What Is "Single Track" Anyway?

Monday, 22 August 2016 11:50 AM Written by Gene Nacey

Sometimes the best way to understand what something is, is to first understand what it is not. Single track is not rails to trails or crushed stone trails like you see around the city. It is also not dirt or gravel back roads; more often referred to as double track. That being said, double track is a very good place to practice riding your mountain bike if you have been exclusively riding on the road or the rails to trails network. Typically double track will be a mix of gravel and dirt with occasional mud puddles here and there. These are also called fire roads and are used by the forest service for a variety of purposes.

The picture with the yellow trees (taken in Tahoe, CA) is a great example of double track or fire roads. The other pics in this post are good examples of single track.

In addition, single track is often accessed by starting on a fire road until you see the single track trail head. For example, at Boyce park you will often start on the double track after parking your car and then you will head into the woods on what at first might just look like a deer or foot path, but once inside you should see a worn trail about 6 to 12 inches wide with most of the vegetation immediately to the right and left of the trail cut back so you don't get your arms and shoulders scratched up from thorn bushes and such.

So naturally, you ride single track in single file, one person after the other, with at least 3 bike lengths or so between riders. Since the trail isn't really wide, you have to stay attentive to say "on the path", but if you make sure to start riding on the "green circles" or beginner type trails this will be much easier than you think. Remember that MTB tires are typically much wider (even as much as 3 inches these days) and so you have good stability as you ride along the track. Especially on the smoother, more "flowy" beginner tracks this can feel like a Kennywood ride. Throw in a few ups and downs and you'll think you're on a roller coaster on 2 wheels!

More in this category:
« Mountain Biking Now Ready For All Riders
Technical vs Flowy MTB Tracks »
Tagged under

- **outdoor cycling**

Commenting policy | How to report abuse

Commenting policy | How to report abuse

back to top

welcome!