

YOU TALK – WE LISTEN

And boy – did we?

OK – so we had a great Thanksgiving and Christmas break but we also spent hours crawling through your 2016 Blue Ridge Brutal survey comments and we've made some BIG changes. Not least of which is –

NEW ROUTES

We've noted all your feedback regarding some busy roads, especially NC88 returning from Warrentsville, and we've made BIG changes. Check out the new 2017 Brutal routes on our website www.blueridgebrutal.org

But rest assured - all the best bits are staying.

So, here's what you can expect in 2017

- There's still over 21 miles on the gorgeous Blue Ridge Parkway. No other ride offers that!
- We're then taking the 72 and 102 mile routes in to Alleghany County (getting close to the Virginia border) where you'll experience some stunning long distance views
- After that you'll wind your way back towards West Jefferson, avoiding the busiest parts of NC88 near Warrentsville, along challenging roads with great rural farm land vistas.
- For the 102 milers, there's still Ben Bolan.....aaarrggghhh!!
- And, for the 55 milers, we're cutting out Frank Dillard Rd. This will avoid the awkward left turn on to Frank Dillard which will eliminate one major safety concern.
- But, don't think you're getting away with anything. This is still **THE BRUTAL**. The elevation gains are still there (data courtesy of Ride with GPS):
 - 102 mile route average 87ft. elevation gain per mile
 - 72 mile route average 88ft. elevation gain per mile
 - 55 mile route average 82ft. elevation gain per mile

SIGNS

We continually revisit how we can improve signage. For 2017, apart from additional direction, stop/turn around and information signs, we'll also be adding mileage signs at each Rest Stop advising Current Mileage, Miles to Next Rest Stop/Finish so as you can better plan your ride. There will also be DISCARD WATER BOTTLES and TRASH signs about one mile after each Rest Stop. Please make use of these points to discard anything you don't need. We'll then clean up as we pick up signs after the ride.

WATER FOR THE FAST PACK

This is a difficult one as we're very concerned we are not seen to be the cause of additional litter on our beautiful roads. However, we do plan to reintroduce water bottle handouts but we want your cooperation in return. As previously mentioned, we'll be placing DISCARD WATER BOTTLES and TRASH signs one mile from each of the Rest Stops. To avoid adding litter on our beautiful countryside roads we want you, the Fast Pack in particular, to commit to discard your used water bottle at these signs OR keep it and discard it at the next Rest Stop/Finish.

FOOD

We'll be talking to all our Rest Stop volunteers and will encourage them to ensure there is an adequate supply of the basics – bananas, oranges, Fig Newton's as well as salt and rehydration tablets at later stops. However, rest assured, for those of you who like a bit of the good old mountain hospitality, we'll continue to encourage our volunteers to provide some variety.

As far as the post ride meal – what can we do? We've seen all the comments you can imagine. Everything from Love the BBQ to Should be Pasta. At the moment, though we're not totally sure what we will serve, you can be sure, whatever it is, it will be great and will include a vegetarian option.

VOLUNTEERS AT KEY INTERSECTIONS

Every year we try to enlist more volunteers so as we can place people at key intersections. 2017 is no different. Our intention is for at least two people at every major turn. This will improve your safety and we hope provide additional encouragement.

So, these are the big items but we've noted all your other comments and will be working hard over the coming months to try to address them all.

Thank you for your suggestions to improve the BRUTAL. We REALLY appreciate it.

**HELP US MAKE THE 2107 BRUTAL THE BEST BRUTAL EVER. SIGN UP ON MARCH 1
TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT**

www.blueridgebrutal.org