

Gravel Rider Level Guidelines

EAGER / BEGINNER

BEGINNER riders are new to gravel riding and/or are just starting to develop their skills and fitness/endurance. Hills steeper than 5% would be daunting even if they are short. They can manage a ride that is 1 - 1½ hours long at a pace of around 15-20 kph on flat gravel surfaces.

EXCITED / NOVICE

NOVICE riders have *some* experience with gravel and/or are of a slightly higher skill and fitness/endurance level. They can manage a few climbs with gradients >10% and a ride duration up to 2 ½ hours. A pace in the range of 20 – 25 kph can be maintained on flat gravel surfaces.

EXPERIENCED / SPORT

SPORT riders have at least moderate amounts of gravel experience and a more elevated fitness/endurance level. Multiple steep climbs, off-road trail segments, and a total elevation in the range of 1,000 – 1,300 m is achievable. They can ride for 4 – 5 hours overall and maintain a speed of around 25 kph on flat gravel surfaces.

EXPERT

EXPERT riders have extensive gravel experience and very high fitness/endurance. If that describes you, you're probably out of our league but you're still welcome to join one of the other groups.

Some Words on Gravel Riding Safety

- Many of the most enjoyable routes follow **remote, very quiet gravel roads**, so it's often safe to ride in the middle of the road where the surface is firmer. However, always be vigilant! When there is vehicular traffic, move as far to the right side of the road as is safe to allow them a wide a berth to pass you. Ride single file in these instances to provide as much room as possible.
- When riding on **busy rail trails or other multi-use paths**, go easy and leave some space. To avoid alarming other users, it's best to ride single file and in groups of no more than 4 riders. Use a bell or a friendly greeting (and thank-you) to alert people as you are approaching.
- Encountering **horses** on trails or roads is quite common, so you need to be cautious so as not to cause them to panic. Do not try to blaze past them. Instead, talk to the rider in friendly tones and ask them how they'd like you to proceed. They may ask you to stop briefly while they move away, or they themselves might stop and ask you to move along when they are ready.
- Be prepared to be **self-sufficient**. This means packing enough food and drink to cover the whole ride. Café stops are planned on most routes, but we never know for sure if they will be open. Also, pack appropriate tools/supplies (pump, spare tube, etc.) to handle basic mechanical breakdowns. Make sure you have a phone in case you become completely disabled and need to call someone for assistance.