

WELCOME! Everything You Need to Know to Bike MS:Bike to the Battlefield

The Ride: You have options. The first thing to know is it is not a race. It's a ride. The next thing to know is you have options.

One-Day / One-Way: You only complete the first day of the ride (35 miles or 75 miles). If you take this option, SAG vehicles can take you back to the starting point or to Vicksburg so you can enjoy the pool party and banquet. Some people do the one day option, stay in Vicksburg Saturday night with friends who drive down, and ride back with them the next day. It's an option rather than riding the entire 150 miles. The only thing we ask is that you let us know if you plan to ride any distance less than the 150 miles so we can plan accordingly. If you decide to do 75 miles or 150 miles and get on the course and discover you can't make it the full distance, no problem, just let a rest stop attendant know or alert a SAG vehicle and we can give you a ride to the next rest stop so you can take a break or we can take you on in to the finish.

The Equipment: It makes a difference First there's the bike itself. On the ride you will see all manner of two and three wheeled vehicles. You can do this ride on a beach cruiser, if you choose. You can do it on a mountain bike. You will see people who do. Most people will choose neither of these options. By far, the bike of choice is a road bike with skinny tires. The tires are sometimes called 'slick' tires. The difference in weight and road friction between a mountain bike with fat knobby tires and a road bike with skinny tires is substantial, and makes a big difference in the difficulty of the ride. If you want the challenge of doing it on a mountain bike, go for it. A road bike will make this endeavor easier. Some people who own road bikes will replace the wheels/tires with skinny road wheels/tires. That's an option to make it easier, too.

The seat on the bike is another matter. You will prefer the small skinny seat of a road bike. If you're riding anything less than 20 miles, big cushy seats with shocks feel great. On longer rides, they lose their appeal. If you start from scratch when you start training, you will probably ride less than 20 miles. If that's the case, doing it in shorts and a t-shirt is fine. As you go farther though, and you will, you'll want to invest in bike clothes. Bike jerseys and shorts pull moisture away from your body, which helps regulate your body temperature. Bike shorts include padding right where you need it. You'll want all that.

Also, as you venture farther from home, you will want to bring a few things with you. You'll want to bring some ID, some money, perhaps a cell phone and perhaps a flat repair kit. You don't want to be stranded, 20 miles from home with a flat tire.

Fundraising: It's easier than you think. Yes, the ride is a challenge, but here's the real reason we do this, and it permeates everything else. After you register for the ride, you will be given a web page on the MS Society web site. This is a great tool to help you raise money and track what you do. It will come with some text by default. Take some time to personalize that. It will help. It comes with a default fundraising goal, which is the minimum you are required to raise (\$250). Feel free to make that the first thing you change. People can go to this site and donate using a credit card. This is especially convenient for you, since you don't have to track that.

As you get cash and checks, you can manually enter those amounts using this page, so the fundraising total on the page accurately reflects what you have done. Again, the fundraising minimum is \$250, but most people raise more than the minimum. To be eligible for prizes you must raise more than \$250. If you have not turned in \$250 or more by the 2012 ride, you will not be able to participate. Please remember every dollar raised gets us one step closer to a world free of MS!

You will get an envelope from the MS Society in the mail. You can save all your cash and checks people give you in that and turn it in toward the end of this journey at check-in. If you don't feel comfortable doing that, you can mail the checks (I wouldn't recommend mailing cash) to the MS Society at any time. Our address can be found at the 'Contact Us' link on your web page. If you do this, enclose a note with your name/team so we know the checks are from people sponsoring you. You do need that envelope they send you though. You have to turn it in when you check in.

Bike MS Clubs: Beyond prize eligibility, there are many other reasons to raise more than the minimum. There are various Bike MS Fundraising Clubs that you should know about. You truly are an insider in one of these prestigious clubs.

Top Fundraiser: You become a member by raising a thousand dollars or more. This club is where you'll find the serious perks! Just as the amounts for each level may change, so may the perks, so we won't list them here. Just know they exist and being a Top Fundraiser is the best way to Bike MS.

Triple Threat: This new club exists for those who are brave enough to attempt all 3 rides offered by the Alabama-Mississippi Chapter ... Mooresville Ride, Tour de Beach and Bike to the Battlefield.

Training: Do it NOW!! The fun begins. Start this early and do it often. This part differs for everybody. Training will make it possible for you to complete this journey you're undertaking. It won't make it painless.

Pre-check in: Don't wait until the morning of! At some point you have to check in. You will bring your envelope containing cash or checks you have collected. Please have the money counted, the envelope sealed and filled out before checking in. Just because you hand in the envelope doesn't mean you have to stop fundraising. People can still use your web page to donate online with their credit card. You can still collect checks and mail them to the MS Society for about a month after the ride. The deadline to be eligible for prizes is October 31st. (yes, that's Halloween) We will have check-in on the evening of Thursday October 4th at our office in Madison and the evening of Friday October 5th at the Baptist Healthplex in Clinton ... stay tuned for an announcement of those check-in times.

When you check in, you'll get a goodie bag, your t-shirt and jersey if you have raised \$500 or above. The bag will have your rider number on two pieces of paper. You will pin one to the back of your jersey for the ride. The other gets attached to your bike. Make sure you have these. A luggage tag that goes on your overnight bag will also be included in the packet. It should also have a number, and that number should match the other two. It's how we know which bag to give you when you reach your Saturday destination. If any of the three aren't there, don't walk out the door without knowing what somebody is going to do about your missing number(s). You don't want to be getting the answer to that question on Saturday morning of the ride if possible.

Planning the Day of the Ride

The objective is to plan, so the morning of the ride, all you have to do is get there, turn in your overnight bag, get your team picture taken and get on your bike. Anything else is painful.

Packing: You can bring one overnight bag with your luggage tag on it. Make sure you have clothes for Saturday night and riding clothes for Sunday. You may also want to bring a change of clothes for Sunday afternoon when you finish the ride. A bathing suit is a good idea as well. If it's hot you can dive in the pool at your Saturday destination. If you wear cycling shoes, bring others to wear Saturday.

The Day of the Ride: Leave home early. Plan on being there before the time you are supposed to be there. Remember, a few hundred bicyclists are planning to do the same thing. Hopefully you are already checked in, so you aren't standing in line. If not, join the line as soon as you get there. There will be trucks there (look for the Luggage signs) waiting for your overnight bag. Turn it in there. There will be team photos.

Someone with a bullhorn will be calling for you when they do your team picture. Then it's a matter of being ready to go. The top fundraising team from the prior year gets to leave first. If you aren't on one of those teams, stay clear of the start/finish line. The ride begins at 8:00.

The start is a slow cautious exercise. Ride defensively; at least until you get a few miles down the road and things thin out some. Don't be in a big hurry. It's not a race. The object is not to get there first. It's to get there. There will be motorcycles riding with you, warning motorists to watch out for you. There will be vans from bike shops along the route to assist you if you have mechanical problems. There are also SAG vehicles. SAG stands for Support and Gear. Mostly, the mission of these vehicles is to pick you up if for whatever reason you elect to catch a ride to the next rest stop.

Rest stops: There will be one approximately every 10-15 miles. They will have food and drinks. The drinks will be cup-less, so make sure you bring at least one water bottle. They may also have other things, like more Advil and/or Biofreeze. There will be Porta Potties. It's a good idea to stop at most of the rest stops. Grab a bite to eat and refill your water bottle(s). You aren't required to stop at any. Most have fruit, like orange slices and bananas. Sometimes there are candy bars and PB&J sandwiches.

Meals: Over the course of the weekend meals are provided: lunch & dinner on Saturday and breakfast and lunch on Sunday. Lunch on Saturday is served on the route. Your family and friends are welcome to eat with you. They can either pay \$5 for one meal or \$15 for the whole weekend.

Saturday Overnight: To book, see the website www.bikemississippi.org for hotel accommodations and contact information. The pool party and banquet will take place at the Hampton Inn, but we will be shuttling cyclists back and forth if you choose to stay at another hotel. Cyclists are responsible for their own hotel accommodations. Hopefully you made your hotel reservations early.

Bike Parking: Most cyclists choose to take their bikes with them to their room for safe storage and the hotels are aware that you will be storing your bike in your room.

Luggage: Your luggage will be located in the lobby of the Hampton Inn on Saturday for you to pick-up and outside of the Baptist Healthplex upon your return on Sunday. The volunteers will need to see your bib number to get your luggage.

Shuttles: There will be shuttles running to all the official hotels. You can jump on a shuttle in the driveway in front of the hotel lobby.

Saturday Dinner & Program: A spaghetti dinner followed by a program by the NMSS will be held Saturday night. More details to come.

Sunday Breakfast: A hot breakfast is served starting at 6am in the lobby area of the Hampton Inn.

Coming Home: The trip home begins at 8:00 am at the Hampton Inn. You will probably be sore. Remember the object is not to get there fast. It's to get there. There will be snacks and showers at the finish line. You can stay a while or leave immediately, but the feeling you will have makes everything you did to get ready for this moment well worth it.