

BRAG 2006

Free Wheelin' recently caught up with BRAG Ride Director, Jerry Colley, to discuss this year's BRAG events.

FW: Where is BRAG going this year?

BRAG: BRAG starts in Dalton, GA. We gather on Saturday, June 10th, and we have our Purist Ride that day to the Tennessee state line and back. Sunday, June 11th, we go to Cartersville taking The Pocket Road along the way. Monday we go to Jasper, Georgia's Pink Marble Capital. Tuesday we go across Lake Lanier to Gainesville. Wednesday is the layover day with the optional Century Ride into the North Georgia foothills. Thursday is the Ice Cream Ride to Commerce. We will go by Chateau Elan Winery and the Mayfield Dairy for ice cream treats. Friday we go to Washington and then Saturday we end up on the Riverwalk in Augusta in air-conditioned comfort of the Marriott Hotel with a cash bar, swimming pool, and all-you-can-eat tacos.

FW: That sounds like an interesting ride. Are there any other sites to see along the way?

BRAG: BRAG veterans will remember the infamous hill coming into Dalton High School. We had to climb that hill on BRAG 1995 and BRAG 2002 and people still talk about that hill. Well, this year we get to go down it instead of up it. So, that's the first treat. In Cartersville we are having a hoe-down at the Booth Western Art Museum complete with gun slingers, roping demonstrations, music, and maybe some Bud Light beer. One night we will have the so-called Talent Show and Indescribable Moonbase Planetarium. On Thursday we go by the Crawford W. Long Museum in Jefferson, GA. Diane Loupe is bringing back the BRAG Kazoo Marching Band. Everyday except for the last day, we have a hammerhead option which is more mileage for those who want it. On the last day coming into Augusta, we have a fat tire option on the Augusta Canal Towpath which will come right into downtown Augusta.

FW: Why don't you have a hammerhead option on the last day?

BRAG: Because they only serve the taco meal until 3:00pm. Also, the buses leave at 3:00pm, so we need to get everyone in as soon as we can.

FW: I noticed that an old BRAG favorite, Chris Cakes, is not coming back to BRAG. What happened?

BRAG: There are actually three or four Chris Cakes around the country. Steve

Smith in Ohio has to do the GOBA ride the same week as BRAG. Steve Hamilton in Kansas has been flipping pancakes for us for several years. He has had some health problems, plus he decided he wasn't selling enough pancakes to justify coming to BRAG from Kansas.

FW: Any replacement for Chris Cakes?

BRAG: Yes, we have Mama Raphael out of North Carolina. Mama came to the Spring Tune-Up and Georgia BikeFest last year. They will be on BRAG at the first rest stop each day this year. They cook up a killer breakfast burrito made to order with eggs, sausage, mushrooms, onions, cheese, salsa, etc. They also have biscuits and sawmill gravy. Another BRAG favorite, the Veggie Lady, will return with her sandwiches and pasta at the lunch stop/rest stop each day.

FW: What is the terrain like on BRAG this year?

BRAG: Hilly. Very hilly in places.

FW: Does it flatten out as we get to Augusta?

BRAG: It is less hilly as we get toward Augusta, but unlike going to the coast in South Georgia, it never does flatten out.

FW: How should somebody prepare to ride BRAG?

BRAG: There is no substitute for riding your bicycle to prepare to do a bicycle ride. So, spend as much time in the saddle as you can. If the weather or your job keeps you from doing that, then do as much cross-training as you can, swimming, running, walking. Anything to keep the cardiovascular system in top condition. We have two official BRAG training rides coming up. There is the Spring Tune-Up Ride in April and then the Challenge of the Centuries in May. You need to be able to ride 60 miles a day for two days in a row without killing yourself. And, if you can do that, then you are ready to ride BRAG. And the Spring Tune-Up and Challenge of the Centuries are both opportunities to test yourself.

FW: Tell us about BRAG's other events for 2006.

BRAG: BRAG now has four events. Our next event is the Spring Tune-Up Ride in Madison, GA, April 28-30. Then we have the summer seven-day BRAG, June 10-17. Bike Atlanta is Saturday, September 23, and finally we have Georgia

BikeFest in Newnan, GA. The dates for that are still being determined. The Georgia BikeFest this year is a League of American Bicyclists featured event. So, we are very proud of that.

FW: Well, tell us more about the Spring Tune-Up Ride.

BRAG: We will be in Madison, GA camping at Madison Community Park with three days of riding through Georgia's scenic heartland with rides through Social Circle and Good Hope, GA, through Rutledge, and past the Rock Eagle Conference Center in Eatonton. Something new this year is that BRAG riders will receive free admission to MadisonFest, a three day arts, crafts, and bluegrass festival in downtown Madison which is within easy walking distance of the campsite. Like last year, BRAG will offer rides of various lengths each day including a fully sagged Century option on Saturday.

FW: What does the t-shirt look like this year?

BRAG: The t-shirt design is on the cover of the ride application and the Spring Tune-Up t-shirt is also in the ride application. We also have a BRAG 2006 jersey this year which you can order with sleeves or sleeveless. And also new this year is a female specific jersey which doesn't have elastic at the bottom and is flared at the hips. Pictures of the jerseys are on the ride application. We will also have a female t-shirt for Spring Tune-Up and for BRAG.

FW: Tell us about Team BRAG.

BRAG: Team BRAG spent a wonderful week in Costa Rica in January. We are taking a group to RAGBRAI in July and then taking a group to swim with the whale sharks off the coast of Mexico in August. We are also planning our second Bicycle Costa Rica for February, 2007, and a bicycling trip to New Zealand in January, 2007. And we also want to have another Riviera Maya Bicycle Adventure in early 2007. Anybody interested in any of the Team BRAG rides should contact me at braghq@aol.com.

FW: Any final comments?

BRAG: Yes, I hope all of your readers will come join us on our events this year. And, please share the road with bicycles.