

Brecon Beacons and Black Mountains Classics Weekend

2 big mountain days, 2 epic rides, countless mind-warping descents plus 1 large dose of our usual amazing hospitality, all within easy reach of southern England.

- The stuff you dream about - big mountain days that test man and machine
- Ride the classic Gap Road plus a monster Black Mountain's loop that should be on every mtber's hit list.
- Descents that go on forever (and ever)
- Scenery that'll take your breath away
- Luxurious, spacious, modern hostel accommodation
- Awesome food prepared on site by our own chef
- Based just 1 hour's drive from the Severn Bridge

INTRODUCTION

The Brecon Beacons are the highest mountains in Southern Britain and in easy reach of the M4 motorway, making them incredibly accessible for mtbers based in the south. Accessible, yes; but definitely not to be under-estimated – these are real mountains and the riding in the area is pretty full-on, with big climbs, awesome views and amazing descents. This trip is based in a luxury hostel in the Usk Valley, giving us a chance to enjoy the area's 2 big mountain classics.

SAMPLE ITINERARY

Friday night

Arrive at the hostel in your own time and grab a beer and a few minutes to wind down and meet your fellow riders in the lounge before enjoying sumptuous 2-course meal prepared by our own chef. Dinner is usually served at 8 to allow folk plenty of time to arrive.

Saturday

Approximate distance: 35km

Approximate ascent: 1000m

Enjoy a cooked breakfast and a selection of cereals, as well as a few coffees, and we'll then have a bit of faff time before loading bikes onto the trailer and hopping into the minibus for the short ride to the trailhead. Weather permitting, we'll ride a variation of the classic big Black Mountains tour, using the minibus to reduce the amount of climbing and tarmac at the beginning. This is definitely one of the best mtb rides anywhere in the UK, and one should be on every mtber's bucket list. We'll finish in the small town of Crickhowell, where if time allows, we can grab a quick beer before being driven back to the hostel. Back at the hostel, there will be coffee and cake as well as a hot shower awaiting us.

Saturday night will be more socialising, and more home-cooked food – plenty of opportunity to put back the calories you burned during the day.

Sunday

Approximate distance: 35km

Approximate ascent: 900m

After another cooked breakfast, more calories and more coffee, we'll roll straight out of the hostel and down to the tiny village of Talybont-on-Usk, where we'll start a variation of the famous Brecon

Beacons Gap Ride. The exact route will depend on weather and the group, but whatever we decide to do, we'll eventually climb to a 600m col in the highest mountains in the national park, and then enjoy an almost endless descent to finish. Back at Talybont, we'll use the village bike wash – yes, the village really does have dedicated bike wash facilities, before hopping on the bus for a lift back up to the hostel for more coffee and cake...

What's included?

- 2 full day's guided riding in the mountains – maximum client to guide ratio 8-1
- Transport for you and your bike to and from the trailhead where needed
- 2 nights' accommodation in a luxury hostel (Exclusive to us)
- Gargantuan cooked breakfasts to set you up for the rides
- Packed lunches to savour on the trail
- Great coffee and unlimited cake
- Sumptuous 2-course evening meals cooked by our own chef

Is this weekend for me?

The riding may be tailored a little to suit the group but definitely won't be suitable for complete beginners. You'd want to be comfortable tackling trail centre Red trails as a minimum, and happy to have go, or at least walk, more technical stuff when we come across it.

Fitness-wise, these are big days – at least 5-6 hours – with plenty of ups and downs. But we won't leave anybody behind – up or down.

If you have any concerns about your ability or fitness, please get in touch

BIKES

Your bike needs to be ready for the rigours of the mountains – steep and rocky climbs and descents. It would be well worth having it fully serviced (or doing it yourself). If there are parts you're in any doubt about, change them. This trip WILL be hard on bikes. As a minimum make sure your chain, chainset and cassette are all in decent nick and your brake pads are new or nearly new (you can always carry the old ones as spares and slot them back in later).

As a rule, a lightweight x-country bike won't be strong enough for the descents and a downhill rig will be too heavy for the climbs. There's no perfect bike but make sure you can climb and descend on it reasonably well.

We prefer to run tubeless to reduce pinch flats – a real problem on rocky terrain. Always carry at least one tube though. We also run Huck Norris tyre protectors, which have saved us countless torn tyres and dinged rims.

Tyres are important. Lightweight racing tyres won't be strong enough. We recommend good trail or all-mountain tyres such as Onza Ibex or Maxxis High Rollers.

BIKE CLEANING, MAINTENANCE AND SECURITY

The hostel has a hose so we can wash the bikes there. And on day 2, we will use the village bike cleaning facilities in Talybont.

We travel with a bike stand and a good selection of tools. If you need specific tools for your bike, please bring them.

We try not to leave the bikes unattended on the trailer, but we've got a selection of cables and locks so we can lock them if needed. If you've got a lock, please bring it. The hostel provides secure storage.

MAPS

Yup, we're guiding so you don't need them. But if you're interested in following routes on your own maps, speak to us before you buy them in case plans change and you end up with the wrong ones. If you just want printouts of where we've been when we get home, let us know and we can do this (on a non-commercial basis 😊)

ETHICS ON THE HILL

There's no getting around it, 10 mountain bikers will always be pretty conspicuous and we'll always have some impact on the landscape and other trail users. As a company, we're 100% committed to minimising this impact in every way we can. We operate a strict 'pack it out' policy for all litter (including banana skins and orange peel), and we try to leave as little trace of our passing as possible.

While we'll enjoy some epic descents and trails, we encourage our guests to always ride in control and at a speed that reflects line of sight and ability.

We'll certainly meet walkers and we want any interactions to be as positive as possible. It's important to us to give mountain bikers a good name. The Welsh Government have been quite positive about extending access to mtbers and we don't want to do anything that will jeopardise this

INSURANCE

We strongly recommend travel insurance to cover you should you get injured or fall ill before the trip or during it.

KIT LIST

Not trying to teach anyone to suck eggs but always worth having a checklist!

General

- Alcohol/drinks with dinner
- Towels
- Pyjamas/similar
- Earplugs
- Small bag to leave in the minibus Saturday with a change of clothes for after the ride

Riding kit

Some items can be shared between the group. Please let us know at the briefing on Friday night (or before) if there's anything you haven't got that you may need.

- Hydration pack big enough to carry everything in the list below – suggested size 15L to 20L
- Water and snacks – gels, energy bars, jelly babies etc
- Lunch (this will be provided but you'll need to carry it)
- Dry bag to keep everything dry inside your pack
- Mini pump for your valve type
- Inner tube (even if you use tubeless)
- Tube patches (preferably self-adhesive)
- Tubeless repair kit (if you use tubeless)
- Tyre levers
- Multi-tool
- 1 set of spare brake pads
- Rear gear hanger for your bike
- Cable ties
- Duct tape (we suggest wrapping 1m around your pump)
- Power link for your chain type and speed

- Mobile phone - in a waterproof case or plastic bag
- Small personal first aid kit
- Any medication you need

Recommended clothing

We can go through the exact requirements for the day when we have an up to date weather forecast.

- Helmet
- Knee and elbow pads
- Cycling shorts and/or waterproof shorts (or trousers)
- Wicking base layer or cycling jersey
- Mid layer (fleece or soft shell)
- Windproof and/or waterproof jacket (depending on the weather forecast)
- Insulated jacket or warm emergency layer
- Woolly hat or buff
- Riding glasses
- Gloves (worth having a spare pair if it's wet)
- Waterproof socks
- Cycling shoes (you must be able to walk in them!)