



People Cycling Ride Leader Handbook

We the people, cycling together.

Ride Leader Handbook

Have you thought about becoming a ride leader? Our leaders are the heart of our club, and we can't survive without them. In other words, we need YOU! In order to offer the number of rides that we plan to, we need you to consider leading a ride yourself. When properly planned, it isn't difficult to lead a ride. The purpose of this document is to help you get there.

People Cycling's guiding principle is that we give ride leaders broad discretion on how to lead their rides.

You will be given the responsibility to make sure your ride will be a great experience for the riders on your tour. You will be given the flexibility to choose to do whatever will accomplish that goal. We will not tell you what you need to do, but if you need guidance our experienced members and leaders will be here to support you.

Advance Planning

Perhaps there's a region that you know and love. Chances are that our other members will like it, too. Or maybe there's somewhere you've always wanted to visit, and you just know that cycling is the best way to see it. Riding with friends is always more fun than going it alone. You won't make money by leading a ride, but our club's reimbursement policy will ensure that you won't break your own bank, either. We allow you to claim expenses for your lodging, meals, and travel, up to 20% of the total cost of the ride, spread among three leaders. We do not, however, reimburse your airfare should you need to fly to the area.

There is no one way to lead a ride. While always keeping in mind the founding principles of the club, think about what works best for your time slot and trip location. Many rides travel to a different hotel each day, with a vehicle and driver transporting luggage, but there's no reason why you couldn't ride self-contained. Fixed base rides are popular and allow you the opportunity to explore your region in greater depth. Or, combine the two styles – pick a few spots to spend some time and travel on the other days. We allow compensation for up to three leaders (including drivers) so you can be sure of having lots of help. Commercially supported rides are also possible in areas that are difficult to do yourself. We can all use a little help sometimes.

Your most important task at this point is to do detailed scouting. We urge you to ride or at least drive the routes yourself. Driving allows you to cover more territory within a much shorter time span, but still get a good feeling for the ride. Finally, mapping tools such as RideWithGPS are great for getting accurate data on the routes you're proposing, although road surface, traffic conditions and shoulder width are variables not always obvious. It is recommended that a ride leader should use a combination of all three methods.

Decide on convenient locations to begin and end. Accessibility of public transportation, airport shuttles, bus to a more remote location, etc., is a big plus. If this is a point-to-point ride, participants will also find it convenient if you return to the place you began. If not, you'll need to research how to get riders and rental bikes back to the start. Charter buses are one way to accomplish this, but depending on the number of riders you have, you may not be able to fit all the bikes in the storage

compartments (and budget for moving blankets so the bikes aren't damaged in transit).

Unless you're doing a fixed-base ride, you'll need to rent a SAG (Storage and Gear) vehicle. Cargo and moving vans are a great option if they are available in the area you are touring. Shop around for the best price and ALWAYS get the full amount of insurance they offer. Also make sure that if you are planning on using a driver that they have a valid license and are listed in the rental agreement. You should not ask your riders to drive the van.

There are a lot of things to consider when choosing your hotel. Everyone enjoys luxury, and participants are often willing to pay for it. On the other hand, standard chain hotels work just fine and are usually convenient. And don't overlook the little independent mom and pop places which can offer a unique experience. As in Real Estate, when you decide on a hotel it's “location, location, location.” You may find only one hotel along your ride route on any given day. If it really isn't suitable you may have to change your plans. Try to negotiate with hotel managers to get the best deal you can on a group rate. Except in very unusual circumstances, do not ask participants to share a bath (i.e. it's probably not good to use youth hostels).

Consider these things when making your decision:

- How many rooms does the hotel have? That will determine the size of your group.
- Do they have rooms with two beds so that you can accept riders that want to share a room?
- Are there restaurants within walking/cycling distance? Keep in mind the season you'll be riding – distances need to be shorter in the fall when it gets dark early.
- Can they accommodate a group dinner or know a caterer if there are no restaurants nearby?
- Can they provide space for an evening Happy Hour and daily route review meetings?
- What about overnight bike storage? Do they have a secure space? Can participants bring their bikes to their rooms?
- For your start hotel you'll also need to think about long term parking, bike box storage, airport transportation, etc.
- Is there a bike shop nearby that offers rentals?
- If participants want to ship their bikes, will the hotel or local bike shop accept delivery?
- This goes without saying – is it clean?

Meals

Breakfasts – in our experience nearly every rider will want to start the day off with a good breakfast. It doesn't need to be a full buffet but shouldn't be “continental”. Most chain hotels have breakfast options that are included in the hotel rate. This is an easy way to provide this without a lot of trouble.

Lunches are important but finding food along the road can be troublesome. Know where the lunch stops might be and be sure to check their hours and closing days. If there's really nothing, think about providing a picnic lunch and setting up a place for riders to meet the van. If you're not eating in a restaurant, you also need to know in advance where the “rest stops” could be. Parks are generally a great place to rest, the main shelter will also usually have bathrooms as well. Don't overlook public

libraries in towns you'll pass through but check their open hours before you mention them. The places to eat should be listed on your daily route sheets

Dinners – You will want to plan a few group dinners and put them in your budget. It's standard to have group dinner the first and last night of the tour, but you can add as many as you like. Hotel dinners are convenient, but restaurants close by may have more local character. Check the reviews online and be sure they offer vegetarian/vegan options. If your hotel is isolated, consider having pizza or other take-out food delivered. As mentioned, caterers are also an option just be sure the hotel has a place you can use for the meal.

Someone will have a mechanical problem. Depend on it. Know where the bike shops are and be prepared to help people get there if they're off your route. It's a good idea to know in advance how complete a service the shops offer. Before you write your ride description, check which shops offer rentals and ask if they can deliver the bikes to the hotel. It's also a good idea to put a repair kit together. A few tools and some spare inner tubes and tires will come in handy for quick repairs and could prevent the need to transport the rider and bike to a shop.

Budgeting

The final planning step is to prepare your budget. There's a spreadsheet on www.peoplecycling.org that makes it easy. The budget must be submitted along with your ride proposal.

The budget is the most important part of your proposal. You'll submit the budget along with your proposal. In addition to hotels and group meals, include items such as printing, postage, happy hour supplies, ferries, special events, jerseys, etc. It will also include a contingency fund in case of unforeseen expenses. Enter it all into the spreadsheet and the computer does the rest of the work for you.

Commercially Supported Rides

You can lead a ride using a commercial touring company (even in the US under certain circumstances). You will need to negotiate with the touring company to get the best rate for your riders. You will also be allowed to negotiate for inclusions (where a certain number of ride leaders are included as part of the cost of the ride). The number of inclusions allowed are between you and the touring company, but they should be fair to the other riders. As a rule, there shouldn't be more than two inclusions per tour. You can discuss with the tour company if they would prefer to be paid via master account or individually by the riders (this will vary based on the tour companies themselves).

Ride Leaders that are using commercial touring companies are not eligible for additional expense compensation. They will need to pay for their own airfare and additional meals during the tour.

A list of approved tour companies will be listed on the People Cycling website. New companies can be suggested to the Board which will vet them prior to allowing the ride to be approved.

Ride Proposal

You've done your homework, so now it's time to put it all together. Our team has done much of the work for you. There's a form for putting together your proposal on our website. Here's what you need to include.

- A Title – be creative but descriptive
- Start date
- End date
- Start and End Cities – include nearest airport codes if people will be flying.
- Estimated cost
- Deposit required
- Maximum and Minimum number of riders
- Tour company if using commercial assistance
- A *concise* description of the ride. (If it's too wordy, no one will read it)
- Rate the ride. There are four categories – Easy, Moderate, Difficult and Challenging.
- Average daily elevation
- Average daily mileage.

Your ride description should make people want to come. Include the highlights of the ride – especially any monuments, historical locations and other attractions that you'll see. If you're planning a special event, a tour or a hike, let them know if that cost will be included in the tour price, and if they'll need a special wardrobe – walking shoes, special dress codes, etc. Mention the road conditions – whether urban or rural, if they might encounter rough road conditions or possible traffic issues. If there are particularly steep climbs, it would be helpful to include the maximum % grades. If any day has mileage or elevation gain that is significantly higher than the average, put it in.

Give a brief description of the hotels and be sure to mention anything unusual. Most people are flexible, but they like to know in advance what to expect. Include the number of group meals and if daily breakfasts are included. Let people know what type of cuisine to expect in your area, and if possible try to predict the weather, including average temperature and likelihood of rain.

Will your ride be fixed base, semi-fixed base or point to point? If fixed base, let them know that there will be no vehicle traveling the route for support. If point to point, tell people in advance if there will be a luggage limit.

Ride rating

Rides are rated as follows:

Easy - Under 30mi/48km in distance and 1600ft/500m in elevation
Moderate – over Easy but under 50mi/80km and 2460ft/750m

Difficult – Over Moderate but under 75mi/120km and 3280/1000m

Challenging – Over Difficult

Note that these ratings are guidelines and not ironclad. A ride that has an average distance of 60mi/100km but is in mostly flat terrain of less than 1600ft/500m could still be considered Moderate

Bike Rental and Bike Types

Participants should make their own arrangements if they plan to rent bikes. Include the name of the local bike shop to contact for policies and prices. If you are not returning to your start location, you'll need to determine a way for them to return rentals to the shop.

e-Bikes are getting very popular and you should allow them on your ride. The same goes for tandem bikes, if someone is confident they can do the ride on a unicycle why prevent them from doing so? If for some reason you feel you need to restrict bikes to a specific type (e.g. requiring mountain biking or fat tires) make sure you put this in your ride description.

Cancellations

There are always a few cancellations. It's important to include your cancellation policy right up front. Share how you will handle the money. Will you need them to mail checks to you, or are you able to accept credit cards for payment on Venmo, PayPal, Stripe or Square? It is recommended that you accept credit card payments – if you need assistance setting this up you can call the Office and we will help you with it. Accepting credit cards will be a convenience for your riders, but it is not required. You can simply have them mail you a check. In either case, it is also recommended that you get a separate bank account for your rides. You may even want to look into registering a 401c(4) not-for-profit with your state for this purpose (this will prevent you from having to report ride funds as income with the IRS)

In general, the ride fee paid to People Cycling is non-refundable. The board will take special circumstances into consideration if you advocate for a rider that had to cancel and you feel they should have the fee refunded.

Accepting Riders

So, requests to participate are pouring in. How do you choose? The easy way is to take them in the order you get them, but that's not mandated. You may get requests from large groups that want to be together. There's no rule against that but realize that there is a tendency for the “group” to hang out together and split off from other participants. Some people go on lots of rides each year. If you find that you have applicants who have already done several rides, it's nice to give the spots to those who haven't yet been able to get on a ride.

Sleeping arrangements can get tricky. Many people sign up without a roommate in mind but aren't prepared to pay for a private room. As the ride leader, you can put them in touch with other singles on the ride and let them decide if they will room together. You can also ask if they'd like you to assist

them in finding a roommate and match people yourself. Often, people request to have a private room to themselves. Be aware that if you have a limited number of rooms reserved, this will result in your being able to accept one less participant. If the hotel has additional rooms available, it is probably not a problem. If a rider wants the private room they will need to pay for the additional cost of the room (e.g. the entire cost of the room usually split between two riders).

On the Ride

Arrive at your start location a day or two ahead of your participants. You'll need to do a brief re-scout. Find out if there is construction on any of your routes. Are any bridges closed? Especially in Europe, know if there are any rail or ferry strikes going on during your tour. It happens all too often. Plan an alternative.

Emergencies aside, riders should be able to ride the entire length of the ride on their own, unless you will specifically provide this support. If you do, be sure this is highlighted in your ride description. Your SAG vehicle is for luggage transport, emergency pick-ups and shopping for happy hour supplies. Be firm when someone wants a mileage boost in the morning or an early pick-up in the afternoon unless they have a good reason. Carry a small supply of standard size tubes, a few basic tools and a floor pump. Bring some extra water, either a jug or plastic bottles, especially if you are riding in hot climates.

Luggage

Some people will want to be on the road early, and others like to hang around a bit. Set a reasonable time for all the luggage to be in the lobby in the morning. Some people ride very fast; they like their luggage to be there when they arrive at the hotel. If you are driving, don't dawdle too much along the way so that the SAG vehicle is the last to get there. Participants always appreciate it if the luggage is unloaded and in the lobby. If you have help (people are usually eager to help!) bring it in. If it happens that there's no one else around, you can leave the vehicle key at the desk so everyone can access their own things. Don't leave the SAG vehicle unlocked!

Happy Hours

You'll also need to carry all the supplies you'll need for the happy hours, especially if you can't shop every day. There are all styles of happy hours – be sure to offer a little variety. Participants don't need to substitute happy hour for dinner, but they will appreciate snacks, drinks and conversation. Bring along a cooler for cold food and drink storage. In addition to food you'll need plates, bowls, cups, napkins, and cutlery. Bring a cutting board and a good knife. Include dish soap and towels in your happy hour box. Don't forget a corkscrew and a bottle opener unless you're bringing all screw caps. People are usually more than willing to help with happy hour set-up and clean-up. Let them.

It's easiest if the hotel has given you a space to hold your happy hours, but there are ways to work around that. On nice days, it's fun to go outside. In a worst-case scenario, have the happy hour in your room, *but do have a happy hour*. Be mindful of hotel restrictions on serving alcohol. If your hotel has a bar (or restaurant) you may not be allowed to bring in your own beverages and snacks.

This is especially likely in Europe and National/State Park resorts. It can be expensive if you need to buy drinks on-site, so budget accordingly. You can allow for one or two drinks per person to be included, or have people just buy their own. Some resorts will even provide drink tickets.

Mapping and Cue Sheets

Smartphone mapping apps are great, but you are required to give printed cue sheets just in case cell phone service reception is poor or a rider's smartphone battery dies. You should also consider getting a Premium account at RideWithGPS.com, they have advanced route editing tools that will help you create cue sheets and gpx/tcx files for use with popular GPS devices such as Garmin's. If possible, have detailed maps. The mapping sites give great directions, but their maps usually leave something to be desired. You will need to hold a map meeting every evening at the happy hour. Note, you can skip the map meeting part of the happy hour if the next day is a rest day. Ask your riders to bring their cue sheets to the meeting, along with a pen or pencil to make notes. Even if you've made previous announcements, it doesn't hurt to refresh people's memory. Repeat everything! It's easy for participants to have missed something.

What to do if something goes wrong

It's going to happen – someone might be injured, someone may not be physically up to getting from point A to point B, there might be a confrontation between riders. Whatever happens think through how you can mitigate the problem.

Emergency contact information

On the People Cycling website there is an Emergency Contact Form. At the very first meeting, before anyone goes on the ride, have your participants fill this form out completely. It will have the contact information of the person you should reach out to in case of an emergency. Be sure you can read the information they wrote down, and then keep them with you at all times. Make sure that your riders have your mobile phone number (and you have theirs). You should also know where the closest hospitals and urgent care centers are.

Unprepared Riders

Hopefully your ride description and rating were accurate. If not, you may want to do what you can to help an unprepared rider. But if a rider is truly not up to the task and cannot keep up you may want to consider sending them home. If you have room in the SAG vehicle you might consider asking them to be an assistant – help you unload luggage, set up happy hours, etc. – in order to stay on the ride (just do not allow them to drive unless you can get them on the rental agreement). Again, this is your ride and you can lead it any way you choose.

Confrontations

Not everyone will get along. If this happens, try to suggest that the people involved just distance themselves and play nice or they will be asked to leave. If the problems continue you should remove them from the ride and send them home. People Cycling will back you up 100% on any decision you make.

After the ride

Once your ride is completed you will need to review all your expenditures and send back to the riders whatever is left over, split evenly between them.

Errors and Omissions

Mistakes happen. If you over-estimated the costs of the ride you can certainly send back whatever extra funds that the riders paid to you. If you under-estimated hopefully your contingency fee (built into the budget) will cover it. If not, contact the Office Manager who will raise the issue with board for a decision to help offset the difference.

If someone cancelled or left the ride early you should calculate the amount of the ride cost that they didn't use and send that back to them. However, only send back what you can re-coup. If they were a single and shared a room they will still need to pay the cost of the unused portion of the hotel room.

Ride Review

A People Cycling tour reviewer will be in touch to discuss what went right (or wrong) and see what you might want to change should you decide to lead the ride again. It is our hope that you will, or at least find another ride to lead the next year.

There's more of course. Be nice! Have a fun! If you are having a good time, chances are everyone else will be, too.