

VANLIFE MTB CODE OF CONDUCT – 10 tips for mountain bike trips with your motorhome or camper van

Vanlife and mountain biking are the perfect match. Our Adventure Crew is the best proof. And our vehicles are adapted to adventurers who are setting out to explore the world with four and then two wheels. There's no better start in the day than to wake up right in the mountains or at the foot of the bike park. Have a coffee – and hit the trails.

However, the dream of limitless freedom can quickly turn into an issue for co-campers, residents or environmentalists. Campers should follow etiquette rules no matter whether they travel in a van, a motorhome or a caravan, on the streets as well as on the sites. To ensure the beautiful places stay beautiful and your peaceful camping life stays peaceful, SUNLIGHT has collected ten tips in our special "Vanlife Code of Conduct for Mountain Bikers".

10 TIPS FOR MOUNTAIN BIKERS TO HAVE THE BEST CAMPING SEASON 2022

1. HELLO THERE

Bus drivers do it, truck drivers do it, and of course motorbike riders do it, too. They greet each other. Well, it's the same for drivers of rare vehicles – and campers who are united by their passion for the life on the road. But mind: When you greet your co-campers on the road avoid wild gestures and flashlights. Lift your hand, nod your head, give a smile – do not honk your horn, signal or beam your headlights as you might confuse other drivers. Safety first, politeness second.

2. LEGAL GROUNDS

An illuminated VW bus in the moonlight, parked on a steep cliff – now, that's romantic. But it's not a good idea! In most of Europe wild camping is prohibited. It can get pretty expensive to spend the night outside of campgrounds or designated parking sites. In some countries, as for example in Germany, you are allowed to stay anywhere for one night to maintain your driving ability. However, sleeping and recovering does not mean camping: so you're not allowed to unpack your camping chairs, get out the awning, laundry, mountain bikes, etc. That's when the rear garage – as features in various SUNLIGHT vehicles – comes in handy: store it there safely and you can relax inside. And, of course, always make sure to stay on legal grounds and check the local rules of your destination before setting out!

3. MIND THE GAP

The sun is shining and the conditions are perfect? Well, that also means it will be busy out there. And the busier it gets the more considerate we should act. Mind to keep a good distance to your neighbors and park carefully (right direction and no cross parking). The closer you get the more uncomfortable it gets. Space is also a safety issue. In some countries, Fire Protection Ordinance specify a distance of three meters for official parking sites. Those who reserve spots for friends or family or even claim two slots for themselves, might not make many friends on the site. Consideration and communication are key.

4. PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB

Just like in everyday life, there are general rules of conduct for campers when it comes to noise and coexistence. Avoid slamming the door in the morning, shouting across the whole site or loud music at night. Most campgrounds have specific regulations for quiet times at lunchtime or night. When you're out in nature, far from civilization, you might not have people around you, but still a sensitive environment to respect.

5. BUDDY ON BOARD

Quite a few mountain bikers travel with their loved ones – their dogs. Most campgrounds have specific guidelines and leash requirements. If you park on a rather remote spot with few neighbors, go and talk to them and introduce yourself and your buddy. And make sure to watch your dog especially during lunchtime and dinner, when the smell gets tempting – your neighbors might not be too eager to share their food... Whether campsite or backcountry – leave-no-trace! Always pick up your dog's waste.

6. DOING YOUR BUSINESS

This brings us to a rather sensitive topic: many of the DIY Camper Vans have no toilet on board. But you just have to do your business – and thus mother nature becomes your bathroom. Which may upset farmers, hikers etc. However, you can find a wide selection of space-saving, mobile and sustainable toilet solutions out there. So you should really consider to get one on board.

7. STAY CLEAN

Rule number 1: leave the place as you've found it. Collect your trash, dispose it properly or take it back with you. Fruit leftovers may be organic, but they still should not be left in the woods. Imagine a paradise filled with potato peelings and coffee grounds. Clean ups make sense and people will love it. Collecting waste has a positive impact on nature – plus it sends a positive message to co-campers. A long-term investment to protect sites for camping.

8. DIRT AND BIKERS

Of course, it comes in handy to have a water hose to clean your bike. But always consider the effects on others. Your neighbours might not be amused by big puddles or muddy grounds. Keep your distance – or simply talk to them to make sure everybody's happy. And dispose your wastewater properly! You will find special disposal opportunities at campsites, petrol or rest station. And please do not mix the names of the two hoses. One hose is exclusively for cleaning the toilet, the other hose exclusively for tapping fresh water. To be on the safe side you can clean the hose before filling up water.

9. FIGHT THE FIRE

A nice barbecue at night or a small fire? Ahem: no! Open fireplaces are often prohibited and can be extremely dangerous, especially in countries that struggle with dry periods and thus wildfires. Plus: burnt soil can send the wrong message and bring other people to light their fire and maybe do it less cautiously. Also check on your campsite what is allowed – ask the receptionists when booking.

10. SUPPORT THE LOCALS

Quite a few campers travel as proud self-caterers and hardly spend a penny in the region – a habit to reconsider! We should all respect and support the communities we visit, and interact with them. Look for shops selling local food, eat in restaurants, see if you can stay on a ground of a farmer, get to know people, show your interest, and your stay will be so much more memorable. It's as simple as buying a chain lube at the local shop instead of online –and while talking you might learn about hidden singletrack gems...