

Fun and Safety on a Mountain Bike

Mountain biking is a very appealing activity and provides National Park visitors with a real challenge. The key to fun mountain biking is having a good bike. These bikes are designed to travel over uneven and sloping surfaces. National Parks Bulletin offers the following instructions for fun and safe mountain biking.

- **Saddle position** This should be set to the most comfortable height, so the body can move back and forwards with ease. Do not tilt the saddle forwards or backwards too far.



- **Handlebars** Some types are adjustable, but these should not be set too high as they may come off when riding over very rough terrain.

- **Arm position** Riders should bend their elbows slightly

to reduce the discomfort of vertical vibration. This is particularly important on longer rides.

- **Hand & wrist position** Tightness of grip on the handlebars can be important. If too loose, vibrations can make the hands numb and a sudden bump

may cause grip to be lost altogether. Too tight a grip, will of course, also lead to discomfort. Riders should consider these points and find the optimum level of grip. Gripping with thumbs alone is not a good idea because

a sudden shake can loosen the grip and cause loss of balance and possibly a fall.

- **Bottom position** Good riders don't always keep their bottom in the middle of the seat. When traveling on sloping ground, it is necessary to move backward or forwards on the seat to transfer weight and keep both wheels on the ground. Going uphill, keep the bottom forwards, but when going downhill, make sure you sit towards the back of your seat.

- **Helmet** This is essential equipment and can reduce the impact of the head hitting in an accident. It's important that the helmet fit properly. Elbow and knee protection is also available.

- **Brakes** Both front and back brake systems should be thoroughly tested before embarking on a mountain bike trip.

- **Signals** front lights and reflectors should be clean and in working order. Remember to make hand signals before making turn.

- **Maintenance** After going through water or muddy ground the bike must be cleaned thoroughly, allowed to dry and joints be protected from corrosion with oil and lubricants. Do not soak the bike totally in water as this may remove the grease which keeps the pedals and chains functioning.

- **Overnighting** If you are camping overnight as part of your mountain bike trip, keep the bikes under a tree to reduce the dew; do not park them in a waterway as the moisture can seep into the pedals.

If mountain bikers heed these messages, their journeys in our National Parks will be fun and rewarding, leaving plenty of opportunities to enjoy the surrounding nature.

