

Western Australian Mountain Bike Information Guide

*Compiled by the W.A. Mountain Bike Association
with the help of Trailswest and CALM.*

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MINISTRY OF SPORT
AND RECREATION



Western Australia
Millions Won. Thousands Helped.



WAMBA



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Warning

Mountain biking is a strenuous activity and is potentially dangerous. Make sure you are adequately prepared and preferably ride in a group. Do not ride beyond your abilities; if you doubt you are able to ride a section of trail safely, walk it instead.

cattle and disturbing wild animals is a serious offence. Leave gates as you found them, or as marked.

Most of the wild animals that you are likely to encounter in Western Australia are harmless, though even kangaroos have been known to attack if provoked, especially in breeding season, or when with young. Watch out for snakes, which are generally extremely poisonous. They will often bask on sunny parts of the trail on cold days. See the first aid section for information on how to deal with a snake bite. In some areas wild pigs may be encountered. It can be hazardous to come between a sow and her piglets.

6. Plan ahead; be prepared: Know your equipment, your ability and the area where you are riding. Be self-sufficient at all times, carry food and plenty of water, a hydro-pack is almost a necessity in Western Australia. Always wear a helmet, and consider gloves. Maintain your bicycle in good condition, and carry at least a spare tube and pump; make sure that someone in your group has a multi-tool. Be prepared for changes in weather conditions. Planning a trip well will increase your enjoyment and you won't be a burden or offence to others.

Technique

Here are some basic riding techniques which will help you get more out of your mountain biking. Always ride within your ability. It is better to get off and walk a section that you aren't comfortable with than to risk injury; with practice your skills and confidence will increase.

Balance is crucial in mountain biking, not just left-right balance, but front-back balance too. Weight over the rear wheel is what gives you traction, but you need to balance this with keeping your front wheel

on the ground. Practice moving your upper body around and see how this affects the handling of your bike.



Climbing: Most riders will do at least some of their hardest climbs out of the saddle. It's necessary to rock the bike gently with each pedal stroke in order to keep the bike in a straight line. As your right pedal goes down, rock to the left, as your left pedal goes down, rock to the right and so on. For longer hills, try climbing in the saddle, use a low enough gear to spin the pedals, and change down before you have to exert too much force on the pedals. On steep hills, you will have to adjust your body position to keep traction with the rear wheel whilst keeping enough weight on the front wheel so that you can steer the bike. Try crouching forward, just resting on the front of the saddle; with your arms, pull back on the bars rather than up.



Braking and Descents: Check your brakes before you ride! Always cover the brakes so that you are ready to slow down or stop, learn to "modulate" your brakes. This technique works like ABS on a car and will help you slow down much more quickly, keeping in control and allowing you to corner faster - as soon as you feel your tyres skidding, release the brake pressure, when the wheels are rolling again, apply more braking force. With practice, careful modulation of the front brake combined with moderate rear brake and a backwards body weight shift will allow you to stop or slow down very quickly. Make sure you can stop in the distance you can see down the trail. Remember, most of your braking force is in the front brake. Don't lock your back brake to skid! It is extremely destructive to the trail and not effective at slowing you down.

On fast descents stand up on the pedals with your feet level, lead with your

"chocolate" or best foot, this will help you keep your balance and absorb the roughness of the trail. On steep descents, you may have to move your body behind the saddle, straighten your arms and push your bum back and down. On rocky sections slow down and try to "float" the bike over the worst bumps - stand up and "think light". Allow the bike to move underneath you, following the smoothest line through the rocks while your body goes straight down the hill. Start slowly and build up your skills, don't descend anything you are not sure of; if in doubt, walk it.

Cornering: Look where you want to go, not at what you want to avoid. Bikes have a way of going wherever you look. Lean into turns with your outside pedal down and most of your body weight on it - even if you are sitting most of your weight should be on your outside pedal, you can "lead" with your inside knee to help this. Lean the bike over more than your body. Brake before corners, not in them, then start pedalling as soon as your pedals will clear the ground. Don't skid, it looks fast, but it isn't and causes significant damage to trails. The technique of "counter steering" can be useful to initiate a sharp turn, to do this "twitch" the bars in the opposite direction to which you want to turn, this will cause the bike to lean into the turn, follow with your body to complete the turn.

Shifting Gear: You should generally pick a gear that allows you to "spin" your pedals at between 60 and 90 rpm, this will allow you to ride for longer periods without getting exhausted. (Try counting your revolutions for ten seconds, then multiply by six, or get a cycle computer with a cadence function.) Try to push your feet round smoothly in a complete circle, this will give you more power. Different shifters work differently, so get the sales-

person who sells you the bike to show you how to select gears if you don't know. Lower gears are "easier" to spin on hills, while higher gears are "harder". The smallest chain ring (on the crank set, where the pedals are) is your lowest gear range, while the largest chain ring is your highest gear range. The largest cog (on the back wheel) is your lowest gear, while the smallest cog is your highest gear. It's the combination of chain ring and cog that gives you the overall gear ratio which you are using. Try shifting to a lower gear before you are in the middle of a steep hill; shifting is difficult when you have you full weight on the pedals. Try not to cross the chain, this will cause extra wear on the chain, chain rings and cogs. Crossing the chain is when you have selected the largest chain ring at the front and largest cog at the back, or when you have the smallest chain ring and smallest cog selected.

Single-track: On these narrow trails, don't look off the trail, instead focus on the trail ahead. Slow down around blind curves; other riders, hikers or equestrians may be around the corner.

Mud: Do not ride in mud! It leaves deep grooves in which water will flow, causing erosion. If you hit a small patch of mud on an otherwise dry trail, pull up lightly on the bars, and either maintain speed or pedal through. If the mud is deep, walk your bike around it. Do not try to ride around - this causes trail widening.

Sand: Similar to mud, but try a slightly higher gear than you would normally ride in. When descending through sand at high speed keep you weight back and hold the bars firmly to stop them suddenly turning. At lower speeds keep some weight on the front so that you can steer effectively. You will need to use more arm strength to keep

the front wheel straight, so be prepared.

Rocks, Holes and Bumps: When going over rocks, holes, or bumps that may trap your front wheel, you need to move your weight back so that the wheel can float over the obstacle. Sometimes, you will need to pick up the front wheel to get it over the obstacle. Your rear wheel will then just roll through the obstacle. Practice bunny hopping, this technique will allow you to lift both wheels over obstacles. To bunny hop, approach the obstacle at a fast walking pace with your pedals level, lift the front wheel then pitch your weight forwards and push back and up with your feet to lift the rear wheel. Start by lifting each wheel separately over a small stick, then as you become more skilful, learn to lift both wheels at the same time.

Water & Water Crossings: Avoid riding through creeks where possible; a tyre's passage causes sedimentation of the creek. If you must cross, maintain momentum in a low gear, and use a light touch on the handlebars. Let rocks deflect your tyre gently.



Tyre Selection and Pressure:

Western Australia has virtually unique pea gravel on many of its trails. Wide front tyres with small, stiff knobs work best in these conditions. Popular favourites are IRC Mythos and Specialised Team Master, some XC riders even use IRC Kujo down-hill tyres. Some riders also like the WTB Velociraptors. Semi-slicks are often used on the rears, IRC Mythos, Specialised Team Master and WTB Velociraptors are popular rear tyre choices. Mud is rarely a problem in most of Western Australia. Although some parts of the south west can get quite wet in July and August, the soils are generally quite sandy and do not clog tyres too badly. Many areas are quite rocky so running a high tyre pressure (45+ psi) is a good way to avoid pinch flats. In some area, thorns are a big problem, using tyre liners or slime is often a good idea unless you like mending punctures.



Basic First Aid

It is advisable to always ride with at least one other rider. Also carry a basic first aid kit.

Snake Bite: Immediately apply pressure onto the bite. Keep the person calm and completely at rest. If bitten on a limb, apply a firm roller bandage over the affected area. In addition bandage from the toes or fingertips and continue up to include the next joint above the bite. The bandage should be firm but not tight. The limb should be immobilised with a splint or sling. Once applied it should remain in place until medical care arrives (try to bring transport as near as possible to the patient). Do not wash the venom off the skin as this will assist in identification of the snake.

Ticks: Remove ticks by levering them out with tweezers, methylated spirits dabbed on the tick will help it come out. Do not squeeze or pull the tick as it may inject venom.

Heat Exhaustion and Dehydration:

Western Australia is often very hot. Carry plenty of water with you and aim to drink one water bottle per hour. A hydro pack is an excellent idea for all but the shortest rides. Symptoms of heat exhaustion and dehydration are feeling hot, faint, giddy thirsty, complaining of nausea, cramps, headache. Sufferers will appear clammy with excessive sweating, rapid breathing and pulse rate. Rest in a shady spot, sponge exposed skin with cool water and frequently drink cool water.

Sprains and Strains: Sprains occur when a ligament around a joint is over-stretched or torn. When a muscle or tendon is over-stretched or torn it is called a strain. Similar aid is required for both. Assist the person to be comfortable. Raise

injured part to reduce swelling (if a sprain). Support the injury with a firm bandage and apply a cool compress over the bandage for 10 min. Avoid any heat for up to 48 hrs.

Bleeding and Wounds: If too much blood is being lost from a wound or injury stop the flow of blood by pressing firmly on the wound with a bulky sterile dressing. Keep firm pressure on the wound for 10 min with the person resting. If the wound is on a limb, elevate it. Comfort and reassurance will slow heartbeat and reduce further loss of blood. Minor wounds should be cleaned and dressed.



Equipment Checklist

Bicycle: For off-road riding, it is recommended that you buy a true mountain bike, not a hybrid. Usually, an appropriately sized mountain bike should have around 4 inches of room between the top of the frame and your crotch when you stand above the bike with feet flat on the

ground. You should be able to reach the handlebars without feeling cramped. The height of the stem should be adjusted to put the handlebars slightly below the saddle, allowing some of your weight to shift to the front of the bike for a more balanced position. The saddle should be set at a height so that your legs reach almost full extension when you place your heel on the pedal when it is in its lowest position in line with the seat tube. Make sure you buy your bike from a reputable dealer, they will help you choose an appropriate bike of the right size. They should also offer a check-up service of the bike; after a few weeks use, gear and brake cables will stretch and will need re-adjusting.

Helmet: This is a legally necessary piece of equipment. When you buy your bike, also buy a good quality helmet which meets or exceeds the ASS helmet safety standard AS/NZS 2063. Ensure that it fits correctly and that the straps are adjusted for a snug fit. Wear your helmet whenever you ride your bike. It will save your life. Full face helmets are highly recommended for downhill events.

Water: We recommend that you carry two water bottles or a hydro pack which is also convenient for carrying tools and spares. You will lose a lot of water as you ride. Drink water to prevent dehydration.

Clothing: Dress for the weather and riding conditions. Proper cycling shorts and jerseys will all contribute to your enjoyment. Consider also a wind breaker or light jacket, especially in autumn and winter. Gloves will keep you from compressing nerves in your hand, getting blisters, and in the event of a fall, save your skin. You can ride in tennis shoes, but the soles are not stiff enough to provide enough comfort or power transfer. Try mountain bike specific cycling shoes and consider

buying clipless pedals, these will make your pedal stroke more powerful and help you control your bike over bumpy terrain. Use the correct equipment, you will be more comfortable!

Sun Glasses: to protect your eyes from both the sun, dust, stones and branches.

Spares: Make sure that you have the basics (tube, tyre levers and pump) and that your group has the rest of the items between you:

Spare tube: You don't want to be left with a long walk home.

Patch kit: Carry this for when you use your spare tube, and get another flat!

Tyre levers: You'll need these to help take your tyre off, in order to change your tube.

Small screwdriver: For adjusting derailleurs.

Spanners 8, 10mm: For a number of uses, check them against the bolts on your bike.

Allen keys: Same as above. Get a good selection, and check them against the bolts on your bike.

Chain tool: For fixing a broken chain. If you don't have it and you break your chain, you'll be walking.

Spoke wrench: For tightening loose spokes, or removing broken ones.

Multi-tool: There are many multi-tools available which have all or most of the tools listed above.

First aid kit: To fix damaged rider.

Rag: For wiping the grease off your hands.

Seat pack, bum bag or hydro pack: To keep all this stuff in.

Basic on-trail repairs

What good is carrying all these tools if you don't know how to use them? Your bike is likely to break down at some point, and it is much more convenient to fix it and ride out than it is to have to walk out. You should know how to perform basic repairs, such as fixing:

- * Flat tyres
- * Derailed chain
- * Broken chain
- * Loose or broken spokes

Get a good book, or take a class from a local bike shop.

Maintenance

You may prefer to have a shop do all your major maintenance, but there are certain maintenance tasks that need to be done often. You should learn how to do these:

- * Clean bike
- * Clean chain
- * Lubricate chain (and wipe off excess lubricant!)
- * Check and adjust air pressure in tyres
- * Adjust brakes
- * Tighten bolts
- * Lubricate cables and derailleurs
- * Check headset for play
- * Check wheels for alignment



Further Information and Where to Ride

There are many places in WA where you can ride your mountain bike. For further information, speak to the staff in your local bike shop, they should be able to give you a copy of the WAMBA calendar which comes out early each year. It lists all the races and rides through the season (March - October).

Alternatively, join your local mountain bike club and go on their organised rides. This is a great way to meet like-minded people, make new friends and find new trails to ride. The WAMBA calendar has contact details for all affiliated clubs in WA.

All the above information and much more may be found on the WAMBA web site (see below). This web site also contains up-to-date information and maps of marked trails and race tracks that you can ride.

Some of the main areas are:

Geraldton:	Several local trails.
Mundaring:	Heritage Trail, Pechey Rd off Morrison Rd, Swan View.
Mundaring:	Mundaring loop, Hills Forest Activity Centre
Greenmount:	Goat Farm off Great Eastern Hwy, near Scott Street.
Carinyah:	off Brookton Hwy, approx. 2km east of Canning Rd.
Gleneagles:	off Albany Hwy, approx. 20km south of Armadale.
Jarrahdale:	Langford Park off Nettleton Rd, approx. 2km north-east of Jarrahdale.
Dwellingup:	Turner Hill, Scarp Rd off Williams Rd, approx. 7km west of Dwellingup; Marrinup near Golf Course; Nanga and Baden Powell reserves.
York:	Mt Brown.
Dardanup:	Lennard Circuit off Pile Rd, approx. 15km east of Dardanup.
Dardanup:	Wellington Mills off Ferguson Rd, approx. 18km south-east of Dardanup.
Margaret River:	Margaret Plantation off Carter Rd, approx. 3km north of Margaret River.
Manjimup:	off Morgan Rd past King-Jarrahdale turn-off.
Northcliffe:	Forest Park; Boorara Block off Boorara Rd; Rount Tuit Campsite.
Albany:	Several local trails.
Ravensthorpe:	Good areas in hills few km east of town.

Also check out these web sites:

WAMBA (WA Mountain Bike Assoc.):	www.wamba.asn.au
MTBA (Mountain Bike Australia):	www.mtba.asn.au
IMBA (International Mountain Bike Assoc.):	www.imba.com
Trailswest:	www.msr.wa.gov.au
Bikewest:	www.transport.wa.gov.au/metro/bikewest
CALM (Conservation And Land Management):	www.calm.wa.gov.au
Lotteries Commission of WA:	www.lottery.wa.gov.au

Keep trails open by setting a good example of environmentally sound and socially responsible off-road cycling.

