



INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN BICYCLING ASSOCIATION

ELECTRIC MOUNTAIN BIKING GUIDELINES

IMBA'S GUIDE TO eMTB USE AND TRAIL ETIQUETTE

Electric-assist mountain bikes (eMTBs) have evolved into amazingly capable bicycles. Once limited by power output, battery life and heavysset designs, the current models can handle extended adventures on natural-surface trails and allow riders to stay outside longer. They are also fun to ride—many models offer the same qualities of suspension and responsiveness that top-tier mountain bikes provide.

Yet, eMTBs and traditional mountain bikes are not the same thing. The addition of a motor assisted power source means that land managers regulate them differently than traditional mountain bikes. . In North America, eMTBs are often not allowed on narrow, singletrack trails that are exclusively managed for non-motorized use (foot, bike and equestrian travel).

WHERE CAN I RIDE MY eMTB?

First, eMTB rules and regulations are in a state of flux—land managers are scrambling to keep up as the technology becomes more sophisticated and widespread.

In general, trails designated only for non-motorized use are off-limits to eMTBs. Trails and natural-surface paths (fire roads, some double-track) designated for both motorized and non-motorized use are open to eMTBs.

Keep these principles in mind:

- eMTBs are usually not allowed on trails managed for non-motorized activities.
- eMTBs usually are allowed on trails managed for motorized activities.
- When in doubt about what uses are allowed, contact the land manager for clarification. Local land rules change frequently.

There are thousands of trail miles that do allow motorized recreation, including eMTBs. For example, there are over 300,000 miles of singletrack and natural surface roads where motorized users currently enjoy access on federal public lands. Many of these trails are the type of narrow, twisty singletrack that traditional mountain bikers enjoy.



WHAT'S GOOD ETIQUETTE WHEN ENCOUNTERING OTHER TRAIL USERS?

IMBA's "Rules of the Trail" help recreational users get along on shared-use trails. These guidelines are largely the same for eMTBers as for traditional mountain bikers, with a few modifications specific to eMTBers.

- 1 RIDE OPEN TRAILS:** Respect motorized/non-motorized trail use regulations—ask a land manager for clarification if you are uncertain about the status of a trail. Do not trespass on private land. Obtain permits or other authorization as required. Be aware that bicycles and eMTBs are not permitted in areas protected as state or federal Wilderness.
- 2 LEAVE NO TRACE:** Be sensitive to the dirt beneath you. Wet and muddy trails are more vulnerable to damage than dry ones. When the trail is soft, consider other riding options. This also means staying on existing trails and not creating new ones. Don't cut switchbacks. Be sure to pack out at least as much as you pack in.
- 3 CONTROL YOUR eMTB:** Inattention for even a moment could put yourself and others at risk. Obey all speed regulations and recommendations, and ride within your limits.
- 4 YIELD APPROPRIATELY:** Do your utmost to let your fellow trail users know you're coming—a friendly greeting or bell ring are good methods. Try to anticipate other trail users as you ride around corners. eMTBers should yield to all non-motorized users, regardless of the direction they are travelling.
- 5 NEVER SCARE ANIMALS:** Animals are easily startled by an unannounced approach, a sudden movement or a loud noise. Give animals enough room and time to adjust to you. When passing horses, use special care and follow directions from the horseback riders (ask if uncertain). Running cattle and disturbing wildlife are serious offenses.
- 6 PLAN AHEAD:** Know your equipment, your ability and the area in which you are riding and prepare accordingly. Strive to be self-sufficient: keep your equipment in good repair and carry necessary supplies for changes in weather or other conditions. Always wear a helmet and appropriate safety gear.

IMBA eMTB TRAIL TESTING

It is important for consumers to know where they can legally enjoy eMTBs. IMBA and the Bicycle Product Suppliers Association are coordinating a study of the impacts, both environmental and social, that eMTBs can have on natural-surface trails and trail users, and documenting where eMTBs can be legally ridden. Research and better information will help land managers make appropriate access decisions. Managing this new category of trail users will take better information in order to protect decades of trail access victories and improved relationships with other trails users.

