

## BT1 Across the Alps on a Touring Bike

### Safety Briefing

In order to maximize any adventure in the outdoors, it is important to keep safety as a top priority. Even the simplest mishaps, like an innocent stumble that causes a sprained ankle, can happen to anybody and will severely disrupt the experience. As this is a self-guided tour, there won't be anybody along the way mitigating all the possible risks for you. **It will be your responsibility before the tour, and throughout the duration of the tour, to make decisions that keep you safe.**

The purpose of this Safety Briefing is to inform you of the known risks for your tour and the actions you can take to mitigate that risk. This information is largely reliant on bicycle safety statistics in European countries. As travel and outdoor adventure are both known to be full of surprises, this list is far from comprehensive. There are a multitude of things that can go wrong during your tour. Many of these may cause disruptions to your itinerary. But hey, it wouldn't be an adventure if everything was guaranteed to go exactly as planned.

By booking a tour with Alpenventures GmbH, you acknowledge and accept all risks, both listed and not listed, and agree to release Alpenventures GmbH from any liability.

Here is a list of the known risks for bicycle touring in Europe, and we'll include any specific dangers related to your tour at the end of this document. It's helpful to know that most accidents happen in cities and at traffic intersections.



General Risks for Bicycle Touring in Europe	
Risk	Mitigation
Traffic accidents	<p>Your greatest risk while bicycle touring is traffic accidents. Although you will be cycling through bicycle-friendly regions, and mostly on bicycle paths, it is still extremely important to be aware of the dangers that exist when riding in vehicle traffic. It is critical that you know and follow the bicycle traffic laws of the country you are cycling in. Although not comprehensive, we do have a summary of some of the most critical traffic laws to know available on our <a href="#">Bicycle Touring Tips</a> webpage. Of most importance is the rule at unmarked intersections that right goes before left. In some countries, this rule applies only when all parties arrive at the intersection at the same time. In the countries where you will be traveling, timing doesn't matter. Each party approaches the intersection and looks to the right, if nobody is to the right, they often continue without looking left. This can create a very dangerous situation for anybody who assumes the car to the right will slow down, or at least look for them. It is also important to stay on bicycle paths when available and to ensure you are riding on the correct side of the road (with traffic). We also strongly recommend wearing bright-colored clothing, avoid riding at night, and ensuring that your bicycle has functioning lights in front and back (if you are renting from a bicycle shop, do not leave the bicycle shop until this has been sorted). And ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET.</p>
Unexpected detours or route changes	<p>Every once in a while, a construction project or unexpected terrain change can really mess up a route. Any detours are likely to be signed out on your route, but this is not guaranteed. Detours can tend to put you onto roads with vehicle traffic, or to route you on paths that are not as good as the original route. We recommend always taking a cautious approach with detours and walking your bike when appropriate.</p>
Cardiovascular failure or other existing major medical conditions	<p><b>Cardiovascular failure during activities that require high levels of exertion are not uncommon.</b> For this reason, we strongly recommend all tour participants, who are 40 and older, visit their General Practitioner for a health check-up prior to their tour. We also want to emphasize that travel may not be the most appropriate time for pushing your own limits. We urge all our customers to make conservative decisions when choosing their tour, as well as when they are out on the trail.</p>

Delayed access to rescue and medical assistance	<p>By nature, bicycle tours travel through some remote areas, and help may not be immediately available should there be a medical emergency. Search and Rescue operations are often run by volunteers and can take hours to reach you, sometimes longer if there is a storm, if it is dark, or if there are other conditions that are unsafe for the teams. It may be up to 24 hours or more before reaching medical assistance should an accident occur. <b>It is important to have basic first aid skills (we recommend taking a Wilderness First Aid Course), to have first aid equipment with you, and to have the equipment with you that would be needed to survive a night outside if necessary (emergency shelter, insulation, food, water).</b> Alpenventures UNGUIDED does not provide rescue assistance as part of our tour packages. Customers use the local search and rescue infrastructure and should have insurance to cover both medical evacuations and medical service in the destination country.</p>
Distracted riding	<p>Of course, we advise against riding with headphones in and sending text messages while cycling, but one of your greatest threats for distraction is navigation. You will likely be using the app provided by Alpenventures or a GPS device throughout your tour. Mounting this somewhere on your handlebars where you can easily glance at it and avoid being distracted by navigation while in areas with a risk of a traffic accident. When you have a safe place, it is wise to dismount from the bicycle and look ahead at your route, memorizing the next series of turns in advance. This route will be very well signed out, so luckily you will not have to pay as close attention to electronic navigation devices.</p>
Getting lost	<p>Navigation can be particularly challenging on bicycle tours. But luckily, you usually have enough access to civilization within a reasonable distance, that you are able to stop and ask for directions. We recommend following the route digitally on a device that is kept in working order<sup>1</sup>. As a back-up, we recommend saving the areas you will be traveling through in Google Maps for offline usage. This will be extremely useful in identifying services along the way when you may not have cell phone connection, such as grocery stores, restaurants, and bicycle repair shops.</p>

Blindly following navigation instructions	While we certainly emphasize using our navigation app or a GPS device, <b>there is also a danger in getting too focused on these resources. Rockslides, landslides, and road construction can deem a route impassable.</b> It is important to be observant during your tour, to constantly assess conditions, and to use your map to find a safer route should any dangerous conditions be present.
Thunderstorms	Thunderstorms can be tricky in the Alps because they build much more slowly and are less imminent than they are in several other parts of the world. <b>Passes should be avoided in thunderstorms, and when the thunderstorm is in close proximity to you, it is important to stop, dismount, separate from your bicycle and seek shelter.</b> Thunderstorms can also bring hail, which make conditions slippery. We strongly advise against cycling in hail or with hail on the roads.
Hypothermia	While hypothermia is a greater risk in winter, it can become a real risk in summer, especially under wet conditions. <b>For this reason, it is very important to avoid wearing cotton clothing (this takes too long to dry), and to bring good quality rain gear.</b> As rain can last for hours in the Alps, it is best to use your rain gear as soon as it starts raining, to prevent yourself from getting wet. It is also important to always have a dry change of clothes available and to have adequate layers to stay safe in cold conditions.
Falling	One of the easiest ways to injure yourself on a bicycle is to fall. Falls can happen on tricky sections but falls most often happen when you least expect it. Even the most innocent fall can cause an injury that can ruin your trip. We recommend you have good balance on a bicycle and remain vigilant and careful throughout the entire tour. And ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET.
Bicycle failure	Whether you ride your own bicycle or arrange for a rental, things can go wrong with the bicycle. It is important to do a safety check at the beginning of each day to ensure that tires are inflated, each brake works, each light works, and that there are no structural weaknesses on the bicycle. Despite that, there may be issues that happen with tires, wheels, the chain, shifting, etc. It is important to have basic bicycle maintenance supplies and skills, so that you can independently change a flat tire, bleed the brakes, adjust the fit of the bicycle, and adjust the shifting. Even with these skills, there may be an issue you

	are unable to fix on the trail. Alpenventures does not provide any maintenance support on the route. Should such an issue occur, it is up to you to locate the nearest bicycle shop (using Google Maps) and identify a route there, either by walking, using public transportation, or calling a bicycle-friendly taxi.
Discomfort and sports injuries due to bicycle fit	Discomfort on a bicycle is not only unpleasant, but it's also an early sign that you may be on your way to a sports injury. Ensuring proper fit of your bicycle is so important, and if you are renting a bicycle, it is critical to take time on your first day to make adjustments until you find the right fit for your bicycle. Failure to do so may result in an injury that you are dealing with long after your adventure. We also recommend taking the time to ensure your saddle is comfortable and to prevent saddle sores or other issues related to saddle fit. We have some videos to help you learn about adjusting your bicycle and avoiding bum pain. Check out <a href="#">Adjusting your Bike for Comfort</a> and <a href="#">Keeping Your Bum Happy on a Bike Seat</a> .
Dehydration and exhaustion	<b>Both dehydration and exhaustion not only create a dangerous health situation for you, but they also cause impaired judgement and poor decision-making.</b> It is critical that you take care to not only carry enough water with you to stay hydrated, but to also drink regularly. We recommend eating enough food, particularly salty snacks, and taking enough breaks to keep your energy at a reasonable level. If you start to feel confusion or moodiness creep in, take a break and eat and drink something before moving on.
Sunburns	Sunburns are common, yet so easy to avoid. <b>Please make sure you use sun protection on both sunny and cloudy days.</b> Apply sweat-proof sunblock regularly, and use hats, sunglasses and clothing to protect from the sun's rays.
Blisters	A blister can truly suck the fun right out of your adventure. Plan ahead for blisters. <b>The most important step you can take is to ensure your footwear fits well and is worn in.</b> But even with a well-worn pair of shoes, a change in how you move can create new friction points. We recommend either applying an anti-chafing cream or wearing sock liners to prevent friction as much as possible. <b>ALWAYS stop as soon as you feel a hotspot</b> and apply moleskin (available in the U.S.) or Compeed (available in Europe) to the hotspot. DO NOT APPLY DIRECTLY ONTO A FORMED BLISTER. If a blister does develop, have a plan and the proper supplies to treat that blister. Tip: duct tape



	can be very useful in keeping moleskin or bandages in place on your feet.
Tick borne illness	Ticks call the wooded areas of the Alps home, and definitely do pose a threat. It is wise to carry tweezers in your first-aid kit and to <b>do a tick check anytime you find yourself brushing against vegetation in wooded areas</b> (which often happens during an impromptu bathroom break).
Minor illness	Minor illness can surprise us at any time. <b>And while it may be minor, it can make physical activity extremely challenging.</b> We recommend minimizing the risk of minor illness by eating foods and taking supplements that support your immune system, leading up to and during your tour. We also recommend avoiding foods that are known to cause issues for you and maintaining good hygiene throughout the duration of your tour. If you do fall ill and it is not wise to continue, please speak with your accommodation and with us to find an alternative solution. There is often an option to use public transportation or a private transfer to move ahead to your next hotel.
Hotel Fire	Although rare, fires can take place at your accommodation. It is important to <b>always identify the location of fire extinguishers and evacuation routes upon first arriving at your accommodation.</b>
Theft	Crime is rare during the first part of your tour but picks up as you make your way into Italy. The risk is highest in areas of public transportation, such as major train stations, as well as in areas visited by a large volume of tourists. We recommend keeping your personal items securely with you, and to avoid wearing expensive jewelry or accessories. Lock your bicycle securely, and whenever possible, park it overnight inside the hotel. We recommend carrying a second lock that you can use to lock your panniers to your bicycle when you park it and bringing a lightweight string backpack you can use to carry your valuables in when you are not immediately next to your bicycle, like when you go into a restaurant or grocery store. <b>One of the best ways to prevent theft is to simply pay attention to the people around you. Avoid being distracted by your phone or a book while in public areas, including public transportation.</b>
Terrorist Attack	There is a looming threat of terrorist activity over most western European countries, and we see these happen from time to

	time. <b>Terrorist attacks are most likely at high-profile public events, hotels that are frequented by tourists, places of worship, schools, parks, shopping malls and public transportation.</b> We recommend you avoid these areas when possible and remain vigilant.
Public transportation accident	Public transportation in the Alps is considered to be extremely safe. An accident is very rare but is still possible. We recommend <b>following all signs and instructions when taking public transportation</b> to keep yourself as safe as possible should something occur.
Private transport accident	More common than with public transportation, are accidents that occur on the road with rental cars or with private transport vehicles. We advise our customers to <b>wear seat belts at all times and to abide by speed limits and signage.</b> If there are any concerns regarding a vehicle we have ordered for private transport, contact us immediately so we can find a replacement.
COVID-19	The Alps have been heavily impacted by the presence and spread of the COVID-19 virus. <b>We advise all of our customers to follow appropriate safety protocol as long as the threat remains. This includes wearing a face mask when indoors or interacting with others, keeping 1.5 meters of distance from others, and washing hands regularly.</b> Hotels may have additional measures in place to keep you safe, and we expect that all Alpenventures customers will follow these.
Other threats identified for your destination country as identified by the <b>World Health Organization</b> and by your <b>home government</b>	The safety situation in the Alps is dynamic and can change at any time. <b>We expect all travelers to inform themselves of the safety and health risks their governments warn of for the country of destination, as well as any additional health risks identified by the World Health Organization.</b> Here are some sources to check: <a href="#">Auswärtiges Amt</a> (Germany), <a href="#">State Department</a> (U.S.), <a href="#">Foreign Travel Advice</a> (U.K.), <a href="#">Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade</a> (Australia), and the <a href="#">World Health Organization</a> (worldwide).

<sup>1</sup>Alpenventures provides customers with free access to a navigation app that works offline on your smartphone. However, this is only helpful if the smartphone remains functioning and charged. We recommend either carrying a solar charger and charging cable for your phone or bringing a GPS device with replaceable batteries. Alpenventures can send you the GPS coordinates for your GPS device upon request.

Specific Risks for Across the Alps on a Touring Bicycle	
Risk	Mitigation
Difficult trail over Fern Pass	Fern Pass can be avoided by using a regular shuttle that is available for bicycle tourers during the main season. If you do ride Fern Pass, the trail up is on gravel roads, which can get steep enough to require dismounting and walking your bicycle for short distances. The descent is particularly challenging, because it is on more of a trail with loose rock and roots. This trail would be easy for a mountain bike but loaded touring bicycles should use extreme caution. Proper braking technique is required. There are a couple sections with signs indicating that cyclists should dismount from their bicycle and walk. Please follow these.
Tunnel	There are a few tunnels along a stretch of the route that can also be bypassed with a bicycle shuttle. Tunnels are dangerous, because visibility is poor, and motorists often aren't expecting a cyclist in the tunnel. This also happens to be on a curvy road. It is very important to have both your front and back light on in the tunnel and to move through swiftly without any stops. We also recommend reflective clothing.



## Our Commitment

Your safety is extremely important to us at Alpenventures GmbH. We understand that along the way, you may need to make decisions that alter your itinerary. When presented with these situations, we will be here to help, and will assist with identifying solutions and making changes to your bookings. We will cover the financial costs within reason, but there may be some expensive solutions, such as taking a taxi for a long distance to route around a problematic section of the route, that we are unable to take on for you. All itinerary changes that are made for safety reasons will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Alpenventures does not offer emergency services. Customers will be dependent on the local emergency response services. We will provide the appropriate contact information.

## Summary

While there are certainly risks associated with outdoor adventure, there are a lot of things you can do to minimize those risks. Having a proper training routine leading up to your adventure, ensuring you have adequate vision and are in good health for the tour, as well as planning ahead for navigation and packing the right items are a good start. From there, gathering information, both before and during your tour, and making safe decisions as you go will all help ensure that your big adventure is as safe and secure as possible.