‘Great American Ride’ virtual cross-country cycling event kicks off on March 19

Third annual event challenges cyclists to ride 3,700-mile route across America

Richmond, VA – In the third edition of the ‘Great American Ride’ hosted by Sports Backers in partnership with Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, participants in teams of four, eight, or 12 will attempt a virtual ride across America. The virtual route tracks along the developing 3,700-mile Great American Rail-Trail™, a signature project of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the nation’s largest trails advocacy organization. The Great American Rail-Trail is over 53% complete and connects more than 150 trails between Washington, D.C., and Washington State, with 60 miles having been added to the route since 2019 and 120 miles in the pipeline for development.

The ride kicks off on March 19, and teams will have two months to complete the west-to-east course. Registration is now open at www.GreatAmericanRide.org.

During the event, teams will ride and track their mileage each day and report how far they have gone. An online map will track each group’s virtual progress across the course, and a live leaderboard will display the standings in real time, with groups in male, female, and co-ed categories. Teams will depart from Washington State on March 19, and the first group to virtually ‘reach’ the section of trail in Washington, D.C., will be declared the winner.

All participants will receive an official event shirt, unique finisher medal, pre-mapped route across the country, virtual finisher’s badge, exclusive access to the Great American Ride Facebook Group, and virtual travel experience with destination highlights featured along the route. New in 2022, participants will also have the opportunity to earn virtual badges for completing goals on the way to the finish line.

“The Great American Ride combines the camaraderie of team cycling with the fun of a long-distance solo ride, while making the dream of riding across the country seem a little more real for participants,” said Molly Johnson, Event Director of the Great American Ride. “At Sports Backers, we believe in inspiring active living and encouraging people to be active on a daily basis, and the Great American Ride is an ideal way to accomplish those goals.”

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Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the official charity partner for the Great American Ride, has long championed the vision of the Great American Rail-Trail. Officially launched in 2019, the Great American aims to become an iconic piece of infrastructure serving 50 million people living within 50 miles of the trail, as well as millions of additional visitors from around the world. Participants can support Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s vision for the Great American Rail-Trail by donating during event registration or fundraising during their ride.

“We are thrilled to join forces with Sports Backers again for the Great American Ride. Over the past several years, demand for trails has surged. Millions of people have sought out trails in their neighborhoods and bucket-list destination trails as a way to find joy, be active and to connect with people and the community around them,” said Brandi Horton, vice president of communications for Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. “We love this partnership and this ride as it encourages people to consider trails and cycling as part of their daily routine while also providing the inspiration to dream big. We hope that one day all of the Great American Riders will explore the Great American Rail-Trail itself and experience the entire country from the vantage point of the trail.”

As it enters its third year, the Great American Ride has featured over 1,500 riders on more than 200 teams. The 2021 event attracted participants from 46 states and seven countries to take on the challenge of virtually riding across the United States along the route of the Great American. The 2022 event looks to continue growing while providing participants a unique team cycling experience that is only available with the Great American Ride.

“The Great American Ride is the highlight of my spring! It’s an awesome opportunity to kick my own training motivation into high gear as a cyclist and a fun way to share the cycling slice of life with fellow participants,” said Gordon Wadsworth, a professional cyclist based in Virginia and 2020 and 2021 Great American Ride participant. “We build a team and race together sharing our own personal stories each week as we cross the country! Each milestone is a fun mini celebration for us on our journey across the U.S.”

In addition to sharing the ride experience with teammates, Great American Ride participants can also take advantage of the referral rewards program to recruit others to join. Participants who refer five other riders will receive an exclusive Great American Ride Specialized water bottle, and participants who refer 10 other riders will receive the water bottle and a pair of Goodr Sunglasses. To refer others, a rider can share their unique referral link (found in the registration confirmation email) through email, social media, or text message.

For more information on the 2022 Great American Ride, please visit www.GreatAmericanRide.org.

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About Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation’s largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to building a nation connected by trails, reimagining public spaces to create safe ways for everyone to walk, bike and be active outdoors. Connect with RTC at railstotrails.org and @railstotrails on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

About the Great American Rail-Trail™
The developing 3,700-mile Great American Rail-Trail is a signature project of RTC and its most ambitious project yet. To learn more about the Great American Rail-Trail and to view the trail’s preferred route, visit railstotrails.org/greatamericanrailtrail and follow #GRTAmerican on Twitter and @greatamericanrailtrail on Facebook and Instagram.

About Sports Backers
With a key message of Let’s Go, RVA, the mission of Sports Backers is to inspire people from all corners of the Richmond community to live actively. A non-profit organization, Sports Backers is dedicated to producing nationally recognized quality sporting events and programs that motivate residents and visitors alike to be more active, supporting youth running and fitness programs, and advocating for safe and connected networks of bike and pedestrian infrastructure. Learn more at sportsbackers.org.

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