

Rotary Tour For *M.E.S.A.*

Additional Information for Multi-Day Riders

This information is for those who are riding more than one day and maybe even all week on the Rotary Tour For *M.E.S.A.* The purpose of this information is to help clarify what may be inaccurate presumptions about the tour and to help new riders especially feel more comfortable with how this ride differs from about any tour you've ever ridden.

1. Many of you have ridden long tours before. GOBA is a good example. On rides like GOBA, riders leave as early in the morning as they please and proceed at their own pace all day, covering about 50 or so miles. Rest stops and lunch stops are available all along the route and riders stop when they feel like it, often where they feel like it. Lodging is mostly in tents but some use nearby motels and such. Amenities like showers and toilets are shared with 3000 others in catch as catch can. GOBA is a cool ride enjoyed by thousands each year.

The *M.E.S.A.* tour has many differences. In the morning we all have breakfast together, normally with the Rotary Club hosting our stay. Often there is a brief speech from them and they may choose to hand us a check for *M.E.S.A.* at that time. It is important that all riders are present for this. After breakfast we have a brief time to tend to our bikes – lubing especially but also checking things out for the day. (If your bike had some mechanical problems the day before you should try to get it fixed, adjusted, repaired during the evening somehow – that's not always easy.) Often just before we leave there is a group photo and we take a look at the day's route – some maps will be available. If the turns will be painted on the roadway you will be informed at that time. The painted directions will be uniform in appearance. Then we all head out more or less as a group. Some host clubs take pride in leading us out of town, not so much because we need it but because it is important to them. We always cooperate with this gesture and ride out of town en masse... albeit a small mass.

As we progress in the morning the group will spread out a bit, with faster riders out front and slower riders trailing. Two groups normally form and our support vehicles each tend to stick with one or the other group. Our drivers are instructed to help us by driving ahead and stopping at crucial turns to indicate the direction to go. As riders pass they may stop and replenish water bottles, sports drink, and refuel with food. The two vehicles will also carry first aid supplies. When the group is passed the truck then "leapfrogs" to the next crucial turn about 5 -10 miles ahead. There may be more riders than maps so riders without maps are encouraged to stick with another who does.

Rest stops are planned most days sometimes in the morning and sometimes in the afternoon. These are planned according to where along the route is another Rotary club. Consequently these stops may seem oddly spaced but we all stop anyway. We stop because the local club wants to be a part of the tour. Often these clubs proudly have a check to hand off as their club's donation to *M.E.S.A.* It is very important that all riders hang around for this process.

For our lunch we typically have a fairly specific time to arrive. Lunch stops are hosted by local Rotary clubs and they have schedules to keep too. Arriving early has no real benefits and being very far back means you may be required to hop on the bus to get to the lunch place in time. We appreciate the cooperation of all riders on this. Lunch may occur in a

restaurant or sometimes in a park where the local club brings in the food. Almost always some sort of small presentation is made and riders are expected to mingle with the local members. After lunch there is often another group photo just like at breakfast.

We try to end the day around 4:00 p.m. Here again, there is little benefit arriving early and if you are far behind you might be required to ride the bus to catch up. At our stopping point we most often will meet our overnight hosts. They will often already have your name and be ready for you. You will relinquish your bike now to the driver of the *M.E.S.A.* truck, and assist him in racking your bike for overnight storage. That truck also has your overnight bag which you now take with you to your host's home. Once at your host's home you will clean up and change into casual wear for our evening events. (It does not always go this way; sometimes we go to a building where we can clean up before our evening activities and then go to host's homes later that night; each host club has a slightly different way of dealing with us and that makes each day different and interesting.)

Evening festivities vary from simple to very party-like. This is the time when we enjoy fellowship with the local club that has gone out of its way to host us. Sometimes there is a "check ceremony" involved also.

And the next day it all starts over again. By the end of the week you will be very familiar with the routine.

2. How do you prepare for the *M.E.S.A.* Tour? What should you bring? What costs should you anticipate?

Preparing for the tour physically is up to you of course. But realize that this is 6 days of riding about 65 miles per day with no rest day. Before the tour you should have ridden at least two consecutive days of no less than 45 miles each and have recently experienced a ride no less than 65 miles. It's important for your body to know what it's going to experience. We ride in the heat of the day and we also ride in the rain, but not storms. If lightning threatens, you will be instructed to get off the road, on the bus or seek shelter.

Here is a list of items we recommend you bring:

- Multiple changes of riding clothes. Your host families may offer to do some laundering for you or allow you to use their machines.
- Casual evening clothes. No suit coats, ties, dressy dresses. Be prepared to wear these more than once. Shoes for evening. Sandals are okay.
- All your own toiletries.
- You can bring one bag for your week's clothing and other items above.
- If you want to have ready access to certain items on the road to be kept handy in the truck, bring a separate small bag that we can stash in the rear of the truck or bus. This would be where you keep personal items like sunblock and any other related road things. Your name should be easily identified on this bag.
- There are many photo opportunities everyday. Feel free to bring along a small camera you can use. You are solely responsible for it though.
- A cell phone is important to have with you. In the past we have had many times when our cells were vital to the tour, especially in keeping in touch with our support vehicles, and they with us.

- **FOR YOUR BIKE:** you will be expected to be able to fix your own flat tire with spare tube and inflation. Do not rely on others for this. You should have a minimum of tools you know how to use for making on-road adjustments. If you use tires that are unique or use spokes that would be impossible to find on the road, you might consider bringing spares with you. You should expect to bring your own lubrication materials and cleaning items.

Costs you should anticipate:

- As a group we will provide for our own supplies of sports drinks and “road food” You should expect to be asked to pay \$30 for this for the week. The drivers will use this money during the week to purchase needed supplies to carry in the truck. These supplies are also shared with our “day riders” who join us for only a day or half day. Any cash leftover at the end of the week will go into the vehicles’ fuel tanks.
- There is rarely any time for shopping or making personal purchases... just so you know. We are on a tour but not tourists.
- Tour Tee Shirts may be available – they sell for \$15.
- Tour jerseys are ordered in May. If there are any extras you can buy one from the *M.E.S.A.* truck driver. First come, first served, unless reserved. - Not much else should require cash.

3. What will the support vehicles have with them?

- Water, ice, sports drinks, some food
- Some tools but not necessarily the same tools in both vehicles.
- At least one shop workstand will be in one of the vehicles
- The *M.E.S.A.* truck will carry our bags and be used to store our bikes overnight.

They will be secured on axle-skewer supports. After you remove your front wheel, you attach your bike to the supports. If you allow anyone else to do this you cannot blame them for faulty connection. Take care in securing your front wheel also – a small Bungee cord will do the trick. You are responsible for getting your own bike out of the truck each morning also.

- The bus will have some first aid supplies but you should consider bringing something of your own as well.
- The truck has room for only one passenger; the bus is used for riders unable to continue for any reason or for picking up those who need to catch up, as mentioned above.
- Our drivers are not bicyclists but they do a pretty good job of anticipating our needs. They also are not mind readers nor are they our servants. They are volunteering their services the same as we all are. As you will see, this tour would not be the same at all without them.

4. What if I get ill, too tired, or just need a short rest?

We are blessed to have the bus as a support vehicle. This is a 20-passenger bus with air conditioning. Most riders have used the bus for one purpose or other. When the heat climbs in the afternoon and you are really tired or not feeling well, the bus is your haven, even if only for a half hour. It will continue to drive along the route and you can re-join the riders when you are ready.

5. I am not a Rotarian. Do I participate in their activities? Is there a secret handshake?

There is a handshake but it is one to welcome you to the tour and to thank you for doing this for the *M.E.S.A.* project. There is nothing special about the meetings – people share their day in fellowship, have a meal, maybe enjoy a drink. Our host club members and their families will be interested in hearing about the tour so far. They see it as the unique activity that it is and one that is not ordinary for Rotary clubs to do. You will not be expected to know much about *M.E.S.A.*

6. I still have some burning questions – who do I call?

Randy Box is the Tour Coordinator. He will be able to answer most of your questions. Be aware that often our route information is not complete until a week before the tour.

Contact Randy via email: grbox1@frontier.com or phone: 419-266-4497