Getting to and Bicycling in Pittsburgh
We’re bringing back the coveted summer weekend trip to the Shenandoah Valley! Join us in July for a weekend of rolling hills, sightseeing on pedal and foot, and excellent company. We’re introducing a revamped weekend with an exciting, comfortable new venue in Woodstock, which features a mix of old favorite points of interest and new sightseeing opportunities. Cycling AND hiking routes will take riders and explorers through the New Market Battlefield, close to the George Washington National Forest, and through the rolling and verdant hills of quiet Northwest Virginia.

**When:** July 19-21, rides can begin as early as noon on Friday so block some time to enjoy the area!

**Where:** We’re moving! Our Shenandoah weekend will now base in Woodstock, VA at the newly-renovated and award-winning Holiday Inn. Rides launching of Woodstock for the weekend will vary in distance, ability, and points of interest.

**How:** We have plenty of riding and out-of-saddle activities planned, including a warm up ride on Friday afternoon, a welcome social on Friday night, a Saturday BBQ (with new, expanded vegetarian options!), and trips to points of interest that can range from antiquing to fishing, spelunking and wine tasting. Don’t feel like exploring on two wheels? Hikers can enjoy the beautiful National Forest with suggested routes, complete with cue sheets and topographical maps! And, as always, a trip to the famous Route 11 potato chip factory.

**Who:** PPTC members and non-members are welcome! Pricing tiers cover single and double occupancy for hotel rooms, the welcome social, the Saturday dinner, and cue sheets. Spouses and non-riders are welcome!

**Cost:** A single occupancy is $310 for PPTC members/ $340 for nonmembers, and double occupancy is $180 per person for PPTC members/ $210 for nonmembers (please inquire for triple and quad occupancy pricing).

Questions? Please contact Deb Reynolds at deb.cla.dr@gmail.com for more information.
Out Of Bounds Column

Member Benefit: Ride with GPS Club Account
Member Benefit: Bike Shop Discounts

Potomac Pedalers Calendar of Events

- **Mon, 07/01** A/BB/B * 30 * MD * 9:30am * The Usual Monday Ride From Glen Echo * Glen Echo Park (GLE)
- **Mon, 07/01** BB * 40 * MD * 5:00pm * Frederick's Monday EZ * - Other Start Location MD
- **Tue, 07/02** CC/C * 30/27 * VA * 9:00am * Mid-Week Morning Belle Haven * Belle Haven Picnic Area (BEL)
- **Tue, 07/02** B/CC * 35 * MD * 10:00am * Bud Bike Tuesday *
- **Tue, 07/02** C * 22 * MD * 10:00am * Tuesday Lunch Ride (Olney Ale House) * Weirs Mill Park Recreation Center (WMP)
- **Tue, 07/02** BB/Tandem * 24 * VA * 5:15pm * Tuesday Night Tandems * - Other Start Location VA
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- **Tue, 07/02** D * 10 * MD * 6:00pm * Cruising the Capital Crescent Trail * Capital Crescent Trail Head (CCT)
- **Tue, 07/02** CC/C/D * 9/15/17 * VA * 6:00pm * Everyone Evening Rides * Wakefield Park (WKP)
- **Tue, 07/02** A/BB/B/CC * 17/23/15/19 * MD * 6:10pm * The Slurpee Ride * Layton Village Shopping Center (LAV)
Do you suffer from FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out)? Well, join us in having a great day of biking on the Back Roads Century, Sunday, September 22 and you won’t miss out! There are six (6!) routes to choose from so go for the 25 miler or push it to the max and crank it out on the 100 miler. Whatever you like, we have it for you. Food, fun, and friends and of course blue grass music. Make a weekend of it and ride the ‘Sugar High’ routes on Saturday, a meandering 12.5 or 30 miles through the Antietam Battlefield, ending at Antietam Creek Vineyard with a stop along the way at Nutter’s Ice Cream. Festivities carry on Saturday night at a local beer spot (only 200 slots).

All information is here: https://www.potomacpedalers.org/back-roads-century Hope to see you!

Volunteering is a great way to meet fellow cyclists and have fun. This is a great way to give back to the Potomac Pedalers, the cycling community and to help us ensure the event runs smoothly.

If you’re registered to ride and help for 4 (or more) hours, you’ll get a $25 rebate after the event. Or if you are not riding, you can simply volunteer because you want to make people happy!

Some volunteers shifts leave you free on Ride Weekend.
All volunteers will receive a free “BRC Volunteer T-shirt” and are welcome to join us at the Sunday post-ride party!
You can look at all the volunteer options and sign up here: https://www.potomacpedalers.org/back-roads-century-volunteer-form

If you have questions, please contact Dalis Davidson, dalis@dancingleaffarm.com.
Some friends were planning a June bike tour that included the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP), a (mostly) rail-trail conversion between Pittsburgh PA and Cumberland MD. I just joined them for a portion of their tour. Additional factors (besides the planning and company) that provided impetus for me to ride this tour:

- I would get a chance to use Amtrak’s new-ish (2015) roll-aboard bike access on the Capitol Limited train from DC to Pittsburgh
- I wanted to actually spend some time in and explore Pittsburgh, after having just passed through the city on previous bike and business trips
- 16 miles of trail, connecting Pittsburgh to the previously existing trail, had been completed since my last visit. I would get a chance to ride from Pittsburgh.
Getting to Pittsburgh

My original plan was to take the Amtrak Capitol Limited train to Pittsburgh on Friday evening, spend Saturday in Pittsburgh, and meet the group on Sunday. Some time in March I went online to buy my Amtrak tickets: 1 person, no problem; 1 bicycle, ALL SOLD OUT! So, I bought tickets for Thursday. Lesson learned: I knew there were limited places for bikes on the train (8!). But I didn’t realize they would sell out so far ahead of time. Book early.

Travel Day

I got to Union Station in plenty of time to get on the 4:05 train. Two other cyclists with loaded touring bikes toward the baggage car with me to stow our bikes. That baggage car was a disappointment: there are no bike racks! People are just supposed to lay their bikes on the floor. There were already three bikes in there. We rearranged them to be able to fit our bikes.

The train was 10 minutes late getting to Pittsburgh. I remember it sitting on the tracks once, as a freight train passed by going toward DC. (CSX owns the tracks, so their trains have priority.) Of course, when we got to Pittsburgh, a little after 11:30 PM, it was raining. My hotel was nearby. Whew.

I subsequently called Adventure Cycling, which has been working hard to get bike access on long-distance Amtrak trains, to promote bicycle tourism. Their Travel Initiatives Coordinator, Saara Snow, informed me that Amtrak originally DID have bike racks in the baggage car, but she had heard other recent reports that the racks were no longer there. She has contacted Amtrak, to investigate what is going on.

Pittsburgh

Last night’s hotel was conveniently located in downtown Pittsburgh, in the Golden Triangle. I started by walking to Cherrie’s Cafe for breakfast, passing many parks and displays of public art on the way.

My morning bike ride was on some of the river-side trails and the many, many bridges across Pittsburgh’s three rivers. Unlike other bridges I have known (in NY, Philadelphia and DC, to name a few) every bridge I tried was bike- and ped-friendly! Sidewalks! Signage! The buses have bike racks. The main thing that wasn’t bike friendly were the climbs from the waterfront up onto the bridge or into town.

My destination for the morning was Bicycle Heaven, a bicycle museum (!) and repair shop, located just off the North Shore Bike Trail.

The bikes are fantastic — historically significant and painstakingly restored. I could have definitely spent more time here. A visit would be especially worthwhile if you are interested in a particular type of older bike – the owner/curator is very knowledgeable. And helpful.

The Three Rivers Arts Festival was happening in Point State Park,
one block from my hotel. (The three rivers are the Ohio; the Youghiogheny (the Yock); and the Monongehela (the Mon). It featured interesting arts & crafts exhibits as well as food vendors. I saw something I had previously only read about — a sculpture made of discarded flip-flops – and ate something I hadn’t even heard of – a fried oreo.

After checking into a different, more reasonably priced hotel (the South Side Traveler’s Rest hostel), I headed for the Squirrel Hill neighborhood. I had originally planned to visit the Tree of Life synagogue, site of the October, 2018 shooting. However, it turned out that Tree of Life’s Friday night services were being held at Rodef Shalom, another synagogue in Squirrel Hill. Since the Rodef Shalom building is on the register of historical places, I decided to ride there. I attended a nice service and had an opportunity to explore an extensive collection of Judaica. The bike ride back to my hotel was gorgeous — Google Maps told me to take the Junction Hollow Trail, and I did. Just wish I’d had more time to explore the Squirrel Hill neighborhood – and more neighborhoods in Pittsburgh.

**Leaving Pittsburgh**

The next morning over coffee, I met Paul, one of the co-owners of the inn. He has been involved with the Allegheny Trail Alliance since its beginning. He reported that two of the three founding members are still active. The third now works for Dero. He sells bike racks at wholesale price to local advocacy organizations, so they can promote them to local governments. Hmm, maybe he can promote some to Amtrak.

My “quick” stop for breakfast at Waffles INCaffeinated took a bit longer than planned, when I started talking with a fellow cyclist (wearing an Allegheny Trail jersey). Seems like some of the difficulties the group has had with getting bicycle infrastructure improved in Pittsburgh and the vicinity are the same (surprise, surprise) as those found in Washington DC.

I hit the road around 9 AM. The first part of the trail system — between Pittsburgh and Boston — is newer than my last trip on the GAP. These miles hug the river and alternate between former industrial sites and suburbs. There are new bridges to go across the still-in-service railroad tracks and busy suburban roads.

I was very impressed by the signage (on the trail and on the bridges) and the tributes to mining and steel industries that were built alongside the trail.

In McKeesport, there are two trails: the GAP and the Loop. The Loop only goes 4 miles, to the GAP trailhead in Boston. I decided to take the Loop, since it promised to go through old industrial sites and towns which I’m curious about. Near its end, in Boston, the Loop crosses the Youghiogheny (shortened to
“Yough”, pronounced “Yock”) River and joins the GAP.

The remaining days of my ride were on the rest of the GAP with a detour off-trail to visit the Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville. I would highly recommend this detour (or just a trip). This article was excerpted from a series of blogs on the tour, for example, https://bikesbytesbites.wordpress.com/2019/06/23/gap-tour-part-2/
Have you ever shown up for a group ride and discovered you don’t have a helmet? How about you drove 4 hours to a beach front destination but your cycling shoes at still drying out back home in the living room. These and other “duh I forgot” items have happened to me over the years and I’ve heard enough stories to know I am not alone. After having done a few of these things enough times I finally decided to create a checklist much list a pilot used to double check everything before taking off in an airplane. It makes sense and makes most of your rides a lot better. Personally, I keep a copy of this near my garage door where the bikes are stored. I have another one taped inside the back of the car I use to take my bikes to group rides away from home. This helps me make sure I have what I need. In addition, I keep a separate list in the garage of what should be in the under-seat bag on my bike. Finally, taped to the inside of the rear hatchback door of my car is a pre-ride check list. Just a few things to go over before starting that group ride to make sure it is fun and safe. Here are my lists. Yours will likely be different based on your needs. I hope you find this a good starting point.

Pre-Flight CheckList!

- Tell someone not on the ride where you will be and about how long.
- Download the .gpx file if using a head unit and make sure it loads properly.
- Cycling Check List
  - Helmet
  - Heart Rate Monitor
  - Mirror
  - Mini Pump
  - Cleat Covers
  - Cycling Shoes
  - Gloves
  - Chamois Cream
  - Water bottles
  - Solid Nutrition
  - Keys
  - Mobile phone
  - ID Tag (Ride ID)
  - Insurance Card, Driver’s License, Credit Card
  - Cash
  - Loud Whistle on breakaway lanyard
  - Bright Red Rear Light
  - Bright White Front Light
  - Underseat Bag
  - Spare tube
  - Tube patches
  - Co2 cartridges
  - Advil
  - Band-Aids
  - 2 plastic tire tools
  - 3 zip ties
  - Latex gloves
  - Clean wipe
  - Bee Sting Relief Packet
  - Insect repellent packet
  - Suntan lotion packet
  - 2 screws for cleats
  - 2 spare chain links
  - 2 spare chain pins
  - 3” x 1” tire boot
  - Folding Bike Tool
  - Pre-Ride Checklist
  - Make sure odometer/speedometer GPS is working. Reset if necessary.
  - Check Quick Release Levers: Positioned right? Are they tight?
  - Bounce the bike: Listen to rattles.
  - Check the brakes. Front and rear separately.
  - Spin the wheels: Make sure not rubbing on brakes and hubs don’t make a grinding sound.
  - Check the cranks: Make sure crank arms are tight and chainrings not missing any teeth.
  - Check the headset: Make sure it is tight.
  - Check tires: Ensure proper pressure. Clean without cuts, no glass or other items lodged in them.
  - Check handle bars: make sure they and stem are secure. Check for bends or cracks.
  - Take it Farther?
  - Consider keeping a bag or box with spares in your car all the time. I keep a spare helmet, shoes, socks, shorts, jersey, water bottles, tire, just in case. More often I loan things out than use them myself. Here’s a picture of Anne Hyman’s Bike Trunk in the back of her car.

Haze a great summer!

Ed Hazelwood
Potomac Pedalers ExCom
Member at Large
Hey Potomac Pedalers - Have you ever wanted to bicycle the complete C&O Canal towpath from Cumberland down to Georgetown? For many DC area cyclists, the C&O Canal ride is a “bucket list” item that many of us would like to do, although the logistics often prove to be an obstacle.

Well now, here is your opportunity to “Pedal the Potomac” along the complete C&O Canal and ride through our own incredibly scenic national park. The C&O Canal National Historical Park follows the Potomac River from historic Cumberland, Maryland through to Georgetown in the District of Columbia. The C&O Canal National Historical Park is the ninth most visited National Park in the nation, with over 5 million visitors a year. It features a 184.5 mile towpath that for most of the trail is adjacent to the Potomac River. It is the ride to Washington that has been a mainstay for DC area cyclists since the 1970’s.

Check out the TGBT Ride video.

“The stretch of 185 miles of country from Washington, DC to Cumberland, MD is one of the most fascinating and picturesque in the Nation... It is a refuge, a place of retreat, a long stretch of quiet and peace... a wilderness area where we can commune with God and nature, a place not yet marred by the roar of wheels and the sound of horns.” -- William O. Douglas, Associate Justice United States Supreme Court

The Great Bicycle Tour (TGBT) is a fully supported point to point bicycle tour of the C&O Canal that serves as an annual fundraiser for the San Mar Children’s Home near Boonsboro in Washington County, MD. It is a 4-Day cycling event that is tailored for both beginning cyclists to the hardened endurance athlete.

Vide: 2017 TGBT of the C&O Canal

The TGBT Ride includes:

• Transportation by charter bus to the start of the C&O Canal.
• All meals and snacks.
• Free parking for your vehicle throughout the event.
• Rest stops every ten to fifteen miles.
• Camp fees paid for the first two nights or transportation to nearby hotels.
• Hotel on the third night.
• Transport of all gear throughout the event.
• T-shirt, water bottle and a TGBT patch.
• Return to your vehicle by charter bus from Georgetown at end of event.

• A lifetime memory.

Best ridden on a gravel bike, mountain bike or hybrid, the C&O Canal towpath is a flat dirt surface trail which traverses forests, farmlands...
and historic bridges and tunnels usually within sight of the Potomac River. The route also includes the historic Paw Paw Tunnel, a 3,118 ft. tunnel that was completed in 1850, to allow barge travel through a mountainous area of Allegany County. The Paw Paw Tunnel is a “must ride” for thousands of U.S. and international cyclists each year, each sporting a functional head light for the trip through the mountain.

Note: The TGBT is a fundraising event, although it is not prohibitive in price and can be ridden by those not seeking to raise thousands of dollars. It is considered affordable by many past riders judging by the services and facilities offered along the route. The San Mar Children’s Home offers community services, family services and mental health services to children and youths in Washington County.  

Historical background: The Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal was started in 1828 as canal construction project to provide access from Georgetown to the commercial wealth in the Ohio Valley. Eclipsed by Baltimore’s B&O Railroad, the C&O Canal operated from 1834 to 1924. Communities grew along the canal as coal, lumber and agricultural products floated down the waterway to market. After closing due to destruction from floods, the canal and towpath fell into disrepair. It was proposed for a highway corridor in the 1950’s. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas rallied support for developing the C&O Canal as a linear park, and in 1971, it was formally designated as a National Historical Park.