

About RAAM

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the categories?

Categories of the Race Across America are:

- Solo
- 2-Person
- 4-Person
- 8-Person

Within these categories they are further breakdowns for age, gender, and different types of bikes such as tandems and recumbents.

How much support do you provide?

RAAM provides festivities at the start and the finish and recruits staff for the Time Station. Each Racer must provide their own support crew and support vehicles. A typical crew is 8-12 people and 2-4 vehicles. It's the responsibility of the crew to care for the racers – food, clothing, medical care, bicycle repair, massage, entertainment, and directions. Crewing is as much of a challenge as riding is – and it offers some immense rewards of seeing the country, building some lifelong friendships and the pride of getting your racer safely across the country.

What's a Time Station?

The RAAM route has 54 Time Stations which are approximately 40 to 80 miles apart. At each Time Station, the racer must call into Race Headquarters and report their location and time. This information is posted to the RAAM Race Coverage website which allows fans and officials to track the race. Time Stations are great places to watch racers come through and cheer them on.

Time Stations vary from someone's home, to bike shops, to city parks, to the Capital Building in Jefferson City, MO, to the McDonald's in Pratt, KS.

About half of the Time Stations are staffed. This staff is invaluable in building awareness of the race in the local communities along the course. As racers come through, the Time Station staff is the cheering section; they can help racers find services in town. Time stations have offered hotel rooms, gas, showers – and in Pratt, KS, they offer everyone free food at McDonalds.

If you'd like to help with a Time Station, click here ([link – Get Involved](#)).

Do they really do it solo?

They do indeed. The Race Across America is the world's toughest bike race. Extraordinary cyclists come to test themselves against the world's best in a long distance race. More than that, it's a competition against nature and against themselves. The solo



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racers are the stars of RAAM. Very few people can finish within the allotted time of 12 days.

How does team racing work?

Teams consist of 2, 4, or 8 racers. Teams generally race in a relay format with one racer always on the road. Teams may put more than one racer on the road at a time if they feel it will be advantageous. The strategy of who races when and for how long is constantly changing. It depends on the strengths of the team members and the terrain. Shifts vary from 20 minutes to several hours.

With an 8-Person team, each racer spends about three hours a day on the bicycle on average. Think you can manage that?

How much do they sleep? Do they hallucinate?

Sleep management is one of the biggest challenges of the race. This goes for everyone from racers, to crew, to race staff. The challenge for racers is balancing sleep, which means time off the bike and stopping, against continuing to move down the road. This is critical because the clock doesn't stop, even for sleeping. The solos at the front of the race sleep as little as 90 minutes a day. Just to finish within the 12 day time limit, racers can't afford to sleep more than about 4 hours a day at the most.

Teams have the advantage here and can continue racing 24 hours a day as racers rotate. One while sleeps, another races on down the road.

Some racers do hallucinate and this can make for some entertaining stories. Racers can be entirely awake and lucid and still hallucinate, or they can so tired reality shifts. Officials and crew are constantly paying attention to a racers condition and to safety. Safety is always paramount and officials and crews will stop a racer or crew for a sleep break if they feel a racer is past the safety margin of sleep.

Why are there so few women?

Almost all ultra-endurance events have a low percentage of women, typically less than 20%. This includes running, adventurer racing, dog sledding, yachting, and adventure racing. RAAM and ultracycling are no different. It's not that women aren't strong enough – in fact women's bodies are built for endurance and women have proved they are truly capable of very strong performances in all ultra-endurance events, including RAAM. We will certainly continue to encourage women to race.

Compare RAAM to the Tour de France or Mt Everest

The Race Across America is almost 50% longer than the Tour de France. Solo racers will finish in about 10 days, which is half the time of the Tour de France, and will have no rest days. RAAM racers are not allowed to draft or ride in packs. Every racer will make their way across the country on their own power with no help with teammates.



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Mt. Everest and the Race Across America are entirely different. Austrian adventurer Wolfgang Fasching has won solo RAAM three times and climbed Mt. Everest. In his opinion, “Everest is more dangerous, but RAAM is much harder.”

How much do they eat?

Nutrition and fluid intake is critical during the race. It’s at least as important as any piece of equipment or any training. If your body doesn’t have the right fuel or enough fuel, you’re not going anywhere. It’s a tough balance to get the right nutrition and the right nutrients in the right amounts at the right time while staying on the bike and riding hard.

Racers need to constantly eat and drink. With racers drinking 20-24 ounces an hour, they will easily drink more than 3 gallons of fluid each day. Racers also need to consume 300-400 calories every hour for the duration of the race. That’s more than 8000 calories each day – a typical diet is about 2000 calories a day.

How much does it cost?

Besides the entry fee, every racer and team has to provide their own support crew and support vehicles. Depending on the number of crew, the number of vehicles, and how deluxe your race is, the costs starts at \$20,000. With a Team of racers this costs gets split multiple ways. By contrast, typically it costs over \$50,000 to climb Mt. Everest and a year of college can cost over \$30,000.

For some, this is certainly a lot of expense – and you will never regret spending any of it. The rewards of this race far outweigh any dollar value. As they say in the Visa commercials – ‘Finishing RAAM – priceless.’

Can I watch it on TV?

Over the history of the race, it has been aired on ABC Wide World of Sports, ESPN, OLN, NBC, BBC, and many other stations around the world. We are hoping to have broadcast coverage in 2008, and this depends on securing funds and sponsorship to enable this endeavor.

During the race, you can follow the race at our website. We have daily video updates, photos, ongoing stories about the racers, and of course stats of where everyone is.

If you want to see video of previous years, DVDs are available of past races at the RAAM Store.

Is it safe?

Yes, it’s very safe. Safety is paramount for RAAM. All racers are required to follow all rules of the road over the entire course – stopping at stop signs and stop lights, staying to the right, and so on. RAAM has a lengthy set of rules most of which are aimed at the safety of everyone – racers, crew, and all road users. These rules are built over years of



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experience. We also have two dozen officials on the course monitoring the racers to ensure they are being safe.

Tell me a little history

The concept of a bicycle race across America can be traced back to newspaperman George Nellis, who in 1887 crossed the USA on a 45-pound iron high-wheel bicycle with no gears and with pedals attached directly to the front wheel. Following the railroad routes across the country, he made the crossing in just under 80 days.

Every ten years or so, the record would be reduced by a few days, but it was not until the 1970s, when John Marino got serious about finding how quickly a bicycle could be ridden across the U.S.A. that the modern movement of trans-national cycling competition began. Other riders began challenging the marks made by Marino, and by 1982 a group of these riders decided they were ready for a head-to-head race. In its first year, the Race Across America (RAAM) was called the Great American Bike Race. Four riders lined up on the pier in Santa Monica and raced to New York. The winner was Lon Haldeman. Since then the race has been run every year, always west to east.

By The Numbers

- Total distance is more than 3000 Miles.
- Collectively, the Solo and Team finishers will travel a combined distance equivalent to circling the Earth at the equator seven times.
- In the 26 year history of the race, Solo finishers have ridden more than one million miles – that's two round trips to the moon.
- Lowest elevation is 170 feet below sea level. Highest elevation is more than 10,000 feet high above sea level. This elevation range exceeds two vertical miles.
- Each Solo and Team will climb more than 100,000 feet. This is roughly the distance from the ground to the edge of space, more than three times the altitude flown by commercial jetliners and almost four times the altitude of Mt. Everest.
- Less than 200 solo and tandem racers have officially finished solo RAAM, compared with over 2000 individuals who have summited Mt. Everest and 200 racers every year compete in the Tour de France.
- Racers have come from 4 continents – North America, South America, Asia, and Europe. More than 25 countries have been represented in the Race Across America.
- RAAM crosses the five longest rivers that are entirely in the US: the Mississippi, Missouri, Rio Grande, Arkansas and the Ohio.
- The RAAM staff during the race is more than 40 people. More than 200 people staff Time Stations. Racers are supported by more than 800 people. More than 200 vehicles are part of the RAAM caravan across the country.
- In the last three years, RAAM racers have raised more than \$3,000,000 for charities.



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