



Preparing for the **FREEDOM CHALLENGE** & its feeder events.

The Journey Ahead

“There is no single right way to do it — only your way.”

There is no single right way to prepare for this race. Each rider brings different strengths, goals, and gear — and that’s what makes the Freedom Challenge such a deeply personal experience.

The trail will test you in every way imaginable. Weather, navigation, terrain, and time will conspire to push your limits — yet within those moments of uncertainty lie the greatest rewards.

Preparation, resilience, and attitude are your real tools out there. This guide will help you plan, but it’s your spirit, and your willingness to adapt, that will carry you to the finish.

Use this guide as a framework, seek wisdom from those who’ve earned their blankets, and get ready for the adventure of a lifetime.

Freedom awaits.

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Race Format

It is important to understand the basics of how things work on the Freedom trail.

Here are a few key points to understand:

- The race is essentially **non-stop**. Once you start, the clock only stops when you cross the finish-line.
- You will start in small batches of 7-9 riders per day. Generally slower batches go off first and racing batch last.
- It is a solo event but you can ride with friend(s) if you wish.
- You must **follow the prescribed route** as shown on the maps.
- The route is not marked, riders must navigate themselves by means of map and a written narrative.
- GPS devices capable of navigation are strictly prohibited.
- You must carry mobile phone BUT '**location services**' (GPS functionality) must remain **switched off** on your phone for the duration of the event.
- There are Support Stations and Intermediate Stops approximately 50-60km apart where food and accommodation are provided.
- You may pre-pack a 2 litre ice-cream tub to be sent to each Support Station, these are known as '**rider tubs**'

Freedom Challenge = 20 tubs

RTR / RTW = 5 tubs

RTC / RTP = 4 Tubs

- These 2 litre tubs are packed with trail food, spares, personal medications and maps for the following section.
- If you sleep over at a stop, you will receive snack on arrival, dinner and breakfast.
- If passing through you will receive a meal on arrival.

- Most support stations have bread available to make 'sandwiches for the road'
- Towels and linen are provided at all stations.
- Most stations will do laundry for you if you stay over and get in before 6 pm (R100 per load).
- All stations have plug points to charge electronics.
- You need to inform race office (RO) of your sleeping plans so that the SS know who to expect. You will message RO a 6 day sleeping plan and keep updating your plan.
- Beds are allocated on a first-come-first serve basis. Please leave double beds for couples.
- You have to sign in and sign out of all Support Stations and interim stops. The support stations are 'compulsory checkpoints', the interim stops are not compulsory.
- You must familiarise yourself with the rules of the events to ensure you understand fully the terms of taking part.
[HTTPS://WWW.FREEDOMCHALLENGE.ORG.ZA/FC-RULES](https://www.freedomchallenge.org.za/fc-rules)
- You may not receive any personal outside assistance i.e. No seconding whatsoever.
- There are portions of the route that are not rideable and so you will be required to hike-a-bike
- The route traverses some of the most beautiful parts of the country, rich in heritage and we advise that you treat it like an expedition of exploration and adventure. Having the right attitude and maintaining your composure during the trying times will help you overcome the inevitable setbacks and keep you moving forward.



Packing lists

Adequate preparation and the right gear can save your race, and maybe even your life.

The temperatures can get well below zero, sometimes as cold as -10 degrees celsius in the early mornings. Even if you are not planning on sleeping out you need to be prepared to. Injury, navigation, weather can all affect your strategy and cause you to need to sleep out in cold conditions, it is your responsibility to be prepared for all eventualities. Rider safety is the primary goal on expeditions such as the Freedom Challenge. **Preparation and the right gear can save your life.**

Use the checklists below to make sure you are familiar with the compulsory gear, are adequately prepared and don't forget anything.

Most of the route takes you through remote countryside, away from towns. Although you do pass through a few small towns along the way, you will be relying primarily on the support stations and your tubs for all your resupply needs, so plan carefully what you will be putting into your 2 litre tubs.

Even if you are planning to team up with another rider, you still need to carry all your own equipment (clothing, maps, spares, meds etc.) as there are no guarantees that both of you will stay together for the duration of the event and in the event of your riding partner (or you) being forced to withdraw, the other rider must still be able to continue on their own.

Freedom Challenge packing checklist:

Compulsory items:

- Headlamp
- Bike-light
- Helmet
- First Aid Kit (see compulsory list below)
- **Emergency bivvy NB!**
- Phone
- Compass
- Waterproof jacket
- Base layer top
- Base layer bottoms (Leg Warmers or Long tights)
- Head warmers (Beanie or Balaclava or Buff)

- Emergency food/dehydrated meal
- Water purification tabs

Compulsory First Aid kit

- Gauze
- Strapping
- Bandage
- Plasters
- Hydration salts
- Steri-strips
- Adhesive tape
- Aspirin (Disprin)
- Anti-nausea (Valoid)
- Anti-histamine (cream and tabs)
- Anti-septic (Bactroban/Dettol)
- Friars Balsam and/or Methiolate Gauze
- Pain killers (e.g. Panado/ Stilpain/Tramadol)

Prescription Meds

- COX2 Anti-inflammatories (Adco Etoricoxib 90mg x 10) (NOT Cataflam)
- General antibiotic (Augmentin 1000mg - full 7 day course)
- General antibiotic (Zithromax 500mg - full 3 day course)
- Bacterial infection antibiotic (Kentrexil x 20)
- Cortisone (Prednisone x 50)

Random kit inspections will take place at any point during the event, at the start or at the finish to ensure all riders are carrying the compulsory items.

Missing items will result in a warning, a time penalty or disqualification.

General items

- Backpack (20-25L)
- Rain cover
- Hydration bladder/water bottles
- Pump
- Map sleeve/ziplocks
- Leatherman (mini)
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste

- Soap
- Lip - ice
- Sun cream
- Anti - chafe
- Chargers
- Saddle bag
- Map board

Other Clothes (optional but recommended)

- Cycle shoes
- Walking shoes (if you are using stiff/race cycling shoes)
- Shoe covers
- Socks
- Sealskin socks (waterproof)
- Thermal tights
- Waterproof pants
- Cycle shorts
- Running shorts (for sleeping)
- Cycle top
- T-shirt (for sleeping)
- Light Fleece
- Light Shell
- Riding gloves
- Warm Insulated Gloves (waterproof)
- Arm warmers

Bike Spares

- Spokes x3, check lengths (These can be stored in your saddle seat post.)
- Duct tape
- Cable ties
- Spare tyre (optional)
- Brake pads (x3 sets)
- Multi tool
- Lube & rag
- Plugs
- Patches
- Tyre boot / gaiter
- Gear cable
- chain link (x2)
- Piece of chain
- **Spare derailleur hanger - NB**
- Bombs + inflator
- Spare valve

- Tube (slime)
- Freewheel hub spares (pawls + springs)
- Map board spares

Box spares (things to put in your rider tubs)

- Maps for next portion
- Batteries (for headlamp etc.)
- Chain lube
- Tyre sealant
- CO2 Cartridges *
- Anti-Chafe cream *
- Spare tubes *
- Shower gel
- Toothbrush/paste
- Replacement socks
- Suncream

*Please note: These items are all available at the “Squirt Tech Zones” approx. every 3-4 support stations including: Masakala, Rhodes, Romansfontein and Sandrivier.

Trail Food (things to put in your rider tubs)

- Energy drink powder (no fluids permitted in boxes)
- Chocolate
- Dried fruit
- Energy / protein bars
- Jellies
- Nuts
- Favourite post ride snacks / protein shake powder
- ‘Special request’ foods (extra proteins for vegetarians, GF alternatives etc.)

Other items

- Personal meds/contact lenses etc.
- Cash. R100 per person for laundry and for a beer or 2 if there is an honesty bar. By putting cash in your tubs you don’t need to carry it all the way along the trail.

As you can see from the above lists, there are many items to consider and you also need to decide if the items need to be carried with you at all times or if you can send them ahead in your rider tubs to collect along the route.

It is your **responsibility as a rider to take care of your own personal, medical and technical issues during the event.** You should go into the event as self-sufficient as possible, since there will be only limited support along the route (only support stations and official race office interventions).



Squirt Tech Zones

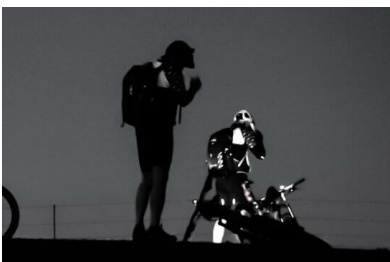
There are no bike shops along the route for spares/repairs, so you need to take care of your own bike and be able to fix any potential issues yourself.

Approximately every 3-4 support stations there will be a box of bike spares. These are known as the Squirt Tech zones.

The Support stations where you will find these spares are:
Masakala, Rhodes, Romansfontein and Sandrivier.

Items include:

- Tubes
- Tyres (honesty system, pls email race office after the event and we will invoice you for this)
- CO2 Cartridges
- Tyre sealant
- Chain Lube
- Anti-chafe cream
- Foot pump and shock pump available



Time penalties

Race rules are the same of all Freedom riders weather you are racing or touring. Time penalties are a way of motivating riders to sort themselves out on the trail.

In the event that you require any assistance there will be a time penalty issued. Please note there is no guarantee that you will receive the support

that you ask for as RO works on a triage system, with most important needs put first. Medical and rider safety issues are put before mechanical assistance. There will be a cost associated to any assistance that you receive.

An excerpt from the race rules no 23. A full set of the race rules can be found at:

[HTTPS://WWW.FREEDOMCHALLENGE.ORG.ZA/FC-RULES](https://www.freedomchallenge.org.za/fc-rules)

- Time penalties are served during consecutive daylight hours (6am-6pm)
- Tracker must record no movement for duration of penalty (Rider to ensure tracker is outside and skyward facing)
- If a challenger's penalty period is not completed before 6pm then they may not move until it continues at 6am the following day
- All penalties must be served in full within 24 hours of penalty being served (and received)
- Challenger must inform race office (via whatsapp) before commencing penalty period
- If a rider chooses to serve penalty in a support station or interim stop then a non-negotiable one hour is added to penalty to compensate ordinary stoppage time.



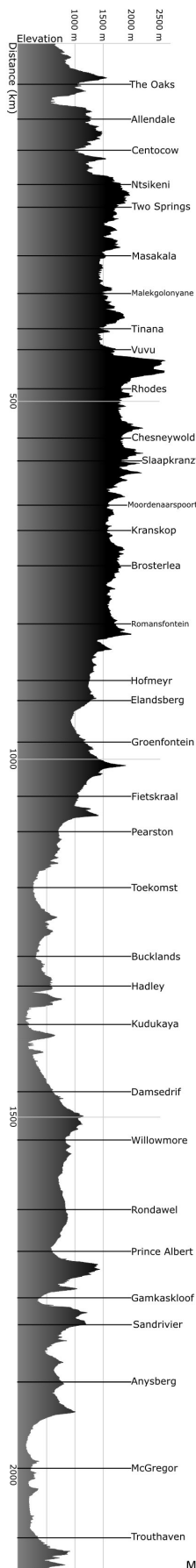
Support stations



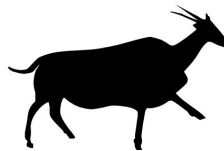
The Freedom Trail Angels, who run the support stations, bring heart to trail, they are a very special part of what makes Freedom so special.

Across the full Freedom Trail there are 34 stops where you can get food and accommodation. These are split into Support Stations (SS) and Interim Stops (IS). The **Support stations are compulsory** and are the places where you can send tubs to. The interim stops are not compulsory.

The Freedom Trail Angels use the tracking site and communication from RO to get an idea of expected rider numbers for the day. Please be understanding if they are not prepared for you and sometimes this can happen.



FREEDOM CHALLENGE



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SS	Location	Description	Host name/s	No. of Beds	Compulsary	Laundry	Tech zone	Distance from previous (km)	Cumulative Distance (km)	Avg. ride time from prev. (hrs)	Ascent from previous (m)	Cumulative Ascent (m)
START	PMB City Hall	PMB City Hall	Race Office		●			0	0	0	0	0
IS1	The Oaks	Hotel	Staff	20+				57	57	5	1400	1400
SS1	Allendale	Farm BnB	Dana & Ian	11	●			48	105	6	1375	2775
IS2	Centocow Mission	Guesthouse	Nonthanthle	14		●		45	150	5	910	3685
SS2	Ntsikeni	Lodge	Mr Dalu Ncgobo	16	●	●		48	198	6	1570	5255
IS3	Two Springs	Farmstay	Caela & Tristan	12		●		32	230	5	670	5925
SS3	Masakala	Village guesthouse	Rethabile & Cindy	14	●	●	●	70	300	6	1080	7005
SS4	Malekholonyane	Rural guesthouse	Mathabo & Fundiswa	14	●	●		56	356	8	860	7865
IS4	Tinana	Homestay	Kibi Family	6		●		45	401	7	820	8685
SS5	Vuvu School	Rural homestay	Nomkhuseli & Aphiwe	20+	●	●		29	430	4	670	9355
SS6	Rhodes (Hotel)	Hotel	Sandra & Henri	20+	●	●	●	52	482	9	1390	10745
IS5	Chesney Wold	Farmstay	Minki & Coreen	6		●		68	550	6	1360	12105
SS7	Slaapkraantz	Farmstay	Joyce & Andre	10	●	●		37	587	4	710	12815
IS6	Moedenaarspoort	Farmstay	Regina & Danie	4				57	644	9	1400	14215
SS8	Kranskop	Farmstay	Sandra (self-service)	12	●			38	682	3	420	14635
IS7	Brosterlea	Farmstay	Alta & Barry	4		●		49	731	5	710	15345
SS9	Romansfontein	Farmstay	Stephanie & Wil	12	●	●	●	82	813	6	770	16115
IS8	Hofmeyr	Farmhouse BnB & Hotel	Jax	12		●		72	885	6	900	17015
SS10	Elandsberg	Farmstay	Margret (self-service)	10	●			37	922	4	275	17290
IS9	Groenfontein	Farmstay	Amelia & Frans	10		●		56	978	5	320	17610
SS11	Fietskraal	Farmstay	Charne & Michael	10	●	●		66	1044	5	1040	18650
IS10	Pearston Hotel	Hotel	Jorrie & Anne	20+		●		51	1095	6	700	19350
SS12	Toekomst	Farmstay	Aimie & Dean	10	●	●		74	1169	5	520	19870
SS13	Bucklands	Farm BnB	Rene & Hannes	16	●	●	●	98	1267	6	930	20800
IS11	Hadley	Farmstay	Anine & Bennie	8		●		41	1308	4	610	21410
SS14	Cambria (KuduKaya)	Farmstay	Helene	12	●	●		54	1362	8	1170	22580
SS15	Dam se Drif	Farm BnB	Hestelle & Rune	12		●		78	1440	7	1460	24040
SS16	Willowmore	Hotel	El-Anne & Derrick	20+	●	●		83	1523	6	1130	25170
IS12	Rondawel	Farmstay	Karien & Gerhard	8		●		95	1618	6	560	25730
SS17	Prince Albert (Yellowhouse)	Guesthouse	Petro & Joubert	12	●	●		66	1684	4	260	25990
IS13	Gamkaskloof	Farm BnB	Marienette & Piet	12				59	1743	5	1540	27530
SS18	Sandrivier	Farmstay	Jonel	10	●	●	●	38	1781	5	1260	28790
IS14	Anysberg	Lodge	Self-service	7				80	1861	5	890	29680
SS19	McGregor	Guesthouse	Geoff	16	●	●		120	1981	7	1020	30700
SS20	Trouthaven	Cottage	Self-service	12	●			99	2080	7	850	31550
Finish	Diemersfontein	Wine Estate	Race office	20+	●			51	2131	11	1450	33000

Map Reference

Support station

National Freeway; National Route.....	
Arterial Route.....	
Main Road.....	
Secondary Road; Bench Mark.....	
Other Road; Bridge.....	
Track and Hiking Trail.....	
Railway; Station or Siding.....	
Other Railway; Tunnel.....	
Embankment; Cutting.....	
Power Line.....	
Built-up Area (High, Low Density).....	
Buildings; Ruin.....	
Post Office; Police Station; Store.....	

Standard route (recommended)

Place of Worship; School; Hotel.....	
Fence; Wall.....	
Windpump; Monument.....	
Communication Tower.....	
Wind Turbine; Wind Farm.....	
Satellite Antenna; Solar Panel Array.....	
Trigonometrical Station; Marine Beacon.....	
Lighthouse and Marine Light.....	
Cemetery; Grave.....	
International Boundary and Beacon.....	
Provincial Boundary.....	
Protected Area.....	
Perennial River.....	
Non-perennial River.....	

Alternate route permitted

Non-Perennial Water.....	
Dry Water Course.....	
Dry Pan.....	
Marsh and Vlei.....	
Pipeline (above ground).....	
Water Tower; Reservoir; Water Point.....	
Coastal Rocks.....	
Prominent Rock Outcrop.....	
Erosion; Sand.....	
Woodland.....	
Cultivated Land.....	
Orchard or Vineyard.....	
Recreation Ground.....	
Row of Trees.....	
Mine Dump; Excavation.....	



Not all the SS and IS offer the same level of service. There is a wide range of offerings along the trail, and this is part of the magic of the trail. It is beautiful how rewarding it can be just to have the basics covered.

There have been instances where a SS's beds are full and riders have to sleep on mattresses on the floor. Beds are issued on a first come first serve basis. There are a few IS with limited beds and mattresses.

Moordenaarspoort (IS6) has 4-6 beds. It is close to Kranskop. In the event that Moordenaars beds are full, you may have to cycle 38km on gravel from Moordenaars to Kranskop. In true freedom style there is no cell reception around Moordenaarspoort so arrangements must be communicated for this stretch of the trail before leaving Slaapkrantz.

Each SS / IS brings something special to the Freedom experience, with each stop being hosted with love and care. Freedom riders are not always the easiest customers; often arriving late, muddy and hungry. This coupled with special rates, is why we call our hosts the **Freedom Trail Angels**.

Laundry

Some SS offer laundry service for R100 per person. Please hand in your laundry as early as possible. If you arrive after 6pm it is unlikely that you will be able to get laundry done and you should plan to do it at another stop. Unfortunately there are no special cleaning options, if you have special requests for bibs, please hand wash them in the bathroom yourself.

Support station etiquette

Here are some guidelines to help nurture an enduring relationship between riders and our Freedom Trail Angels.

- No muddy shoes, bikes or gear inside
- Please turn off electric blankets and heaters when not in use
- Place rubbish in bins
- In the farm stays, please stack dirty dishes and leave eating spaces neat
- No bum cream on furniture or sheets please
- Hand in laundry as early as possible with R100 cash pp

A brilliant sentiment from stone saddle recipient Mark Basel: "As I reach the gate of a SS, I take a moment to reflect on the experience that the SS hosts have of FC. Its actually not only about me, but about them too. For this (FC) to work, it has to be a mutually beneficial relationship."



Race strategy: race, ride or tour

Plan and prep but also know that anything is possible out there and be prepared to adapt.

Sometimes taking a half day can save your ride.

Your main aim in the Freedom Challenge should be to get to the finish before the 26-day cut off - that in itself is a worthy achievement and for that you will get your finisher's blanket.

Aiming for a faster finishing time is entirely possible but immediately puts additional pressure on you. It is wise to decide on a strategy beforehand because it will affect your planning - are you **racing** (sub15-days); **riding** (16-22 days) or **touring** (22-26-days)?

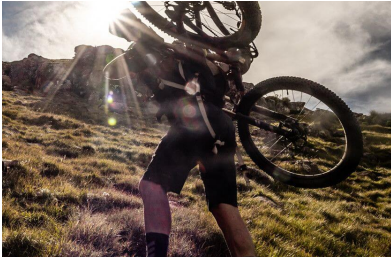
These are fairly loose definitions but are based on past statistics. The finishing time you are aiming for will determine how far you need to ride each day, where you are likely to sleep each night and it could influence what type of equipment you choose.

Looking at the stage distances and daily altitude stats and comparing them to your normal training rides or other events can be misleading and you should not base your strategy and planning on this. There are 3 reasons why: navigation, portages and the weather.

CUT-OFFS: when planning your race strategy, you need to be aware of the rolling cut-offs that apply along the route– if you miss a cut-off, you may not continue.

Cut offs

Freedom Challenge:	Rhodes: 8 days Hofmeyr: 13 days Diemersfontein: 26 days
RTR:	Rhodes: 7 days
RTC:	Cradock: 6 days
RTW:	Willowmore: 6 days
RTP:	Diemersfontein: 6 days



Training and fitness

Freedom is different in that the trail is hard on the whole body. The bike carrying adds a big demand on full body strength. You need to be familiar with riding long days and hiking with load.

The fitter you are, the more you'll enjoy it and the faster you'll recover from a hard day out on the trail.

The first two stages are both long and hard days with steep climbs, so if you are planning a fast start with an aggressive race plan, then you need to be fit and focused. If you plan to start slowly and ride yourself into it, you could probably get away with a bit less training overall, but you still need to be fit enough to survive those first two days.

In terms of training, you would prepare as for any other multi-day event and according to your available training time but your specific focus will shift depending on your race strategy.

The common component should be long rides at medium intensity and sufficient time in the saddle to get used to the bike and all your kit. An average day on the trail will be at least 10 - 12 hours of riding, so you need to build enough endurance to cope with this and recover sufficiently to do it again the next day. You also need to get used to riding with a backpack, which you will feel as additional pressure on your neck, shoulders, back and particularly on the saddle.

Your training schedule should include back-to-back training days and more long rides where possible (over the weekends). Fortunately the intensity during the race is lower than you think – it's more about making steady progress than outright racing and the frequent navigation stops will allow for some rest.

You could add in some short, higher intensity workouts (e.g. hill repeats) during the week, as they are a time efficient way to improve your overall fitness, strength and will also help with recovery.

Train for the portages by hiking (or running), preferably off-road over steep, uneven terrain and if possible, using the same shoes and your bike to figure out how to carry everything comfortably (stair climbing is a good substitute if you can't get outdoors often enough).

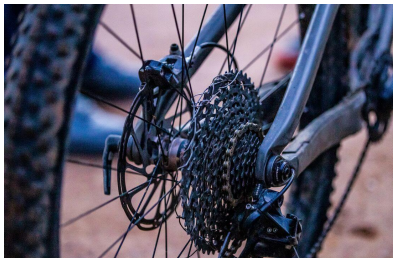
It's a good idea to train with weight on your back but start light and build up to what you expect your final weight to be.

Strength work in the gym is also important be beneficial – to help overall conditioning, climbing strength and to help prevent injuries.

A word about overtraining: always allow enough time for recovery, especially as you get nearer to your start date – aim for peak volumes and intensities 4-6 weeks before the event and then start to taper off and focus on maintaining fitness and boost recovery so that you are not over-trained or carrying any injuries going into the event.

Monitor your health so you don't end up getting sick in the lead up to the event – this becomes more important as the colder winter months approach. If you do get sick in the week before the race, act with medication quickly.

Early morning rides in the cold are good for conditioning and testing out your cold weather kit to fine tune your set up but you should not risk illness in the process.



Bikes and tools

You won't be hammering the bike and giving it to someone else to fix afterwards – you will need to take care of your own bike and equipment on the trail.

Virtually every type of mountain bike has been used on the Freedom Challenge before: steel, titanium, carbon and aluminium - both hardtails and full suspension and there have been failures or issues with all types to varying degrees – what this says is that there really is no “perfect bike” for the Freedom Challenge and it usually comes down to personal preference.

So the best bike for the job is probably the one you already own. If you have the option to choose though, then here are some points to consider:

- lightweight is good but strength and reliability are important
- dependable components, avoid lightweight or difficult to service parts
- strong tubeless tyres are very important
- choose grips, saddle and pedals for all day comfort (use them in training)
- space for bottle cages on frame
- start the event with a close-to-new drivetrain and a fully serviced bike

- bike fit is critical, a comfortable riding position will lead to less fatigue and a more enjoyable ride.

Something to bear in mind is that you won't be hammering the bike and giving it to someone else to fix afterwards – you will need to take care of your own bike and equipment. You will most likely end up riding more conservatively and getting off to walk or push more frequently in an attempt to save bike and body. It's good to get into the habit of checking your bike after each day – a quick clean and lube of the drivetrain and an additional check to see that nothing has worked loose or been damaged – this is essential and will help you avoid major mechanical issues later on.

What spares to carry?

Too many bike spares and tools can quickly add up to unnecessary weight so don't try to cover every eventuality when it comes to breakdowns. You should carry the things that you think you will need to keep the bike running smoothly out on the trail and then send additional spares in your support station boxes to pick up along the way.

Consider taking the following spares and tools:

- Spare derailleur hanger – NB!
- A spare tyre is not necessary if you are using strong tubeless (UST) tyres with fresh sealant but many riders still choose to take one. If you decide to take a spare, store it at the bottom of your backpack or strap it securely to your bike frame. If you don't carry a spare, take glue, patches and gaiters (even a needle+thread) to be able to fix a bad sidewall cut
- Small bottle of sealant with you at all times and send extra in your boxes
- Tubeless plugs of various sizes
- Tubeless valves
- A good mini-pump
- CO2 bomb + inflator with you
- Brake pads – start with new, carry a 3 sets with you
- Carry a spare derailleur cable
- a few spare spokes+nipples – they can be stored inside you handlebar or seat post by using some foam to hold them in place
- Chain quick links. Small light so maybe carry a few.
- A comprehensive multi-tool which includes a chain-breaker and spoke spanner (or separate tools)
- Strong tyre levers (that will not snap in the cold)
- If you are riding full suspension, consider taking a small shock-pump and make sure all pivot bearings/bushes have been serviced before you start

- A small cleaning brush plus soap – you could carry the brush and send the soap in your boxes (make sure it doesn't leak into food supplies)
- A Leatherman type multi-tool/pliers (mini version)
- Duct tape and cable ties for makeshift repairs
- Chainlube – supplied by the event at the start and at certain points along the route but you may also carry your own preferred brand

Having all these tools and spares will allow you to fix most breakdowns, provided you know how to use them – if you don't know, then ask your local bike shop to teach you the basics and practice beforehand.

The most common mechanical issues encountered along the trail are usually tyre or puncture related, rear hub failures or suspension failures. Tyre issues can be taken care of by carrying the right spares as detailed above (and using strong tubeless tyres), the others are a bit more complex.

The freewheel mechanism sometimes freezes up on really cold mornings and won't engage. Pouring hot water over it often sorts it out but in the event of a more serious failure, you may need to open it up to replace the damaged parts. This is normally a job for the bike shop but by carrying the spare parts (which are small and light), you may be able to fix this problem out on the trail – get your bike shop to go through the procedure with you for your specific hub if you are concerned about such a failure.

Front and rear suspension systems need to be serviced before you start and all seals replaced – old seals leak air/oil and eventually lead to collapse which can't be easily repaired on the trail.

There have been a few incidents of frames cracking during the Freedom Challenge. If this happens, you will need a temporary fix to get you to the next support station. Duct tape, cable ties, rope, string or wire have all been used to good effect. If you cannot fix the frame, you need to contact the race office to discuss your options. It is possible to have a replacement frame sent in but you will be given a time penalty and depending on where you are on the route, it may take a day or two to reach you. The same applies for any other spares that you may need along the trail – a spare wheel, seatpost, tyre etc.

Please note: any outside technical support has to be cleared by and arranged through the race office - failure to do so will result in disqualification.



Lights and electronics

Your lights could mean the difference between getting lost or arriving comfortably at a support station.

Lights

Lights are an important part of your kit for Freedom Challenge and you are likely to use them every day out on the trail. In the winter expect sunlight only between 7 am and 5 pm, which gives you 10 hours to work with – being able to extend that by an hour or two either side with your lights could mean the difference between getting lost or arriving comfortably at a support station.

On most mornings you will be trying to leave before sunrise to maximize the available daylight at end of the day when you are tired.

The most common set up is to have a light on your bike (usually on the handlebars) and another light on your helmet. The bike light is typically more powerful and has rechargeable batteries while the helmet light uses replaceable batteries – these are sent in your boxes to pick up along the route.

How bright should the light be? It is personal preference but a decent light for off road riding is typically at least **300 lumens or brighter** – sufficient for dirt road riding and slow technical riding. There are many lights that surpass that with 1000 lumens or more being popular. While these lights are really bright, battery life at full power is limited so they are often used at half power to make them last longer. Recharge times are also important – if you are part of a group sharing accommodation, you may only have an hour or two at night when there is a plug available for you to use.

Look for a light that will give you at least **300 lumens for 3 hours** or more and be able to recharge sufficiently at night to repeat the next day.

If you decide to use a bike light that runs off disposable batteries, make sure you test the run times and send enough spare batteries in your boxes. The helmet light should be lightweight on your head to avoid neck fatigue and burn for a few hours before it dims.

You will mostly be using it when portaging and for reading your maps – a zoom feature or the ability to adjust the beam to see further is useful when navigating in the dark. Some lightweight headlamps work well for this

purpose and give an output of **200 lumens** or more, yet they will only need fresh batteries every third or fourth day. Again, test out the run times beforehand in training and work out carefully where to send your spare batteries in your rider tubs.

Another option that has become more popular in recent years is a hub dynamo that powers a dedicated bike light. These systems do not have any batteries and rely on your leg power when you ride the bike - as long as the front wheel is turning, your light will shine but the brightness of the light depends on your speed. On portages, the light will switch off, so you will still need a helmet light. A bonus of the system is the ability to recharge other devices (phone) at the same time while on the move by means of a small, integrated charger box. The hub dynamo/light/charger system is convenient but is by no means essential to finishing the Freedom Challenge.

It is also important and compulsory to take a **rear flashing light for safety**. From the start in Pietermaritzburg you will be riding in traffic and again near the end before Wellington. Along the way there are other places where you may encounter traffic. These flasher units are small and light and with fresh batteries and selective use, they should last the whole ride.

Electronics

Apart from an event issued tracking device and a mobile phone, which is compulsory for communicating with the race office, all other electronics are optional. Think carefully before taking any extra devices with you – they all add weight and complication to your setup.

In the past, riders have taken some of the following – the choice to take these or similar is entirely up to you:

- a portable power pack to recharge your phone
- a separate camera if you intend to take photos regularly
- a separate video/action camera to document your adventure
- a music player/iPod
- chargers for all the different devices
- or a universal/USB type charger that will possibly work for all the different devices

Remember that the intention is not for you to suffer on the Freedom Challenge, so if you decide to take some luxury items along, that's fine. Just be sure that you are really going to use them enough to warrant having them with you. Make sure you use them in training and are familiar with functions and battery life.



Clothing and shoes

Be sure the items you pack are up for the task of keeping you warm and dry in extreme conditions.

Probably one of the most important topics in your preparation, so apart from what you'll find here, take the time to speak to other riders and learn from their hard-won experience.

The cold winter temperatures and potential for **extreme weather** make clothing choice critical. If you are caught out in a sudden change of weather, you need to be able to survive those conditions with the kit in your backpack. You have to be prepared to sleep out in the cold.

Clothing can be divided into 6 categories:

- a) base layer
- b) mid layer
- c) shell layer
- d) extremities (hands, feet, head)
- e) shoes
- f) overnight clothing

a) Base layer

The base layer is your 'next to skin layer.'

Top – a light to medium weight long sleeve top, could be synthetic (polyprop, polyester, nylon) or merino wool fabric. Lightweight and packs up small.

Carry two and rinse/wash where possible.

Bottom – padded cycling shorts with leg warmers (could be bib type) or long cycling pants. Carry 2 pairs (shorts) and rinse/wash where possible.

b) Mid Layer

Top - The mid layer can also usually be worn as a 'next to skin layer' if needed. It is intended to provide more warmth and insulation than a base layer. Usually a synthetic or merino wool fabric, with or without front zip. Could also be a long sleeve, winter-weight cycling jersey. Quite bulky to pack but it is usually worn every day, with possibly a second garment stored in the backpack if you have the space.

Bottom – if you don't have legwarmers, consider taking long cycling pants as your warm layer to wear over your padded cycling shorts.

c) Shell Layer

Top - this layer must protect you from cold, wind and rain. It may be one waterproof jacket or two jackets, one waterproof and the other one a lightweight windproof. The waterproof jacket should have a hood, which you will typically wear under your helmet (some jackets have adjustable hoods which can fit over a helmet). Carefully consider the weight and bulk of the waterproof jacket – it needs to keep you dry in the worst conditions but you won't be wearing it all the time and will have to carry it in the backpack mostly – too big and bulky will mean a bigger backpack, too thin and light and it may not provide sufficient protection and could tear easily, allowing water/cold in.

Bottom – waterproof shell pants to match the jacket, will be used in very cold conditions to cut the wind and conserve body heat and in the rain to keep you dry, otherwise mostly carried in the backpack.

d) Extremities

The hands, feet and head are areas that are very susceptible to cold.

Hands – a combination of thin base layer, windproof mid layer (winter cycle gloves) and insulated, waterproof outer gloves depending on conditions. Most of the time you will only use one of the 3. Sizing is important, the outer gloves should be sized with enough room to fit the layers underneath.

Feet – similar to hands but possibly fewer layers, a thin liner sock (that can be washed regularly) plus a thick, warm outer sock (wool or synthetic). Waterproof socks like Sealskinz also work well as they are insulated, windproof and waterproof – ideal as outer layer and the thicker versions can be used as the only layer.

Head – your helmet will be your outer layer and you should have enough adjustment to accommodate some thicker insulating layers underneath. These layers are very much dependent on personal preference but should be adaptable and easy to take off if you start overheating. A buff /tube scarf around the neck with a second over the head is common. A windproof skull-cap and a thin balaclava for really cold mornings are other options worth considering.

e) Shoes

Shoes need to be comfortable and keep your feet warm.

First you need to decide if you will use one pair of shoes for the whole journey or if you want to take a second, lighter pair of shoes for portaging and wearing at night around the support station.

If you take two types of shoes, then choose cycling shoes that you can still walk in and take a pair of lightweight running shoes as the second pair.

If you plan to use only one type of shoe, look for something that you can walk in comfortably over technical terrain, shoes which are robust to protect your feet and keep them warm. These types of shoes typically have leather uppers and a 'hiking shoe' type sole (there are models available that have a waterproof treatment or lining which adds warmth and protection in wet conditions, in either a shoe or boot style). If you are buying shoes for this event, try to fit them with the socks you will use, especially if they are thick winter socks or Sealskinz – you typically need to get a size bigger than normal for a comfortable fit.

f) Overnight clothing

Although you will spend most of the day outdoors on your bike, at night you should be indoors at a support station. Here you'll typically wear your second set of clothing, while the dirty ones are being washed and dried. Some riders prefer to pack a separate set of 'night clothes' which are only worn in the evenings or which could double as extra layers on the bike if needed. The important thing is to be able to put on clean clothing at night and to be comfortably warm while at the support station. A lightweight fleece top and sleeping shorts are good options and some riders even pack an ultralight down jacket/vest for the evenings. Consider these items carefully as they will usually be packed in your backpack during the day and only get used at night, which means extra weight on your back. If possible, choose items which could also be used on the bike in the case of an emergency or if you encounter extreme weather conditions.



Backpacks

You will be carrying all your gear with you, there are many ways you can choose to do this.

First decide if you prefer to carry all your kit in a **backpack**, in **frame bags on the bike** or using a **combination** of both. If you use only a backpack, most of the weight will be on your shoulders and back (putting pressure on your saddle). This will make the bike lighter for portaging and pushing. Using frame bags, the weight is distributed across the bike, resulting in a much smaller and lighter backpack but the bike is then significantly heavier when pushing and carrying it on the portages. If you decide to use both frame bags and a large backpack, make sure you don't end up carrying too much kit – extra packing space should not be an excuse to carry unnecessary extra weight.

Whichever setup you choose, the aim is the same, try to pack sensibly and eliminate things that you don't need daily or rather send more items in your rider tubs – any extra weight will just make life harder on the trail.

Backpack only

Look for bags in the 20-30 litre range, any bigger will become uncomfortably heavy and smaller will make it hard to fit everything in. If you have lightweight kit and are taking a lean and mean approach, you'll get away with a 20 litre backpack and be aiming for a total mass of 7-8kg (including water) or less. A 25 litre pack will give you a bit more volume but you could still end up with a total mass of 10kg or less. This seems to be the ideal size and is a popular choice. Going bigger than 25 litres makes it harder to get the total under 12kg (because you often tend to use the extra space for luxuries). However, if your kit is light but bulky e.g. down jacket, you may need the extra volume to fit everything in. Smaller backpacks can be harder to pack because everything is a tight fit, so bigger bags do have some advantages here.

As far as backpack features go, look for something with pockets/pouches to organize your gear (inside and outside), a decent waistbelt that can transfer weight to the hips (zip pouches on the waistbelt are good for items you need to access easily – snacks, tools etc), water resistant fabric and zips or a separate rain cover and hydration compatibility to carry fluids (although you don't necessarily need to fill it)

Frame bags

Frame bags offer a lot of volume and feature robust construction. The most popular type of bag used is a small top-tube bag, usually filled with snacks, tools or spares. Another useful option is a seat pack – it offers good volume and also serves as a mudguard below the seat. There are other types of bags that fill in the frame triangle or hang in front of the handlebar so it's worth researching all the options.

Remember that these bags were developed for carrying bulky camping equipment on extended backcountry bike trips – during the Freedom Challenge you will be staying indoors at support stations with all bedding supplied.

Unless you plan to use these bags in place of a backpack, don't make the mistake of ending up with too much packing space and filling it with unnecessary items.

“What if I realize on Day 1 that my bag is too heavy, and I want to send some kit back home?”

If you've taken too many 'extras' with you and your bag is too heavy and you need to dump some kit but don't want to throw it away, you have two options:

1. You are allowed to dump kit at Allendale (support station 1) – this will be collected and taken to the finish in Wellington for you to collect at the end. If you withdraw before finishing, it is up to you to track down the kit and make arrangements to retrieve it from the race office.

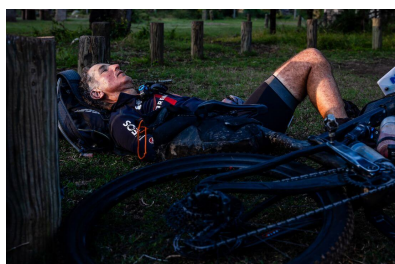
2. You may post the kit back home from any post office along the route but you will need to do it yourself. Asking someone else to post it for you is considered outside support and will incur a time penalty or lead to disqualification.

Towns along the route with post offices/agencies:

Matatiele/Jamestown/Hofmeyr/Pearston/Kleinpoort/Willowmore/
Prince Albert/Montagu/McGregor - some of these are slightly off route and require a detour to get there.

If you need to post anything, you will need to inform the race office of your intentions before doing so and will have to re-join the route at the same point you left it. If you leave any other items of kit (spares, clothing, devices etc.) at any of the other support stations, you will forfeit those items – you may not ask the support station hosts to make any arrangements to get them back to you after the race and you may not arrange for anyone to meet you along the route during the race to collect the kit from you.

So pack carefully and test everything thoroughly in training before the event, especially in colder weather as the winter approaches. Try to have a system of packing and unpacking worked out in advance and make use of your training sessions as a simulation of a typical day out on the trail.



Medical

You need to look after yourself and prevent issues as far as possible while pushing your limits out on the trail.

Minor injuries and illness are common on the Freedom Challenge. Being prepared for them will limit their potential impact on your ride. **Prevention** being the name of the game!

Your compulsory first aid kit will have the basic items to treat common injuries/wounds and illness. The first aid kit will be carried with you at all times, so pack it carefully and make sure it is easily accessible in the case of an emergency. Consider what additional items could be sent in your boxes and also where you may need to replenish stocks of items you expect to use along the trail.

“Doc” Grant Lyndsay

Doc Lindsay is a volunteer race doctor and has been involved with Freedom for over 5 years. He has done many tours on the trail and knows it and the demands of Freedom well.

If you are starting to suffer from an injury or illness please reach out to doc on whats app. **+27 (0)71 6761826**. Please save this number into your phone.

Doc usually instructs you to act early with treating illness and injury as a day or half day on the bike isn't likely to help you get healthier.

In repayment for his services he asks if you can make a donation towards the Freedom Challenge Scholarship Fund. What a legend!

Doc Lyndsay will also be the one to co-ordinate emergency evacuation off the trail with RO. Please be aware that all emergency evacuations are for your own (medical aid) account.

Injuries/wounds

Overuse injuries to muscles and joints tend to creep in after a few long, hard days. The huge amounts of climbing in the first section of the trail and the perhaps the less familiar hiking and portaging make one susceptible to overuse injuries. Strength and mobility training for core, hips, knees, ankles, shoulders and back can counter this. Carry strapping tape and bandages for support. Anti-inflammatories and pain-killers may become necessary but use them wisely. In the event of a crash or fall, you may need to dress an open wound – gauze, disinfectant cream/wipes, plasters or bandages may all be required.

Saddle sores are also common, largely due to the long hours in the saddle and the extra weight of the backpack – prevention is best with long rides in training for conditioning and the use of an anti-chafe cream. An anesthetic

cream (e.g. Anethaine) can help manage discomfort once a problem has developed and the race doctor usually advised Friars Balsam and/or Methiolate for treatment of sores so it is worth carrying those.

Illness

During the Freedom Challenge, cold mornings/evenings, dust and shared indoor spaces increase the chances of throat, chest and lung infections. If you get sick, please reach out to Dr Grant Lindsay, our race doctor, as he will be able to help you treat it early. He approach is normally treat early as proactively as possible as with the cold exposure and long days of riding, getting better without intervention is unlikely.

Stomach issues are also common due to the run down state one's body gets into on an expedition like Freedom. Rehydration is important if you have stomach issues.

If you take any chronic critical medication it is vital that you make provision for this when packing. Either carry enough supply with you at all times or take a smaller supply and spread the rest out over your support station boxes. Ensuring it is in a waterproof bag.

The route takes you through remote areas away from towns and cities so you cannot rely on purchasing anything specific along the way.

If you are affected by injury or illness during your ride, you need to manage it and the decision to continue is in your hands unless the race doctor insists you need to withdraw. Be realistic about your condition and your chances for recovery – sometimes a rest day at a support station could be enough to help you get going again and there will be opportunities to make up lost time further along the trail.

If carrying on leads to further injury and means risking permanent damage, consider your options carefully and consult with the race office before making any final decision.

Personal Hygiene

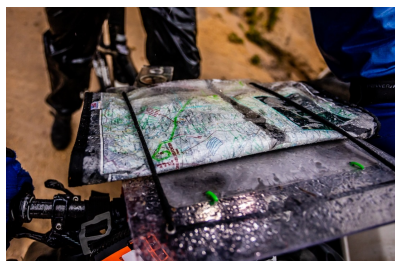
Washing your hands regularly especially before eating is the best preventative method to prevent stomach issues. Sanitiser is useful for keeping hands clean.

Washing or rinsing your clothes regularly is also important, especially in preventing saddle sores. Some of the support stations offer a paid-for laundry service – you need to pay them R100 in cash if they do your laundry

(if you intend to make use of the laundry service, send the cash ahead in your boxes).

You may also wash or rinse your own clothing but ask where to do it first and ask where you may hang it to dry (often in front of a stove or fireplace). In this case, you can send some soap/washing powder in your boxes too but make sure it doesn't leak and contaminate food supplies.

The personal toiletries that you carry can also be kept to a minimum by sending most things in your boxes. Soap, toothpaste, shampoo etc. can all be decanted into smaller containers, otherwise you end up carrying them all day but only using them at support stations at night – better to have them waiting for you there and save a bit of weight in your backpack.



Maps and narrative

Not having a marked route to follow brings in the element of adventure and makes each day a journey of discovery.

The Freedom Challenge maps were overhauled for 2022 and are now A4 paper size but still 1:50 000 scale. Narratives are now included on the map and should be used in conjunction with maps. Blank maps showing route only with no narrative can be issued on soft copy upon request.

The Freedom Challenge route has evolved over time and continues to do so – it is therefore important to make use of the most recent set of maps. Maps are labelled with applicable event and year in top left corner. Do not try to use older versions of maps and narratives as they could indicate a route, which is no longer in use and you could end up getting lost. You may also end up trespassing on private land.

It is best to use the maps and narratives together but it is possible to follow the route using only one (maps or narratives). On average you will be using 6-7 maps between support stations. Together with a compass and bike computer, these form your navigational tools and your means to follow the intended route. Although you may find some signs (the famous Freedom Challenge 'bokkie') along the route, these are intended only as confirmation markers.

To save you having to carry all the maps and narratives all the time, you can split them up and send them ahead in your race boxes – NB make sure you

place the correct maps in the correct boxes and send them to correct support stations (i.e the maps you will need for the next section of the route after that particular support station).

NB – if there are any late changes to the route or support stations, riders will be notified by the race office and sent the relevant info in time to include in your rider tubs. Should there be any further changes, they will then be discussed at the race briefing before the start.

Getting to know the route

Once you have your printed maps and narratives in hand, spend some time getting to know them. Go through in detail paying attention to landmarks mentioned and direction of travel. You will not remember every detail but the idea is to get comfortable with using the two side-by-side and cross-referencing between them.

If you are using a map board, practice with the maps mounted. You could produce your own map and narrative for one of your training rides and practice with that, this has the advantage of also giving you practice with the compass and the process of resetting your bike computer for distance splits).

You can study the route further by trying to match the route on the printed maps to Google Earth – this will give you a better idea of the type of terrain you will be passing through along the route.

Although the navigation can seem daunting, it really is the essence of this event and once you master it, you will gain the confidence to head off into the unknown with only your maps and narratives to guide you. It may take a few days on the trail to figure it out but it really isn't something to fear and can be practiced and mastered with a bit of patience.

If you really are in a panic about getting lost, you have the option of trying to stick with other riders who can either navigate well or know the route – don't rely on this though, if your pace is slower, then you will also be worried about being left behind. With the maps and narratives in hand, you will have the tools you need to find your way and stick to the route – that is part of the challenge of any navigation event and is what sets the Freedom Challenge apart from most other staged mountain bike events.

Not having a marked route to follow brings in the element of adventure and makes each day a journey of discovery. Finding the route becomes like solving a puzzle - something you do bit-by-bit each day as you move down the trail.



Trackers

Your tracker is a reliable lifeline to the outside world. Please respect it and ensure that it is always on and tracking!

You will be lent a Spot satellite tracker to use during your FC event. If the tracker is lost or damaged you will be held accountable and need to pay R3000 for it.

The tracker will be given to you switched ON, please do not turn it off. Sometimes when carrying your bike on your shoulder, the tracker can accidentally be switched off. Please check your own and your riding partners' trackers are working properly after portage sections.

A tracker that is tracking well will have a green flashing lights on the top portion over the power and GPS icons as well as over the boot button, centre.

If you need to **reboot your tracker**:

1. Press and hold the **“power” button** top left for 3-4 seconds
2. Press and hold the **“boot” button** centre for 3-4 seconds

If you only press the “power” button then the tracker is on but not tracking your location. It is important to press the boot button after the power button. If you are doing the full FC you will be given a spare set of lithium batteries to carry with you. These are only to be used for your tracker and please not to be mixed with batteries you may be carrying for other devices.

The tracker needs to be securely attached to the **shoulder strap** of your back pack. It needs to be upward facing - **“SPOT” needs to be sky facing**. It can not be attached to your bike, as in the event you are separated from your bike, as what has been the case before with a big fall, you still need to be able to access your tracker.

There are one way communication options on your tracker. These are vital uses of communication when you are out of cell phone signal.

Regions on the trail where there is known no network coverage include:

Umko, black fountain, portages before and after Slaapkrantz, Elandsberg, Osseberg, Styttynskloof. This list also happen to be highly

technical portions of the trail and could take you all day and a night to cover them. Please be extra sure that your tracker is working well when you are doing these portions.



If you have cell signal please always call or message first, before pressing an emergency button on your tracker.

The “OK” button:

Please press this button if you are stopped for an extended period of time and everything is alright. This is particularly important to press if it is at night and you are stopping to sleep.

The “helping hand” button:

Emergency button

Please press this button if you do not have cell phone signal and you are too injured to continue. This indicates to race office that you are **withdrawing from the race** and need to be collected. If you are able to move at all, please make your way towards the nearest accessible point by vehicle. Please note this may be

Examples of when not to press the helping hand button: you are cold and lost.

Emergency button

If you press any of the above emergency buttons (helping hand or SOS) by accident you can de-activate them by pressing and holding them again for 3-4 seconds until the light above them stops flashing. This will send RO a cancel message. Please follow this up with pressing the OK button so that it is confirmed that you are alright.

Your tracker is a reliable lifeline to the outside world. Please respect it and ensure that it is always on and tracking!



Rider tubs

2 litres of race essentials and home comforts.

Your 2 litre rider tubs, that are sent to each support station, are meant to get your **maps & narratives, bike spares, toiletries** and **medicine** to those parts of the trail where you will need them.

After you've packed all the essentials, there should still be space left over in the boxes. Although the support stations and lunch stops will provide you with ample food and lunch packs for the road, you may decide to use a particular energy drink, recovery product or take your favourite riding snacks with you.

If you have any special dietary requirements, please use your tubs to add to your needs, incase the support stations cant offer you what you need. For example vegetarians may choose to include some additional protein options and those that are gluten intolerant may choose to include GF alternatives to cereals / snacks in your tubs.

The key to packing these tubs is **variety** – don't put the same thing in every box, you will eventually get tired of eating even your best loved snacks. You will also start to crave different things during the ride, sometimes sweet, other times salty, so give yourself the option of both types of snacks. You could get friends or family to help you by giving them some guidelines and then letting them pack each box as a surprise for you. Once on the trail, you could also end up swapping snacks with other riders for even more variety.

Some riders in the past have also packed reminders from their families or short messages of encouragement from home – these could give you a morale boost at just the right time but they also help to involve your family in the preparations for the event.

Once you have decided what to put in your boxes, pack everything you need and then label each box clearly including:

1. Support station name e.g. Allendale
2. Your first name and surname.

These must be **labeled on the top and ends of each box** so that when they are all well stacked you can easily see which box is yours and so that when they are all being sorted your box goes to the correct support station.

Please seal your tubs with adhesive tape (or duct tape) to make sure they don't accidentally open during transit.

If you only write your initials or only your first name or surname your box could get confused with someone else. Withdrawn riders' tubs are allowed to be opened by fellow riders. If your name is similar to a withdrawn rider there is the chance it will get raided if not marked clearly.

NOTE: you will only be sending boxes to 'support stations' and not to the 'interim stops.'

Freedom Challenge: 20 tubs
Race to Rhodes: 5 tubs
Race to Cradock: 4 tubs
Race to Willowmore: 4 tubs
Race to Paarl: 4 tubs

Take your time when packing them and make sure you pack the correct maps in the correct boxes.

Race Office will notify riders regarding the arrangements for getting your boxes sent to the office, usually by drop off at a courier company. The deadline is usually 3 weeks before race start. Once they arrive at the Race Office, they will be sorted with all the other rider tubs and then repackaged and sent to the support stations along the route.

When you arrive at a support station during the event, the hosts will either give you your box or show you where they are all being stored. Do not open any other unopened tubs, only your own.

You may make use of items found in the leftovers from previous riders – only those who started in earlier batches than you and have already passed through the support station. These will either be in their opened boxes or all placed in a large leftovers box by the hosts. Whatever you leave behind at a support station is lost to you and you should not expect to see it again after the race – it will be used by other riders or claimed by the support station hosts (this includes clothing and bike spares).



Communication on the trail

While you are alone out there, there is much happening in the background to make that possible.

Communication is key.

All **communication with race office needs to go through a what's app group that includes both Chris and Julia**. These groups will be set up before you start. Communication including all bike issues, spares requested, sleeping plans, illness/injury status must go through these groups so that everyone knows what's going on.

No communication is to go directly to the Buffalo Herders, but rather needs to go through race office on these whats app groups.

Sleeping plans

In order for the support stations to prepare meals and beds for you, you need to let race office know your sleeping plans in advance via What's App. You will need to send a 5 day sleeping plan via whats app to the group you have with race office.

Sign-in sheets

At **every support station and interim stop** you will find a printed list of all the riders entered for the event. Each rider **MUST** sign in next to their name by writing down their **arrival time** and **the date** and the same again on **departure**.



Golden rules

The Golden Rules are a distillation of the General Race Rules

PLEASE FAMILIARISE YOURSELF WITH THE FULL LIST OF RULES FOUND ON THE FREEDOM WEBSITE: [HTTPS://WWW.FREEDOMCHALLENGE.ORG.ZA/FC-RULES](https://www.freedomchallenge.org.za/fc-rules)

Golden Rule 1 - No motorized transport

After the commencement of the race, challengers may not be transported at any time by motorized means whether forward, backward or off the trail with a vehicle or they will be disqualified.

Golden Rule 2 - Close Gates

Always close any gate that you open yourself, even if there are riders immediately behind you. Failure to close gates properly will lead to severe time penalties or disqualification.

Golden Rule 3 - No outside support

Challengers may not receive personal support or outside assistance at any stage during the race. This includes but is not limited to visits by family, friends or supporters anywhere along the route or receiving any sort of gear, equipment, food or spares.

Golden Rule 4 - No GPS for Navigation

The Freedom Challenge is a traditional navigation style event. ie Map and compass. This is a massive and important part of the challenge. GPS devices capable of following a track or assisting navigation more than speed

and distance are strictly prohibited. Competitors may use simple GPS odometers or running watches that show speed and distance only. Riders must have their distance measuring devices visible at race start. Any rider caught with a GPS device capable of navigation during the event will be disqualified. All competitors must carry a cell phone and smart phones are allowed and encouraged (for photo sharing and social media reach purposes).

Golden Rule 5 - Impeccable behaviour

All Challengers are expected to act in a sportsmanlike manner and conduct themselves in a civil manner throughout the race. Abusive behaviour toward fellow riders, support station hosts or any other people encountered along the route will not be tolerated and will result in time penalties. Any complaints received from support station hosts will be investigated and could result in disqualification.

Golden Rule 6 - No Fires

Challengers accept that during any Freedom Challenge event, the making of open fires is prohibited anywhere along the route – doing so will likely result in disqualification and Challengers will be held liable for any damages that may occur from the spread of such a fire.



A typical day on the trail

To make life easier on the trail, it helps to have a daily routine to follow.

Below is a guideline of what to expect:

- wake up around 4 am, sometimes earlier
- get dressed and pack bags
- breakfast
- final bike admin and bag packing
- sign out 5 am
- on the road before sunrise
- mid-morning snack stop
- ride till lunch stop
- Arrive at lunch stop, throw out rubbish, refill water bottles, clean hands, have lunch hit the road
- afternoon snack stop
- ride till supper

Try to keep moving during the day, limit stops on longer days or in bad weather conditions in order to aim to arrive before sunset.

On arrival at a support station:

- Take your bottles off your bike, throw rubbish away.
- sign in
- get your tub
- shower/bath
- hand in laundry as soon as possible on arrival (pay for laundry when handing it in)
- bike check and maintenance, refill bottles for the next day.
- social time and check maps for next day
- supper
- Inform race office of plans for following day(s)
- Bed

Daily bike maintenance and checking is important and setting up your bike for the next day can develop into a routine of its own:

- where possible, wash bike (or just drivetrain)
- do a quick check (front to back/top to bottom), check for play, loose bolts, broken spokes, tyre cuts etc
- Mornings – lube chain (not indoors!), check tyres, reset trip meter, display correct maps (or do all of this at night so bike is ready to go in the morning).

Week 1 is the hardest as you will be **adjusting** to life on the trail, by **week 2** you should be **coping** a bit better and hopefully by **week 3** you will be more comfortable and maybe even **having fun!**



Freedom Challenge Scholarship Fund

Your preparation for Freedom wouldn't be complete without introducing you to the incredible Freedom

Challenge Scholarship Fund (FCSF).

In 2010 Sean Woolnough was the guardian of a group of riders doing the Ride to Rhodes - the precursor to The Race to Rhodes. After their stay at Vuvu there was a discussion among his batch of riders about what they could do to help the school. The initial idea was to get them a television. This

idea was fed back to David Waddilove the founder and then race director of the Freedom Challenge. David felt that the provision of a television for the school fell within the ambit of the education department and instead mooted the idea of starting a scholarship fund where pupils along the Maluti portion of the Ride to Rhodes route could be funded to attend the boarding school located at Mariazell Mission School which is located at the foot of the ridge below the support station of Malekhalonyane. This idea fit firmly into one of David's founding principles - supporting communities along the route.

Nikki McLeod, located near Matatiele, and involved in community developmental projects in the region together with the Mehlooding Trust took up the challenge of getting the programme off the ground. Initially the fund fell under the auspices of an established foundation. Apart from charging admin fees the foundation added nothing to the initiative. With that in mind the Freedom Trail Foundation was established as its own Nonprofit Organisation.

From that point forward the administration of the Foundation has been done on a zero fee basis. The net effect being that every cent raised goes to funding students. Direct deposits into the Foundations account strips away the overhead costs associated with the various fund raising apps.

Allen Sharp has been at the helm of the administration since scholars have been attending Mariazell starting 2011. The ground work is done by Tsepo Lesholu who is remunerated by Chris and Julia. Apart from the work Tsepo does in keeping the relationship going between the race and the local communities he shoulders the responsibility of interacting with the chiefs, school principals and teachers, Mariazell, parents/guardians and the students. The combined efforts of Allen and Tsepo is the glue that keeps it all together and the oil that makes it run smoothly.

The Race administrators who have followed David; Glenn and Meryl, and now Chris and Julia; have been steadfast supporters of the Fund.

So far the Fund has sponsored 72 scholars, representing 213 scholar years. Initially the sponsorship was for the final 3 years of high school but has since opted to admit students for 5 years. This gives the students a better chance of academic success. Over the last few years a number of students have gone on to study at university. It's worth mentioning that attending university, while a fair measure of academic achievement, is not the only goal. If students are able to go on and find employment or establish their own small businesses then those are equally acceptable outcomes. The school at Mariazell, while a zero fee government school, is run under the auspices of the church established at the mission. Apart from a good education students are exposed to discipline and respect.

The support given to the various village schools along the trail hasn't gone unnoticed by the local population. When it's race season the first sighting of riders is texted along the trail - "The riders are here!"

The funding of the FCSF has been done entirely by the ongoing support of riders and supporters of the various Freedom Challenge events. The generosity of this cohort is extraordinary. Year after year all it takes is the flimsiest excuse to spur them on to supporting the fund.

Allen made an interesting comment the other day—"I don't know if David realised the reach the race would have when he established it. The amount of people drawn into the Freedom Challenge extends far beyond the riders."
By Mike Woolnough

In your journey across / a portion of South Africa you are going to be moved and touched and perhaps even inspired by the cultural journey you will be on. If riding the Freedom Trail touches you in a special way and if it inspires you choose to live life in a different way. Don't hold back in giving back to the beautiful South Africa that opened it's heart to you.

BANKING DETAILS

Freedom Trail Foundation

First National Bank or FNB South Africa

Account Number: 62473449356

Reference: your name

Branch: Cresta

Branch Code: 250655

Swift code: FIRNZAJJ or FIRNZAJJXXX if your bank requires an 11-digit code



**Thank you for choosing Freedom,
and with it the wild unknown.
With all the unpredictabilities on the Freedom Trail,
one thing is certain;
adventure is guaranteed.**