

Notes for Erie Canal Trail Ride 2024 by Scott Saunders, 3/16/24

Notes:

1. John Porcari, semiretired national transportation official, instigated this idea and thus is the mastermind behind this ride (person to blame): ride the old Erie Canal trail 50 miles a day, for one week. Ride has a <https://www.campstellamaris.org/> campership donation theme, to assist financially challenged families affording summer camp for their kid(s). Ride will be announced on <https://www.campstellamaris.org/support-csm/> page and the alumni web page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/168238706589323/>, which can be used to issue a ride challenge for more riders and donations.
2. I have completed this journey before, in pieces, over 3 separate weekends a few years ago, as has Matt Guinane. My name is recorded on this list https://www.ptny.org/application/files/7415/5803/2320/Honor_Roll_2019.pdf. But since that ride, the state has performed a major buildout of the canal path, providing protected bike path where there had only been roads in many areas. The path across the state is now **87% path**, only 13% road. Many of those remaining roads are quiet rural farm roads.
3. We welcome anyone to ride with us. But any permanently untrained person who refuses to leave their couch before July, should rent an electric bike that has a full charge battery range of at least 60 miles, if not more.
4. Route summary (old Erie Canal trail segment length*):
 - a. Friday overnight 7/5 at **Buffalo**
 - b. **49 miles** Saturday 7/6 to **Medina**
 - c. **58 miles** Sunday 7/7 to **Fairport****
 - d. **54 miles** Monday 7/8 to **Weedsport**
 - e. **49 miles** Tuesday 7/9 to **Canastota**
 - f. **54 miles** Wednesday 7/10 to **Herkimer**
 - g. **49 miles** Thursday 7/11 to **Amsterdam**
 - h. **47 miles** Friday 7/12 to **Albany**
 - i. Saturday 7/13 motorized dispersal

*Distance doesn't include trail detours, side trips, extra distance to/from end point hotels. Actual riding distance may be a few miles more on any given day. I'll provide a ride map for each day, with total miles for the day.

**Note that some riders have family in Rochester, so they will head to those Rochester locations for 7/7 overnight. Some out-of-towners will stay at the Saunders or Fitzpatrick houses in Fairport.

5. This note concerns our riding speed on the trail. Group ride participants usually let me ride point, to set the pace (and to place blame if a wrong turn is taken). Assuming that I'm riding level with no extraordinary heat and humidity conditions present, it's dry with no wind, I ride on hard packed fine stone dust at 12-13 MPH, and pavement at 14 MPH. When stone dust is polluted by larger gravel (by cheap maintainer!) or saturated by many hours of heavy rain, my speed can be reduced to 10-11 MPH, due to much higher tires rolling resistance. The same reduced speed is true for the worst section of canal trail in the state, between Palmyra and Newark, where it's just a dirt rut for my back tire, with both my front trike tires on grass. So those who fret about riding your heavier mountain or gravel bike on this journey, that doing so will slow you down, not to worry, because I set a modest pace on my comparatively heavy trike.
6. We'll have two "SAG wagons" (support and gear wagon) vehicles transporting our overnight bags (so we can pedal light) and be on call for major breakdowns. The van and Jeep (towing enclosed 5x8' trailer) will be piloted by Chuck Porcari and Tim Guinane. Those two are the "nothing is more comfortable than a car seat" crew.
7. Concerning getting to Buffalo if you don't have a drop-you-off-driver, or getting back to Buffalo if you leave a car there: Amtrak has a train or two a day with a bike storage car, to allow a passenger with a bike to travel by rail. Refer to <https://canalwaytrailtimes.org/2023/02/23/bikes-on-board-a-guide-to-using-amtrak-to-ride-the-erie-canalway-trail/>.
8. Since Amtrak won't carry my trike, I rented a small as I can get one-way U-Haul truck (with 10' box) to return to Fairport from Albany. Truck only has 2 seats, so only one person is coming back with me. But I can bring more bikes and gear back to Fairport, if you live in the Rochester area.
9. Note that our ride schedule will be deconflicted with the Parks & Trails NY (a non-profit that lobbies Albany to improve/expand trails and improve parks) official annual Erie Canal ride (<https://www.ptny.org/cycle-the-erie-canal/annual-bike-tour/itinerary>). For cost comparison, note that their ride costs **\$1200** and includes the following: first you have to bring your own camping gear (typically moving indoors when rain is forecast, for example, into school gym), gear transport between overnights, every breakfast, most dinners, on call SAG wagon support for riders in trouble (extra fee for actual bike

Notes for Erie Canal Trail Ride 2024 by Scott Saunders, 3/16/24

repair). But our total ride vrbo house/hotels cost projects to be about **\$600** per person, assuming sharing hotel rooms with a roommate. That's a deal for a clean shower and a real bed the whole way!

10. Matt G. is able to secure free camping at state canal parks in some overnight locations, and is considering a few other low-cost campsite options. I'll always be staying in a nearby hotel with all the other hot shower and bed-craving riders.
11. Storm Shield app on my phone will alert me if there is a storm warning and if there is a lightning strike to ground within 10 miles of my moving GPS location. I can then look at that map for lightning strike location and approaching front direction on radar, long before thunder is heard. If we're in a threatened location, we'll divert to shelter before it's on us. I can also more proactively check radar at every water break stop, or more often if it's a high humidity pop up T-storm day.



12. We have been known to stop at a brewery or two on long rides, just for a sample. Brewery mapping is provided by New York Brewers Association app on my phone, which automatically updates frequently, but is about 3 months behind brewery openings and closings. That's where monitoring other more timely info sources, such as the weekly Cleveland Prost and Brew York & Beyond comes in handy for these long ride plans.



13. Matt's cycling training advice for newbies: "canal path is a flat trail, but you would need to get in shape to ride the whole thing, the biggest thing is getting a comfortable bike and getting 'seat time' so your butt isn't killing you. Generally, when getting into condition on a bike, you need to put in about 100 miles of riding time before your butt stops hurting. Pedal through the pain until then, it's worth it. Padded cycling shorts are a plus!"
14. My note to *want-to-be-cyclists*: My rare neuromuscular condition has gradually subtracted 50% of my leg strength (as measured on a horizontal leg press weight machine) over the last 15 years despite constant exercise, yet I can do this ride easily (even though pedaling is really a lightweight single leg press). In fact, on a cool day, I can ride 80 miles. I'll set no speed records as I ride my **60**-pound trike (loaded with accessories, tools, water) with the extra third tire worth of rolling resistance in the stone dust surface, but I can ride all day. So you *want-to-be-cyclists* can do this!! The key to doing *this* is conditioning regularly before the ride. There are no shortcuts to riding a non-electric bike over a significant distance, unless you already jog or swim frequently and have achieved great cardiovascular ability, thus potentially providing an easy ride for you this summer. Note that in the winter, when there is snow or when below 30 degrees F, I'll ride a recumbent stationary bike at the YMCA for 2 hours = 32 miles, 1200 calories burned (soaked with sweat), at least once a week. So, if you can get access to such a stationary bike for winter training, ride at least once a week and get close to my stats, and then supplement with longer rides outside in the spring. You will then have an easy ride with us on your 35-pound old heavy bike (that's **not heavy!**).
15. Websites of interest to this ride:
 - a. <https://www.ptny.org/cycletheeriecanal/planatrip/trailmap>
 - b. <https://empiretrail.ny.gov/buffalo-rochester/city-buffalo>
 - c. <https://rwparkbuffalo.org/shoreline-trail-detour-follow-this-route/>
 - d. <https://www.canals.ny.gov/maps/index.html?layer=trail>
 - e. <https://empiretrail.ny.gov/>
 - f. <https://bikeeriecanal.com/erie-canal-map.aspx>
 - g. <https://nycanalmap.com/>
 - h. <https://eriecanalway.org/explore/cycling>
 - i. <https://www.canals.ny.gov/>
 - j. <https://www.ptny.org/cycle-the-erie-canal/annual-bike-tour/merchandise/guide-book>
 - k. <https://www.ptny.org/cycle-the-erie-canal/the-trail/trail-closures>
 - l. <https://www.canals.ny.gov/trails/index.html>

16. What cyclists need to ride long distance in the summertime (**attention want-to-be-cyclists**):

- a. **Buy a bike helmet!**
- b. **Before the ride**, make sure your bike has been gone over fully by someone who knows bikes, to establish the following: chain is properly oiled, both derailleurs are perfectly adjusted to manage chain shifting (full gear range, no falloffs while riding), brakes are properly adjusted and work fine, there are no loose fasteners anywhere on your bike, your tires are pumped up to maximum pressure.
- c. **Buy an extra tube to fit your tires in case of a flat.** It's the quickest way to reliably get rolling again. Note that you should also carry these tools to deal with a flat anytime you're not riding with other tool carrying riders (assuming your bike has quick release hubs, no wrench needed): plastic tire levers, small needle nose pliers (for pulling puncture object out of your tire), air pump that interfaces to your tube valve type, tire pressure gauge, patch kit to fix your punctured tube later (overnight), or sooner if you get a very unlucky second flat that day. Newbies, review this 6-minute video concerning dealing with a flat: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58SttUM-Wow&list=PLGCTGpvdT04SCKR3pm1OsC5mUF9dapUuz>.
- d. **Buy these accessory items:** at least 2 water bottles of 20-24 oz capacity (note that I'll be riding with two 24 oz bottles **and** two 20 oz bottles each day to avoid dehydration), bike frame bottle holders, rear view mirror, bell (if you'll get tired of saying "passing on your left" to trail walkers), bike lock. Note that for summer hot weather riding, I use **LMNT** (<https://drinklmnt.com/>) electrolyte in my bottled water to avoid overhydration (water intoxication) and to replace the salt I lose every day. Note that if your salt deficient, your body can't hang onto what fresh water you drink, so your soon after drinking water potty stops increase as your dehydration accelerates. LMNT advises mixing each individual package into a bottle sized from 16 to 32 oz. I use 1 package in each of my 24 oz main bottles. If it's going to be really hot (above 85 with constant sun or high humidity), I'll split a 3rd package between my 20 oz bottles.
- e. **Bring your choice of energy snack to eat at water break time, when you need more energy.** Note that unlike other cyclists, I have to stop to drink water, can't drink on the move. So you'll get plenty of opportunities to snack.
- f. Consider wearing 100% synthetic clothing/socks during the ride: breaths better (you'll be cooler!); if it gets wet, its lighter because it doesn't hold the water volume of cotton; dries rapidly in the summer. I wear Under Armour heat gear in the summer and cold gear in the winter, along with occasional use of 100% synthetic cycling jerseys.
- g. For added safety, consider buying day flashers (visible in bright sunshine for over 1 mile) whenever you ride on a road, especially by yourself. I use these Bontrager USB rechargeable lights on my trike: Ion 200 RT white flasher forward; Flare RT red flasher pointed to rear. You can simply operate them manually. You don't usually need flashers on the trail, so conserve the battery while trail riding. I use their remote control (Bluetooth) mounted to handlebar, to quickly turn them both on/off while riding trail (off) to road (on) to trail (off). They also offer helmet mounts for anyone to add a second white flasher forward and second red flasher rearward up there, manually or remotely controlled. See the selection: https://www.trekbikes.com/us/en_US/equipment/bike-accessories/bike-lights/daytime-running-lights/c/E430/.

17. Cycling etiquette for anyone not familiar with organized pack riding, especially on roads (**attention want-to-be-cyclists**):

- a. **Being Predictable** - Group riding requires even more attention to predictability than riding alone. Other riders expect you to continue straight ahead at a constant speed unless you indicate differently. Don't stop suddenly.
- b. **Using Signals** - Use hand and verbal signals to communicate with members of the group and with other traffic.
- c. **Giving Warnings** - Warn bicyclists behind you well in advance of changes in your direction or speed. To notify the group of a change in path, the lead rider should call out "left turn" or "right turn" in addition to giving a hand signal. *Note that due to my special condition that delays speech, especially when breathing hard, I'll only use hand signals most of the time. Its up to second cyclist behind me to verbalize the warning.*
- d. **Only Passing on Left** - Slower traffic stays right, and you should only pass on their left. Notify someone you are about to pass with "on your left" or "passing" or ring a loud bell at least twice, if not more. Never pass on the right, as it is a common reaction to pull to the right when startled and a crash can easily be caused.
- e. **Announcing Hazards to Other Riders** - When riding in a group, most of the bicyclists do not have a good view of the road surface ahead, so it is important to announce holes, glass, gravel, grates, and other hazards. The leader should indicate road hazards by pointing down to the left or right, and by shouting "hole", "bump", "gravel", etc., where required for safety. *Note that I'll only use pointing hand signals most of the time. Its up to second cyclist behind me to verbalize the warning.*

Notes for Erie Canal Trail Ride 2024 by Scott Saunders, 3/16/24

- f. **Watching for Traffic Coming from the Rear** - Since those in front cannot see traffic approaching from the rear, it is the responsibility of the riders in back to inform the others by saying "car back!". Around curves, on narrow roads, or when riding double, it is also helpful to warn of traffic approaching from the front with "car up!". *Its up to second cyclist behind me to verbalize this warning.*
- g. **Watching Out at Intersections** - When approaching intersections that require vehicles to yield or stop, the lead rider will say "slowing" or "stopping" to alert those behind to the change in speed. *Note that I'll use raised hand signal. Its up to second cyclist behind me to verbalize the warning.*
- h. **Leaving a Gap for Cars** -When riding up hills or on narrow roads where you are impeding faster traffic, leave a gap for cars between every three or four bicycles. That way a motorist can take advantage of shorter passing intervals and eventually move piecemeal around the entire group.
- i. **Moving Off the Road when You Stop** - Whether you are stopping because of mechanical problems or to regroup with your companions, move well off the road so you don't interfere with vehicle traffic or other passing bicyclists. When you start up again, each cyclist should look for, and yield to, traffic.
- j. **Sharing the Road**- When traffic is present, it is more courteous to ride single file and to leave gaps for cars to pass. While in some instances riding two abreast is acceptable, it is important you be mindful of other road users. Take the vehicle lane only when necessary for safety reasons, such as an unusable shoulder area.
- k. **Wearing a Helmet at all Times when Riding** - Wearing a helmet is your best defense in the event of a crash, both physically and legally and required during all officially organized rides.
- l. **Use a mirror frequently**– To see vehicles and cyclists behind you, as they approach to pass.
- m. **Lights** – Most states or counties require lights for night riding: white front light visible for 500'; red rear light visible for 300'. For day riding on roads, high visibility day flashers are recommended.