

Grab Your Road Bike: Tips for a Long Ride

S self.com/algo.html



[Share via Pinterest](#)

That's pretty much what I was thinking when I signed up to do the [Best Buddies Challenge: Hearst Castle](#) with Team [Cannondale](#). Now don't get me wrong; I've completed a triathlon, I've done some lengthy rides and I Spin on the regular. But at mile one as I began the first 600-foot climb of 5,000 total feet of climbing, this charity challenge (put on by Best Buddies International, a foundation started by Anthony Shriver to help change the lives of those with intellectual disabilities) was going to be just that—and it was the hardest ride I've done to this point (and possibly for a long while). Lucky for me, I was riding with good company and even better support while tracking my elevation, power, speed and ride time. The views along the California coast highway didn't hurt either. Now that the journey's over, I have tips to share with those of you looking to embark on a long, butt-kicking route.

1. Get your bike fitted.

For this ride, I had the honor of riding a [Cannondale Synapse](#), a bike made for endurance rides. While a fellow cyclist rode a commuter bike the full century (bless his butt!), I would recommend choosing a bike that can withstand the distance. Meanwhile, I happened to be

riding with the Cannondale team and was sure to have a fitting with them before I set out for the long haul. A fitting helps to ensure your seat is the right amount away from your pedals (leg almost fully extended when at the bottom of a rotation), your handle bars are the right height and distance from your seat, plus a check to make sure you have the right pedals on your bike (so you can ride clipless which is key for efficiency). After, we made sure to take the bikes out for a short shake out ride--it's always good to find out if there are any issues before the day of the event.

2. Dress for the occasion.

Again, you could just wear shorts and a tank for this ride, but man will your backside hate you the next day...or even just 10 miles into the race. Wearing a kit—a jersey, or bib and shorts with a thick chamois pad—is your best option. If you're starting early in the morning, you may want to consider leg and arm warmers as well. Just a word of advice: Be sure to put on sunscreen before you put on all your gear. Keep in mind that if you don't and you take the arm warmers off, you're going to be paying for it with a farmer's tan for weeks (I know from experience). Sunglasses are pretty essential (even more so if you wear contacts), as is a helmet that fits you well.

WATCH THIS

[The 9 Best Healthy Snacks From Costco](#)

3. Know how to use your gears before the race starts

This is important especially if the bike is new to you. Trust me—it's definitely not ideal to learn how to downshift on a steep climb. If you have the resources to ask someone to explain gear shifting to you, go for it. If not, the best way to learn is by getting on your bike and logging some miles where you can practice.

4. Pack enough fuel and food...and then some

Try to have some simple carbs before you hit the road—foods that can be broken down easily like a muffin. A banana is also a good option to give you some energy just starting out. Plus, at least two water bottles are a must for a ride of this length, and refilling them is important when it's hot out. And it may seem like a lot having multiple packs of energy chews and bars in your kit might feel like it's weighing you down, it isn't...and having them is necessary. They will keep you from hitting a wall after mile 30 and 40 and thousands of feet of climbing.

5. Support is key

If it's your first time doing a distance ride, this is even more important. While you can do anything you set your mind to, it doesn't hurt to have experienced riders or even a fellow beginner rider pedaling along side of you. You don't have to ride side-by-side the entire time or even speak (I told my friend that she could talk but not to expect me to answer on climbs. A girl's gotta breathe!). But having someone there for words of encouragement helps—and it

makes the celebration upon completion (which in our case was at the Hearst Ranch and then Hearst Castle!) even sweeter.

6. Track your ride

Whether you're riding for fun or to break a PR, it's great to be able to see what you accomplished on the bike. I knew I'd be riding 62 miles and climbing—a lot!—but I wanted to know real stats on those seemingly never-ending inclines. So I clipped my [Garmin Edge 1000](#) to my bike and uploaded the ride to Strava after, an app that records a wealth of information. Not only could I see the full route we conquered, each climb was broken up into its own section, letting me know top, lowest and average speed, which on some climbs was in the single digits. I could tell my active time on the bike on top of total time, since we stopped to take a bunch of photos, naturally.

Remember that even while the hardest climb might make you feel like giving up, you're always able to push just a little farther. If you have to stop and take a break, do it. And fuel back up while you're doing so. Slow and steady might not win the race, but you'll finish it!

Ready to take on a lengthy ride? [Sign up](#) and raise money for The Best Buddies Challenge Miami on November 21.

Photo Credit: Best Buddies International