

Bikepacking with dogs—Is this a good idea?



Nothing beats the company of your best friend on a bikepacking trip; especially if you have a [service or support dog](#). There are some important factors to take into consideration before bringing your dog bikepacking though; it could turn out to be more than just the bonding experience you bargained for. Taking your dog with you comes with a huge amount of added responsibility.

If you plan on taking your dog bikepacking, it's best to familiarize yourself with the safety and environmental contingencies before prepping Fido for a trip. Additionally, if you're certain it's a good idea, planning ahead and considering things like the terrain and weather conditions can increase the chances of you having a good time with your dog. Once that's all figured out, you'll need to decide if it's even worth it when it comes to planning and logistics.

## Key considerations.

Even if you have the most well-trained dog, some things could make the trip more difficult and dangerous. It's important to consider things like keeping your dog and the environment safe, as well as having a plan if things start going downhill. Here are some things to think about.

### 1. Safety

Safety should always be at the forefront, particularly if you plan to have a dog in tow. Depending on where you are located, and what kind of ride you plan on taking, the safety considerations can certainly add up, here are some things to think about safety-wise:

- Will your dog stay on the trail and in close proximity to you? If your dog tends to run off after squirrels, rabbits, and whatnot, you may want to rethink things.
- Are there creatures that could potentially harm your dog while out in the wild? Big creatures like elk or mountain lions, or small creatures like ticks and [venomous snakes](#).
- Will you be riding on a popular trail? Sometimes it's difficult enough to navigate around other hikers or cyclists, add a dog to the mix and things become unsafe. If your dog has ever bitten anyone, they should not be out and about without restraints.
- Is your dog capable of doing the ride with you without getting exhausted? If Rufus has only walked a block or two from home in his entire life, he probably can't go more than a mile or two at bike pace. Just like humans, dogs need to be conditioned for such adventures.

### 2. Environmental.

When it comes to protecting the environment, hopefully, everyone practices Leave No Trace. This means, if there is no trash can available, you'd have to bag up and take out all your pups poop, or bury it somehow depending on the regulations for the area you are visiting.

While dogs are naturally meant to live outdoors, all places may not be suited for all kinds of dogs. Many of the good biking trails are on BLM or Forest Service land which has varying and

limited leash laws, but many State and National Park trails require dogs to be on a leash for environmental and safety reasons. Some are listed below:

- Your dog could potentially frighten, hurt or kill wildlife.
- Your dog could destroy native or endangered fauna and flora.
- Your dog could contract a [disease](#) from other animals or droppings.
- Your dog could drink contaminated water.
- Your dog could potentially disrupt, frighten or harm other humans along the way.

### 3. Logistics.

Aside from safety and environmental considerations, it's important to understand what's all involved when taking on this trek. Here are a few of the many logistical issues that could pop up depending on where you're heading:

- How do you plan on transporting your dog's food, bowls, first aid kit, and other necessities? Will you or your dog be carrying this?
- Where will your dog be sleeping?
- How do you plan on ensuring your dog stays in close proximity?
- What is your plan if your dog gets injured or sick?
- How will you protect your dog from predators and hazards on the trail?
- How will you protect your dog from extreme heat or cold, rough terrain, and exhaustion?
- How will you follow the local laws pertaining to dogs in the location you are going?

### The Tail-end.

Having your dog accompany you on a bikepacking trip means a lot more responsibility and shouldn't be taken lightly. While I mostly outlined the cautionary side of bringing your best beastie, some real benefits should also be considered.

For those who rely on a well-trained service or support dog to get you on your bike and out there, this is a perfect opportunity for both to have some fun. Also, your dog not only gives you comfort, joy, and unconditional love, it can also be an added measure of security.

It's important to fully understand what you're getting into, what liabilities are involved, and have a solid evacuation plan if needed. Make sure you're committed to the responsibility and enjoy the ride. A well-traveled dog and owner pair can make for a great trip under the right circumstances.