

The Century Ride Organizer Playbook

The authoritative end-to-end operational blueprint, permitting roadmap, and logistics package for hosting 100-mile and metric century cycling events.

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Road, Gravel & Fondos

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12-Month Master Event Production Timeline

Organizing a safe, compliant, and memorable 100-mile century ride requires disciplined lead times across municipal governance, logistics acquisition, and participant acquisition. Follow this reverse-engineered critical path.

TIMELINE	PRIMARY MILESTONE	KEY DELIVERABLES & REQUIREMENTS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
12 to 10 Months Out	Date & Venue Lock	Confirm calendar date (avoid conflicts with regional centuries); secure start/finish venue agreements (parking, restrooms, power); establish event entity (LLC or 501c3).	Race Director
10 to 8 Months Out	Initial Course Drafting & Agency Contact	Design primary 100-mile and metric 62-mile loops in mapping software (RideWithGPS/Strava); identify all DOT, County, and Municipal jurisdictions; submit pre-applications.	Course Director
8 to 6 Months Out	Insurance & Registration Launch	Procure sanctioning / General Liability policy (\$1M/\$2M aggregate min); launch registration platform (BikeReg/RunSignup); establish tiered pricing tiers and refund policy.	Operations & Marketing
6 to 4 Months Out	Aid Station Sites & Vendor Contracts	Secure 4–5 rest stop facilities (schools, churches, parks with water/shade); execute vendor contracts for portable toilets, timing, EMT/ambulance support, and t-shirts/medals.	Logistics Lead
4 to 2 Months Out	Physical Course Scouting & Volunteer Push	Drive course in vehicle; log pavement conditions, bridge construction, blind intersections; launch volunteer recruitment drive targeting local cycling clubs and service organizations.	Safety & Volunteer Leads
60 Days Out	Final Permit Approvals & Police Details	Submit final turn-by-turn cue sheets and emergency plans; receive executed DOT and municipality parade/special event permits; book off-duty police details for critical crossings.	Race Director
30 Days Out	Inventory & Aid Station Food Procurement	Order endurance nutrition (Hammer HEED, gels, bars); order route marking lawn signs, Dan Henry chalk-paint; finalize SAG driver roster; publish rider guide and GPX downloads.	Logistics & SAG Leads
14 to 7 Days Out	Final Road Check & Agency Briefings	Pre-ride or drive course to detect emergency roadwork or gravel patches; send final EAP packets to county dispatch and local hospital emergency rooms; hold volunteer zoom briefing.	Course & Safety Director
Race Week	Course Marking & Packet Fulfillment	Mark entire route 48–24 hours before roll-out; assemble rider bibs, timing chips, and	Full Core Team

TIMELINE	PRIMARY MILESTONE	KEY DELIVERABLES & REQUIREMENTS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		swag bags; stage rental trucks with tables, coolers, and canopies.	

Critical Rule on Permitting Lead Times: Most State Departments of Transportation (DOT) and National Forest ranger districts strictly enforce a **90 to 180-day minimum application window** for special events on public roadways. Do not launch public marketing until preliminary agency feasibility is confirmed.

Permitting, Jurisdictions & Insurance Matrix

A single 100-mile cycling route routinely crosses multiple regulatory jurisdictions. Failing to secure a single municipal permit can lead to immediate law enforcement shutdown on race morning. Use this audit framework.

Agency Jurisdiction Hierarchy

Every roadway belongs to a distinct authority. You must systematically dissect your route:

- ☐ **State DOT (Department of Transportation):** State highways, arterial corridors, and bridge crossings. Requires Certificate of Insurance naming DOT as additional insured.
- ☐ **County Highway Departments:** County roads (CR), rural trunk highways, and unincorporated intersections.
- ☐ **City & Township Councils:** Municipal street usage, noise permits, and park staging area permits.
- ☐ **Federal Land Agencies:** US Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), or National Park Service (NPS) special recreation permits.

Insurance & Sanctioning Standards

Ride organizers face substantial liability exposure from crashes, vehicular collisions, and rider medical events.

- ☐ **Minimum Policy Coverage:** \$1,000,000 per occurrence / \$2,000,000 general aggregate liability.
- ☐ **Excess / Umbrella Coverage:** Recommended \$3M–\$5M umbrella for events with over 400 riders.
- ☐ **Participant Accident Insurance:** Secondary medical insurance for registered cyclists.
- ☐ **Sanctioning Bodies:** USA Cycling (USAC Non-Competitive Gran Fondo / Fun Ride permit) or League of American Bicyclists (LAB).

Required Permitting Documentation Package

DOCUMENT NAME	REQUIRED CONTENTS	RECIPIENT AGENCIES
Certificate of Insurance (COI)	General liability binder with thirty-day cancellation clause; specific agency names and addresses listed as <i>Additionally Insured</i> .	State DOT, County Commissioners, City Councils, Start/Finish Venue.
Turn-by-Turn Cue Sheet & Map	Mile-by-mile road names, turn directions, state route numbers, and rest stop physical street addresses.	County Sheriff, Highway Patrol, Police Departments, 911 Dispatch.
Traffic Control Plan (TCP)	Designated intersection traffic control (police cruiser placements, professional flaggers, warning sign placements 500ft in advance).	State DOT traffic engineers, County Road Engineers.
Participant Waiver Form	Comprehensive assumption of risk, helmet requirement clause, indemnification, and photo release signed by every registered participant.	Sanctioning body, Legal counsel archive (retained 7 years).

Pro-Tip for Crossings: For busy two-lane highway crossings, hire off-duty police officers or certified flaggers. Never attempt to use untrained volunteers to stop or direct vehicular traffic; civilian traffic control is illegal in most states and voids event liability coverage.

Course Engineering, Route Scouting & Marking

The course is the primary product of your century ride. Flawless navigation and safety-oriented routing separate premier centuries from chaotic, dangerous events.

**Geometry & Right Turns**

Prioritize **clockwise route loops**. Clockwise loops maximize right-hand turns, eliminating dangerous left turns across oncoming highway traffic. Avoid complex urban multi-lane corridors.

**Hazard Auditing**

Drive the route 7 days prior. Mark railroad tracks (especially diagonal crossings), cattle guards, longitudinal road seams, loose gravel patches, and bridge expansion joints with orange safety paint.

**Distance Options**

Offer a "cloverleaf" or cut-off design. Providing a 62-mile Metric Century alongside the 100-mile Full Century increases total registrations by 35–50% and provides a built-in safety bailout.

The "Dan Henry" Route Marking Standard

Dan Henry markings (painted symbols on the asphalt) are the gold standard for road cycling events worldwide. They are visible from 30 yards away and cannot be knocked over or stolen by vandals.

SYMBOL TYPE	VISUAL DESCRIPTION	PLACEMENT DISTANCE	ORGANIZER PURPOSE
Advance Warning Arrow	Circle with arrow pointing in direction of upcoming turn.	100–150 feet before the intersection in right wheel line.	Alerts riders to prepare for braking and directional transition.
Turn Confirmation Arrow	Straight line into angled arrowhead directly at turn point.	15–20 feet before the turn at intersection corner.	Confirms immediate execution point of turn.
Validation Arrow	Straight arrow pointing forward in travel direction.	100–200 feet after completing the turn on new road.	Reassures riders they are on the correct route corridor.
Hazard Alert ("CAUTION")	Large circle with exclamation point or crosshatched grid.	75–100 feet before rough tracks, cattle guard, or steep descent.	Warns pack cyclists of immediate road hazard.

Paint Compliance Notice: NEVER use permanent spray paint or solvent-based enamel on public roadways! Always use **temporary inverted water-based marking paint** (e.g., Seymour Stripe Water-Based or Rust-Oleum Striping Paint) or lumber marking chalk. Permanent paint constitutes highway vandalism and will result in fines and revocation of DOT permits.

Rest Stop Architecture & Nutrition Logistics

A century ride burns between 3,500 and 5,000 calories per participant. The quality, spacing, and reliability of your rest stops make or break the rider experience.

Optimal Aid Station Spacing

STOP #	MILEAGE POINT	FOCUS & FOOD PROFILE
Rest Stop 1	Mile 18–22	Quick spin: Water, Electrolytes, Fruit, PB&J
Rest Stop 2	Mile 38–42	Endurance fuel: Gels, Pretzels, Fig bars
Rest Stop 3 (Lunch)	Mile 58–62	Major nutrition: Sandwiches, Pickles, Soda
Rest Stop 4	Mile 78–82	Caffeine & Sugar: Candy, Cola, Electrolytes
Finish Hub	Mile 100	Recovery: Meal ticket, Cold beverages, Beer garden

Sanitation & Waste Ratios

- ☐ **Porta-Potty Ratio:** 1 unit per 50 registered riders at Start/Finish; 2–4 units at each intermediate rest stop.
- ☐ **Hand Sanitation:** 1 hand sanitizer pump station per 2 portable toilets.
- ☐ **Waste Bins:** Minimum 3 trash bins and 2 recycling bins per rest stop (weighted down against wind).
- ☐ **Shade & Seating:** Minimum two 10×10 EZ-Up canopies and 10 folding chairs for fatigued riders.

Procurement Formulas (Per 100 Registered Cyclists)

ITEM CATEGORY	RECOMMENDED QUANTITY	OPERATIONAL BEST PRACTICE
Drinking Water	1.5 to 2.5 Gallons per rider (150–250 gal total)	Use 5-gallon Igloo coolers with quick-pour spigots. Never rely on individual plastic water bottles (slow and excessive waste).
Electrolyte Drink (HEED/Skratch)	1.0 Gallon per rider (100 gal total)	Pre-mix in clearly marked dedicated coolers (different color from pure water coolers). Never mix at double-strength.
Bananas	1.5 Bananas per rider (150 count, cut in half)	Purchase 1 day in advance slightly green/yellow. Cut into halves with skin intact to prevent browning.
PB&J / Turkey Sandwiches	1 to 1.5 Sandwiches per rider at Lunch stop	Pre-cut into quarters and individually bag in Ziplocs to ensure sanitary handling and lightning-fast rider grab-and-go.
Dill Pickles & Pickle Juice	2 to 3 Gallons of whole pickles + juice	The ultimate anti-cramping remedy. Have small 2-oz paper medicine cups for riders to drink straight pickle brine.
Salty Snacks (Pretzels, Chips)	8 to 10 Large bulk bags	Display in pourable bowls with tongs; provides necessary sodium replacement during high-sweat afternoon miles.

Tool & Mechanic Kit at Every Stop: Equip every aid station captain with a high-pressure floor pump (with dual Presta/Schrader chuck), chain lubricant, tire levers, 700×25–32 tubes, and a multi-tool. 40% of rider dropouts can be prevented with simple pump access.

SAG (Support and Gear) Fleet Architecture

SAG vehicles are your mobile safety net. When a rider suffers mechanical failure, heat exhaustion, or acute fatigue 40 miles from civilization, professional SAG operations prevent an inconvenience from escalating into a medical emergency.

SAG Fleet Sizing Ratio

Standard Ratio: 1 SAG vehicle per 60–75 riders.
For a 300-rider century, deploy 4–5 vehicles:

- ☐ **Roving SAGs (3 Vehicles):** Patrol designated route segments (e.g., SAG 1 covers Mi 0–35, SAG 2 covers Mi 30–70, SAG 3 covers Mi 65–100).
- ☐ **Sweep / "Broom" Wagon (1 Vehicle):** Traverses at mandatory minimum pace (10–12 mph) directly behind the final rider.
- ☐ **Rapid Response SAG (1 Vehicle):** Centrally staged with tools and high bike capacity for dispatch to priority incidents.

Mandatory SAG Onboard Manifest

- ☐ **Hitch-mounted Bike Rack:** 4-bike capacity min.
- ☐ **Floor Pump & Tools:** Multi-tool, chain breaker.
- ☐ **Tubes:** 700c 25–32mm Presta tubes (6 count).
- ☐ **Hydration/Fuel:** 5-gal water cooler, electrolyte mix.
- ☐ **First Aid Kit:** Road rash dressing, ice packs.
- ☐ **Driver Identification:** Magnetic vehicle signs ("OFFICIAL CENTURY SAG VEHICLE").

Broom Wagon (Sweep) Schedule Matrix

To reopen roads and release volunteer checkpoints on time, publish and enforce strict course cut-off times based on a **10.5 mph rolling average pace**.

COURSE LOCATION	MILEAGE	FIRST RIDER PASS (20 MPH)	BROOM CUT-OFF (10.5 MPH)	STATION TEARDOWN
Start Line Rollout	Mile 0.0	07:00 AM	07:45 AM (Gates Close)	08:15 AM
Rest Stop 1	Mile 21.0	08:03 AM	09:45 AM	10:00 AM
Rest Stop 2	Mile 41.5	09:05 AM	11:45 AM	12:15 PM
Rest Stop 3 (Lunch / Bailout)	Mile 62.0	10:06 AM	01:45 PM (<i>Mandatory Re-Route</i>)	02:15 PM
Rest Stop 4	Mile 81.0	11:03 AM	03:30 PM	04:00 PM
Finish Line Hub	Mile 100.0	12:00 PM (Noon)	05:15 PM (Course Closed)	06:30 PM

Bailout Protocol at Mile 60: Any rider arriving at Rest Stop 3 after 01:45 PM must be required to either accept a SAG shuttle ride back to the finish line or follow the shortened metric century cutoff route. Continuing after the sweep vehicle constitutes unsanctioned cycling at rider's own risk.

Medical Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

In endurance events spanning 100 miles of open highways, quick decision-making under medical stress is paramount. This Emergency Action Plan outlines clear escalation protocols.

The 911 vs SAG Protocol

DIAL 911 IMMEDIATELY IF:

- ☐ Rider is unconscious or exhibits altered mental status.
- ☐ Suspected neck, spine, or traumatic head injury.
- ☐ Severe uncontrolled bleeding or compound bone fracture.
- ☐ Signs of cardiac arrest, chest pain, or heat stroke.

DISPATCH SAG WAGON IF:

- ☐ Minor road rash / abrasions (rider conscious & stable).
- ☐ Flat tires, broken spokes, snapped chains, or torn derailleur.
- ☐ Physical exhaustion or severe cramping without heat stroke.

Communication in Dead Zones

Cellular dead zones are common in rural cycling corridors. Implement these fallbacks:

- ☐ **Amateur (HAM) Radio Club:** Partner with a local Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) club. HAM operators stationed at every rest stop and in SAG vans provide 100% reliable communications across mountainous terrain.
- ☐ **Satellite Communicators:** Provide Lead SAG and Sweep with Garmin inReach or ZOLEO satellite SOS units.
- ☐ **GPS Milepost System:** Ensure all staff identify incident locations by road name + mile marker, not vague descriptions.

Incident Logging & Medical Report Template

FIELD	INCIDENT DATA REQUIRED	OPERATIONAL INSTRUCTIONS
Rider Info	Bib #, Full Name, Emergency Contact Phone	Check registration manifest; locate next of kin information.
Location	Mile Marker, Cross Street, GPS Coordinates	Drop Google Maps pin; guide EMS directly to vehicle access point.
Incident Time	Time of Occurrence & Time EMS Dispatched	Log exact timestamps for insurance and liability audit trails.
Medical Summary	Vitals, nature of injuries, helmet condition	Document if helmet cracked; take photograph of crash scene/bicycle.
Disposition	Treated & Released / Transported to Hospital	Record receiving hospital name and ambulance unit number.

Volunteer Architecture & Staffing Deployment

Volunteers are the lifeblood of amateur cycling events. A typical 300-rider century requires between 45 and 65 volunteer shifts to operate seamlessly from sunrise to sunset.

OPERATIONAL SECTOR	STAFF COUNT	SHIFT WINDOW	CORE RESPONSIBILITIES
Packet Pickup & Check-In	6 to 8 Staff	05:30 AM – 08:00 AM	Verify signed waivers, issue bib numbers, distribute event t-shirts, route maps, and wristbands.
Parking & Staging Marshals	4 to 6 Staff	05:15 AM – 07:30 AM	Direct vehicular traffic into designated grass/paved stalls; prevent double-parking and blocking fire hydrants.
Aid Station Captains & Crews	4 Staff per stop (16–20 total)	Staggered shifts (4–5 hours per stop)	Ice cooler replenishment, water mixing, fruit slicing, PB&J assembly, cheerful rider encouragement.
SAG Vehicle Drivers & Navigators	8 to 10 Staff (2 per vehicle)	06:45 AM – 05:30 PM	Drive course corridor, retrieve stranded cyclists, transport fatigued riders forward to next aid station.
Finish Line Hospitality & Meals	6 to 8 Staff	11:00 AM – 06:00 PM	Distribute finisher medals, pour recovery drinks, manage post-ride food line, maintain clean grounds.
Course Teardown & Sweepers	4 Staff	03:00 PM – 07:30 PM	Collect lawn signs, retrieve trash bags from all rest stops, perform final venue sweep and packing.

Volunteer Retention & Hospitality Package

Uniform & Visibility

Equip every volunteer with a bright safety-yellow volunteer event t-shirt and reflective vest. Riders must be able to spot official staff instantly from 100 yards away.

Food & Hydration

Provide volunteers with free coffee and morning bagels at 5:30 AM, dedicated box lunches at midday, and full post-race meal tickets. A hungry volunteer is an unhappy volunteer.

Clear Task Sheets

Never give vague instructions. Give each station captain a laminated 1-page playbook with exact breakdown times, ice refill phone numbers, and emergency dispatch contact numbers.

Master Event Budget & Pro-Forma Worksheet

Below is a production budget model for a standard mid-sized amateur century ride of **350 registered participants** at an average registration fee of \$85.00.

REVENUE CATEGORY	BASIS & METRICS	TOTAL PROJECTION	% OF REVENUE
Tiered Rider Registrations	350 riders @ \$85 average blended ticket	\$29,750.00	78.5%
Title & Presenting Sponsor	1 Local Hospital / Bank / Bike Brand	\$5,000.00	13.2%
Rest Stop & SAG Sponsors	4 Local businesses @ \$500 each	\$2,000.00	5.3%
Merchandise & Day-of Sales	Socks, caps, custom jerseys, extra meal tickets	\$1,150.00	3.0%
TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUE		\$37,900.00	100.0%

EXPENSE CATEGORY	UNIT ASSUMPTIONS & SCOPE	TOTAL COST
Permits & Municipal Police Details	State DOT (\$250) + 4 Police Details (4hrs @ \$75/hr = \$1,200) + Park Venue (\$500)	\$1,950.00
Insurance & Sanctioning	USAC or LAB Sanctioning + \$1M/\$2M Policy (\$4.50/rider)	\$1,575.00
Participant Swag (Shirts & Medals)	Tech t-shirts (\$9.50) + Custom finisher medals (\$4.00) x 350	\$4,725.00
Aid Station Food & Hydration	Water, HEED drink mix, fruit, PB&J, bars, salty snacks (\$7.50/rider)	\$2,625.00
Portable Restroom Rentals	12 units + 3 hand wash stations delivered & serviced	\$1,650.00
Post-Ride Catered Lunch & Drinks	BBQ / Taco bar / Veggie options + beverages (\$12.00/rider)	\$4,200.00
Signage, Course Paint & Hardware	50 Coroplast lawn signs, Dan Henry paint, zip ties, stakes	\$650.00
SAG Fleet Fuel & Driver Stipends	5 SAG vehicles (gas stipends + vehicle magnetic signs)	\$500.00
Registration Processing & Marketing	BikeReg fees (~6%) + Digital social ads (\$600)	\$2,385.00
Emergency Contingency (10%)	Reserved for emergency supplies, weather reroutes, equipment replacement	\$2,030.00
TOTAL PROJECTED EXPENSES		\$22,290.00
NET CHARITABLE / ORGANIZATIONAL SURPLUS		+\$15,610.00 (41.2% Margin)

Event-Day Master Run of Show

Flawless race-morning execution requires an synchronized minute-by-minute schedule. Distribute this operational sheet to all division leads and city agency liaisons.

TIME	OPERATIONAL STATION	ACTION ITEMS & CRITICAL MILESTONES
04:30 AM	Start/Finish Venue	Core directors arrive; unlock facilities, turn on generator/power; test PA system; stage trash cans.
05:15 AM	Registration & Parking	Volunteers arrive for briefing; parking marshals deploy with flashlights; coffee/breakfast cart open.
05:45 AM	Check-In Opens	Rider packet pickup commences; mechanic stations open for free pre-ride tire inflations.
06:30 AM	Rest Stops & SAGs	Rest Stop 1 & 2 crews deploy to locations; SAG drivers report for radio/GPS sync check and vehicle tags.
06:50 AM	Start Line Coral	Rider safety announcement: helmet check, rules of the road (single file, stop signs), emergency number briefing.
07:00 AM	Wave 1: Century Wave	Full 100-mile riders depart in waves of 50 riders (staggered by 2 minutes to prevent highway crowding).
07:30 AM	Wave 2: Metric Century	62-mile and shorter distance riders depart.
08:00 AM	Start Cleared & Sweep	Broom wagon sweeps start area; start line reconfigured into finishing chute and timing arch.
11:30 AM	First Finishers	Post-ride meal service begins; music/announcer active; recovery beverage station staffed.
01:45 PM	Bailout Cutoff	Rest Stop 3 cutoff enforced; riders redirected to short course or loaded onto SAG shuttles.
05:15 PM	Course Official Close	Final sweep vehicle crosses finish line; confirmation of zero riders remaining on open highway.
06:30 PM	Teardown Complete	Venue trash cleared; rental equipment locked; thank-you debrief with core committee.

Staggered Wave Rollout Protocol: Never release more than 50–75 cyclists simultaneously onto public open roads. Large masses overwhelm stop signs and trigger motorist road rage. Release waves every 2 to 3 minutes to disperse the field into manageable pacelines.

Organizer Day-Of Master Checklist

✓ Equipment & Facility Items

- ☐ PA system, microphone, megaphone with fresh backup batteries.
- ☐ Starting arch or banners secured with 50-lb concrete ballasts.
- ☐ Emergency medical binder with all registered rider contact numbers.
- ☐ 10 Heavy-duty pop-up canopies with sandbag weights.
- ☐ Tables, folding chairs, and ice chests distributed to all stops.
- ☐ Directional yard signs placed at confusing intersections.

✓ Post-Event Archival & Wrap

- ☐ Post-event survey emailed to participants within 24 hours.
- ☐ Financial settlement: pay police details, venues, vendors.
- ☐ Submit event results and incident reports to insurance body.
- ☐ Thank-you letters sent to municipal councils and sponsors.
- ☐ Submit event details to CenturyRides.org for next year's index.
- ☐ Publish official high-res photo gallery for participants.

Post-Event Debrief & Regulatory Closure

ACTIVITY	ACTION ITEMS	EXPECTED OUTCOME
Agency Letters	Formal thank-you letters to County Sheriff, State Police, and DOT.	Ensures expedited permit approvals for following calendar year.
Insurance Settlement	Submit final post-event audit report and incident logs to sanctioning body.	Closes insurance file; resolves any participant claims immediately.
Financial Audit	Reconcile Stripe/BikeReg merchant accounts against receipts.	Finalizes net charitable contribution and P&L statement.
CenturyRides.org Listing	Submit next year's dates for free directory inclusion.	Maintains continuous organic search visibility and early registrations.

Host Your Ride with CenturyRides.org: Ready to publish your century ride to thousands of endurance cyclists? Submit your ride to the CenturyRides.org directory for free verification and programmatic index inclusion at <https://centuryrides.org/?submit=true>.