

**2020 Loudoun 1725 Gravel Grinder**  
**October 25, 2020 (postponed from June 9, 2020)**  
**Operational Revisions due to COVID-19**

**Event Overview**

The Loudoun 1725 Gravel Grinder is a scenic bike ride along historic gravel roads in Northern Virginia. Located east of the Blue Ridge, in lush Loudoun Valley, these crushed rock roadways meander through awe inspiring beauty, past stone walls, grand estates, horse farms, wineries, bubbling creeks, tiny hamlets, and significant historical sites. Riding these roads is a sublime experience – like stepping back in time and cycling through history.

With over 300 miles of gravel road dating back to the early 1700s, Loudoun County Virginia boasts the largest and oldest intact network of gravel roads in the United States. When settlement in this area officially began in the year 1725, these roads were first used by mills and farms to get goods to market and by settlers to get to town and church. Today these special routes are used by residents, farmers, visitors, equestrians, and cyclists.

The event will start and finish at Salamander Resort in the quaint town of Middleburg. Salamander is a perfect setting for the event, with plentiful amenities, huge parking areas, and a gorgeous staging area. From Salamander, riders will embark along a 40, 60, or 80-mile route. The ride will be fully marked and supported, with well stocked rest stops, mechanical and SAG support, and great post-ride food and beer!

To help preserve Loudoun’s unique and precious gravel roads, 5% of gross ride funds received will be donated to America’s Routes, a group that is advocating to save these historic rural roads from being paved over by development. Riders may donate additional funds during registration.

**Our Goals**

We strive to produce a safe, high-quality, and enjoyable event experience that provides participating athletes with a unique opportunity to ride the historic gravel roads of Loudoun County in an organized event and to raise awareness and funds for America’s Routes.

**Operational Overview with Additional Safety and Social Distancing Measures Due to COVID-19**

This document will outline the operational changes and enhancements we have made to increase safety and facilitate social distancing, to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These measures are in line with the COVID-19 spread prevention guidelines suggested by the Centers for Disease Control and comply with Executive Order 67, which VA Governor Northam signed on June 30, 2020.

In 2020, we strive to create a more individualized and small group event experience by decreasing the number of people gathering at any one time, at any one place. Our plans will ensure that we will never get anywhere near the 250-person mass gathering limit required under Phase 3 of the VA reopening plan.

In addition to separating the field of participants, we will institute safety measures to increase safety when people are gathered. These include promoting personal prevention practices such as handwashing, staying home when sick (self-assessment), maintaining 6’ of social distancing, and wearing cloth face coverings. Additionally, environmental prevention practices such as cleaning and disinfecting protocols will be put into place.

Changes will be instituted to the procedures, timing, layout, and flow of almost every operational aspect of the event. Some of these changes include enhanced pre-ride communication, drive-up check-in vs walk up check-in, facilitated/directive parking with additional space between vehicles, staggered starting, starting corral, additional SAG vehicles on the route, deliberate flow and limited facilitated support at the aid stations and at the finish line, limited post-ride food options and procedures, and doing a virtual awards ceremony vs a live awards ceremony on the day of the ride.

#### Things that will NOT change:

- Same beautiful and challenging courses along the historic gravel roads of Loudoun County.
- Excellent course marking that are easy to follow.
- Aid stations spaced 12-20 miles apart.
- Fantastic SAG support along the route.
- Great swag.
- Professional operations.
- Excellent event experience.

#### Things that WILL change:

- General Safety Protocols:
  - Face coverings will be required for all athletes, staff, and volunteers.
  - Volunteers and staff must wear face coverings at all times. Gloves must be used when handling any food or hydration items. This PPE will be provided for volunteers and staff.
  - Athletes must wear face coverings at all times when not on their bikes.
  - Throughout the event, athletes will be reminded to practice 6 feet of social distancing during the event.
  - Athletes will be reminded to pass safely on the roads. They should warn of their presence before passing. Commands such as 'passing on your left' should be used.
  - Athletes will be reminded to practice good hygiene by washing hands and avoid touching their face.
  - Hand sanitizer and Clorox wipes will be ubiquitous at the event.
  - Spectators will be discouraged from attending.
- Enhanced Pre-Ride Communication:
  - To reduce in-person contact at check-in and on the day of the ride, EX2 will communicate logistics, procedures, and FAQs thoroughly to all athletes before the ride, especially during the two-week period leading up to the ride.
  - By Monday 10/19 we will post a pre-ride brief video on Facebook and on the EX2 website. All athletes will be emailed a link to the pre-ride brief.
- Drive-Up Check-In:
  - All General Safety Protocols apply to check-in.
  - The largest point of congestion during the 2019 Loudoun 1725 Gravel Grinder were at check-in and the start of the ride. Changing this process to drive up check-in and staggering the start into much larger windows of time will significantly reduce the in-person contact between participants, volunteers, and staff.
  - At check-in, athletes must verify that they have no symptoms of COVID-19 and have not knowingly been in contact with anyone with COVID-19. Any athlete that answers yes, will not be permitted to participate in the event. They will receive a deferment into the 2021 ride.
  - Athletes will que up and stay in vehicles when checking in. Social distancing is baked into this process.
  - Athletes will self-select one of 23 different 15-minute check-in/start time windows. Each of the 23 windows will accommodate up to 20 athletes. 80 milers will occupy the first 5 windows, 60 milers the next 9 windows, and then 40 milers will occupy the final 9 windows. After checking in, riders will have 30-45 minutes to park, prep, enter the start corral, and start their ride. This process will reduce bottlenecks and lines at check-in. (see Start Process spreadsheet)
  - Riders will be told that they SHOULD NOT arrive at the venue outside of their check-in window of time.
  - Eliminate on-site registration. This will reduce in-person contact and reduce complexity of operations, allowing staff and volunteers to focus on safely checking in athletes.
  - A team of Greeters will leap-frog down the vehicle cue and explain the process to those waiting in the vehicles. This greeting process will significantly reduce the time needed to distribute the packets and allow for the processing of at least two vehicles/minute.
  - Volunteers wearing PPE will distribute ride packets (ride guide, ride numbers, pins, twist ties, instructions, maps/cue sheets) and swag (tee, pint glass, etc). Distributing swag at drive up check-in will consolidate contact and eliminate the need to distribute or carry any swag post-ride.

- Check-in tents will be positioned to provide plenty of room to cue-up 40 vehicles. The check-in tents and volunteers will be positioned on the passenger side of the vehicle so the driver and volunteer will be separated by the passenger seat.
- Facilitated/Directive Parking with Additional Space Between Vehicles:
  - All General Safety Protocols apply to parking.
  - We will have robust volunteer course marshal support in the parking lots.
  - Volunteers will direct athletes into parking spots.
  - When parking vehicles, additional space will be provided between vehicles. We have a HUGE parking area and plenty of space to accommodate all vehicles with this added space.
- New Staggered Start times
  - The ride start will increase from a 2-hour window of time to a 6-hour window of time. The 80M will start from 7:30am-9am, 60M from 8:45am-11:15am, and 40M from 11am-1:30pm
  - Groups of 20 riders from the same distance (40, 60, and 80 mile) will self-select a 45-minute check-in/start window - 15 min for check-in window, followed by a 30-minute start window.
  - On a first come, first serve basis, riders will be provided an opportunity to select their check-in/start window through an online form. Each check-in/start window will have 20 available spots. Those riders who do not self-select their check-in/start window be assigned to one.
- Start Corral
  - All General Safety Protocols apply to parking.
  - The start corral will be enclosed and secure, with soft fencing.
  - The start corral will have one entrance and one exit. Both will be monitored by volunteers.
  - The start area will have one-way traffic flow arrows.
  - The start area layout will include 8 rows of 5 spaces, enough to accommodate 40 riders, which is enough space to full accommodate two check-in windows of riders. Each rider space will be spaced at least 6 feet apart from each other.
  - We will institute a rolling start. 5 riders will start every 2 minutes so it will take 8 minutes for all 20 athletes to exit the start area. This will provide plenty of overlap time so no rider needs to wait outside the start corral
- Additional SAG Vehicles:
  - All General Safety Protocols apply to SAG vehicles.
  - We will double the number of SAG vehicles along the route to ensure we have plenty of coverage for any riders in need of support and that we will not need to pick up more than one rider or group of riders at a time.
- Deliberate Flow and Facilitated Support at the Aid Stations:
  - All General Safety Protocols apply at all aid stations.
  - Aid stations will be spaced 12-20 miles apart. We will use the same aid stations as we did in 2019. 40 milers will have 3 aid stations, 60 milers will have 4 aid stations, and 80 milers will have 5 aid stations.
  - Because we are increasing the start windows from 2 hours to 6 hours, aid stations will be less crowded than in 2019.
  - Athletes should limit their time at each aid stations to no more than 10 minutes. This time limit guideline will provide a maximum of 20 riders at an aid station, at any time.
  - Aid stations will provide hydration, pre-packaged snacks, bike mechanical support, portajohns, and hand sanitizing stations.
  - Each aid station will occupy more physical space and each activity within the aid stations will be further apart than in 2019.
  - All athletes must use hand sanitizer when entering an aid station. Bottles of hand sanitizer will be positioned on a table near the bike racks.
  - We will triple the number of bike racks at each aid station because only two bikes/rack will be permitted on each 10' bike rack. A bike rack can usually hold six bikes. Each aid station will now have 10 racks instead of three.
  - Volunteers ONLY will be permitted in designated food and hydration area.
  - Athletes will order from a 'menu board' of offerings and will be served from PPE wearing volunteers.

- Hydration includes bottled water and bottled Gatorade.
- Food items will be significantly limited and will only include pre-packaged items in individual wrappings such as sandwiches in individual zip locks, chips, cookies, bars, candy, trail mix, and fruit with skin such as bananas and oranges.
- Even though riders will not enter the food and hydration area, FOOD SERVING TABLES WILL BE CLEANED PERIODICALLY WITH DISINFECTANT SOLUTION BY PPE WEARING VOLUNTEERS.
- Food (other than nutrition bars) will NOT be provided at the Unison Aid Station due to the out and back flow of this aid station, which is used twice as Aid #1 and Aid #3, and the limited physical space available to facilitate safe food distribution.
- Food WILL be available at the Austins Grove, Philomont, and Zephaniah Aid Stations.
- Deliberate Flow and Facilitated Support at the Finish Area:
  - All General Safety Protocols apply at the Finish Area.
  - The staging area layout has been revised to facilitate social distancing.
  - The staging area will be sectioned off and secured with temporary fencing.
  - Similar to 2019, all riders will finish from the road then through the finish chute, to the 'finish line'.
  - First aid will be available near the finish.
  - Finish aid will be available. Volunteers wearing PPE will distribute bottled water and bottled Gatorade.
  - Massage services will be eliminated.
  - Sponsors will not be present at the staging area or anywhere at the venue. Sponsors will be highlighted and thanked virtually before and after the event.
  - The emcee will announce riders as they cross the finish line and also play family friendly music.
  - Trash will be significantly reduced due to lack of post-ride meal. Any trash generated will be removed periodically by PPE wearing volunteers.
  - Swag will not be distributed at the end of the ride, as it was in 2019. Riders will receive swag during drive-up check-in.
- Altered Post-Ride Food and Beverage Service:
  - All General Safety Protocols apply at the Post-Ride Food/Beverage Area.
  - Tables, seating, and the dining tent will be eliminated. Standing room only.
  - Food will be separated from the start/finish area, near parking. This is to encourage riders to grab their meal and bring to their vehicle.
  - Athletes will order food from a menu board and will not be permitted near food.
  - Food will be served in to-go containers.
  - Beer will not be available as it has been in the past. This is to prevent congregation at the finish area and to abide by ABC laws.
  - Trash will be removed periodically by PPE wearing volunteers.
- Virtual Awards Ceremony vs Live Awards
  - The live awards ceremony has been eliminated and we will do a virtual awards ceremony instead.
  - A few days after the event, we will post an Awards Ceremony Video where we will talk about America's Routes, thank riders, donors, sponsors, and volunteers, and randomly draw the winners of all the giveaways.
  - Awards and prizes will be mailed.

### **Follow Up Questions from Town of Middleburg**

1) You only ask for the Officer until 6pm. However, your chart of possible departure and arrival times shows that some may be returning after 6pm. In general, I do not think that is a problem, since the riders will be making a simple right-turn into the back entrance to Salamander (correct?). However, I want to make sure that you did not intend for the officer to remain until the last rider arrives.

2) Darkness seems to be a concern: if you have riders returning after 6pm, it will be getting dark. Do you have proper preparation measures for the riders (lights, reflective gear) and do you have proper preparation measures for your onsite finish line/food pickup/etc that would accommodate riders arriving after dark?

3) While you can control the departure times, clearly you can't control arrivals – do you have plans on how to address the issue if you have a significant number of riders all arriving back at the same time? Please describe the means by which you would ensure separation, physical distancing, and safe distribution of food if there is a huge rush.

4) Current COVID-19 guidelines require the regular disinfecting of commonly-used surfaces. Do you have staff that are on a rotation to keep the porta pottys clean by wiping them down with cleaning cloths/disinfectant spray or other cleaning methods on a regular basis?

### **Responses to Questions from EX2 Adventures**

Projected finish times - Our timeline estimates are VERY conservative and we use those estimates to create a projection of what is possible. Most riders will average 10-15 MPH and, while not impossible, it is highly unlikely anyone will ride as fast (20+MPH) or as slow (8 MPH) as what we have on the spreadsheet. With this said, I can assure you that no rider will be riding after sunset. We track the riders as they proceed through the route and have SAG vehicles and sweeps that will ensure anyone that is falling behind gets scooped up and brought back to the staging area before it gets dark. As we get closer to the end of our events, we are usually in verbal communication with the straggling athletes and almost chaperone them back into the finish. We are planning for everyone to be back by 6pm and so that is why we requested the officer until that time.

Finish process - Most riders will finish in a 4 hour window of time, between 1pm-5pm. Riders will be crossing the finish line as individuals or in small groups. When riders finish the event, they will proceed through the 'finish chute' and straight into the parking area. Bottled water will be available for them at the finish chute but no other food items will be available in the immediate area of the finish line. The staging area will be set up to discourage congregation, with no tents, tables, food, or beer. In addition, all 'finish' swag will be distributed to them during drive-thru check-in. This is to further limit the amount of contact between riders and staff/volunteers and to discourage congregation. Social distancing and 'you must wear your facemask when not riding' signage will be ubiquitous all over the staging area and at our aid stations. We will not serve beer. Salamander will set up their food operations close to the parking lot in grab-and-go fashion. Only 150 riders actually ordered a meal so we anticipate this being very streamlined and Salamander are 100% on board with the rationale behind this plan. The idea is that riders will grab their food on the way from the finish chute to their vehicle or they will bring their bike to their vehicle and then come grab their food. Tables for sitting will not be available near the food. Riders will eat their meal at their vehicle.

Portajohns will be cleaned every 2 hours with a CDC approved bleach disinfectant. Table surfaces at aid stations will be cleared on a regular basis with the same solution.

Rationale for estimates - We will never get anywhere near the 250 person max participants in the staging area, or anywhere on the route. At the height of operations in the morning, we estimate that we may have up to 50 riders max spaced out between the parking area checking in, the portajohns, and the start corral. The finish is more difficult to predict but our finish process quickly gets riders moving through the finish chute and to their vehicles in an expedited manner. So, even if there are 100 total people @ Salamander (and we think our max will be closer to 50), they will be spaced out between the finish chute, the food pick up area, and the parking fields. If 80% of riders finish between 1pm-5pm, that is 360 riders over a 4 hour window of time. If each rider spends 1 hour between the finish, getting food, and eating food at their vehicle, that would be 90 people spaced out over that entire area. With our finish process in place, we believe most riders will spend closer to 30 minutes post event, so that number goes down to 45 max riders.

With this event, we will not be shy about enforcing any of our rules. In 'normal' times, we are all about a great party atmosphere and we hope to get back to that next year, but this year is vastly different and as long as we communicate the message with respect and clarity, riders will be appreciative and respectful of our requests.