

KATY TRAIL BIKE RIDE

MAY 2025

I recently biked the katy trail in Missouri with a friend of mine, an avid cyclist. We signed up with crossroads tours for a five-day, self-guided ride. The company drove us from St. Charles to Clinton to start the ride, and we biked eastward back to St. Charles.

BACKGROUND

The MKT railroad line, named for the states of Missouri, Kansas, and Texas, ran from St. Louis to Dallas. When the rail line was active, it was also known as “K-T” and “the Katy”; that nickname remains today. Now decommissioned, the railway tracks have been converted into the Katy Trail, a well-maintained gravel trail that is used by pedestrians, equestrians, and cyclists.



The main segment of Missouri's Katy Trail, starting at Clinton and ending at St. Charles, is 237.7 miles. The portion of the Katy Trail from Boonville to St. Charles follows the Missouri River. It is also the route that Lewis and Clark took in 1804 when they headed west; this



segment is also referred to as the Lewis and Clark Trail. Coincidentally, we started our trip eight days after the 221st anniversary of when Lewis and Clark started their journey westward.



PREPERATION

While I had biked in the past, I had stopped biking over the last couple of years. I have never attempted anything of this magnitude. Regardless, I agreed to bike the Katy Trail ride with my friend, as this commitment would jumpstart my fitness quest.

To get ready for the ride, I first made changes to my diet. I ate healthier foods and tracked what I was eating. The next thing I did was to sign up for indoor cycling classes, an activity that I never thought I would do. These classes turned out to be great in jumpstarting my biking, toning my legs and core, and building stamina. In conjunction with the indoor cycling, I did two 20-mile road bike rides each week. An equally important adjustment that I made was to redevelop good sleeping habits. I tried to get at least eight hours of uninterrupted sleep each night.

In hindsight, I should have started the biking training earlier. While I trained for two months, I should have at least given myself six months. My friend also told me that I could have done a ride equal to the longest day duration, which in this case is 63.9 miles.

Alternatively, I could have done a 38-mile ride each week, which is equal to the miles ridden for each of the first two days. Another option is to complete a three-hour ride once a week, this will allow to get acclimated to riding for three-hours, since we stopped after three hours for lunch and another three hours after lunch depending on the distance remaining.

BEFORE TRAVELING

Based on my experience, I provide a checklist of items to consider for a ride of this length.

Bike – The most important decision to make centers around the bike: Do you want to bring your bike, or do you want to rent a bike? My friend brought his bike since he knew how to disassemble his bike for the flight and reassemble it for the ride. I chose to rent a bike.

There are three options for renting a bike:

- Hybrid
- Gravel
- E-bike

I rented a hybrid bike for the ride. After this ride, I will rent a gravel bike for future rides. Gravel bikes are suited for long distance rides. Gravel bikes have handlebars similar to a road bike that provides more positions for your hands as compared to a hybrid bike that only has one position.

Another consideration to keep in mind when renting a bike is to have measurements for your saddle's height. I learned the importance of proper saddle height the hard way: Not having the right height made my ride very uncomfortable for the first day. You can have your local

bike store help you with the measurement. If you choose to handle the measurement yourself, this site has good information on saddle height measurement: <https://www.myvelofit.com/fit-academy/saddle-height-101-a-comprehensive-guide-to-setting-your-saddle-height/>

Pedals – The rental came with flat pedals. I should have pursued the use of clipless pedals since I am accustomed to riding clipless pedals.

Shoes - My feet hurt a lot after the first two days of riding in mountain bike shoes. Towards the end of day two, I realized that my insoles were not providing the cushion and comfort that I needed. We arrived in Boonville around 3:00 pm, which gave me enough time to find a shop, Family Shoe Store, to buy new insoles. The friendly employee recommended some comfortable insoles that made a world of difference and made riding more comfortable.

Also, we had to ride in the rain during the trip, and I wish I had brought my waterproof shoe covers.

Clothes – I took mountain biking shorts and biking jerseys and t-shirts. In the future, I need to bring a warmer biking jersey, arm warmers and knee warmers to use in inclement weather. When it rained on us, the temperature dropped considerably. While I brought a light rain jacket, I would have been more comfortable wearing a rain jacket with a hood.

Water bottles – Two water bottles are a must for this ride.

Tubes and Tire – I ended up having a flat and a blowout. The rental bike came with one replacement tube. For a ride of this length, I recommend bring a patch kit and an extra tube.

BEFORE STARTING THE RIDE

I didn't spend any time in Clinton getting acclimated to the bike, and I failed to recognize that the seat was set at the wrong height. It took me the whole ride on the first day to determine that I needed to adjust the saddle. In hindsight, I should have spent 10 to 15 minutes to check the bike, but I was in hurry to get started and get some food since we had a long bike ride ahead of us.

Speaking of food, I should have brought some food with me to the starting point since there is no food at the start (as noted by the tour company). I erroneously thought I could make it to Calhoun (first town after Clinton) and get food there.

I have written about each day's ride in separate documents:

- Day 1 Clinton – Sedalia (38.97 miles)
- Day 2 Sedalia – Boonville (36.97 miles)
- Day 3 Boonville – Jefferson City (52.29 miles)
- Day 4 Jefferson City – Hermann (47.67 miles)
- Day 5 Hermann – St. Charles (64.76 miles)

When the distance from the trail to each evening's hotel is added, I ended up biking 240.66 miles.



In conclusion, I am happy that I went on this bike ride. The time spent biking provided opportunities for reflection. I experienced an internal serenity as the miles slowly rolled by. I have been calling it my own "walkabout" to borrow an Aborigine expression. I received personal satisfaction by accomplishing a personal athletic feat of having biked across Missouri.

