

INSTALLMENT 4

REST STOPS

Every 10 or 15 miles there will be a rest stop. Most are obvious but sometimes you may ride by it. Make your stops short because the longer you stay there, the harder it is to get going again. There will be plenty to eat: usually fruit and cookies. Also, there will be PowerAde sports drink available. If the weather is hot you will need water AND electrolytes. The PowerAde has the electrolytes. One of the rest stops is also the lunch stop. See the Meal Plan for more on this. Occasionally, the first rest stop is also a breakfast stop. If you are going to conk-out or breakdown, a rest stop is a good place to do it because they have radios and can get a ride for you. Just be sure that you are in genuine distress and not just out of motivation. By the way, 70 miles non-stop is WAY harder than 70 miles with six 10-minute rest stops.

HYGIENE

Most likely, you will not be carrying rubber gloves or eating utensils on your bike. This means at the rest stops you will be handling food with your hands. Now think about what you have probably touched since you washed your hands last: your sweaty gloves (that have contacted what?), your bike (that may have been handled by other people), your tires that have rolled through God only knows, and the door to the Port-O-Let. GET THE PICTURE?

- **Remove your gloves and wash your hands before handling food or drinks.**
- **Do not touch any food unless you are going to eat it.**
- **Do not put your hands into ice** (some people got sick in 2000 from sticking their hands in the ice).

Buy quality riding shorts. Thicker pads are not necessarily better. Do not wear anything under the bike shorts. Riding a bike several hours causes some skin irritation no matter how used to it you may already be. Therefore, bathe every day. Many people do their laundry in a sink or while in the shower. While this may be okay for jerseys and socks, it really does not get your riding shorts very clean. For most, this is not a problem, but this author came down with a serious fungal infection two days after the tour. It was very unpleasant to treat and cure. I will bring 7 pairs of riding shorts or find a commercial Laundromat during the week.

The shower truck is dependable and has plenty of hot water and places to sit while you wait your turn. The shower truck has to set up near a fire hydrant and drain which may not be right at your campsite, but it will be nearby. There is no charge. Whether using the shower truck or the indoor facility (usually a school locker room), towels and soap are not provided. There may be a towel service available from one of the BRAG vendors for an extra charge. Liquid soap is easier to deal with than bar soap. Buy a large bottle and transfer it to small containers, which can be found at Wal-Mart and the like. Seven ounces ought to be plenty and about half that much shampoo. These are guy quantities! Quick dry towels do dry quickly and pack down to a small size. Plan on bringing two towels in case one doesn't dry from the previous day. Bring about 20 feet of clothesline and clothespins. Shower shoes or flip-flops are a good idea.

If you get wounds, chaffing, rashes, or other physical irritations, no matter how minor, treat them immediately before they become serious problems. If you are unable to treat the wound, see the BRAG medical personnel; they know some secret remedies!

MEAL PLANS

Your confirmation letter, which you will receive in May, will have the various meal plans. You may also find the meal order form on the web site. You can pick and choose each individual meal for each individual day you wish to purchase. You are not forced to get a "package" deal, i.e., five lunches.

You check off which meals you want from which vendor on each of the seven days on the Meal Order Form. Send in your money. In return, you get a coupon book that has the vendor and day printed on small paper slips that you present for your food. You might be able to purchase some of the meals the day of, but you are taking the chance that they may not have enough after feeding everyone that pre-purchased their dinner. The safest thing to do is to buy your meals in advance.

MORNING COFFEE - CAFÉ CAMPESINO

Gourmet coffee and muffins will be available for a one-time charge for the entire week, or cups can be purchased each morning. They open very early. They may also have iced coffee in the afternoon, which is very refreshing. Your coupon is a bracelet you wear for the week. Decaf is also available.

BREAKFAST

At all overnight stops, a breakfast will be available before starting in the morning.

LUNCH

The lunch stops may have more than one vendor. They usually have several sandwich choices including peanut butter in a plastic bag that is a really good snack 20 more miles down the road.

DINNER

Dinner is usually supplied by the host school. In addition, as a fund raiser, they often open their snack bar or have a burger grill for cash sales. Some overnight towns will have shuttle buses to restaurants in town.

MEAL PLAN COMMENTS

The meals are a time to get food and visit with other riders. Though the lines may be a bit long, the people in them make it into an enjoyable stand-up "bull session."or as the BRAG Organizing Team puts it, "a linear socialization opportunity." Searching for dinner after riding all day can be a real bummer; a meal plan dinner is a sure thing. On the other hand, dinner in a local restaurant can be a nice break from cafeteria-type food. Remember that the shuttle bus to town can take quite a while to complete each loop. Some of the overnight stops may not be near restaurants or have shuttle buses. As a beginner, you could purchase breakfast, lunch, and dinner for each day, guaranteeing that you will have something to eat. Because each meal is inexpensive, you can change your mind to eat in town with your new-found friends, forfeiting very little money.