book in advance and/or pay a small fee. Our favorite was Husky Haven in Rockwood, Pennsylvania ([www.huskyhavencampground.com](http://www.huskyhavencampground.com)).

**Sights:** The trail follows two picturesque, rapid-moving rivers, the

