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You might want to consider this list of "desirable" items for our rides:

01. Hardware

Pump - Allen Keys - Tyre Levers - Puncture Outfit - Spanner if you need one - String - Tape - Inner Tube - Chain Tool - Screwdriver - Blade - Cable (zip) ties -

All this stuff is probably carried anyway by us "Old hands", because we learned as we went along. Chances are you'll survive without all or most of it if you ride with us, but one day ... The current trend in Mountain Bikes is for them not to need any spanners - they only use Allen keys for most adjustable parts. If your bike still has it's nuts, you'd better find a spanner that fits them and carry it with you - just in case one of us old bods doesn't, coz we don't need them.

02. Software

Waterproof Jacket - Waterproof Socks - Gloves - Thin Ski Hat under your helmet for winter - Ear Warmers - Change of Clothes for wet rides (keep in the car) - Overtrousers - Elastoplasts -

Notes on Above

01. Clothing.

If you're out with us somewhere bleak, things can become tricky if the weather turns either cold, wet or both, and it can happen suddenly without warning. On higher ground it can be

extremely cold in winter, so you have to be prepared. This means either wearing plenty of clothes - many thin layers are better than two thick ones, and you can add or remove them and carry them easily if necessary - or taking extra with you in your backpack or rucksack. Wet feet can make you feel horrible if they get cold, so think about investing in some waterproof socks, such as SealSkinz. Even if the water gets inside, your tootsies shouldn't freeze. If you are 20 miles out into the wilds of Northumberland, that means you have to do 20 miles to get back out, and you can't do that easily with Hypothermia setting in, so try to avoid getting cold and wet.

Human skin is waterproof, we know, but if you can pedal wearing waterproof overtrousers, they can keep you feeling comfortable in the wet stuff. Spare a thought for your car driver if you're sharing - she or he may not appreciate your muddy arse all over their car seats, or muddy boots all over their carpets and seatbacks. I've suffered this for years because I'm different, but not everyone can cope with imbeciles, and why should they?

02. Sustenance.

The human body uses energy to produce output, like pedalling a bike. That energy has to come from somewhere. It also has to be replenished at regular intervals to maintain peak performance. That means you have to EAT stuff. This is extremely important always, but even more so in winter. So feed up before you go off on a ride, and snack while you're out. We always have a lunch stop, sometimes short maybe, but we'll have one. And probably a few more food breaks on longer rides. In winter it isn't good to stop for too long anyway as you cool quickly, and you can damage muscles and ligaments if you push too hard when restarting. If you get hungry or thirsty on a ride, **SHOUT IT OUT!** We'll certainly agree with you that we need another break!

A Thermos Flask with a hot drink is a great idea for winter rides. Unbreakable stainless steel ones are quite cheap now. You can either carry it with you during the ride, or take it to drink after you finish, but **DO NOT** stand your flask or your helmet - or anything, in fact - on the roof of someone's car. This is common sense but some Mountain Bikers treasure their few hundred quid bikes more than your 15 grand car. Or they're just thoughtless bastards. This I know.

Don't want hot drinks? That's fine, but you must take some liquid, and preferably plain water, as it's by far the best way to stay safely hydrated. Being dehydrated really hurts, and can do so in some strange ways. Most MTBers wear a Camelbak or similar backpack with a rubber water bag inside and a tube to drink through, as it's more convenient than a frame-mounted water bottle and a lot bigger for long rides. You should take a heavy swig every 15 minutes or so. After a while you'll discover how long your water will last on a long ride.

If you think some of this sounds like Survival Tactics, you'd be dead right. Don't become a victim.

More useless, uninformative stuff coming later.

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