

# **Preparing for the Race Across the West**

## **Differences of Scale**

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The Race Across the West (RAW) is the newest challenge of ultramarathon bicycle racing in the United States. Running concurrently with the Race Across America (RAAM), it requires the same logistical considerations, but with the shorter distance, the “numbers” come out smaller. You should still read the material on the website under Resources-Guidelines to help you prepare as it applies to RAW also. This document will help define those aspects of planning and strategy which are different from RAAM.

### **Support Crew**

First, you will not need as many support crew. Most RAAM efforts have support crews of 8 to 12 people. For RAW, a large support crew would be 6 people and 4 is sufficient for most racers.

One of the hurdles to finding a sufficient number of support crew for RAAM is the time commitment involved. For RAW, the time commitment is about one week instead of two weeks for RAAM. The week consists of, 1-2 days in Oceanside getting ready, 2-4 days of racing, 1-2 days to get home.

With fewer support crew necessary and a shorter time commitment, you are more likely to find people willing to help.

### **Support Vehicles**

With fewer support crew, you also need fewer support vehicles. For a solo effort, 1 or 2 support vehicles are adequate, whereas in RAAM 3 support vehicles are common. For teams, 2 support vehicles are probably adequate versus 3 or 4 support vehicles in RAAM.

### **Support Vehicle Logistics**

With a start in Oceanside, once your race is over, it is conceivable to drive back to southern California. This creates an opportunity to return rental vehicles to the same place you picked them up and avoid one-way drop off fees that many companies charge. Purchasing airline tickets is easier because you can get round-trip tickets in and out of southern California versus multiple one-way fares.

The alternative is to drive to a major airport from Taos for dropping off rental vehicles and getting flights. The three closest are Sante Fee (1 hour), Albuquerque (2 hours), and Denver (6 hours).

Depending on costs and logistics, you may consider Phoenix or Denver as your jumping off spot. Fly into one of those cities, rent your vehicles there and then drive to the start. You may even be able to drive the route to see what it's like. Once you finish, it's a shorter trip to Phoenix or Denver than back to southern California and you still get one location for vehicle rentals and round-trip airline tickets.

#### **4-Person Teams**

A 4-Person Race Across the West team has a unique opportunity. With 4 people it is possible to crew for yourself and to do the race with just one vehicle. This can streamline your logistics and budget considerably.

#### **RVs and Sleeping**

For RAAM, a sleep strategy is very important to survive a week for teams and more than 10 days for solos. For the Race Across the West, your sleep strategy will be different. Solos will typically finish in 70-85 hours which is perhaps 2-3 big sleep breaks. Most teams will finish in 48-60 hours which is doable by just sleeping in support vehicles.

Two options to consider for sleep are an RV or to plan ahead and book hotel rooms at one of the major towns the route passes through. The major towns include Prescott at mile 395, Flagstaff at mile 483, Cortez at mile 761, Durango at mile 806, and Pagosa Springs at mile 876. You may also search for hotels between Flagstaff and Cortez.

An RV is clearly beneficial on RAAM and some of those same benefits apply to RAW. The cost and burden may not be worth it for RAW, especially for teams.

#### **Budget**

Ultimately this all affects budget. To begin with, a RAW budget will be significantly smaller than a RAAM budget. Fewer crew means less money on airfares, food, hotels, etc. Fewer vehicles means less rental costs and less money spent on gas.

The website has a Budget article under Resources-Guidelines to help you lay out your budget.

#### **Supplies**

You may want to consider racing with fewer supplies than you would for RAAM, e.g. fewer spare parts, fewer clothes, etc. You risk the possibility of not having an item if something should go wrong. On the other hand, RAW is a shorter race, so *theoretically* the chances of something going wrong are less. The quantity of supplies is something to consider. As with RAAM, you should gather the supplies that will make you feel comfortable racing and not add additional stress.

Don't be fooled, RAW is still a serious endeavor. Racing 1000 miles *will* challenge you, as was proven in the inaugural running of the event with just a single solo finisher. You still need to:

- be organized
- have a solid, committed crew
- be adaptable
- be prepared
- have your nutrition dialed in

- be prepared for heat and climbing

The race is a *simpler* logistical affair than RAAM, but it is not simple.

### **The Finish**

Finally, once you get to Taos, consider staying a day or two and enjoy Taos itself. Taos has a thriving arts community and a beautiful surrounding geography. Depending on where you have placed in the RAW field, I'm sure those still finishing would appreciate your support as they finish. The RAAM racers are also coming through as well. Stick and around and cheer on your fellow racers.