

Where do I sleep during these rides?

Check with the ride manager or secretary before entering. Competitive trail rides are usually held in remote areas or campgrounds, but sometimes there are cabins available to rent at particular rides. Generally, you will need to plan on camping out.

Some people sleep in the back of their horse trailer, some in tents, and some in RVs or trailers with living quarters. Unless noted for the ride, you will be on your own for food and shelter during the weekend.

Where do I stable my horse?

All horses are to be stabled in a similar fashion. NATRC does not allow the use of electric or portable pens during the ride. Unless the campground has stabling facilities for ALL the horses entered (this will be noted in the ride description), your horse will be tied to the trailer when not being ridden or walked. Some rides allow picketing or "high-lining" between two trees. If you have questions about a particular ride, call or e-mail the ride manager for details.

Do I need a registered horse to compete?

Any horse, pony or mule that is over the age of 48 months is welcome to participate in the Novice or CP division of a NATRC ride. Animals competing in the Open division must be at least 60 months old. Stallions are welcome as long as they are well behaved, wear a yellow ribbon in their tail and are double-tied to their trailer as per the NATRC rulebook. Junior riders are not permitted to ride stallions.

Does my horse have to be shod?

NATRC has never insisted that horses be shod for their competitions. At some rides, shoes may be strongly recommended, but they are not a requirement. Any type of shoes and/or pads are allowed, including EZ boots. Leg wraps, splint boots, bell boots or any other sort of leg protection is prohibited, however.

Can I just ride and not compete?

No, sorry. Some ride managers may allow you to drag ride (ride behind the last rider and make sure no one gets hurt/lost) if you are familiar with the trails and have a well-conditioned horse. It is strongly suggested if you want to learn more about CTRs without actually competing, that you volunteer at a ride or two. Ride managers can always use people to help on P&Rs, act as secretaries, run errands and drive judges. Notify the ride manager before hand and introduce yourself, let them know you want to volunteer and what you feel comfortable doing. You will get a crash course on how a NATRC ride is run, without the worries of competing the first time.

How far/fast will I be expected to travel on my horse?

Novice and CP horses are normally asked to do 15-22 miles per day. They may be asked to go as far as 24 miles in one day, but the total mileage for the weekend may not exceed 40 miles in two days. The pace for a ride in these divisions is usually around 3.5 - 4.5 miles per hour. The ride management sets the speed based on weather, terrain, season of the year and footing on the trail.

Open horses are expected to go further and faster. Animals in this division will be asked to cover 25-35 miles a day, with a 60-mile maximum allowed for the weekend.

The pace set for Open horses ranges between 5-6 mph.

What is CP?

NATRC offers 3 different divisions in which to compete: Novice, Competitive Pleasure (CP) and Open. Novice is designed for people who are just getting started in NATRC, people riding younger or inexperienced horses, or horses coming back from an injury. Open is the nationally recognized level for experienced competitors. CP is the "middle division" for people who cannot or will not ride at the other levels. Competitive Pleasure riders are usually asked to follow the same speed, distance as Novice, but do not compete against riders in the Novice division for awards. Some first time riders mistakenly enter CP because they think Competitive Pleasure is "just for fun" and that it would be better to ride there. This division often has the best and most experienced riders and without weight categories, the competition is much more intense than Novice.

When do I need to get to the ride?

It's a fact of life that most of us have to work to support our "horsie habit". You should try to get to the ride as early as possible on Friday. Usually the ride secretary will start checking in entrants between 1-2 pm and the judges will begin vetting around 3 pm and continue until all the horses are done or it is too dark to see. You will want time to unload your horse, let him relax a bit and clean him up before presenting to the judges. If you can't arrive until after dark on Friday, please make a note to the ride secretary that you will require a "late check-in". This lets her know that the judges will probably have to examine your horse first thing in the morning, before the ride starts.

What's all this stuff in my packet for?

When you register at the ride with the secretary, you will receive a packet of goodies. The rider wears the bib, halter tag goes on the horse and you attach the numbered card on your trailer where your horse is tied. This identifies you, your horse and your stabling area during the ride.

What time is the ride briefing?

Usually about dark on Friday evening. Bring a chair and a pen; be ready to take notes.

What is this "2 mile marker" everyone mentions?

Since NATRC rides are not races, getting back to camp first will not assure you a ribbon. At the ride briefing you will be given a map and told what pace in mph the trail master has set. It is up to you to maintain that pace as best you can for the duration of the ride. The "2 mile marker" will be your last mileage checkpoint each day. Unless noted at the ride briefing, it will be exactly 2 miles from camp. Most people allow 30 minutes to cover the 2 miles back to camp. If that will put you back in camp ahead of minimum time, you need to wait at the two-mile marker. Once you pass that point, NATRC rules say you must maintain forward motion.