



Some of the Basics...

Frequently Asked Questions

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What is a competitive trail ride?

A competitive trail ride is a distance event where the competitors cover a measured distance within a window of time. In NATRC™ rides, approved veterinary and horsemanship judges provide review of both horses and riders. The emphasis is on education, safety and sportsmanship in a fun, family-oriented environment.

Do I have to be a member?

Although competitors do not have to be members, membership results in a number of benefits such as reduced ride fees, eligibility to vote and participate in the management of NATRC, opportunity to become a ride Rules Interpreter or train to become a recognized judge, and to accumulate points and mileage toward regional and national awards.

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 an NATRC ride. Animals competing in the Open Division must be at least 60 months of age. Stallions are welcome as long as they are well behaved, wear a yellow ribbon in their tail and are double-tied as per the NATRC rule book. Junior riders are not permitted to ride stallions.

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

Novice and CP horses do 15-24 miles per day, but the total mileage for the weekend may not exceed 40 miles in two days. The average pace for a ride in these divisions is 3.5 - 5.0 miles per hour. Ride

management sets the pace based on weather, terrain, season of the year and footing on the trail. Open horses are expected to cover 25-35 miles a day, with a 60 mile maximum allowed for the weekend. The average pace set for Open horses is 4-6 mph.

What is the difference between an "A" ride and a "B" ride?

An "A" ride is a 2-day ride, usually Saturday and Sunday. "B" rides are 1-day rides. Normally they are offered on Saturday in conjunction with an "A" ride. "B" rides might not offer the full range of divisions and classes that the "A" ride offers.

What Division should I ride in?

NATRC offers three competitive divisions: Novice, Competitive/Pleasure (CP) and Open. Novice is designed for people 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. CP riders usually follow the same speed and distance as Novice but may be asked to go slightly faster or farther. They do not compete against riders in the Novice division for awards. This division often has the best and most experienced riders and without weight categories, the competition is much more intense than Novice.

Can I just ride and not compete?

Distance Only (DO) is offered as an option in all divisions. DO participants follow all the same rules as competitors (except for leg protection; see current NATRC Rule Book), receive informative scorecards, get credit for the mileage, but are not put in the placings. Some ride managers may allow you to ride safety (ride behind the last rider and make sure no one gets hurt/lost) if you are familiar with the trails, have a well-conditioned horse, and meet certain other requirements.

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&R (Pulse and Respiration) teams, act as secretaries, run errands and drive judges. Notify the ride manager beforehand, 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.

Does my horse have to be shod?

At some rides, shoes may be strongly recommended, but they are not a requirement. Any types of shoes and/or pads are allowed, including EZ boots. All hoof boots that provide sole protection are allowed as long as the attached gaiters, straps or keepers do not extend above the pastern. Leg wraps, splint boots, bell boots or any other sort of leg protection are prohibited, however. See current *Rule Book* for details.

Do I need any special tack?

NATRC rules state you must use a saddle. The type of saddle and other equipment is at the discretion of the rider within the bounds of good horsemanship. You will see a wide variety of saddles being used: English, western, distance, and Aussie saddles. You will quickly discover the saddle fit is much more important than the saddle type.

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 "horse 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. The judges will begin vetting around 3 pm and continue until all the horses have been examined 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 management know that the judges will probably have to examine your horse first thing Saturday morning, before the ride starts.

Where do I stable my horse?

Horses are stabled at your camp site, but there are different options available depending on the ride facility and/or ride management. Usually your horse will be tied to the trailer when not being ridden or walked unless

the campground has stabling facilities available for ALL the horses entered (this will be noted in the ride description). Some rides allow horses to be in portable corrals or tied to a high line or sliding tether. NATRC does not allow the use of electric fence pens, hobbling or staking out as primary containment methods during the ride. If you have questions about a particular ride, call or e-mail the ride manager for details.



Photo by Peggy Johnson

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. 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. Sometimes there are cabins available to rent at particular rides. Unless noted for the ride, you will be on your own for food and shelter during the weekend.

What do I do with the things in my packet?

When you register at the ride with the secretary, you will receive a packet of identification and information. 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?

Ride briefings usually start about dark on Friday evening. Bring a chair, pen and flashlight; be ready to take notes.

What is the "2 mile marker"?

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 average 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 check point 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. This serves two purposes. A rider has to pace the horse at least the last 2 miles of the ride. This also prevents a rider from stopping just outside the finish line to wait for minimum time if they are ahead of their 30-minute time window.

What NATRC region do I live in?



- Region 1** N. CA, OR, WA, NV (except Clark County), ID, AK
- Region 2** S. CA, NV (Clark County), AZ, HI
- Region 3** NM, CO, MT, UT, WY
- Region 4** TX, OK, AR, LA
- Region 5** AL, CT, DE, FL, GA, IN, KY, MA, MD, ME, MI (except upper peninsula), MS, NH, NJ, NY, NC, OH, PA, RI, SC, TN, VT, VA, WV
- Region 6** IL, IA, KS, MI (upper peninsula), MN, MO, NE, ND, SD, WI

