

North Country 600k

Ride Description & Important Information

Section #1: Montpelier, VT – Warren, NH (48.8 miles)

The ride will start from the Comfort Inn in Montpelier at 4:00AM on Saturday, July 16th, 2011. The first section of the ride includes two moderate climbs which will serve as a nice warm up for the rest of the days climbing. Riders will roll past the State Airport with views of the city below before descending into Barre. Riders will need to use extreme caution in the pre-dawn darkness as the descent into Barre is very steep & winding. Upon leaving Barre, the route follows the Jail Branch of the Winooski River upstream. Riders will climb off and on for approximately 8 miles before cresting the Granite Hills. The route then follows the Waits River downstream for approximately 20 miles to its confluence with the Connecticut River.

Crossing the Connecticut River the route enters New Hampshire and begins a steady climb around Mount Cube up to scenic Lake Tarleton. The ride along NH-25C is rough in places so please use caution. Riders will cross the Appalachian Trail for the first time on the route along this section of road. After descending past farmland along the road riders will arrive in Warren, NH, the site of control #2 at the Warren Village Market.

Section #2: Warren, NH – North Conway, NH (59.3 miles)

The second section of the ride also includes two climbs, however, these two climbs are easily the toughest of the ride. Shortly after leaving the control in Warren if you look left you will notice a Redstone ballistic missile towering over the town square. A light breakfast should be had in Warren, as shortly after departing from the control you will begin an approximately 8 mile ascent up NH-118, locally referred to as “Gonzo Pass”. There are limited views at the top of the climb, however, less than ½ mile after beginning the descent a pull-off is located on the right side of the road. This is a good spot to pull off to rest your legs after the climb & to enjoy views of the White Mountains, including Franconia Notch. After enjoying the limited views you will descend for approximately 8 miles following the Lost River downstream to its confluence with the Pemigewasset River in North Woodstock, NH.

As you make your way through Woodstock & Lincoln it is a good idea to refill your water before beginning the next climb. Once you start the climb there won't be another place to get water until you reach the next control in North Conway. You will then ride along the well known Kancamagus Highway, following the East Branch of the Pemigewasset River upstream for approximately 14 miles. Caution will need to be exercised along this section of highway as there is little shoulder in places and a high volume of tourist traffic is possible. The climb up to Kancamagus Pass is longer than the previous climb, however, the highway grades are more gradual and make for a slightly more forgiving

ascent.

Upon reaching the top of Kancamagus Pass you will begin your descent following the Swift River downstream for approximately 22 miles to its confluence with the Saco River in the town of Conway. Before reaching Conway, however, you will turn off of the Kancamagus Highway and cross the Swift River over the Albany Covered Bridge. After crossing the river you will ride along picturesque Passaconaway Road which follows the Swift River and has a nice tree canopy, providing shade from the midday sun. At the end of Passaconaway Road the route turns north following the Saco River upstream, into North Conway, the location of control #3 at Elvio's Pizzeria.

Section #3: North Conway, NH – Bethel, ME (49.8 miles)

The third section of the route involves some pleasant riding through farmland, one climb and then a quiet riverside ride. Upon leaving the third control, the route heads south making its way back downstream along the Saco River before turning east, then north and entering Maine. It then follows the Cold River upstream, climbing over rolling hills before more steeply ascending to Evans Notch. This section of the route along route 113 parallels the border with NH & Maine, entering back into NH briefly before re-entering Maine. The ride up to Evans Notch also has a nice tree canopy which will provide some shade from the afternoon sun.

After reaching the top of Evans Notch, with its views of the mountains to the west, the ride then begins an approximately 8 mile descent, following Evans Brook and then the Wild River to its confluence with the Androscoggin River. Caution should be exercised on this descent as there is rough pavement in places. The route then crosses the Androscoggin River and follows the river downstream to the town of Bethel, the location of control #4 at a Dunkin' Donuts & convenience store.

Section #4: Bethel, ME – Rumford, ME (24.4 miles)

The fourth section of the route gives the legs a rest as it follows the Androscoggin River downstream along quite rural roads. There are a few small rolling hills along the river, however, most of the ride to Rumford is relatively flat. Upon reaching control #5 at Sam's Italian Foods in Rumford, you will have reached the furthest east point on the route.

Section #5: Rumford, ME – Upton, ME (32.1 miles)

Upon exiting Rumford the route heads west along US-2 before turning north. It then follows the Ellis River upstream for about 12 miles crossing the river on the Lovejoy Covered Bridge. The route then turns west again in the town of Andover following the West Branch of the Ellis River upstream. The ride then travels along isolated East B Hill Road, climbing for most of its length which at times becomes rather steep. Along this stretch of road you will once again cross the Appalachian Trail as it begins its course through Maine on its way to distant Mount Katahdin. The climbing continues, more or less, for all of the 15 miles between Andover and our sleep control in Upton.

Our sleep stop is at the Windsong Garden Cabins along Maine Route 26. The cabin, or cabins

depending on the number of registrants, will provide somewhat limited, shared sleeping arrangements. Private sleeping arrangements can be made in nearby Errol, NH (approximately 9 miles further along the route) or Colebrook, NH (approximately 30 miles further along the route). A pasta dinner and some sleep will give riders a chance to rest legs & minds after a long first day of climbing.

Section #6: Upton, ME – East Burke, VT (79.3 miles)

The six section of the route is the longest and most isolated of the entire route. Riders should be prepared for little to no services along this section of the ride. In addition, as riders will pass through a good portion of this section at night, encounters with moose are a good possibility. After leaving the sleep control you will quickly enter back into New Hampshire & pass Lake Umbagog. You will once again cross the Androscoggin River very near to its headwaters as you pass through the town of Errol, NH. After passing through Errol the route follows the Clear Stream upstream to its beginnings in Dixville Notch. The climb up to the notch begins gradually but steepens considerably near the top of the climb. Immediately after reaching the top of the notch you will see the Balsams Grand Resort on the right side of the road. A clean, reliable water source is located about 1/10 of a mile up the entrance road for the resort. It is highly recommended to refill your water bottles here before continuing on.

You will then follow the Mohawk River downstream to its confluence with the Connecticut River in Colebrook, NH. In downtown Colebrook, at the junction of NH-26 & US-3, is another possible resupply point. There is a convenience store here which closes at 11:00 PM on Saturday night & reopens at 5:30 AM on Sunday. After passing through Colebrook you will cross the Connecticut River into Vermont and follow it downstream to the town of Bloomfield. As you're riding through Bloomfield on what will likely be a warm, summer night you might be interested to know about the New England record low temperature of -50°F that was set here in 1933.

In Bloomfield the route heads west again following the Nulhegan River upstream towards Island Pond. After passing through the village of Island Pond the route heads south following the East Branch of the Passumpsic River downstream to East Burke, the location of the next control. If you arrive before the convenience store in East Burke opens at 6:00 AM a volunteer will be waiting to check you in & to provide you provisions.

Section #7: East Burke, VT – Morrisville, VT (55.3 miles)

After departing East Burke you will ride along a quiet country road through Burke Hollow and into West Burke. In West Burke you will follow the West Branch of the Passumpsic River upstream towards Lake Willoughby. After several miles of gradual climbing you will begin to get views of Mount Pisgah & Mount Hor which both flank Lake Willoughby. The ride along Lake Willoughby is spectacular with the mountain cliffs dropping down to the deep, glacial lake (the deepest lake entirely in Vermont). After passing by the lake the route follows the Willoughby River downstream to its confluence with the Barton River in Orleans. You will then ride uphill for a short stretch into

Irasburg with its picturesque town green & country store.

The route then heads south along VT-14 following the Black River upstream. Although the route heads upstream it is mostly flat riding through a wide valley. The route then climbs a short hill on North Wolcott Road and then follows the Wild Branch downstream to its confluence with the Lamoille River. The route then follows the Lamoille River downstream into the village of Morrisville, the location of the penultimate control.

Section #8: Morrisville, VT – Montpelier, VT (27.3 miles)

Immediately after leaving the control in Morrisville you will begin a long, somewhat steep climb following Elmore Pond Brook upstream around the shoulder of Mount Elmore. After passing scenic Lake Elmore, with Mount Elmore directly behind, you will continue climbing. Once you've reached the height of land you will cross over into the Winooski River watershed & enjoy about 18 mostly downhill miles into Montpelier. After passing through Montpelier you will climb one last short, steep climb up to the finish control.

Other Important Information:

Sunrise: 5:23 AM; Sunset: 8:35 PM

Moonrise: 9:12 PM; Moonset: 6:54 AM

Cell Service: There is limited cell service for most of the ride. I can confirm that I had cell service (Verizon Wireless) at the top of Gonzo Pass (NH-118) and in the towns of North Conway, NH, Bethel, ME, Upton, ME, Colebrook, NH and Orleans, VT. There will surely be places in between these locations and even within these towns where no cell service will be available. You should plan for & be prepared to be self sufficient on this ride.

Abandon: There aren't really any public transit options for getting back to the start control if you need to abandon the ride. There will be two volunteer vehicles along the course. If you abandon the course you should contact either or both of these volunteers on their cell phones to let them know you've abandoned the ride & to request a sag, if necessary. Cell phone #'s for these volunteers will be listed on the final cue sheet handed out at the start of the brevet. Please note that, depending on where you abandon, it may be a while before the support vehicle makes it back to the start control.

Bag Drops: There will be two bag drops for riders to utilize. The first bag will be brought to the sleep control in Upton, ME. Please pack a towel in this bag if you wish to use the shower at the sleep control. The second bag, which should contain a towel & post-ride clothing, will be brought to the finish control. Please label each of the bags with your name & the destination for the bag (ie. Sleep -Upton, ME or Finish – Montpelier, VT).

Finish Shuttle: After finishing the ride you can choose to ride the approximately 4 miles back to your car at the start control. Cue sheets will be available at the finish control to guide you back to your vehicle. Please note that the ride back to your car is almost entirely uphill with about 600 feet of elevation gain. Alternatively, volunteers will be available to shuttle you back to your vehicle. The volunteer will also shuttle as many bikes as possible back to the start control. However, it may be necessary, depending on the number of riders requiring a shuttle at the time for you to drive your vehicle back to the finish control to retrieve your bike.