

Otway Odyssey bike check list

Have you hugged your bike recently? Have you had a close look to check that all is well and it's going to get you through the Odyssey? Nothing is more frustrating than having a poor result or a DNF because you didn't get your bike in decent condition BEFORE the event. So take the time now to check your bike and get it in tiptop shape.

Before we get started on a checklist, let us assure you that you don't have to have the latest and the best to enjoy the Odyssey events, as long as you find your existing bike comfortable and it all works well, you'll be fine.

Make sure your bike is in good working order - these points are especially relevant to mountain bikes:

- Check wheels are they running true or are they buckled? And your skewers, make sure they are tight.
- Look at your tyres, how worn are they? Cuts / abrasions on the sidewalls? Minimal tread? Make sure you have tyres appropriate to the conditions. A good, general condition tyre is generally OK unless the course conditions are very wet or very dry, where a specific tyre may be better.
- Look at your inner tubes (if you use tubed tyres). If they slowly lose air pressure or have heaps of patches on them already, it's better to replace them now. 30psi (depending on tyre) is about right.
- Brakes: you'll need them on some of these epic descents, so are they rubbing? If you have disk brakes, is your caliper aligned or is it rubbing against the rotor? Is your rotor straight and tight? Is there plenty of life left in the pads and are they operating at full power rather than feeling a bit mushy and ineffective?
- Check all cables and replace if necessary. Check brake blocks and disc pads (better to replace them if they're on their way out - 50km or 100km riding can be hard work for half-worn equipment).
- Run your hands over your chain, are there any stiff or broken links? What about broken or bent teeth on your chain rings and cassette? Keep it all nicely lubricated and running freely - even take some lube with you on the day.
- Are your gear / brake cables tight and casings nice and clean? If it's hard to change gears, try changing your cables and casing with a clean set.
- Your derailleur should be straight and the hanger tight. Do your gears shift sweetly or are they rubbing in some gears? It's far easier to fix this now than put up with it for 100km. How are your jockey wheels and free hub - any funny noises in there?
- Have a look over your bottom bracket and cranks. Is everything tight and running freely?
- Finally, have a general look over everything else and make sure it's all nice and tight - handle bars, bottle cages, seat post, pedals
- Make sure that your seat is high enough, and that you have enough reach to the bars - it may be worth putting on a longer stem if you normally run a very short one. The general rule for the seat height is that when you are sitting down, your leg should be almost - but not quite - straight when you put your heel on the pedal in the six o'clock position. Use this as a starting point to find the most comfortable position for you.
- Check that all your controls are set up on the bars in a comfortable position, paying special attention to your brake levers. Ensure the lever blades are not set too far away from the bars.
- Consider using a foot retention pedalling system to maximise the efficiency of your pedaling: SPD-style pedals (Shimano SPDs, Time ATACs, Crank Bros. Egg Beaters etc) but make sure you get some practice in first!
- Fit a second bottle cage to your bike so you can take a second bottle if you'd rather not carry a hydration pack.
- Make sure that what you are going to wear is comfortable and that you have worn it before. It's not much fun riding for 5+ hours in shoes that don't fit.