

Rider Information

What is a Randonnee?

A randonnee is an organised cycling event, traditionally 200, 300, 400, 600, 1000 or 1200 kilometres long, that must be completed between specified maximum and minimum speeds (usually 30 –15 kph), including all stops. These events are not races although everybody who finishes within the time limits 'wins'. The rider follows directions from a route sheet or map supplied by the organiser, getting their 'brevet card' signed and/or stamped at designated places (known as 'checkpoints' in audax-speak). Checkpoints can be cafes, service stations, fully catered roadside picnics set up by the organiser or even questions about specific locations.

There are also shorter 50, 100 and 150 kilometre rides at the same speeds, together with the off-road 'Dirt Series' of 35, 70 and 100 kilometres with lower required speeds. Riders who complete randonnees are known as 'randonneurs' and pride themselves on being self-reliant.

How do I enter?

Contact the organiser well before the event. Some events have closing dates or may limit the number of participants and it makes the organiser's life easier organising food and support if you don't leave it to the last minute. Some organisers are happy to take entries on the start line though. Fill out and sign the entry form and pay the required entry fee. Riders that are not members of Audax Australia pay an additional fee although Cycling Australia members do not pay any extra. Riders under the age of 18 will need their parent's or guardian's permission to enter. Riders under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a responsible adult throughout the ride.

Before the start?

Arrive perhaps half an hour prior to the start to collect your brevet card, possibly the route sheet and for the organiser's rider briefing. There may be nobody about if you arrive late, Audax riders tend to keep one eye on the clock! You can always read the organiser's copy of the Audax Australia Ride Rules.

What do I need?

A road-worthy bike is a good start. Anything recognised as a cycle in the Australian Road Rules is fine, bicycle or tricycle, recumbent or upright, faired or folding. The organiser can disqualify riders with unroad-worthy bikes.

Do I need anything else?

If any part of your event could be during the hours of darkness, you will be required to fit a set of front and rear constant beam lights and a rear reflector to the bike and to carry another set of lights (can be flashing) plus a reflective vest or equivalent for use at night. This is a requirement even if you plan to finish before it gets dark. The organiser or a support crew member will check your lights and reflective vest before the event starts and the organiser will have no choice but to disqualify you do not have these. Under the Australian Road Rules, a light must be clearly visible from at least 200 metres away and a reflector must be clearly visible from at least 50 metres away when lit by a car headlight. Many experienced randonneurs choose to fit additional lights as back-up or to assist in reading route sheets or signs and will turn on the lights as soon as visibility starts to drop. It is generally considered impolite to use flashing lights when riding in a group.

Remember the more visibility, whether it be lights or reflective material and tape on your or your bike, the better. Oh and don't forget to have enough batteries to get you through the night on a long ride.

On the ride?

You may cycle on your own or in a group. Riding together chatting and sheltering each other from the wind can help the miles go by but be aware of your abilities. Don't cling to the wheels of the fast blokes to later burn yourself out before getting lost because you couldn't keep track of where you were on the route sheet. In general, organisers try to provide an enjoyable route but our events can include sections that are hard, hilly, heavily trafficked, cross railway tracks, are roughly surfaced, with steep descents, ridden during rainstorms, ridden at night or with all options combined. Keep your wits about you, the ground is not soft.

Follow the route (don't assume that another rider knows where they are going) and obtain signatures and/or stamps at the nominated checkpoints. Till or ATM receipts also count if there's no one around to sign, so

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don't lose them. The opening and closing times for each checkpoint (usually 40 – 80 km apart) will be on your brevet card, although there may also be 'secret checkpoints', to ensure no shortcutting. You may need to answer an 'information control' question, so a pen to record the answer might be useful. Don't lose your brevet card; it is the proof of your ride.

You should carry sufficient food and water to get to the next place you can resupply. Audax rides go through remote areas and country shops are often shut when we might want to use them. Most riders carry two large water bottles. A little extra is better than not enough! Carrying bike tools, pump and spare tubes is obviously sensible.

Don't waste too much time off the bike but there is no need to burn yourself out on the bike. The time limits are quite generous and there is no prize for being first. Slower riders just get better value for their money.

Support is only allowed at checkpoints although there is nothing stopping you getting food, drink, mechanical assistance from disinterested bystanders. You cannot organise for a friend to help you between checkpoints.

What about the weather?

Sun cream, rain jacket and warm clothing are prudent choices. These rides are long enough for the weather to change dramatically and rain or sleet at midnight requires something better than when riding on a sunny afternoon. It takes extreme conditions for an organiser to cancel a ride, so you should be prepared for anything.

What support is there?

It can vary from a route sheet, a card and a cheery wave at the start to lashings of hot and cold food, espresso coffee and sports drinks at every checkpoint. The organiser may even offer a drop bag service. Contact the organiser to find out what is provided and what is available along the route. Support of course is a great benefit but please don't treat it as a right; it may not be possible to provide support to everyone across a spread out field of riders. If this happens support may be biased towards the slower riders.

An organiser may help get you and your bike back to the start if you decide to pull out but has not made any commitment to do so. Randonneurs should be self-reliant. Don't rely just on a mobile phone and an ATM card, our rides can go anywhere. If you do decide to pull out of a ride, please contact the organiser, to avoid somebody waiting patiently for a rider who has already gone home. Look at the route sheet or on your brevet card for the organiser's contact number.

What about sleep?

Most riders don't need sleep on the shorter events but over 400 km most of us prefer to get our heads down for a while. The organiser may provide sleeping accommodation at specific checkpoints, particularly on 600 km or longer events, so ask the organiser for available options. It is sensible to adjust your riding schedule to take advantage of this although you can sleep wherever you wish. The tales are legendary of hardy randonneurs wrapped in space blankets napping on park benches or under bridges.

Think about how you will get home after a long event. Organising a lift home or taking a snooze before driving off are worthwhile options for a tired rider at the finish.

Can I be disqualified?

Yes, the organiser or designated support crew members can disqualify riders for any violation of the Audax Australia Ride Rules but particularly for lighting irregularities. A rider can be disqualified for being a danger to themselves or to other road users. If you get disqualified you should withdraw from the ride and find your own way home. You can appeal to the National Executive Committee but overturning the organiser's decision is a rare occurrence.

Afterwards?

Successful riders hand or occasionally post their filled-in brevet card to the organiser for validation by Audax Australia and Audax Club Parisien (the international governing body). It will be mailed back to you, together with the relevant cloth badge or medallion marking your achievement, if you choose to purchase one.

Congratulations on a successful ride!