

Race Across America Time Station Guidebook



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Introduction

What is the Race Across America?

The Race Across America, or RAAM, is an annual bicycle race from the west coast of the United States to the east coast. Racers cycle 3000 miles across the country as solos and teams of 2, 4 or 8 riders. We invite you to review other information about the race located at the RAAM website – www.raceacrossamerica.org.

What is a Time Station?

RAAM has 54 Time Stations across the 3000 mile course. Time Stations are spaced from 40 to 90 miles apart. The most basic function of a Time Station is a tracking point for racers. Racers are required to report the time they arrived at each Time Station to Race Headquarters. That information is used by Race Officials to track the racers and that information is posted to the Official RAAM website where fans can track the racers.

What are Staffed Time Stations?

About half of the Time Stations are staffed with volunteers. The other Time Stations are locations with no staff, but racers are still required to call in to Race Headquarters. Staffed Time Stations are also a critical link between RAAM and the local communities along the route. RAAM has a small staff and we do our best to contact communities along the route and inform them when the race is coming through. Unfortunately we don't have enough resources to have more personal contact with the communities where Time Stations are located. This is where we need help to spread the word that RAAM is coming.

What really happens at a Time Station?

During the race, each Racer and Team has their own support crew of 6 to 16 people. They are relatively self-sufficient during the race finding supplies. When they arrive at a Time Station, they may or may not need any particular supplies or information as they come through.

When they do need something, Time Station Staff are critical and invaluable to solving problems and finding resources. It could be finding a place to repair a flat tire, or finding a doctor, or unlocking a car. We always hear stories from crews who received the heroic help from Time Station staff and everyone is truly appreciative of what you provide.

Why Staff a Time Station?

The people. The people involved with RAAM from the racers to the crews to the race staff, imbedded with media and officials, are all wonderful, friendly people. Seeing the struggle and heroics of each Racer is a sight to see and an inspiration for many – from the first to the last. Each has a story of how they arrived at RAAM and what they have had to overcome during the race.

Ultimately, you are the cheering section for the racers. This isn't the Tour de France with spectators lining the course for miles at a time. It can be a tough venture to race across the country and see the same dozen faces of your racers and your crew the entire way. Your enthusiasm and support of every team that comes through warms their hearts and reinvigorates them as they proceed to the finish.



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Before the Race

Time Stations can be very simple – a tent or a storefront with just a few people there. They can be built up with multiple tents, RVs, food, grills, etc. You are encouraged to have fun with your Time Station and enjoy the process of planning and then the race itself.

As soon as you know that you are going to have a Time Station, there are a number of pieces to consider and plan for. This section will help you plan your Time Station.

Time Station Locations

When designing the overall course, Time Stations are spaced approximately 70 miles apart in the west and 50 miles apart in the east. Our Route Designer drives the course at least once before the race and sometimes twice so we have seen every road and every Time Station location. We do our best to determine an appropriate Time Station location.

We suggest getting the location for Time Stations from the National Time Station Manager. Visit the location to see what it looks like and how it can accommodate what you hope to do.

The two primary criteria when choosing a Time Station location are safety and availability of a phone. Safety considerations include having a Time Station on the right side of the road, easy turn-in and turn-out, and a road with slower speeds for turning. Since racers must report their position at Time Stations, access to a phone 24 hours a day is necessary. We attempt to have Time Stations at or near services. This could be gas, food, or lodging. We also try to ensure there is sufficient parking for multiple support vehicles including RVs and that our presence is not disruptive to local business and more likely contributes to local businesses.

We are open to changing the location of a Time Station as long as the safety and phone criteria are met. Changes must happen before April 1st because that's when we finalize our Route Book for printing. Once the route book goes to printing it is very difficult to change a Time Station location and relay that change to every racer, official, and media.

If you want to change the Time Station Location, please consult with the National Time Station Manager who will work with the Route Designer and Race Director.

Supplies

The following is a basic list of suggested supplies which can help make your Time Station comfortable for you.

- A covered space. This could be a tent, canopy, building, etc. This should be a minimum of 10'x10'. Your covered space should also be able to handle wind and rain.
- Table(s) and Chairs
- Light – lanterns, flashlights, generator



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- Paper, pencils, pens, markers
- Paperweights to hold down paper.
- Poster to display current race standings
- Clothes for all weather
- Reading material or games for during slow times. Possibly music.
- Drinks, food (or nearby places to eat), trash bags
- Camera
- Radio for weather reports.
- Name tags
- Bug spray, sunscreen
- Jumper cables

You can go much further than this. Some Time Stations set up WiFi and computers for racers to check race standings. Some have grills and food set up.

Depending on the size of your staff, you may want to consider having some place for staff to lay down or sleep – a cot, a camper/RV, a tent, a nearby motel room.

Signs

Here are a few signs to consider making

- a poster board to display current race standings.
- signs directing crews and racers in and out of the Time Station. They may be tired and your signs will help.
- Welcome signs. Welcome in multiple languages. Time Station #, mileage, Town, etc.

RAAM will provide a sign that says RAAM Time Station with the RAAM logo.

Staff and Sleep

In order to have a Time Station you will need people to help. Most Time Stations from Colorado east have the possibility of racers passing through for 2 to 4 days, 24 hours a day. We realize this is a long time and that's the nature of the race. We recommend having at least 2 people there all the time so they can keep each other awake and so you can take turns eating, running errands, etc.

We find that most people might sign up for a short period of time and then get caught up in the excitement and stay for hours and hours and hours. There's no guarantee of this, but it's common.

Contact friendly people that will help you. You can find friends, you can get the community involved, get a bike club or other club involved, perhaps even contact the Chamber of Commerce. Of course ask those that volunteered in past years, they will often be excited to return.

An important part of the race for **everyone** is getting enough sleep. Racers, crew, officials, and media will have more than a week of very little sleep while Time Stations



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may have several days. It is very important that everyone get some sleep. If you are not rested enough you can become more of a liability than a help. We would rather have you rest and miss a few racers than be overtired and perhaps have safety issues. Be sure your entire staff gets sleep – look out for each other.

For Time Station staff, RAAM will supply each Time Station with a maximum of 10 t-shirts. If you want to buy additional t-shirts for your staff we will sell each Time Station up to an additional 20 t-shirts at a reduced cost. These additional t-shirts are for Time Station staff only (not to be sold).

We suggest making a schedule hour by hour of who will be there. You'll want to remind everyone to be on time as well. You never know when a racer, support vehicle, or official is going to arrive so try to be sure someone is always at the Time Station.

Time Station Opening and Closing

You should check the Route page at the RAAM website. It will have a table of estimated arrivals dates and times for solos and teams for each Time Station. These are estimated based upon past experience.

Once the race begins, we will begin tracking each racer. Since the times are reported for each racer at each Time Station we are able to estimate when racers will arrive at Time Stations. You should check the race progress once the race starts to see when the first racers might arrive at your Time Station and when you should begin setting up. The one who appreciate you the most are the last ones and as you can track them as well.

Media

RAAM attempts to contact local media throughout the route. This can be very difficult in a rural area. Contact the media at least 4 weeks in advance to provide maximum exposure for the event. When the local Time Station Captain contacts the media it may prove more effective as the media will feel there is local interest and participation in the event. Find the RAAM press release (see RAAM website) and modify it with specific information about your time station. Be careful to give contact information and directions. An invitation for spectators and volunteers is appropriate. If provided electronically, many times newspapers will print exactly as submitted so be specific. If your time station is a business this will be free advertising. One of your goals is to distribute as much information as possible. If they show up, be sure to give them every courtesy possible. If you are unsure of the correct answer, contact headquarters. The media frequently wants to take pictures and interview the riders. Information to the media serves a two fold purpose. First, it informs potential volunteers and area cyclists. Secondly, but truly more important, it informs the community about the event. If the community knows about & understands the race, they are more likely to be supportive.

We have a PR Toolkit available on the RAAM website also. It can be found XXX

Sponsors

Before the race you might consider finding a sponsor for your Time Station. They could provide food or drinks or souvenirs. **TODO info from Jeff**



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Local Services and Route Knowledge

Some racers will ask questions about local services and about the upcoming route. We suggest having a list of local services available. This can include:

- WiFi service
- RV dump site
- Grocery store
- Closest Wal-Mart
- Bike shop
- Health food store
- Locksmith (or the ability to get into a vehicle with keys locked in it)
- Medical facility (24 hour facility-Hospital would be best)
- Laundry facilities
- Auto repair shop
- Auto parts store
- Lodging (with prices and distances)
- Drug store

It will help to have a local map handy so crews can see where they are going.

Crews may ask about the route. Only give information about the route if you know the route. Don't guess. Inaccurate information only frustrates racers and crews. It's okay to say you don't know. You might consider driving the route near your Time Station to see what the racers encounter.

Resources

The RAAM website has a number of resources which can be of help to you as you prepare. They provide a lot more information about the race. It's not necessary to view or read all of it, but it is available.

- Rules – The complete rules for the race.
- Route – The complete route and Time Stations for the race.

The complete Race Roster is available on the website. For each Racer we have a biography about who they are and how they came to RAAM. They are wonderful reading material as you wait for racers to arrive and they help you relate to these amazing athletes as they come through.



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During the Race

The race is the culmination of your efforts – and the efforts of every racer. It is an exciting time as more than 75 racers come through over the course of several days. You may see several very quickly and then no one for several hours.

An important piece to remember is that everyone is not getting much sleep. People will be in many moods – laughing, grouchy, tired, and slow. The farther into the race, the more tired they will be. Have patience with them and provide as much support as you can. Your friendly face and easy demeanor will make a world of difference.

Prior to Arriving on Site

When the route was driven and Time Stations were designated, often we were not able to obtain formal permission from the owners of the property. We found that most owners were not available. Experience in RAAM has taught us that the best approach is to simply seek permission from the property attendants, if one is present, at the time of the race. Time Stations are low-key affairs. We're not charging admission, erecting bleachers, and sign posts or dealing with large crowds of people. The idea when talking to them is to sell them on the idea that this will bring them more business. If it is not a business that will benefit by us being there, then talk to them about the goodwill and the community involvement. Most of the time, the property attendants have no problem with us. In fact, they usually like the idea once they see and meet the people and learn about the race in person. Many get caught up in the excitement. We rarely have a problem with using a small corner of a parking lot or grassy area for our stations. If there is no one around to ask, like in the case of a park or closed store, don't worry about trying to find someone. If there are any problems, the station can be moved, even if several racers have already passed. Consult with a Race Official or Race Headquarters prior to moving a Time Station.

When to Open and Tracking Racers

RAAM issues an estimated schedule showing riders expected arrival departure time. In regard to arrival, you should have your Time Station ready to receive crew and riders four hours before the first expected arrival. Go to raceacrossamerica.org to keep track of the lead riders, making sure they will not arrive a lot earlier than expected.

What really happens

You will see crews coming and going all the time. Each racer has 2-5 vehicles which move along the course at different rates. Some may stop, some may not. You will know which vehicles are RAAM vehicles because they all have racer numbers and RAAM signage on them. You can ask the crews where the racers are and when they will arrive.

The first thing to do when they arrive is to welcome them with a strong, positive attitude. Ask them how they are doing. Next ask them what they need. They may need nothing – or they may not know or remember they need something. If you have services at the Time Station such as WiFi or food or a bathroom let them know.

If there is a situation where you get to talk to the rider, be very careful of what you say, which is often little. Some riders do not even have speedometers. Some want to know



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nothing. Some want to know everything. You can answer a question, but do not volunteer anything. The crews know best how to interact with the racer and what to tell them to keep them motivated and moving. So it's best to say little. It is a difficult thing to have the opportunity to talk to the greatest athletes in the world and not do it. But, you must always have your job foremost in your mind.

At night the racers and support vehicle must stay together. You can expect that during the day crews may stop and say hi and let the racer go for a short period; at night this isn't possible.

Things you should not do

- run errands for crew
- let the crew do their job – don't help the racer off the bike

Race Updates

As much as we'd like to know everything before the race starts, things change. During the race we may have detours, route updates, or construction warnings. We pass all this information along to racers from Race Headquarters and via the website. We may also ask you to pass along updates such as a sheet with a detour.

We check the route every year and every year we have detours because of construction or other road projects. If you know of road issues in your area which would make passage by racers difficult or impossible, please contact the Race Director with the information you have. If you can help determine a safe detour with your local knowledge, that is always immensely helpful.

Questions and Headquarters

Just before the race starts we will send you two phone numbers – one for Race Headquarters and one for the Race Director. You will already have the contact info for the National Time Station Manager and the other Time Stations. If you have any questions, you should contact race staff. If you contact Race Headquarters, please keep the conversation short. They need to be available to answer calls from racers calling from Time Stations.

Media
TODO

Visitors and Fans

RAAM has fans! Some of these people will drive hours to visit a Time Station and see racers come through. In this case, they know about the race. You will also find that people will see the racers or your Time Station and stop to ask about the race and see what is happening. RAAM will provide you with a program or flyer to provide to these new fans. The more you know about the race the more information you can provide these folks. If you don't have an answer, you can always direct visitors to the RAAM website.

These folks are very important to local acceptance of the event!



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Police

We have notified all local, county, and statewide police agencies along the entire route that RAAM is passing through and the locations of our Time Stations. We have learned from past experience that sometimes the law enforcement administration offices do not inform their respective patrol officers about the race. They are more likely interested in catching criminals than in a bike race coming through. If for some reason, a police official doesn't know what's going on and begins to question you, do your best to explain. Cooperate with any requests the police have, including moving a Time Station. Do not argue; diplomacy and courtesy are best. Often we have found the police to be our biggest fans. Most police officers are sports enthusiasts and appreciate what we are doing.

If police have further questions, you can direct them to call Race Headquarters or the Race Director.



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Other

T-shirts and Souvenirs

If you would like to sell Official RAAM t-shirts at your Time Station, please contact the Race Director.

If you want to sell souvenir merchandise with your Time Station on it, please contact the RAAM Store (raamstore@raceacrossamerica.org) to make arrangements and get permission to use the RAAM logo for this purpose.

Ideas

Here are some ideas for you

- RAAM Reunion – racers, time station, crew
- Themes – Hawaiian, etc.
- Get a hotel involved.
- Organize a small ride in your community
- Have a BBQ for your community at the Time Station
- Set up a small fair/expo of local businesses.

Route and Route marking

We mark the route from coast to coast. We need help marking the route and local Time Station Staff know the areas we go through best. If you are able to help us mark the route, please contact the Race Director at director@raceacrossamerica.org.



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Final Words

Your Time Station is what you make of it! You can get the community involved, you can have a website, you can have a reunion, you can find sponsors, you can have a theme – have fun with it! It may not seem like much at times, but your presence is huge and your efforts are truly appreciated.

Thank You

Whether you are running the time station or volunteering for just a couple of hours, the RAAM organization truly appreciates your help. Moreso, the races appreciate your being there. You are the front line of the race and your work does not go unnoticed. Thanks for your help! We hope you enjoy the experience.



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