

The big ride is almost here, and I've got some tips and a list of equipment that will set you up for a great adventure on the Shenandoah Mountain Medio route and Alpine Loop Gran Fondo.

Both of these routes serve up some EPIC terrain that is found nowhere else in the Mid-Atlantic. Don't underestimate the routes; slow down for the caution signs and take it easy on the descents - some of the corners are reducing radius, so be careful and plan to exit all corners in the middle of the lane not on the yellow line.

With elevations of 3,500-feet, it is easily 10-degrees cooler out there than at the start and could have some mountain weather. It can be 72 and sunny in town, but 55 with fog on top of Shenandoah Mountain. Be prepared for fog, rain and wind. And if everyone brings their jacket, it will be sunny!

There are two "tech zones" on the routes: one in Franklin, West Virginia and another 2.5 miles past the Sugar Grove Rest Station at the bottom of the 1/4 dirt road downhill.

I've been caught on the Alpine Loop with just one CO₂ and one tube - and had to walk miles. There is a rolling mechanic that is able to handle light repairs on course. Tubes are free - if you need them and can get to them - but don't risk getting swept up by the party bus - a.k.a. the SAG wagon. Although, it might not be too bad, they'll probably be passing around a jug of moonshine and singing "County Roads, Take Me HOME!"

Items you should have or carry at all times

700 x 25-26c flat-resistant tires inflated to 95 psi

Vest and arm warmers OR a light jacket

Pump, Tube, Patch Kit, and Multi-tool

Identification

2 bottles, and always have enough food for 2 hours

Good attitude :-)

The Alpine Loop is one grind of a ride and will test your metal. Enjoy the challenge; you're taking on something big!

Good luck, and thanks for riding with me!

- Jeremiah