



RAGBRAI Letter #1

28 May 2024

Welcome to RAGBRAI LI and to the Cedar Valley Cyclists' Charter for 2024! While CVC has not organized the charter for all 50 past events, we have been doing it for a long time and we try to build on what works for our folks and make improvements where we can. You are a part of that improvement process! If you have questions or suggestions from other ride experiences or previous RAGBRAI's, please send them our way <RAGBRAI@RideCVC.org> or better yet to (Bob Recker) at cedarvalleyinnovation@gmail.com or Deb at deb@ridecvc.org. Sometimes your question is the same that others may have and so we'll reply to your question and save the answer for the next issue of the CVC RAGBRAI Letter.

A few statistics about us as a group. This year we plan to have 93 folks in the campground each evening. Our charter participants come from 20 states other than Iowa. Colorado leads the out-of-staters with 6 riders.

The group ranges in age from 14 to 77, with the average age of 55. Most of you have ridden RAGBRAI previously, for some, many, many times. (Bob is relatively "new" since this is #13 for him-all with CVC) We do have some first-time riders, and it is a great joy to hear their experiences and lend encouragement and tips where we can. We are proud you've chosen to join us. There is a request for feedback on a pre-ride "Meet and Greet" proposal at the end of this note.

For the experienced riders, the notes below will be familiar but there are some changes, so please read and save them, and ask any questions if we have information gaps.

But first, we want to share some significant changes we have made to how the charter operates. This year is a bit of an experiment-we expect it will be an adventure, and a better one, hopefully. Your participation will also change; here are the major things you will observe:

1. We are smaller than last year. We understand all the RAGBRAI charters are seeing reduced riders, down from the 50th anniversary focus. We number about half of last year. We will have only one tour bus and a 12-passenger van departing from Waterloo.

2. We have changed the staffing structure. This year, for the first time, our staff is 100% volunteers, vs. a mostly paid crew in the previous years. Most, but not all, of the staff is RAGBRAI experienced, and CVC experienced, so they know the routine.
3. We have observed a tremendous amount of time and labor in setting up and taking down camp daily. We have made several major changes to greatly reduce that and give us quicker departure in the morning, and much earlier availability of all the resources in the next overnight town. This will benefit the “hard core” riders who have often arrived in the next town before the truck.
4. Water availability and permission to set up our portable showers has been an increasing problem in recent years due to local city regulations or rules. We are creating a self-contained water supply for showers with fresh and gray water tanks, catching devices and pumps. A small engineering marvel-if it works...smile...Our goal is availability of a hot 2.5 gallon shower every evening and at the end of the ride on Saturday.
5. The baggage handling plan has also changed. To greatly reduce time, labor, and confusion, we will have one truck dedicated to hauling your gear. YOU will need to carry your gear up a ramp or steps and place it on shelves or the floor in the truck in the morning. In the afternoon, you will retrieve your own gear and take it to your camping site. Thus, you will have ready access to it, in case you forget something and need to return to your bag before you depart on the ride, and in the case of rain, you will know that your bag is dry and out of the mud. We will have a little wagon or better to reduce the effort of moving your stuff about the campground. Personal note from Bob. Last year I handled a lot of bags in the heat. I suspected that some of you were carrying a LOT of extra stuff. This system will tend to make you a little more self-managing. Of course, we will make every accommodation possible for medical equipment, compensating for your ability, strength, or injuries, etc. Just let us know!

But much has not changed. We will continue our beverage service in the campground, supported by your contributions to make it self-supporting and hope to bolster the snacks a bit if we can realize the revenue to support them. We do not provide a full food service in camp. The local towns serve that need well.

We will continue to provide electricity for sleeping bag inflation, charging phones and technology, e-bike charging, etc.

Navigation aids will be provided in your packet, and we will continue the signage on the ride to direct you to our campsite. The RAGBRAI organization and the local towns would like to reduce the clutter and effort associated with signage, so we encourage you to develop your skill with downloaded maps, dropped pins, etc. A cautionary note about that from my personal experience. In the weeks before RAGBRAI, I thought I had it all figured out with apps like “Ride with GPS” etc. However, on RAGBRAI, often the sheer overloading of communications systems means that the on-line maps don’t work. Major frustration! I was reluctant to subscribe to their

full system to enable downloaded maps, but they have a 7-day free trial subscription which could get you thru the week.

You will receive your RAGBRAI wristband # via email directly from RAGBRAI beginning June 1. Your physical RAGBRAI materials (wristband, bike band, booklet, bike “license plate,” etc.) will be delivered to us and distributed, along with information about camping locations and instructions for riders, at bus check-in on Saturday July 20th, or at the campground in Glenwood for those not riding the bus. If you ordered any RAGBRAI merchandise, you will receive those items via USPS directly from RAGBRAI. Those joining the ride later during the week need to check in with us at the CVC “field office” trailer for your packet.

Now for the details of our meeting location Saturday, July 20th. We will be meeting at Central Middle School, 1350 Katoski Dr, Waterloo, IA (GPS: 42.494844, -92.396801). Katoski Dr. is about .3 mile south off Greenhill Rd. We will have the trucks there by 7:00 AM that morning for check-in and loading. **All riders must be checked in by 8:15 to save your seat on the bus.** We plan to have everything loaded and on the road by 8:40. The bus is from Hawkeye Stages and will arrive about 8:00 AM. If you are leaving your vehicle for the week, there will be a place to park it at the school, but we will need you to complete a release form. That will be available when you check in and we’ll attach it to a later RAGBRAI Letter so you can print, complete and bring with you.

All the bikes will be loaded into the trucks and personal baggage/gear will be placed in the baggage compartment of the bus for the trip to Glenwood. To prepare the bikes for loading, both pedals will need to be removed as well as anything that projects above the handlebars. We will have tools available that morning, but we ask that each rider be responsible for the pedals once removed. Bring a plastic bag to put them in and pack them in your bag. We also will want every bike covered with a thick blanket like a moving blanket for protection of your bike and the ones next to it. We will have extras if you forget, but it is best if you plan to bring your own blanket to protect your bike. Label it with name and cellphone number so you get it back after the ride. You may use any protective packing for your bike you wish or even pack it in a bike box or carrier. If you do that, plan to have it done before you arrive that morning because there will not be time to do it there and you are responsible for re-assembling your bike in Glenwood. Tandems, recumbents and other non-traditional bikes will be transported in the same way but loaded separately. The return trip from Burlington on the 27th will be done the same way.

A bit more about baggage – we do not have a limit on the number of items. Our only requirement is that no single item weigh more than 50 pounds. The best strategy is to pack a couple smaller bags rather than one huge one. Soft-sided duffel-type bags work well. Lately we have inquiries about hard-sided totes, and these are fine if they do not exceed 50 pounds and the lids are securely attached so will not pop off during unloading and movement. We will allow an exception to the 50 pounds for a tote that is on wheels and will not have to be lifted. Every item must be labeled with your name and cell phone number. We won’t go into all the rationale for that, suffice it to say we have learned the hard way that ALL items must be fully

labelled. Remember that we are tent camping, so be sure to pack the tent, ground cover, rain fly, sleeping bag, mat or air-mattress and everything else you need to camp. You will not need to bring chairs since we have about 50 under the canopy for the social gathering. We have air pumps for the mattresses and floor pumps for the bike tires, so those are 2 more items you will not need to pack. A subsequent letter will have a suggested packing list for you.

A bit more on showers. We have 4 shower stalls, based on our previous units; we hope these meet your needs. If not, every overnight town will have a variety of commercial shower options from travelling vendors to school, pool or recreation center showers. The cost is typically \$6 or 7 each. To use our showers, bring your own towel and wash cloths. You are welcome to select your preferred choice for shower.

Bring chargers for all your electronics. We have a charging station that will operate every night either with an AC electrical connection or generator. Again, it is best if you label your chargers so they don't get mixed up with the 50 or so other chargers that will be plugged in at once.

Finally, a request for feedback:

1. What did we leave out?
2. What are you wondering about, worried about, etc.?
3. Do you have additional input?
4. Do you have an interest in participating in a no-host gathering at the SingleSpeed Brewery in Waterloo on Friday evening, 19 July 2024 before the ride? We will assemble at 6 pm for some great food & beverages, a chance to tell stories and get ready to roll "first thing" Saturday morning. Please email deb@ridecvc.org if this is of interest to you.
5. For those needing lodging Friday evening, we plan to have a block of rooms reserved at Courtyard Waterloo/Cedar Falls, 250 Westfield Ave, Waterloo. This renovated hotel is built in the historic John Deere factory and is just minutes away from the John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum, and our 6 pm informal gathering at SingleSpeed Brewery. Please email deb@ridecvc.org for more details.

Thank you again for choosing to spend a week with Cedar Valley Cyclists. Let the Adventure begin!

Bob Recker
Deb Bartels
Cedar Valley Cyclists