



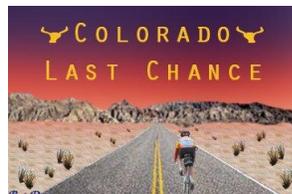
## RUSA 1200k Guidebook



Welcome to the Randonneurs USA 1200k guidebook. This book is for those who are considering organizing the granddaddy of randonneuring events - a 1200 kilometer or longer randonnée.

While all 1200k events differ in style, support and services, this guidebook will describe the fundamental elements of hosting a 1200k and the various considerations our RUSA 1200k organizers have considered when handling the different aspects of their events.

**A Word about Applying** - (1) The *RBA of the region* hosting the event must make the actual application to RUSA. If you would like to organize a 1200k outside an existing region, a new region and RBA will need to be approved beforehand. (2) A [RUSA 1200k event application](#) and plan will need to be submitted and approved - this details your event and, at least as important, your organizational plan leading up to putting it on. You can find the 1200k application on the RUSA website - you may want to study it along with this guide.



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# RUSA 1200k Guidebook

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# Prologue

## Where to Start? Pick your Style!

The very first thing you need to do is decide on the style of your event. Everything else follows from this. Here are some factors to consider:

- Type of Course: loop course versus an out-and-back;
- Level of support: minimal to fully supported;
- Hospitality Level: everywhere or some spots or riders are on their own;
- Pace Options: group style or everyone at their own pace;
- Meal Plans: how much and where; and
- Extras: t-shirts, water bottles, jerseys.

All of this leads to two very important factors – staff and budget. You will need to have some help and you will need to charge something for the event. How much help and how much you charge will depend entirely on how much support you provide given the style of event you choose. A minimally supported event like Last Chance in 2004 could have three staff and charge \$150. On the other hand, Boston-Montreal-Boston had dozens of staff and cost \$400.

As you think about your ride you should think about what makes your ride unique. Obviously the location is unique and that will be an obvious draw for some people, but what else. BMB has its history, the Cascade 1200 has the common overnights, Last Chance touts itself for the more self-sufficient rider. What do you want your riders to experience that they may not find elsewhere?

More importantly, do your research and compare with what is out there and has been done. Check out the websites of other 1200k events, talk with those organizers, find ride accounts where people tell you what the event was really like. This will help you to find your niche and know what to avoid. This applies to everything from website appearance, to pricing, to food, etc.

## Volunteers and Staff

Managing a 1200k is like managing a fairly large project in a work environment. You will need to work with people. You will need to manage timelines. You will need to create task lists. You will need to assign tasks and keep status on them.

Establish three key players for your event who need to be working together from the start. Then build your staff from there. As you choose your staff, make sure to find good, reliable, trustworthy people. You should also consider who is good at what – if someone is better with people, give them the task of rounding up more staff; if someone likes detail, ask them to do the route sheet. Of course you will do much of the work yourself as well.

Some tasks are self-contained so it's easy to hand off an entire section to someone else to complete. For example, t-shirts are pretty self-contained. It would be easy to hand off that entire task to someone else – the design, ordering, etc. Printing and mailing can be handed off. Delegating some of these tasks can take a lot of the burden off you and others will feel like they are making a good contribution.

Then there is staff for the event itself. Make sure to have enough staff at all staffed points – for the number of riders you are hosting – for the duration needed at each point – and able to do the tasks assigned. You'll need to come up with a list of positions and times. The flipside of this is that you don't want too many people at any one point, otherwise they will get bored. For any all-night positions make sure those staff can get some sleep, even for just a few hours. You should strive to have at least one full-time staff per every 10 riders, in addition to the original three. So if you plan on having 30 participants, you need those three key administrators plus at least three staff. If you plan on having 100 participants, you need at least 10 full-time staff (20 half-time, 40 quarter-time, etc), plus the original three.

The best way to find staff is to ask specific people – they can be friends, club members, riding buddies. They will often be glad to help. Often your own club members will want to ride so ask them to ask their family or friends to get involved.

Once the event starts it's best if you are directing and not doing. That way you can deal with emergencies or changes that need to happen. This means you need to give your staff clear directions and tell them what to do – and then you have to trust them to do it. You can't watch them all the time because you can only be in one place at a time and if you've picked quality people this shouldn't be a problem.

While it's possible to ride your own event, it is not recommended. It will take more work to set up the event so you can ride and to have staff you truly trust. If you choose to follow this path, you must ensure that the ride can function smoothly and all riders get competent attention without you because once the ride starts since you are concentrating on your ride and not on the event.

Tell all staff to think like the riders and then they will better know what to do. If you (the volunteer) were a rider coming in who had just ridden 250 miles with rain, what would you need? Your staff immediately know riders will be tired so they need help with knowing where

everything is, where food is, getting food, finding their drop bag if they have one. And sometimes less is more: the rider may need all of the above, plus an expeditious continuation of his or her ride, or a flight to bed – staff need to sense riders' focus, too, however energetic and enthusiastic the staff may feel at the time. It all just flows with that thought process in mind.

Finally, don't forget that once the last rider arrives at the finish the work isn't done. You will need staff to help with the clean up and follow-up. There's a surprising amount of work to be done before the event is truly over. Perhaps designate one person who is deals with post-ride only, who doesn't have some burnout from the event itself.

Some further considerations for your staff and volunteers:

- Does staff get paid?
- Are they responsible? Will they be good workers?
- Does staff get reimbursed for gas/mileage? For food? Other expenses?
- How does staff get to where they need to be? How long does it take to get there?
- How long can each person work?
- How long each staffed point is open and need staff?

One very important thing to remember is to thank your staff. This can be a party, a hand-written note – just make sure to show your appreciation for helping to make your event a success.

# Budgeting

This is perhaps the hardest part of the whole event, especially the first time. Once you've run an event a couple times you'll have historical data to work with and you can get more accurate with your budgeting. You can try to get data from other events, but your event is still going to be unique and require a lot of thought.

The major expenses are going to be:

- food, ice, and water (this can include a finish banquet or breakfast),
- facilities,
- truck or trailer rentals,
- gas and/or mileage for officials vehicles and staff,
- clothing, especially jerseys can be huge.

Food is the most challenging to figure out because it depends on what you offer, how much you offer, and how many riders. Lasagna, pasta, and chili are relatively inexpensive. Adding meat – sausage or chicken – can add up quickly. A finish line banquet can easily be \$20-\$25 per person. The best advice here is simply to talk with another 1200k organizer to see what they did and how that relates to your style of event.

Finish line banquets or meals can be a challenge.

- Are you going to pay per plate or per person?
- Who's doing the counting?
- Where will you have it?
- Is it part of the entry or is it an informal gathering afterwards where everyone pays their own way?

There are many tricks and pitfalls so please talk with other organizers on what they've done and how it has worked out.

Figuring out facility costs is just a matter of calling around to where you need facilities and finding out rates. Truck or trailer rentals are again relatively easy – just call the places that rent.

For t-shirts, expect to spend \$200-\$400 on a design and then about \$7-\$12 per short-sleeve shirt and \$10-\$15 per long-sleeve shirt.

For jerseys, expect to spend \$200-\$400 for design and setup, and then \$60-\$65 per jersey. You will have to decide whether every rider gets a jersey in which case you'll pass this expense onto the entry fee, or whether jerseys are extras.

A further expense on clothing can be clothing for staff. This can be a t-shirt, or RUSA polo shirt, or some other clothing. With dozens of staff, this can easily add up to be a big number as well.

Other expenses you need to consider include printing, event insurance, advertising, web fees, charitable donations, graphics designs (logos, jerseys, t-shirt), medals, and postage. Each one of these will be \$50-\$400 depending on how much you do.

Of course there will always be miscellaneous items so be sure to budget something for that; for example renting coffee urns, renting/buying portable tents, PayPal fees, supplies like sunscreen and first aid supplies. This probably shouldn't be more than several hundred dollars total.

Finally, give yourself another 10-15% buffer at least for the first year or two until you get some good, solid numbers to work with.

There are certain expenses that are likely fixed – facilities, t-shirt designs, truck rental. With these in mind, be sure to figure out how many riders you need to break even. This will give you an idea of how well your budgeting is going. If it takes 100 riders to break even you may want to reevaluate goals and costs.

That said, you want to charge appropriately for your event, the services you are providing, the location, the amenities, and the food. Remember, you want to entice riders to come the first year, so consider carefully your entry fee. This may mean taking a loss the first year, until your event builds ridership and reputation.

# Advertising

A few well placed ads for your 1200k event is money well spent.

## American Randonneur

The RUSA magazine, *American Randonneur*, targets your American consumer perfectly. Since *American Randonneur* is published quarterly, plan which issues will serve you best. If your event is in August, for example, place your ads in the November, February and May issues. The August issue will be too late.

## Paris-Brest-Paris Results

Once every four years, place an ad in the Paris-Brest-Paris Results magazine published by the ACP. It gets sent to every PBP participant, and is the single best way to reach the international randonneur community and to create global awareness of your event. RUSA officials can help research to whom you must submit your ad, by when and for what cost. Submit your ad at PBP. Have your camera-ready ad available in one hand and your Euros in the other. Hand both to the designated ACP person and get a receipt. (This way it won't get lost in the mail.) The magazine gets sent out in January of the year following PBP. This is plenty of time for randonneurs around the world to start planning their ride calendar and hopefully include your event in their plans.

## Your Website

Once your advertising has hit the streets (and in fact once you're event has been placed on the RUSA calendar), people will be looking to your website for more info, or at least signs of life. Make sure you have a Web presence lined up. And once you've run your event, make sure your website isn't frozen at the finish line of that edition. Insert at least some phrasing that looks forward to your next edition, even though it may be a couple years off.

## Scheduling Your 1200k

Picking a date for your event is very important and requires more than you might imagine. Hopefully it's obvious not to schedule on a major holiday (Memorial Day, Labor Day, etc.).

In order to have your event sanctioned by RUSA you will need to fill out a 1200k Event Application. Once approved, RUSA will submit your event to Randonneurs Mondiaux (the worldwide sanctioning body for 1200k and longer events except PBP). You need to schedule your event and submit your dates to RUSA via the RUSA website in the year prior to your event. Go to [http://www.rusa.org/cgi-bin/submit\\_calendar.pl](http://www.rusa.org/cgi-bin/submit_calendar.pl) to submit your future dates

RUSA will publish your event dates in the RUSA newsletter and submit your dates, along with the entire RUSA event calendar to Randonneurs Mondiaux and to the ACP for publication in their international newsletter.

For example; if you plan to host a 1200k event in 2010, then you will need to submit your dates to RUSA by **September** of 2009 ... and submit your application by **July 31** of 2009. **[6/2011]**

If your dates conflict with a pre-existing 1200k, the pre-existing event has the option to keep its date, and so you may be asked to change your dates. It is customary that no 1200k be scheduled less than 3 weeks from another 1200k.

**What Distance?** – If your event is close to 1200km (for example, 1215km), the convention is to schedule it as a 1200k (just as you'd schedule a 200km ACP brevet that was actually 208km in length). If your route is considerably longer, say 1240km, you may wish to schedule it as event of that distance, and give riders the extra time to finish (three hours in the case of the 1240km distance). The same would hold for longer distances: you might schedule a 1410km route as a 1400k event (like LEL), but a 1450km route might warrant a 1450km event distance. **[6/2011]**

If you plan to offer a 1000K/200K option with your 1200k, it needs to be submitted to the RUSA Calendar by October 1<sup>st</sup>. 1200ks are sanctioned by RM, while anything shorter is sanctioned by ACP via RUSA. (You could offer a RUSA domestic 1000k, but see next paragraph.)

**1000k/200k Options - Why?** – The historical reason some 1200k's have offered a 1000k option is for riders aspiring to the ACP Randonneur 5000 award. To judge by recent 1200k's, there is a good market for this option, for that purpose. (There are also some riders who may not feel they're quite ready for that final 200k, but that hasn't been a major rationale to offer a 1000k option.) Advantages to the 1000k rider in a 1200k event:

- more riders to ride with (*viz.*, the 1200k riders),
- a more fully staffed and supported event than many standalone 1000k's,
- practice learning the course, should the rider think of doing the 1200k version one day.

Disadvantages:

- possibly a higher entry fee (than for a standalone 1000k),
- probably stricter qualification requirements (than for same),
- may have to compete with 1200k riders for a spot if you have an aggregate rider cap,

- no RM medal; and no credit towards ARC or Coast-to-Coast awards.

If you decide to offer a 1000k option, you'll need to:

- check for conflicts with 1000k events near in time or locale,
- make up separate brevet cards,
- calculate separate contrôle times (they are slightly different from a 1200k's, especially the time allowed to get to the 1000k mark),
- figure out what riders will do after the 1000k ...

Options for "after the 1000k" include:

- a 200k brevet that starts at that point - but brevets need to have a single start time; this can work if the 1000k mark is at an overnight contrôle (such as Brattleboro, VT on BMB), where riders can take a rest and assemble for a common start time;
- a RUSA permanent that starts at that point (which solves the common start-time problem).

Also remember:

- You can impose qualification requirements on the 1000k option - they can be the same or different from the 1200k's.
- If you have a 1200k rider cap, you can include the 1000k riders in that (or you can have a separate rider cap for them, although that generally isn't realistic, as the 1000k riders are sharing the same resources - roads, beds, food, staff).

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When considering your dates, keep in mind the phases of the moon. Riding at night under the brightness of a full moon, is drastically better than riding at night with no moonlight. Go to <http://imagiware.com/astro/moon.cgi> and type in the year of your event, then view when the moon will be full in the month when you plan to host your 1200k. Sometimes it's impossible to do it – other times it just fits perfectly.

You might also check with the chamber of commerce (or hotels) of where you are going to see what events are already on the calendar in the towns through which your riders will travel. You don't want to find out a week before your event, that the roads will be closed all day in one town for their annual marathon.

You should consider what day to start on for best safety in your area. Events have started on almost every day of the week. Riders will attend no matter what day – just as long as it's a quality and safe event.

## Facilities

Facilities are the buildings or portable structures that will serve some purpose for your ride. These can include schools with gyms for an overnight stop, a hotel where riders make their own reservations, a vehicle on the side of the road for a secret control. Wherever you plan to service riders you will need to have some plan for that service. Some examples:

- a bed and breakfast that serves as a staffed control with food and some sleeping facilities;
- a high school that serves as an overnight stop with full kitchen, showers, gym for sleeping, eating area, etc.;
- a staffed control on top of a mountain pass with tents, chairs, coolers, etc.

As you think about facilities you'll need to think about what services you want to provide at a given point and what kind of facility you'll need to accommodate those services. Here are some things to consider:

- Where do you need services for riders?
- What type of service are you providing?
- What kind of facility do you need to provide that service?
- Is the facility enclosed?
- How close is the nearest grocery store? Is it open 24 hours?
- Is it heated or air-conditioned as appropriate?
- Is water available? Is the water drinkable?
- Are bathrooms available? Are bathrooms available for the number of riders you have? Do you need to supply toilet paper?
- Is there electricity?
- Are there cooking facilities? What's available to use? Are there cooking utensils? A fridge? A microwave? A stove? Tables? Chairs? Shade?
- Are there showers? Is there hot water in the showers? Are there separate showers for men and women?
- What time frame will the facility be open to riders?
- Do you need a sleeping area? A cooking area?
- How much does it cost?
- How long before the event do you need to reserve the facility?

## Start/Finish Venues

Where (which locale, and where within that locale) you start and finish your 1200k should have a safe and scenic route as highest priorities. But within those constraints, please consider that – in contrast to shorter randonnées – perhaps 80% or more of your riders will be traveling from afar.

They may not know the local area. Many of them will be flying in. Many of those would like to avoid renting a car, which would sit idle for 3-4 days while they are riding your event. So consider things from their point of view in terms of:

- lodging, bike inspection, drop-bag hand-off and event orientation at the start;
- post-event banquet or get-together, and drop-bag retrieval at the finish.

In short:

- keep venues close to each other: if possible at/near where participants are lodging;
- ideally, start/finish should be accessible from/to the airport by public transportation (bus, train, metro, motel shuttle).

Remember: something as simple-sounding as getting yourself and your dropbags to another part of town may be toilsome without a car or public transportation.

### Some Examples

- **Boston-Montreal-Boston** –reachable from the airport by shuttle van and theoretically via MBTA (subway); inspection, lodging, and start at the host hotel; finish and banquet at the host hotel.
- **Colorado Last Chance and High Country** – reachable from airport by hourly public bus service (with intercity-capacity baggage space, great for bike boxes); inspection, lodging, and start at the host motel; post-event banquet one block's walk from host motel.
- **Cascade 1200** – Inspection, start, finish at host motel; post-event breakfast across the street.
- **Gold Rush Randonnée** – Convenient airport shuttle to host motel.
- **Shenandoah 1200** – Start, finish, inspection, and post-event banquet at host motel. Fifteen miles from Dulles airport (within good taxi or shuttle distance... or biking range).

**Local Riders** - You will also have some local riders. (High Country had eight in 2011; Alaska's Big Wild Ride had one.) For those riders, think about letting them do inspection and other pre-event activities at the event start, so that they can avoid multiple drives from their homes.

## Route

Once you know the design of your ride, you need to map the route. It needs to be safe, scenic, challenging (with a prescribed amount of elevation), and easy to navigate. To plan a good route, you must see it from different perspectives. Keep in mind a fast rider who may miss a turn because he had his head down and was hammering. Keep in mind the slowest rider, who will be out there longer than everyone else and can no longer hold his head up.

While the style and support level of 1200ks differ, the work to create a great route is the same for all events. You should put a lot of thought and effort into the route because that's what riders will see most.

Suggestions:

- Drive the route with a tape recorder noting routes, town names, possible checkpoints.
- Drive the route again with a navigator who will transcribe all the waypoints.
- Drive the route again at night.
- Ride the route on a bike in the daytime.
- Ride the route on a bike at night.

### Checkpoints

Checkpoints are data collection points for the organizer and refreshment/rest stops for the riders. Take a practical look at your proposed route and look for hospitality points along the way. Checkpoints are usually no less than 50 miles apart and no more than 100 miles apart. Whether the checkpoints are staffed or not, is in another chapter.

### The Cue Sheet

The route sheet is the navigational bible for your riders and a valuable document for your 1200k event. Make sure it's accurate, short (yet complete), and easy to read. Exclude flowery paragraphs about history and scenery. Riders need to know "Right," "Left," or "Straight." They need to know the route numbers or road names and how long to stay on this route before making make a turn. If a route changes names, or has multiple names concurrently (e.g., US-36 and Colfax Ave. in Strasburg, CO), (1) it's helpful to give all the names, or at least (2) go out and make sure which signage the riders will see when on the stretch of road they're riding. Also: reassuring mile marker mentions like town line signs, state lines, or notable landmarks can't hurt - they're great sanity checks while riding the route.

Route sheets can be distributed electronically. While many riders like to format the route sheet to their liking, not everyone does, so make sure to distribute hard copies at the start. Be sure to include a Ziploc bag (the freezer ones are thicker and better) as well so riders have some chance of keeping their cue sheet in order. Tip: if you zap a wet piece of paper in the microwave for 10-15 seconds, it comes out dry as a bone. Keep in mind, that while posting your 1200k route to your website is convenient, anyone can then download it, and ride your 1200k without ever registering.

## Maps

Maps can be a great boon, depending on the complexity of your route. PBP doesn't provide maps, but the route is highly marked. BMB provided a useful overview map. Last Chance, though 90% of its route is simple, provides an overview map with detail sections. As riders, some of us are more cue oriented; others more "visually" (plan-view) oriented. But a map helps everyone visualize the event.

Aside from static maps you generate, also consider online Web-software maps (such as Yahoo or Google maps) that allow the user to zoom in for more detail, choose between terrain, political, and other views, etc. Cascade has done this.

## Miles vs. Kilometers

The route sheet reflects the region in which the ride is taking place. In the US we measure distance in miles, so the route sheets are in miles. In Europe, they measure distance in kilometers, so the route sheets are in kilometers. Because randonneuring is based on French cycle-touring, some true randonneurs want all their route sheets in kilometers, especially because our brevets and randonnées are measured in kilometers. That aside, US road signs will have distances in miles, and many of your riders will have their cycle computers calibrated in miles. So in the US, include miles no matter what, and if you want to follow tradition, include kilometers as well.

## Will you arrow your route?

Marking the road with directional arrows makes it easier to navigate. It builds a reassuring comfort zone around the rider. Riders like knowing someone has been there and marked the route for him or her. Arrowing decreases the number of lost riders. If riders go for a while without seeing an arrow, they realize it, catch their error, correct the problem and get back on course themselves. While not mandatory or necessary, arrowing the route is a nice feature to offer to riders. If you decide to arrow, make sure it's legal to mark that road – some cities and counties do not allow marks on the road. Finally, arrows should be white; they are easiest to see under most conditions.

**Alternatives to painted arrows** - Painted arrows are probably the way to go, as long as the jurisdiction allows them. PBP's signage on road shoulders, lampposts, etc., are great, but are more expensive, intrusive to the public, and labor-intensive. You must also collect the signage after the event (the ones riders haven't made off with).

**Contrôle Signage** - Whether or not you choose to arrow your route, make sure it's easy for riders to find your physical control locations (the building, tent, etc.) when they're in the vicinity. This mainly applies to contrôles staffed by your volunteers (rather than stores or other establishments where no staff is present). A sign on the building, a sandwichboard sign out front or along the road outside the contrôle (as Cascade has done) can demystify the actual spot, especially for bleary riders later on in the event.

## Elevation

There is a basic rule of thumb that when designing a brevet or randonnée, include approximately 5,000 feet of climbing per 200 km (or 4000 feet per 100 miles). Some regions can offer switchbacks up a mountain; others offer miles of riding straight up the mountain. PBP has constant rolling hills, but no mountains. Hills add character to your event. But, too many hills can force riders to quit. The rider's objective is to finish. So don't make it too hilly. Make it doable.

Many riders like to see a route profile so if possible make that available on your website.

## Safety & Darkness

A safe 1200k route is your number one priority. Avoid putting your riders in harm's way. Avoid roads with heavy traffic. If riders complain of too many cars on a certain route, or too many close calls, you need to find a different, safer route. Starting your event in the wee hours of the morning gets riders out of urban centers under the cover of darkness in relative safety. Assume that your average 1200k rider will finish in 80 hours. It is reasonable to expect that 20 hours will be ridden in the dark. Everything looks different at night. Riders need to be reminded that their lights serve two purposes: to see and be seen. Motorists do not expect to see bike riders on the road at night and in the pre-dawn hours. At dawn, riders can see without their lights, but drivers cannot see them. Riders need to leave their lights on so oncoming traffic can see them. Secondary roads have less traffic, but are very dark and often have deep drainage ditches. Be sure your route is easy to navigate at night. Getting lost on a 1200k is lousy. Getting lost at night, all alone and sleep deprived is seriously debilitating.

## Things to look out for

- Is there a six-foot ditch along the edge of the road?
- Are there streetlights on those back roads?
- Are you using one-way streets on the way out?
- Is there a wide shoulder?
- Is there a lot of glass and debris on the shoulder?
- Is there a lot of wildlife on the roads at night?
- Are there any bars along your route that close at midnight?

You will also need to make sure that riders can find adequate services if necessary at night, or make sure they are aware of stretches with no services.

## Control Cards

The brevet control card is a standard issue document with specific boxes for signatures, date and time along the route. Print your control card on Tyvek paper or waterproof card stock so it won't turn to mush in a downpour. And again, provide a Ziploc bag for the control card. It's simple and it makes a big difference. The organizer should include the following items on the control card:

- Name of event
- Location of event
- Date of event
- For each checkpoint, a box containing:
  - ◆ Checkpoint Name
  - ◆ Location
  - ◆ Mileage
  - ◆ Open/close times
- An empty box (or two) for a secret checkpoint

At the end of the ride each checkpoint box should have the following information inside it:

- Time of day of rider arrival at checkpoint
- Date of rider arrival at checkpoint
- Staff initials (for staffed checkpoints)
- Event stamp (for staffed checkpoints)

The rider should not be able to reproduce, on his/her own, the information put in each box. If just date and time are required, any rider can write this information on his/her control card at any time.

For staffed checkpoints, be sure to have your staff put their initials in the box, because the rider has no way of knowing which staff will be on duty when he/she arrives. Be sure there is an event stamp in the box, because the rider has no way of reproducing this unique graphic on his/her own. These last two things eliminate the possibility of tampering with the control card.

If some checkpoints are not staffed, make sure riders know what to do.

- Can they get their card signed anywhere?
- At a particular store?
- Do they need to collect information?
- Do they need to get a receipt?

## **Route Inspection**

Your route ought to be checked two or three times before your route sheet is sent out to your riders. Assuming you've checked it several times, have someone else check it a month prior to check for road closures, detours or construction. If you are arrowing your route, do it two weeks before the event, to check for any last minute changes. If there are, print up the changes and circulate a one-page cue sheet to riders at rider check-in and make an announcement at the start.

## **Towns on your route**

A big question of any event is should you notify any authorities. This can include local towns, police, forest service, etc. While courtesy and safety suggest you should notify towns, this has the potential to backfire with hassles and towns not wanting your riders in town. On the other hand, it can turn into an extraordinarily cooperative venture with police hanging out along the route at night or local townspeople getting involved.

If you decide to work with local authorities, here are some suggestions. Send out a letter to each police or sheriff's office with a brochure about your ride, about a month before the event. Keep a copy in your files. If you don't hear back from anyone, you're good to go. If you get an objection, ask how to correct the problem. Assure the officer that you will make every effort to accommodate his request. If someone complains to the police during your ride, you can stop in to the police station and bring proof of your notification of the ride with you. This will offset any perception that you failed to notify the town of your bike event. Chances are you will not run into any problems, but be prepared for the possibility, just in case.

## Information Distribution & Communication

Every event is going to have a lot of information to present to potential riders. There should be enough information that riders are reasonably aware of what you offer and what they are getting in to.

As you prepare the information that's available, here are a few things to think about:

- Think about what kinds of information you look for when you are thinking about going to an event or preparing for an event. Add that information to your list.
- Look at websites for existing rides - they will give you a good idea of what you might want to consider posting as well.
- As riders ask questions, those are good candidates for a FAQ. If one rider has that question, it's likely others will as well.
- Make sure it is all proofread by someone else and makes sense to someone else. It might make total sense to you, but look like gibberish to potential riders.

Make sure riders have a way to contact you and a way to find that information. Contact information should include an e-mail, telephone number, and regular mail address.

Nowadays the best place to have all this available is on a website. If you don't have a website you're going to have to advertise, send lots of mail, and answer a lot of questions on the phone.

Here's a list of items to consider. This is by no means complete, but a start:

- start location
- nearby hotels and any discounts
- nearby restaurants
- nearest airport
- availability of shuttles from airport to start
- route description, route sheet, elevation profile
- rider list
- description of available support
- dates
- qualifying criteria
- fees and how to register
- contact information
- photos and reports

Most likely you will have a website – it's the easiest way to distribute information and web usage is common now. This means you will need a staff person to create it and keep it updated. A good idea for the website is an area on the front page with dated announcements of what's new. This has the added benefit that riders will frequently check up on your website.

You can also go further with an e-mail list or online forums (or blogs, wikis, etc.). Blogs have the advantage over a manually-structured announcements webpage that posts are automatically dated and archived (i.e., there is an index of prior posts), and can be tagged and grouped by categories. A chatlist is a better way for riders to interact and start conversations on their own, but then you have to consider whether to invest the time in moderating it.

Make sure you get an e-mail address on your registration form. Using the e-mail addresses is a great way to send updates and reminders, especially for your first couple events as you fill out your website with information.

# Registration, Refunds, Qualifying

## Registration Form

You will need a registration form so here are some things to consider including:

- Waiver (actually this is a must to protect you)
- Rider Contact Info and Emergency Contact Info
- Rider Gender (usually obvious by name, but required for Randonneur Mondiaux results)
- Rider Nationality (required for RM results; may differ from current country of residence)
- RUSA or other country organization (e.g., Audax UK, BC Randonneurs) affiliation info
- Will the rider have personal support?
- What sort of equipment (single, tandem, fixed, recumbent, etc.)?
- Has the rider completed 1200k events before this one?
- Qualifying rides (see Qualifying below) - Some organizers ask for the rider's finishing time, to help evaluate the performance level of the rider and highlight possible support issues
- Riding options (e.g., starting time, if you offer more than one starting time)
- 1000k, 200k options if you offer them
- Event support options (if you offer choices of food, accommodations, bag drops, etc.)
- Jersey and other souvenir orders, including sizing and other info
- Payment calculation (including all of the above)
- Payment options (e.g., check, card, electronic - see below)

## How will you distribute the registration form?

- Printable - The form should at least be printable from your website. Make sure the form prints well on paper (e.g., fits well on one page, or two pages, etc.). Consider using PDF format.
- Electronic - You could also support an HTML or other electronically-submitted form.

Note: If you offer only paper registration and check payment, then you can require the two be sent together. If you offer electronic registration and/or electronic payment, then you'll need to match up registrations and payments.

## Pricing

- Will you offer discounts/surcharges for early/late registration, club membership (e.g., sponsoring club), RUSA membership, etc.?
- Will you offer different pricing for the 1000k and 200k options (if you offer those distances)? Some events charge the set 1200k fee for 1000k riders (and include the 200k option for free). Some events charge separately for the 1000k and 200k, e.g., if local riders could come and ride the 200k event.
- Will you charge extra for bag drop services?

## Forms of Payment

- Will you accept checks?
- If so, will you accept foreign funds? (If so, will you add a surcharge - most banks charge \$10 to cash a check in foreign funds)
- Will you accept PayPal (or something similar)? If so, will you add a surcharge to cover your PayPal fee, or bundle this in to the overall fee?
- Will you accept Visa or other credit card?

## What's Your Refund policy?

- A typical refund policy is a date-graduated scheme: the closer to the event, the less the refund, reducing to 0% within a certain proximity to the event (including DNS riders). This encourages riders to cancel earlier rather than later, freeing up slots if you have a rider cap, and reflects your increasing costs and disruption the later a rider cancels.
- In any case, you may wish to hold back a small processing fee (e.g., \$10), even if you haven't yet incurred expenses such as a catering or other services.
- If you've ordered any of the souvenir items (esp. jerseys) based on the rider's application, then that needs to be taken into account for the refund.

## Rider Limits

The ideal case is not to need a rider cap. Ideally, the natural rider demand is within your capacity, and the route's capacity, to support them safely. Some possible constraints:

- event-time staff (controls, roving support, HQ, etc.) - your organization may be unable or unwilling to commit more than a certain number of staff ... or you may want to be able to predict and budget for your staffing needs;
- organizational staff (similar issues);
- facilities - both staffed control facilities such as the high school or ice skating rink or mountain cabins where you intend to provide dining, bag drop, and sleeping space; and motel accommodations, cafés, etc., riders might need en route;
- road capacity - generally not an issue on US roads for the ridership that US 1200k's attract, but for example, US road and traffic culture would have a hard time accommodating the PBP ridership - just something to keep in mind
- special regulations (e.g., traversing public lands);
- ... or a certain ridership size may simply be part of your event concept ("small, intimate"), or you may wish to have a smaller group your first time out.

If you opt for a rider cap, then:

- What will allow a rider to claim a spot? Paying the fee? Being qualified? (Will you allow a rider to provisionally claim a spot by sending in the fee and qualifying by a certain date?)
- Will you have a waiting list? If so, will that be first come/first serve, or will you give qualified riders preference, an initial registration period with lottery, or some other scheme?
- Will you have a different refund policy for waitlisted riders who don't make it?

- Visibility - The rider list and wait list need some visibility (on your website), if not the actual rider names, then at least a count of the two lists (and folks on the waiting list need to know how far down they are).
- Maintenance - Maintaining the list(s) and the web visibility will be one more task for your organizational staff.

Rider caps create an interesting dilemma. When riders see there's a cap, it often generates more interest in your event. You'll likely have more entrants if you have a rider cap and might want to establish a waitlist. On the other hand, riders often sign up just to be signed up in case they want to do it which can skew your event participation projections. Finally, if riders see a long waiting list, they may be (perhaps unduly) discouraged from applying.

## Qualifying

You can and probably should require riders to qualify. If you do, you can choose which kinds of rides will serve as qualifiers, and establish a qualifying time period (one or more years). Some organizers feel that qualifiers at the very least stimulate riders to do the proper training, and to honestly evaluate their fitness level. Plus the qualifiers serve to screen out those who can handle a 1200k from those who can't. It's a natural filtration process at your disposal. But it is not statistically clear that requiring qualification, or specific qualification schemes, affect finishing rates.

- "Traditional" 1200k's (BMB, PBP) have required a Super-Randonneur (SR) series (200k, 300k, 400k, 600k) in the same calendar year as the event, where the rider may substitute brevets of greater distance, and sequence is not important.
- US 1200k's typically count RUSA domestic and ACP brevets. Remember that the latter could include foreign brevets, whose status won't be visible on the RUSA site.
- Some events allow RUSA Permanents for the shorter distances.
- Some events allow a 1000K or 1200k as a substitute for the SR series. (For example, a rider could finish a 1200k that did not require an SR series in the same year, and would thereby be qualified for your event.)
- Some events allow qualifying in the twelve months preceding the event (vs. same calendar year) - consider Southern Hemisphere riders, or if your event is early in the season.
- Some events spread the qualification period over multiple years (e.g., "an SR series or 1200k in the previous three years").
- Some events have none (example: the London-Edinburgh-London 1200k and 1400k).

Consider how much time before your event a rider will reasonably have to qualify. If you require qualification in the calendar year of the event, the earlier in the year your event takes place, the less chance riders will have to qualify (especially in wintrier climes). You'll have to consider whether you allow qualification based upon riders saying they will do future rides.

You can also make it easier on yourself and not allow entrants until they are qualified. This can create tensions if you have a rider limit because those in the northern areas can't ride or qualify until later in the year. You can mitigate this to some extent by requiring full payment to reserve a spot, and enforcing a refund policy that encourages riders to withdraw early unless they're serious.

# Food

For the most part, randonneur riders are not food fussy. They eat to ride, and ride to eat. Hot or cold, sweet or salty – just serve good food, and plenty of it. It needs to look good, smell good and taste good. Keep your menu items simple and high in calories. If it's meant to be served hot, keep it hot. Keep your drinks cold. Keep the food presentation area clean and organized.

## What kind?

The most common food to offer is pasta, potatoes or rice. Add some drinks, cookies and salty snacks. Throw in an unexpected ice-cream sandwich or pizza and the riders will be overjoyed.

## Where?

Advise your riders if there will be food at the controls, or if they have to stop along the way. As long as they know what to expect, they will adjust.

## How much?

Tell your riders if food is included in the entry fee, or if it's a pay-as-you-go event, like PBP. If it's the latter, let them know how much to expect to pay and how much food there will be.

## Where to buy food

Note on the route sheet, or in your pre-ride information where riders can find grocery stores, convenient stores or other places to get food on the route. Make sure to note what times stores are open – not all stores are 24-Hour. Don't send riders off-route for food. This is a randonné, not a scavenger hunt.

## How much food to carry

Advise riders to carry a two waterbottles and a Camelbak with ample fluids if they will be riding long segments without any services. Have individually packaged bags of snacks, raisins and energy bars that riders can tuck into their jersey pocket for down the road. Any experienced randonneur can carry enough food and water on the bike for a 50-mile stretch.

## Menus

Offer a variety of main courses throughout the event, while keeping other “staple” items consistent. While some riders count on being able to get pasta at every checkpoint, other riders find this boring and stop eating, which is not good. Pasta, potatoes and rice in different presentations work well, and are not too expensive. Offer your menu items with and without meat. Have lots of salty snacks and V8 – because riders need potassium. Avoid food that spoils easily, needs refrigeration or looks unappetizing after sitting on a table for a few hours.

## **Sports Drinks**

Offer some kind of sports/energy drink in ample quantities. Many riders will bring their own powder and mix with water. Others rely on the event organizers to provide a sports drink at every checkpoint. Have drinks prepared and cool for the riders at all times. Gatorade is familiar to most riders, easy to mix, easy to dispense and fairly inexpensive. Other companies like E-Caps are strongly supportive of the long-distance cycling community and will offer samples to your event, and discounts on the purchase of various products. It's worth asking for some. What have you got to lose?

On the other hand, take care when providing specialized products – remind riders that if they're unfamiliar with a particular sports drink or supplement, now is not the time to experiment. Most riders know how they'll handle Gatorade; they may not be experienced with Accelerade, Endurolyte or Perpetuem, and a 1200k may not be the best occasion to experiment.

## **Will you have a finish banquet?**

If you are planning a post-ride meal, inform your riders if it's included in the entry fee or if they have to buy a meal ticket. Riders will quickly forget the little irritating things about your ride (wind, rain, heat) if you keep them well fed. It's always a good policy to welcome your participants to the event with a nice meal, and send them home on a full stomach.

## **Food Allergies**

Chances are a couple of your riders will have food allergies. Some can't eat peanuts, so peanut butter is out. Others can't eat dairy, so anything with cheese is a problem. You can't anticipate all types of food allergies. In your pre-ride information describe what you plan to serve at the checkpoints, and that you cannot possibly accommodate all individual food requests. Riders with food allergies are advised to bring their own food or plan to stop and buy what they can eat.

## **Vegetarian and Other Diets**

You may wish to accommodate a number of dietary preferences or needs. Vegetarian offerings are a good example, as a percentage of riders do tend to be vegetarian (if not vegan) or prefer vegetarian items when available. (See below.)

## **Weather**

The weather will affect what riders eat. If it's hot, riders are likely to want softer, cooler foods – deli sandwiches, fruit, grapes, cold drinks, popsicles, etc. On the other hand, if it's colder, riders want hot stuff – hot chocolate, hot apple cider, and hot soup.

## **Sanitation**

You will want to do your best to keep food areas clean and food presentation clean. Riders will have sweaty hands and gloves. Have staff wear nylon/latex gloves whenever possible when dealing with food. Have staff serve main meals instead of letting riders grab at it. Cut up fruit and put it out for riders. For bags of chips and other packaged items, open them and put them in small bowls to keep a majority of items clean. Put out handi-wipes and paper towels for riders. This is certainly a challenge, so do the best you can.

## Event Logistics

So let's talk about the event logistics for food. If you're going to offer food you're going to need to figure out where to get it, how much to get, and how it gets to where it's needed. Are you going to buy everything before the event (CostCo style)? If you get it along the way, make sure you know where good stores are AND when they are open. If you need another loaf of bread at 3 am, where are you going to get it? For any food or drinks you buy before the start, how will you transport it to where it's needed?

You'll also need coolers and water jugs wherever you have food. Coolers will hold ice and keep drink and food cold. Water jugs are good for mixed drinks and keeping water cold as well.

It's also a good idea to have a cooler with clean ice just for water bottles. You don't want riders sticking their hand in the ice so provide a scoop or a baggie for them to get ice.

## How much (Part 2)?

Next to the budget, determining how much food to buy is a great challenge. Finding and preparing food for 80 riders or more (plus staff) is a challenge! Start by counting servings. All food has serving counts – but cut in half any serving counts on packaging since they are small and you are working with hungry riders. Talk with other event organizers. Try to find someone who works in catering who can help with amounts.

## Tips

- You need to make sure every rider gets enough food, which means you're going to have extra.
- Buy brand names – get real Coke, not generic Cola. Get Ruffles, not generic chips.
- Have plenty of variety, but not too much. Variety gives riders choices, too much variety overwhelms them.
- For main meals, be sure to have some with meat (approx 2/3) and some without (approx 1/3).

Here's a sample shopping list

- fig newtons
- cookies (get a good variety)
- chips and pretzels (great for salt and fat)
- chips and salsa
- fruit (oranges, grapes)
- Gatorade or other sports drink
- pop
- hot chocolate, hot apple cider
- pickles
- sandwich stuff (bread, tomatoes, lettuce)
- saltines

- trail mix

Here's a sample main meal list

- pasta with sauce, with cheese, and bread
- chili with rice, crackers, cheese
- lasagna, bread
- baked or boiled potatoes
- instant soup or instant ramen
- sandwiches (turkey and cheese, peanut-butter and jelly)

Here's a sample list of non-food items you might need

- paper plates
- silverware
- hot cups
- cold cups
- ice chests
- condiments (mayo, mustard, salt, pepper, Tabasco)
- ice
- garbage bags
- napkins or wet wipes

## Clothing, Awards, and SWAG

Most public sporting events offer some kind of event souvenir included in the entry fee. If you are giving away a clothing item, and need to be size-specific, you will need to identify the item on the entry form, and get the size from each rider. To present each participant with the souvenir item at the event, collect sizes and quantities and place the order a least one month prior to the event.

It is customary to include your staff in the souvenir item count. Ask your staff to wear the event clothing throughout the event. It helps identify staff to riders. Staff promote event product, making the riders want the item after the ride. If you are giving the same clothing item to riders and staff, then don't print "*STAFF*" on the shirt. Don't print the date of the event on the item either. This way, if you have some leftover, you can use them next time.

Another option to consider for staff is to get RUSA Volunteer polo shirts. These are relatively inexpensive, look great, and show off RUSA.

### T-Shirts

You can find custom t-shirt printing companies galore on the web. Embroidery companies too. Expect to pay between \$7 and \$12 per shirt depending on quality and the number of colors in your logo. Each color screen costs about \$25. Allow 2-3 weeks for delivery. Find a company nearby to save on shipping costs. Get a referral from another event organizer and ask about:

- Product quality,
- Logo reproduction accuracy,
- Cost,
- Order turnaround time.

### Cycling Jerseys

Ask other event organizers or clubs in your area where they get their jerseys made. Expect to pay about \$65 per jersey as long as you meet the minimum number of pieces. Usually 25 pieces is the minimum. At 50 pieces you will get a price break. Call a few months ahead to reserve production time. Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery. Some of the more popular custom cycling jersey companies are:

- VO Max, Plainfield MA [www.vomax.com](http://www.vomax.com)
- Voler, Grover Beach, CA [www.voler.com](http://www.voler.com)
- Louis Garneau, Newport, VT [www.louisgarneau.com](http://www.louisgarneau.com)
- PACE Sportswear, Garden Grove, CA [www.pacesportswear.com](http://www.pacesportswear.com)

### Extras

It's fun to give each rider a non-sized item that is a memento of the event. If your budget permits, surf the web for promotional companies to find items like:

- Hats

- Visors
- Waterbottles
- Coffee Cups
- Flashlight Key rings
- Magnets
- Lapel pins
- Polo shirts
- Sweatshirts
- Socks
- Travel shirts
- Bumper stickers
- Lanyards

## SWAG

Everybody likes free stuff. Contact some product sponsors, and see if they will send you some free product samples. Some companies are happy to distribute samples of an item to large groups and ask for feedback. It helps the company evaluate their product and determine if randonneur cyclists are their target consumer group.

Some examples are:

- Nutritional drinks, tablets or energy bars,
- Sports drinks, powders or gels,
- Pain relievers; tablets, tubes of ointment or lotions,
- Sunscreen lotions,
- Patch kits.

It's worthwhile to ask a cycling company if they might want to offer discount coupons to the participants on product purchases. It costs the organizer nothing to include a card in the registration kit that offers the rider a discount off the purchase of an item by a certain deadline with a code that tracks directly back to the 1200k event. This is a bonus to the rider, to the event and to the company. It also establishes a direct connection between the company and your event, ensuring an ongoing relationship.

## Identification

To help riders and staff identify each other you might consider name tags of some sort. For staff this can be names embroidered on shirts or name tags (stick-ons or pin ons). For riders, helmet name tags are nice. You can also get 'license plates' with the name of the rider. These also make nice souvenirs.

## Rider Numbers

Rider numbers (on frame or helmet or both) can be useful, though they aren't required and some rides function without them. Of course everyone likes being called by their name, but riders may find it easier to enunciate their number than their name after a long day in the saddle, and staff members can read the number off the bike or helmet.



Numbers can be used as a cross-reference and double check mechanism; they can help to assess who's on the ride and who isn't; they can help with tracking bikes or lost riders. They can serve as another souvenir of the ride. Finally, they provide visibility for your event, and help build interest for the next time you run the event.

## Medals

Your 1200k will be internationally sanctioned through Randonneurs Mondiaux, which means you are required to distribute an RM 1200k medal to every official finisher. You can buy the medals through Randonneurs USA, and they must be ordered early in the year. If you are putting on a 1200k for the first time, and don't know how many riders you will have, you will have to estimate the number of medals you will need. You can keep leftover stock for future editions of your events, or inquire about returning extra stock to RUSA.



Upon receipt of the medal, consider having a custom ribbon made, with the name and date of your event, to which the medal attaches. Give out the medal to each finisher as they arrive at the finish line and avoid the expense of postage to send it later. The RM medals cost about \$11 each as of this revision, but fluctuate with exchange rate with the euro.

Or you can have the back of each medal engraved with the name and date of your event. Some organizers even go so far as to include the name of the rider, and his/her finish time on the back of the medal, and send the medal to each finisher, well after the event is over. This gets expensive as the engraving often costs \$1 per letter or number. It also delays the delivery of the medal, and incurs postage expenses to ship the medal. Since RUSA offers medal engraving, that's something you can offer to your riders who want to personalize their medals.

In addition to the RM medal, you can have your own event medal or pin cast. This can be costly, but it makes for a wonderful keepsake of the event for each rider. Usually these are made and engraved at the same time, and these medals are sent to each finisher well after the event is over. These medals cost about \$10 each, plus set-up fees and shipping. You can find custom medal companies on the web. As mentioned above, medals are heavy, and the postage is usually expensive, especially if you have to send medals overseas to foreign riders.

**1000k/200k Options** - If you offer 1000k/200k options, if these are ACP-sanctioned, then finishers can order medals for those directly from the RUSA store. Some organizers provide a 1000k medal to 1000k finishers as a courtesy, but that is up to you.

## Transportation and Logistics

Most likely you will be providing some support for your 1200k. For example you may transport drop bags for riders to several points along the course.

The first thing you need to know is how much support you will have on the course and where. Does this support include food? Baggage drops? Then you have to figure out how much support or supplies are needed at each staffed point. From there you can determine what kind of vehicle or vehicles you will need to transport supplies.

Let's start with baggage. Let's keep it simple in this example – an out-and-back course with one drop bag point. Let's say each bag is about the size of a box of paper and let's say each bag is 25 pounds. Finally, let's estimate 50 riders. What kind of vehicle do you need to transport 50 boxes of paper at over 1200 pounds? Already you will need a large covered pickup or a larger minivan or equivalent. You need to take into account both size/space considerations and weight considerations.

Let's try another example – a staffed control on top of a mountain pass. You'll need a foldable tent, a couple tables, several chairs, signage, perhaps a propane stove for heating up food and liquid, water coolers, and then coolers full of food and ice. Again, you might be able to fit this in a large minivan, or you may need a large pickup again.

Once you figure out how much stuff you need to transport and where it goes then you'll need to figure out the vehicle. You may need to rent a truck or a trailer. If you rent a trailer, make sure the vehicle can tow the trailer and all the weight in the trailer. You might be able to use one truck and drop supplies at multiple points and pick it up again later.

Put everything on wheels. Wheels are great! Be sure to have dollies or handtrucks for moving supplies from vehicles to facilities and back. It makes loading and unloading so much easier.

If you have multiple drop points for bags you will need a system to determine which bags go where. You want to make sure that riders have the least possible chance of making an error when putting their bags somewhere. Color coding the tags in addition to the place name can help, but don't rely on color-coding alone: colors can look different in different lighting (for example, sodium vapor lamps at night in a parking lot), and some people are colorblind.

Another part of this is timing. You need to make sure supplies get to the appropriate spots by the right time. Rider drop bags need to be at the appropriate checkpoint before the riders get there. The easiest calculation for this is to follow the official opening and closing times if your bagdrop is at a checkpoint. Remember, too, however, that riders are not bound to leave a checkpoint before it closes; only to arrive within the window. So you may need to deal with bags handed back after the official checkpoint closing.

A final consideration is - do supplies need to be handed off for any reason? Here's an example – if it's really hot you might set up an extra water and food stop somewhere on the course. This

stop will need a variety of food and water for all riders including the last riders. Once all the riders pass through there's going to be extra (if there's not you may have disappointed some riders) – so what do you do with the water and food?

- Does it go to another staffed checkpoint?
- Does it go to another roving support vehicle?
- What are the arrangements to hand off supplies?

This is not a situation that you want to have very often, but if it does you want to make sure to make the best use of your supplies, vehicles, and staff.

## Graphic Design

An important part of the presence of your event is having a logo. This is all part of marketing your event and creating the brand (or event) name. This establishes your uniqueness and recognition as riders come to know your event by the logo. Logos can be used in advertisements, stationary, t-shirts, jerseys, pins, patches, mugs, etc. Logos are also important for having on your website and for having on related websites such as RUSA's, other 1200k sites, club websites, and so on.



It's important to find a good graphic design artist who can help with logo design, or you could do it yourself. Expect to pay several hundred dollars for their work. Hopefully this is a one time up-front cost. As part of the logo you should be sure to get multiple versions – large ones, small ones, high resolution ones, etc. Most websites take small, lower resolution one, but t-shirt and jersey printers want high resolution ones in specific formats. Check with any printers or jersey manufacturers about what electronic form they might need as well.

The other part of graphic design is the need for designs for any t-shirts, jerseys, or other clothes you do. The front of a t-shirt is typically a logo. Backs of t-shirts are sponsors or other designs. Jerseys often have a logo on the sleeves or front somewhere. The rest of the jersey is a chance to have fun every year. Polos, hats, travel shirts, or other nice clothing often just has a logo. For every different design, I would again expect to pay several hundred dollars. Be sure to include this cost in your budgeting for clothing.

## Mechanical Support

Hopefully riders come prepared with bikes that are tuned up and ready to go. Inevitably something breaks, even for those who are well prepared. If you offer mechanical support, inform the riders in the pre-ride information that it is available, where it's available and how to get help out on the road in the event of a breakdown. Describe the level of support you will provide.

- Will you have spare wheels?
- Will you have spare bikes?
- Will you have Campy, Shimano and SRAM parts? 8spd? 9spd? 10spd?
- Will you have bike repair stands for riders to use?

If you won't be offering mechanical support, make sure riders know that as well. If there are any bike shops along the route, this is a good place to mention them.

### Where to find mechanics

Ask your area bike shops if any of the mechanics are interested in working your event. If that doesn't work out, ask other area event organizers. One of your staff might be competent with most bike repairs – maybe one of them is interested. You'll need to tell them if they need to bring their own tools and have their own transportation. Parts are usually on consignment basis: you pay for what you use, and return what you don't.

### What makes a good event mechanic

Event mechanics need to be versatile, ingenious and unflappable. Experience and endurance is worth more than availability and eagerness. The mechanic works long hours, outside in the dark, often in bad weather. He needs to be familiar with new high-end performance bikes, as well as older classic touring bikes. Sometimes he has to jury-rig a repair on the fly just to get the rider back on the road. Repairs are often spontaneous, improvisational and can't be found in any Park Tool School manual.

### Pre-ride Bike Assembly Assistance

It helps to have bike mechanics available to help riders who are reassembling their bikes out of the bike box. If a bike shop boxes a bike, they can inadvertently leave the wheel skewers on the bench. *Hate it when that happens.* The mechanic will have spare parts in his toolbox to fix the problem. Did you take your pedals off, and forget a pedal wrench? The bike mechanic will have an assortment of specialized tools for the job.

An alternative is to connect with a local bike shop and have riders ship their bikes there. The mechanics there can assemble the bikes (for a fee of course).

### Bike Inspection

It is standard at any 1200k to have each rider pass through a bike inspection before the start of the ride. Have two bike mechanics handle bike inspection. They will check the brakes, the lights and

the tires. It's a quick check – but a seasoned pair of eyes and hands will often spot a malfunction that the rider has overlooked. While the rider might be well-tuned and ready for the ride, the bike may not be. The bike may have just been disassembled into and reassembled out of a bike box. Not every rider has the proper tools and knows how to assemble a bike. Is the seatpost binder bolt missing? Are the skewers tight? Is the handlebar bag rubbing on the front tire?

## **Checkpoint Repairs**

Every rider wants to finish the ride. Mechanical support at controls and on the route during the ride can mean the difference between a rider having to quit or being able to continue. Every checkpoint should have tubes available for sale and a floor pump. Riders should be expected to fix their own flat tires. Beyond that, mechanical support is necessary. When a rider arrives at a control, if he has a problem, he can leave the bike with the mechanic, and go eat. When he's ready to roll, the bike is ready to roll. It saves time, eliminates stress and makes the rider feel taken care of.

## **Breakdowns**

The most common repair on a 1200k is a derailleur adjustment, followed by broken spokes and stretched cables. All are easily repaired given the tools, the expertise and the parts. Every year at BMB there has been at least one catastrophic mechanical breakdown that could not have been anticipated. (broken wheels, broken stems, broken seatposts, broken crankarms, broken pedals, and broken axles) The mechanics have been able to fix the problem and make it possible for the rider to finish. Had there not been a mechanic immediately available, the riders would have had to withdraw.

## **What will it cost?**

Most neutral support services are free. Loaner equipment is free of charge provided it is returned. If a part is needed to repair a bike, the rider will pay for the part, but the labor is free.

## **A word to the riders**

Tell your participants in the pre-ride information that the event mechanics will have a limited supply of conventional parts and tools on hand to do repairs. It would be wise to ride conventional wheels, if you break a spoke and want a quick repair. Event mechanics don't often have carbon spokes in their toolboxes. If the rider's bike or components require special tools, he'd best have those tools with him in case of a mechanical emergency.

## SAG Support and Sweep Vehicle

The spirit of randonneuring events is that riders are on their own, unsupported. The question to you is how much you want to stick to this precedent when riders need help or drop out. The more riders you have, the more likely something is going to happen. Remember also that a typical finish rate is 65-85% so most certainly some people will drop out and the again the more riders you have, the more that will drop out.

For this section support vehicles are considered distinct from logistical vehicles (for transportation of baggage, food, or other supplies), but they can be the same vehicle.

If you are considering having support vehicles, here are a few questions to ask yourself:

- How many support vehicles do you have?
- Is it a sweep vehicle keeping track of the riders near the back and keeping them moving?
- Is it driving up and down the course constantly?
- If the vehicle is driving, what's the range to cover – it's not likely they can cover all the way from the front riders to the end riders effectively. By midway through the ride, riders are probably spread out over 200-250 miles. *Tip: An out-and-back route mitigates that spread during the mid-part of your event, as outbound and returning riders will be sharing the same route segment.*

Some other things to think about with respect to support vehicles:

- Does your support vehicle carry food? What kind of food?
- What about water? Or other liquids? Or Ice?
- Does the support vehicle carry spare parts? Which parts – wheels? Cables? Chains? Tubes? Tires?
- What about tools?
- What about carrying a bike pump?
- Gas costs

For support vehicles that are out all night, it's a good idea to have 2 people in the support vehicle so they can trade off naps and driving.

Several days before the event you can also be checking the weather that's coming up. If it looks like it's going to be extreme or out of the ordinary, do you have a plan to deal with that? In 2006, the Cascade 1200 experienced record heat on both sides of the Cascade Mountains and added extra water stops (and still probably could have added more) at the last minute to help out riders.

Another consideration is that having a support vehicle out on the course can be of great psychological benefit to some riders. They know they aren't alone and they know they are being watched out for.

If you decide to have support you should be sure that support is neutral and help is provided to everyone who needs it.

Before the event starts be sure to define your policy for riders who drop out. Once they drop out they will need to get back to the start to get their stuff. Traditionally it's expected that riders are responsible for finding means back to the start. Left to their own means, riders are usually pretty resourceful: after all they are randonneurs. Riders can ask staff for rides back, they can hitchhike, they can ride and take their time, take a bus. Some events have a policy of sagging abandonées to the next control. Just make sure it's clear to everyone and be consistent.

## Insurance

Insurance is required when hosting any event sanctioned by RUSA. It is for your protection, for RUSA's protection and for riders' protection. RUSA requires that you name Randonneurs USA as a Third Party Insured on your event insurance policy and a certificate bearing this information be sent to RUSA Headquarters prior to your event.

There are several ways to insure your event. If you own your own company, you can ask your insurance company for a "rider" to cover your event against liability. You can also ask about insurance for your riders. If you have a major sponsor, you can ask them to add this event to their insurance policy for coverage.

The two most common insurance providers to RUSA events are RUSA itself and American Specialty Insurance through the League of American Bicyclists (LAB).

Insurance is available to League of American Bicyclists (LAB) member clubs through American Specialty Insurance Services (ASIS). You must be a member LAB club and pay your annual dues to LAB (\$35 per year) before being qualified for ASIS insurance. To access the LAB website, go to <http://www.bikeleague.org/>. Once you are an LAB club, the LAB will send you a kit including the ASIS insurance paperwork. Before the event, you fill out the form which requests the date(s) of your event and how many participants you anticipate. There is a minimum premium of \$93 per event, or \$1.69 per rider, whichever is more. After the event, you reconcile what you owe and pay it within two (2) weeks after your event is over, using actual participant numbers. You pay your final premium by check made out to ASIS.

Insurance is available through Randonneurs USA. The form is available by going to the RBA Resource Kit page of the RUSA website, and scrolling down to Insurance Premium Submission Form. You fill out and send in the form within two (2) weeks after your event. The nominal fee will be \$6.40 per rider, because a 1200k is a four-day event. (The actual fee will be the number of actual rider days, including DNF's - this is detailed on the RUSA premium form.) You pay your premium to the RUSA Treasurer by check made out to RUSA.

## Rider Tracking, Event Reporting, and Results

- **Rider Progress** - Will you offer rider progress updates during the event? It builds interest in your event while it's taking place, and lets friends, family, and fans follow riders they're interested in. But it's entirely optional, and adds work for your field staff plus whoever updates the website, listserv, etc.
- How will it work? Typically, your field staff collects rider progress times and feed them to someone to update a "Rider Progress" webpage on your website. (This could be field personnel as well, if they have the time, the computer access, and the expertise.)
- The data can be recorded on a rider sign-in/sign-out sheet, either self-service or filled in by control staff. This is probably data you are collecting anyway, so this adds no work. However, it does add work to convey the data to the webpage updater, and for that person to update the webpage.
- How granular will you make it? If you have many staffed controls, you could track rider progress through all of them. If you have only a few staffed controls, or the staffing at some of your controls is slim, the tracking will be less granular, and that is entirely satisfactory.
- Examples: the 2005 Gold Rush Randonnée posted arrival and departure times across every checkpoint (since all were staffed). The Colorado Last Chance 1200k has posted arrival times at the three bag drop locations plus the finish line.
- Riders can optionally be tracked through unstaffed controls. (Of course, your control staff could transcribe times for unstaffed controls from the control card, but that's just a lot of added work, and it's after the fact.) At least one event (the Texas Rando Stampede) let riders optionally text their time as they transited unstaffed controls. This makes tracking throughout the day more robust (both for those following the event, and your staff, keeping track of riders). But it's again a transcription job for the staff. **[6/2011]**
- Will you post arrival and departure times, or just arrival?
- You can also post DNF, DNS, and elapsed finishing time - with this info, your Rider Progress page can serve as your Results page.
- You may also find other stats to post, such as RAAM Qualified status (since 1200k randonnées are opportunities to qualify for Race Across AMERICA).
- How often will you update? That could be anywhere from once a day to multiple times throughout the day, depending on the capacity of your webpage maintainer.
- **Running Commentary** - Also consider: reports from the field as the event unfolds. A great vehicle for these is to create a **blog** on the Web. Cascade and [Last Chance](#), among others, have used a blog to post accounts of the event in progress (as well as pre-event and post-event news). With a blog, readers can see a history of posts (and catch up with past post if they've just joined); subscribe to blog updates; and reply to posts (such as encouragement for riders, which can be passed along in your copious free time!). For you, it's an easy way to get nicely formatted news out, including photos. Also consider Twitter and other emerging ways to communicate.
- **Photos** - In conjunction both with the blog idea and post-event goodies is photographic coverage of the event. You and your volunteer staff will be busy, and their first job is to be there for the riders. But that doesn't mean they can't take a small digital camera, snap some pix, and if they have a laptop and internet access, send you some photos (and commentary) during the event. This can lend real immediacy for those following your event. Immediacy

aside, this also sets you up to create a **photo CD** to send to riders after the event if you so desire. (Oh, and when we mention photos, we're not excluding video clips.)

## Gathering the Goods

This section is less about choices you have to make about running your event and more about what to expect and plan for in the last week or two before your event. Everything comes together in the last week or two and so be prepared to spend lots of time getting ready. It could consume most of your week!

Part of this getting ready is having a staging area to hold everything you'll need. If you're running a small, relatively unsupported event you might only need a section of your desk to stack route cards, route sheets, and instructions. If you're planning on support you're going to need an area to accumulate all your supplies and inventory – and all of it takes room!

Here's a list of items you might be gathering:

- Coolers (the Cascade 1200 had 15)
- water jugs (the Cascade 1200 had 4)
- t-shirts, jerseys, and other clothing
- rider packets
- food (and you need a place to store perishables or refrigerated items)
- paper items (paper plates, silverware, napkins, cups (hot and cold), garbage bags)
- possibly folding tables
- any cooking supplies (propane stoves, pots/pans, cooking utensils, toaster, coffee makers)
- portable tents, tables and chairs
- signage
- extension cords and lights
- first aid kit and related supplies (ibuprofen, sunscreen, No-Doz, etc.)
- baggies
- pens, pencils, markers, clipboard, scissors, tape and other office-type supplies
- rubber stamps for checkpoint staff
- toolkits and spare parts

This stuff can easily expand into the space of a one or two car garage to gather all of it and organize it!

## The Finish

The big rides don't always have big finishes. There are no fireworks, live entertainment or jugglers. The 1200k finish line is a sedate area for data collection, a reception area for riders and an information center for spectators. The 1200k staff are there to greet the rider, collect the control card, record the rider's finish time, take a photo and award the medal. Often this is done without any fanfare. Once the formalities are over, the rider is free to pack up and go home, or sit down and enjoy a beer in the company of his fellow 1200k finishers.

The trick is to keep as many of your 1200k finishers around the finish line as possible. As the number of finishers grows, more tend to hang out, and it turns into a party. The atmosphere is festive, the riders have slept, showered and are not ready to leave. The more diversions you offer at the finish, the more likely your crowd will stick around. Except for those who have to catch a flight home the same night, most will spend the night.

### Souvenir Sales

The best time to sell your event items is at the finish line. Grab those impulse buyers before they go home and change their mind. Put your clothing items on display, as well as any other items. Assign one staff person to spend the day doing souvenir sales. Take cash and keep track of what you sold and how many.

### Results Printouts

Post the results of those who have finished at the finish line area. Riders milling around love to read the results and see their names. They want to see where they finished in relation to their friends. Families arriving can check the sheet to see if their loved-one has come in yet. It will also show the fate of those who did not start or did not finish. Posting results allows folks to know the status of everyone involved.

### Refreshments

Most riders can't wait to grab an ice-cold beer out of the barrel. Turn your finish line into a beer-garden, with an assortment of salty snacks: pretzels, potato chips, corn chips 'n salsa and nuts. Have bottled water, iced tea and soda in a cooler for those who are driving.

### Banquet or Picnic

Here's the food thing again. One more time for the folks in the cheap seats: *send your riders home with a full belly*. The best way to get your riders to hang around is to offer food. It's a major distraction, takes up time, and these guys love to eat. It can be a sit-down meal or just pizza party. If weather permits, have it outside and call it a picnic. That tells people that it's casual, fun with no-frills food. When a rider finishes, the crowd stops, stands, applauds and then resumes eating.

## **Prize Drawing**

This goes back to the SWAG thing. Everyone loves getting free stuff. Have good stuff to give away. Either draw rider numbers out of a hat or have riders reach into a bag and pull something out. In the pre-ride information, announce that there will be a prize drawing at the finish line, and that you have to present to claim your prize. It works! Riders will stick around to win a prize.

## **Slide Show**

Everyone likes to see his or her picture. Staff people take digital photos. By the finish, there are enough for an ad-hoc slide-show. Somebody brings a laptop to the finish line, and inserts a memory card into the slot or inserts a memory stick into the USB port. Then just let the photos scroll through continuously. No sound. No editing. A crowd will gather around the laptop and laugh. It's a nice side-show and another diversion. It will keep folks around a little while longer.

Plan some simple Finish Line Festivities to keep your participants around and your last rider will be greeted with a standing ovation from a nice crowd of people. You can't beat that!

## Post-Ride Follow-up

As mentioned above, a 1200k is not over when the 90 hours are up. There is paperwork to fill out, results to process, and control cards to send back to riders. The follow-up letter is the last formal communication you will have with all your participants. Take the opportunity to inform your riders of:

- Date of next event
- Event Souvenirs
- Event Results
- Event Website (ask for photos and ride reports)
- Event Feedback request
- Event offers

Enclose a cover letter thanking the riders for coming and asking them to come back again. Include the control card with certification sticker on, and a full list of results in alphabetical order. It's also good to include a Feedback Form to ask for "Compliments, Criticisms and Comments." Everyone has one. If you find ten or more people ping on the same thing, then you might want to make some changes. If one person complains about one thing, and all the others were fine, then change is probably not necessary.

### Medals

If you are sending medals out after the ride, wait and send everything in one firm package. Randonneurs are historically very patient people. They know nothing good happens fast. So include the medal, but enclose it in bubble-wrap and tape it to a sturdy piece of cardboard. If it doesn't slide around in the envelope, chances are it won't slide out of the envelope.

### Thanks

Make sure to send thank you notes to all your staff, your suppliers, your sponsors and your checkpoint facilities. Include a list of the official results, the dates for the next event and your website address. Make sure you include some tangible reminder of the event so they won't forget about it. A photo, a bumper sticker, a postcard or a magnet – something easily included in the envelope. If you close out your event with courtesy, chances are your staff, suppliers and sponsors will come back, and the checkpoint facilities will want you back.

### Website

Solicit stories and photos from the riders and staff. You can then publish these with the results on your website. It is a great way for riders to share their experiences with each other and with those who may wish to ride your event in future. ALSO: Include some info about your next event. It doesn't have to be much - just some indication that, yes, "Your 1200k will ride again!"

### Next Time

Tying up the loose ends from the last event, naturally leads to prep work for the next one. Six months before your event's next running, send out brochure to everyone on your mailing list. This includes staff, checkpoints, suppliers, sponsors, caterers and participants. Check when you did certain tasks the last time, and make a note on your calendar to repeat those things at the same time next time, or earlier if you found you needed more time. The list will appear long, the tasks

may seem cumbersome and there will be some obstacles. Pace yourself and have a plan. Things have a way of working out.

### **How Often?**

In 2007 the ACP lifted the ban on hosting a 1200k in the same year as PBP. So, now you can run your 1200k event:

- every year,
- every other year,
- once every four years,
- every year except in a PBP year,
- as club resources/enthusiasm allow.

The trade-offs of running more often include:

- wearing out staff (including yourself!);
- + retaining rider interest;
- + building event reputation;
- + giving more folks a chance to ride your event, especially if you have a rider cap.

If you decide to run your event once or twice between PBP's, that's an opportunity to coordinate with other 1200k's who may be doing the same. And there's nothing that says you can't change your mind, of course.

## Other Ideas and Thoughts

### Don't get in over your head

Before you consider organizing a 1200k, host a 600k or 1000k with an eye to the level of support and organization you plan to have for a 1200k. This will give you idea of what you will need to go for a 1200k. Remember that however well you organize your 600k or 1000k brevet, a 1200k is different randonnée: riders will be coming from great distances from your event, and it may be the height of their season. Their expectations will correspond. Having this kind of experience will help your 1200k application process.

### It ain't over til it's over

Remember that once the last rider reaches the finish, he or she is done, but you aren't done. A majority of the work is done, but you still have work to do. It could take several months to resolve everything – pay bills, send expense reimbursements, return supplies, process results, and so on. You can delay some of this to take a break, but some details, like results, need to be handled within the first couple days after the event is over. Be sure to pace yourself through this part.

### Rock a bye Baby

It's easy to get consumed by your event while it's happening. You want everything to go well for riders and staff. If you aren't paying attention, you will have less sleep than the riders and making less sense. You are the organizer so you need to keep it together which means you must get some rest during the event. Even if you don't sleep, try to at least take a nap in the car or lay down in a dark room away from activity for several hours. This will keep you more refreshed and alert for when things need your attention and keep your spirits up once the event is over and you need to finish it all up.



## Resources

The following are some of the 1200k events that have been successfully run in North America. They all have websites where you can gather information and you can certainly contact them for further information.

- Boston-Montreal-Boston (New England) – [www.bmb1200k.com](http://www.bmb1200k.com)
- Last Chance (Colorado) - [www.rmccrides.com/lastchance.htm](http://www.rmccrides.com/lastchance.htm)
- Van Isle 1200 (Vancouver Island) - <http://www.randonneurs.bc.ca/VanIsle1200.html>
- Rocky Mountain 1200 (British Columbia) - [www.randonneurs.bc.ca/rocky/rm1200.html](http://www.randonneurs.bc.ca/rocky/rm1200.html)
- Gold Rush (California) – [http://www.davisbikeclub.org/annual\\_events/ultra\\_distance\\_events/gold\\_rush\\_randonnee](http://www.davisbikeclub.org/annual_events/ultra_distance_events/gold_rush_randonnee)
- Cascade 1200 (Washington) – [www.cascade1200.com](http://www.cascade1200.com)

Here are a few experienced 1200k organizers you can contact through RUSA (contact info on the RUSA website):

- John Lee Ellis
- Mark Thomas
- Jennifer Wise

Another great resource is the Randon e-mail chat list (not affiliated with Randonneurs USA) at Google Groups. You can direct riders here for specific questions about riding and randonneuring or about events. They can also check through archives for recent suggestions and submissions.

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