

Traveling With Your Bike

Traveling with a bicycle has riddled athletes for years. Over time options have changed, new options presented and changed again. This document is a snapshot of the current (Spring 2011) landscape of bicycle traveling options. We hope it is informative and helpful in making decisions about how best to travel to your next event.

The Options

Specialized Carrier

These days there are specialized bike transport options available to travelers. A popular option among triathletes is Tri Bike Transport. Visit TriBikeTransport.com for affiliated races and bike shops. Some triathlon clubs will transport bikes to races for members. For example the Terrier Tri Club (a NYC based triathlon club) takes a bike trailer to Ironman 70.3 Florida. Area triathlon clubs can be found on the internet.

Commercial Courier

Traditional courier services (United States Postal Service, UPS, FedEx and Greyhound bus) provide good options if you are transporting your bike domestically and are comfortable with being separated from your bike for a few days. They also provide some of the most economical options.

In recent years there has been an increase of sports equipment delivery providers (Sports Express, The Luggage Club, Ship Bikes, etc). They provide a higher level of customer service, one point of contact for troubleshooting, and higher base insurance.

Airline Baggage

Lambasted for their inconsistent, ever-changing and expensive baggage fees, the airlines are still the most popular option for transporting a bicycle.

The piece-of-mind of traveling on the same vessel and wheeling the bike box around the airport usually trump the economics and frustrations of bicycle air travel.

If you think triathletes have it bad, check out some of the fees surfers pay for their boards!

How to Ship

- Must have bike secured in a secure cardboard box or special bike box. Cardboard boxes are available at your local bike shop or at online retailers (TriSports.com and Amazon.com offer some good buys).
- Handlebars and pedals must be removed, enclosed in plastic or similar material, or be in bike box.
- Insurance amounts depend on the carrier and are usually adjustable for a fee.
- Some events have sponsored bike shops who will receive (and reassemble if desired) your bike. Please check the event website for details. Otherwise, you should be able to ship to your hotel (usually for a fee) or a local bike shop.
- Keep in mind that you cannot ship to condo units in Kona, Hawaii.
- YouTube (search "bike packing") has some good instructional videos on how to pack a bike.

Bikes on a Plane

- Most airlines only charge the normal checked bag fees if the total dimension (length x width x height) is less than 62 inches / 1.57 meters and/or weighs less than 50 pounds / 22.68 kilograms.
- Most airlines will accept bikes up to 70lbs for a fee in addition to the applicable baggage charges.
- "Folding bikes" can be made small enough to be carried in a regular sized suitcase: Bike Friday (they actually make a tri bike), the Swift Folder by Xootr and the Raleigh Twenty are a few examples.
- Bicycles transported in a cardboard box are usually transported as a conditionally accepted item.
- Acceptance of oversized baggage varies based on airline, aircraft size, and load conditions.
- Check with each airline for their baggage liability policies. Additional travel insurance can be purchased for your baggage (Anthony Travel has a special product available with Travel Guard).

Things to Avoid with Bikes on a Plane

- Most airlines do not accept luggage if the total dimension (l x w x h) is greater than 115 inches / 2.92 meters (some airlines, such as US Airways, 80 inches / 2.03 meters) or 70 pounds / 31.75 kilograms.
- Inter-island flights may charge additional baggage fees.

Approximate Fees

- Below is a breakdown of approximate costs for bike shipment. Research was based on two scenarios. On the left, one-way service from Dallas to Chicago. On the right, one-way service from Dallas to Kailua-Kona for the Ford Ironman World Championship.

PLEASE NOTE. Each airline has its own policies and guidelines for domestic and international flights. Please refer to the specific airline websites and customer service desks for updated details on their program.

	Example: One-Way Dallas to Chicago						Example: One-Way Dallas to Kona					
	Price	Days in Transit	Included Insurance	Price	Days in Transit	Included Insurance	Price	Days in Transit	Included Insurance	Price	Bus. Days in Transit	Included Insurance
SPECIALIZED CARRIER												
Tri Bike Transport	\$290	7	\$1,000				x	x	x			
COMMERCIAL CARRIER												
Sports Express	\$199	7	\$500	\$ 249	4	\$500	\$510	7	\$ 500	\$ 677	2	\$500
The Luggage Club	\$123	3	\$1,000	\$ 230	2	\$1,000	\$412	3	\$1,000			
Ship Bikes	\$75	1-5	\$1,000				x	x	x			
Greyhound PackageXpress	\$60	1	\$300				x	x	x			
FedEx Ground	\$32	5	\$100				x	x	x			
FedEx Air	\$74	2	\$100	\$ 260	1	\$100	\$168	6	\$100	\$ 286	1	\$100
USPS	\$68	11	\$ -				\$107	11				
UPS Ground	\$35	3	\$100				x	x	x			
UPS Air	\$120	2	\$100	\$ 260	1	\$100	\$190	2	\$100	\$ 230	2	\$100
AIRLINE BAGGAGE	Checked Bag	Checked Bag	Checked Bag	Curbside	Bicycle / Oversized Fee	Mainland to Hawaii Baggage Fees						
Air Canada	\$0	\$30	\$100	Free	\$50	Same baggage fees as domestic mainland flights. Inter-island connections may charge additional baggage fees. The best way to avoid additional baggage fees is to book code-share flights. Hawaii Airlines has partner programs with American, Continental, Delta, NWA, US Air and Virgin.						
AirTran	\$15	\$25	\$100	Free	\$79							
Alaska	\$15	\$25	\$50	Varies	\$50							
American	\$25	\$35	\$100	Free	\$100							
Continental	\$25	\$35	\$100	Free	\$100							
Delta	\$25	\$35	\$125	Free	\$150							
Frontier	\$20	\$30	\$50		\$50							
Hawaiian	\$25	\$35	\$100		\$100							
JetBlue	\$0	\$30	\$75	\$2	\$50							
Southwest	\$0	\$0	\$50	Free	\$50							
United	\$25	\$35	\$125	\$2	\$175							
US Airways	\$25	\$35	\$100	\$2	\$100							
Virgin	\$25	\$25	\$25		\$50							