

Dear first-timers to Helen, Georgia,

This is a “self-supported” event. There are no fees, release forms or support provided by Park Ridge Cycling. It is up to you to coordinate your transportation, meals and lodging. All schedules and routes are informal. You are encouraged to join in the group activities, but you are free to set your own schedules.

Helmets are mandatory on all rides.

Pre-departure Checklist

- Check Helen weather for the week. There can be significant variation. Typical morning temps are between the mid-40s and mid-60s. With elevation changes of up to 2,000', the top of gaps are up to 15 degrees cooler. Mid-afternoon temps sometimes reach the mid-80s. There is usually rain at some point during the week.
- Add other riders' names & numbers to your phone.
- Check your bike for necessary repairs or adjustments. Some climbs are 1,200' with 12% grade in some places. Be prepared with the proper gearing. Check your brakes; you go down those same climbs. Check tires and bring your preferred inflation device.
- Bring your own bike with supplies to ride 200–300 miles (pump/flat kit/lubricants/energy bars/drink mix) as there are no bike shops near Helen.
- Bikes are kept in our rooms. The hotel has a hose available if an after-ride rinse is needed.

Travel

Most attendees rideshare the 12-hour drive from Chicago. It's a long drive alone. Review the Ride Roster to find or give a ride. A 5 am departure from Chicago will put you in Helen by 6 pm (Helen is on Eastern Time).

If you fly, Atlanta Hartsfield is the closest airport, a 2-hour drive to Helen. Plan to rent a car; there is no airport shuttle to Helen. Use the ride roster to facilitate carpooling to and from Helen.

A smaller group arrives on Friday and holds an organized ride on Saturday, while the balance of people arrive on Saturday for the first large group ride on Sunday. Arrival day should mainly be used to set up your bike. If time allows, go for a quick check ride "around the block" to prevent last-minute mechanicals on your first full day.

Group dinner in town on Saturday night.

Lodging

The Hampton Inn in Helen provides a discounted rate for our group.

<https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/theparkridgebicycling/>

This link will allow you to reserve a room from April 19 – Apr 26. If your travel dates fall outside of this range, call the hotel directly at the number on the link and arrange for an earlier/later departure at our

group rate. They provide a free, hot breakfast each morning. To save costs, sharing a double room is common but of course not required.

There are other accommodations available.

Meals

Arrangements are made with local restaurants for serving a large group each evening. You are encouraged to join the group but feel free to make other arrangements. There are many restaurants within walking distance of the Hampton Inn.

The hotel lobby is our meeting point for dinner departures. No set time; we usually walk to dinner as a group.

Communication

We mostly use a group text to communicate meal gatherings, ride times and call outs as needed. Cell service is good, but there are areas with gaps.

Use the roster to:

- Share emergency contact information
- Share your contact info for group texts
- Coordinate travel and room sharing.

Daily schedule

Breakfast is 6–8 am. Meet & greet & discuss the day's ride (distance/elevation). Generally, we start from the Hampton parking lot at 9 am but sometimes delay the start due to weather. Expect at roll-out:

- Introductions
- Discuss routes, muster points and key turns or wayfinding landmarks
- Safety briefing and identify the day's leader
- Photos. We generally roll out within 15 or 20 minutes.

Our website has example routes. Rides are 40–70 miles with 2,000 to 6,000 feet of climbing. Lunches range from sit-down restaurants to cafes to local markets. Bring \$20 and a charge card.

Most days, we start together, ride together, share coffee breaks, fix flats together, and finish together! A designated leader rides near the front to avoid turning the ride into a hammer fest. You climb at your pace, regrouping at the top. We muster after descents and key turns. A veteran rider will stay in contact with any new riders.

We return to Helen by mid-afternoon, typically stopping at Betty's General Store. Our routing is more informal than fixed. We ride our own bikes on public roads without a sag vehicle.

Variation

Mid-trip, some riders may wish to start separately: Fatigue may necessitate a shorter route, while the lure of a PB may draw someone else to a climb tackled the day before. Make the changes you need to ensure a great trip. The many Georgia veterans will gladly help you tailor a route for your needs. For safety, we prefer that you find a ride partner. The big size of our group usually makes that task easy.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

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