

MY BIKE

WHAT TYPE OF BIKE SHOULD I RIDE?

The Outback Odyssey is a ride for all who enjoy “off-road” riding, with kilometres of trail perfect for uninterrupted touring.

The Trail’s unsealed roads are usually great to ride on. They’re wide with a good camber. Of course, there will always be a few potholes and crumbling edges in places, so care is needed. And in the Flinders Ranges you may come across washed out creek beds. The surface aggregate can change in an instant from firm and rocky to loose and sandy. And if there is a lot of rain, some parts of the trail can become quite sticky, slippery and at times very boggy. This is why knobbly mountain bike tyres are essential. Check out the tyre options at your local bike store.

On previous Outback Odyssey rides some have chosen to ride a lighter hybrid style bike with wide, grippy tyres and more recently Gravel / CX bikes have become more popular for off-road trail riding. Whilst it is possible to ride the Mawson Trail on any of these types of bikes, we have found that a mountain bike provides the best all round option to cater for a wide variety of trail surfaces and weather conditions.

We recommend you bring a mountain bike with a minimum of front suspension to allow a more comfortable ride all round. We would also highly recommend that your bike has disc brakes for increased braking efficiency and less likelihood of clogging with mud in wet conditions.

Mountain bikes are ideal for the Mawson Trail. They’re usually fitted with a wide range of gears, which helps when taking on the big hills (the Mawson Trail includes a number of hills to negotiate). Front fork suspension helps make for a comfortable ride. The easiest gear is often called the ‘granny gear’, though it’s not always grannies that use it! Mountain bikes are heavier and slower than other bikes, partly because of their robust construction, but also because the tyres are wider increasing the friction with the road (inflating them to around 40-45psi would be a good start).

The best way to carry basic gear (such as rain jacket, puncture repair kit, spare tube, sun block, money, maps, snacks and your cup for morning and afternoon teas) is in a lightweight compact saddlebag or a seat pillar mounted rear bag, or simply in a small backpack. You’ll be carrying plenty of water too, so keep the weight down to a minimum.

In all cases, you should choose the bike and tyres you feel confident about riding on various surfaces, and be able to quickly and safely pull off the road or Trail (on to loose dirt or gravel) if you need to.

Tyre protection. We highly recommend some form of tyre protection. Make no mistake, without this you will get punctures. Tyre liners, tyre sealant such as Stans or Slime, thorn resistant tubes, or a combination of them all are recommended. As at least one rider has said: *“The first time I rode the Mawson I got punctures every day. One day I got five punctures. The following year I used tyre liners and thorn resistant tubes and I did not have one puncture for the whole route.”*

A final word of advice about your choice of bike: Fifteen days in the saddle is a long time, so you need to be very comfortable with your bike. Once you've made your choice, and especially if you're purchasing a new one – or even a new component such as a saddle – give yourself plenty of time to train with it.

Arriving on Day One of the Outback Odyssey with a brand new bike out of the box, or a new saddle that looked good in the store, may not seem like such a great idea 9km, 90km or 900km down the track when your body starts to rebel against this unfamiliar machine. Your bike should be like a familiar friend, perfect company for an adventure along the Mawson Trail.

MOUNTAIN BIKE HIRE

If you don't have a suitable mountain bike, then you can hire one from Bicycle SA. We have a range of Scott Aspect 730 hardtail (front fork suspension only) mountain bikes of all sizes to choose from. Use the registration form booking or email office@bikesa.asn.au for more details.

HOW SHOULD I SET UP MY BIKE?

Taking the time and effort to set up your bike properly is the best way to ensure happy and comfortable riding. When your bike is carefully adjusted to fit your particular body size and shape you'll feel more relaxed and will be able to ride longer distances with less effort. Once you have made the adjustments recommended below, ride gently for the next few days to give your body time to adjust to the new settings.

To set up your bike for an optimum riding position you will need a few bike tools and may need someone to assist you, or help from your local bike store.

Foot position. If you have Shimano SPD shoes / pedals or other clip less pedals you can make this adjustment by clipping your shoes into the pedal and adjusting the cleat fixing bolts. The ball of your foot should be centred over the pedal axle. For small feet and high rpm (revolutions per minute) you can place the ball of your foot slightly behind centre. If you have toe clips there should be a 2mm clearance between your shoe and the clip.

Saddle position. First adjust your saddle so that the top surface is parallel with the road surface. Then set the saddle height the following way: With the crank arm at the bottom and top of the revolution, sit on the saddle and place your heel (shoes on) on the top of the pedal. With the saddle height correctly adjusted your leg should be in the straight 'locked' position. Make sure to take account of oversize heels on your shoes if you have extra thick soles.

Saddle front / back adjustment. Sit on your bike in your normal riding position with the cranks in the 3 and 9 o'clock position. Your saddle is correctly positioned when your tibial tuberosity (the bump at the top of the shin bone) is 1cm behind the pedal axle. You may need a plumb line and a helper to make this adjustment and may have to readjust saddle height if you move the saddle significantly.

Stem and handlebars. Correct stem height can be between level with the saddle height and 6cm below. The generally preferred range is 2.5 to 4.5cm lower. To ensure good chest expansion and breathing your handlebars should be as wide as your shoulders. Some riders may prefer a more upright riding position with a higher stem. Extra wide flat-type mountain bike handlebars may give more stable control on unsealed roads. Bar extensions and narrower handlebars will give you greater variety of comfortable hand positions and also place your upper body in a slightly lower position to reduce your overall resistance to the wind.

Check your set up. When you have made your new bike set up adjustments, go for a short ride and monitor your riding position. Get someone to accompany you on their bike so that they can observe your riding position from the rear and side.

Your riding position should feel very comfortable and not stressed and your legs should feel that they almost extend with each pedal stroke. If your pelvis rocks from side to side on your saddle then it is set too high. Make new adjustments and try again until you feel comfortable.

Adjusting to your new position. It takes time to settle in to your new position and you may still have to do some fine-tuning. Overall you should feel much better when you ride and less strained when you arrive at the finish.

IS YOUR BIKE AS FIT AS YOU ARE?

If you're not able to provide your bike with all the TLC it needs then take it to a bike store for a thorough check up. Book it in at least a month beforehand, especially if major work is needed, otherwise you might find the work's not completed in time, and anyway you need these last few weeks for more training. If you always keep your bike in good mechanical order, you may simply need to lubricate the chain and check the adjustment on all moving parts, especially brakes and gears.

Here is a list of items that you need to check on your bike:

- ALL THE BEARINGS
 - Wheel bearings, front and rear
 - Headset
 - Bottom bracket
 - Pedals

- DRIVE TRAIN
 - Chain (has it stretched - i.e., worn – beyond its limit?)
 - Chain rings
 - Cogs
 - If any one of the drive train components is suspect the other components need to be carefully assessed also. Worn drive train components can lead to poor gear shifting, or the chain slipping.
 - Cranks and chain ring bolts should be tight

- GEARs
 - Derailleurs
 - Cables
 - Replace any frayed cables, or any cracked or broken cable outers
 - Shifters
 - Gripshift style (twist) shifters need to be cleaned and lubricated from time to time

- BRAKES
 - Pads
 - Not too worn, properly aligned (disc brake pads wear too)
 - Pads (rim type or disc) not dragging
 - Cables – as for gears above
 - Hydraulic discs – should not be spongy

- WHEELS
 - Check for buckles, large or small
 - Buckled wheels will also affect braking performance
 - Check for broken or loose spokes

- TYRES
 - Inspect the tread for cuts, wear and tread condition
 - Inspect the tyre side walls for cuts and bulges
 - Check for recommended tyre pressure (marked on the tyre side wall)

- SUSPENSION
 - Performing correctly, without leaks, rattles, or backwards and forwards play

- ACCESSORIES (racks, lights, drink bottle cages, etc.) should be tight, not broken, and with all the correct fixings.

Spares and tools that you should bring with you include:

- Spare tubes of the correct size for your wheels and tyres
- Tube / tyre patch kit and tyre levers
- Spare rear derailleur hanger that fits your bike - this is a sacrificial part and is designed to snap rather than ruin your derailleur or frame. However they are bike specific, we recommend you ALWAYS carry one.
- Spare disc brake pads especially if you are using disc brakes
- Bike pump and valve fittings – make sure it's compatible with your type of tubes
- Basic tools (Philips and flat screwdrivers, Allen keys or spanners) or a multi-tool

Talk to your bike shop about the need to take any special tools specific to your bike.

Check out www.bikesa.asn.au/learncourses/bike-maintenance for information about Bicycle SA maintenance courses or email office@bikesa.asn.au