

A scenic view of a lake with mountains in the background and a bicycle parked on the shore. The image shows a calm body of water with a rocky shoreline in the foreground. A bicycle with a red bag is parked on the right. In the background, there are tall, thin trees and a small town nestled at the foot of a large, forested mountain. The sky is clear and blue.

The beginner's guide to **SELF-GUIDED CYCLING ADVENTURE HOLIDAYS**

PureAdventures

SELF-GUIDED TRAVEL. YOUR WAY.

By Loren Siekman

A photograph of two cyclists riding on a paved road that curves through a lush, green forest. The cyclist in the foreground is wearing a white and yellow jersey, a white helmet, and yellow sunglasses. The cyclist behind is wearing a blue and white jersey and a black helmet. The road is paved and the surrounding area is filled with dense trees and foliage.

WHY HAS GUIDED TRAVEL EVOLVED?

Cycling tours make up a significant volume of adventure holidays. For years, the only known option for most people was a guided trip. The description is obvious,

but to summarize, this historic trip was a package a traveler booked with a tour operator offering a bicycle vacation with a specific departure date and a minimum number of participants. However guided trips have evolved in recent years, with more companies offering custom guided trips and pricing their tours to operate with fewer participants. The question is why?



It's simple:
consumers
are smarter,
have more
choices,
and are
empowered
through

SMART TRAVELERS CHANGED TRENDS

the Internet. This lead to the rise of self-guided travel, which offers great value to travelers who used to fork over a significant amount of money for a guided vacation.

WHAT DOES SELF GUIDED MEAN?

Self guided travel is a hybrid of sorts: on one end is the guided trip, and on the other end is the do it yourself option. Self guided is closer to the guided end of the spectrum.

As advocates of self guided travel for over a decade, Pure Adventures has a formula for top value self guided tours. Just like people might expect guided trips to vary greatly in quality, service and price, so do self guided trips.

Your self guided trip should have at a minimum:

- Some form of start date flexibility
- Lodging of some sort included
- Route identification

tip

SUPPORTED SELF GUIDED TRIPS INCLUDE:

- Choice of start dates
- Choice of travel companions (or solo)
- Lodging options (luxury to economy)
- Luggage transfers
- Expertly designed routes with varying degrees of difficulty
- Quality rental equipment
- Arrival orientation
- Check up meetings, visits, or calls
- Navigation options with thorough maps, cue sheets and site information.
- Tip sheets, suggested visits, private visits or tastings and other activities.
- Family options; specially designed tours and equipment for families with children
- Expert pre- and post-trip assistance
- Travel planning and documentation
- Meals included and suggestions for dining
- "On Call" local support in English to help with any problems or issues where the tour takes place



That list is fairly comprehensive and many tour companies do not offer all that in a self guided trip. Some people, especially Europeans who travel in their own country or nearby, don't need extensive support. Other less expensive offers will not include as many options in their listed price, so aware that you may get charged more to have some of this!

tip

Ask in advance about added services and fees with the self guided trip you are booking.



WHAT'S A DIY TRIP?

A DIY vacation is a bare bones self guided trip. If you enjoy carrying your own gear in panniers and managing your own accommodations, a DIY is an option. Some tour operators may separate out trip components but many won't – it doesn't hurt to ask. Anyone can use a map, but a local guide knows the best route to choose! Be prepared to pay for route info.

Route knowledge is the most valuable part of a self guided trip and usually not available for free.

tip

GOOGLE SEARCH TIPS

The Internet is cluttered with sites and offers, how can you choose? Here are tips to get through the clutter. Note: the results for both paid and organic searches should be relevant.

SEARCH FOR THIS...

- Cycling holidays in Puglia, or even better self guided cycling holidays in Puglia
- Be specific and include terms like mountain bike tour, challenging road tour, training camp or backpacking trip if it is relevant to your vacation.

NOT THIS!

- Bicycle tour, cycling tour, bike tour, biking tour
- Simply searching for "bicycle tours" will produce an infinite list!

Choose at least 3 different tour operators to compare their responsiveness and knowledge. In our opinion, it is essential to have a local component to any self guided trip!





MORE GREAT SEARCH SITES

Search these websites for a self
guided tour operator:
Adventure.travel
Adventure Travel Trade Association
Pedaling.com
The Cycling Tour List
Tour Radar
Bike Tour Reviews

WHAT KIND OF TRAVELER ARE YOU?

When you contact your short-list of tour operators, they should ask you many questions to get to know your travel interests and preferences. These are the questions we ask our potential travelers:

- Have you been to this destination before?
- Have you done self-guided before?
- Do you feel comfortable reading maps and itineraries? (Depending on the answer, we suggest a tour with more or less support available)
- What are you interested in seeing? (We give suggestions: wine, history, scenery, cities, small towns, architecture, food)
- What kind of cycling are you interested in?
- When are you traveling?
- What kind of accommodations do you like?
- How many people are you traveling with?
- Are you traveling to celebrate a special occasion?

With those questions answered, a tour operator will send out itineraries to choose from.



COMPARISON SHOPPING TIPS

When comparison shopping be sure to ask tour operators:

- What meals are included?
- What accommodations are included?
- Is there an orientation and bike set up to get you started?
- Is there emergency support?
- Does the tour operator seem knowledgeable?
- Are there lists of inclusions and exclusions?
- What kind of bikes and equipment are included?
- How much do they know about bikes and repairs?

ENJOY OUR PLANET, TRAVEL LIGHTLY, AND LEAVE IT BETTER THAN YOU FOUND IT!

be beat! But for a growing number of people, a self guided tour is an unbeatable alternative. Power to the people – you can have your tour when you want, at a price you can afford and the reward of accomplishing something you didn't have time to organize!

A guided trip has its place and is more flexible than ever. For DIY travelers, the reward of doing everything yourself can't





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Like Pure Adventures on Facebook for cycling reviews, industry news and more tips on planning a self guided holiday.