



Road Trip Planner and Participation Guide

The goal of this document is to give you a tool to help you plan and participate in an event by sharing what we have learned over the last 6 years of conducting road trips for the Crossroads Miata Club and ideas from other clubs. These are not “rules”, but guidelines and best practices that we have seen or adopted. If this is your first time or twentieth time in leading an event hopefully you can use this guide to help you plan our next event.

Here is the outline of what this document covers. Remember this is a living document so as we learn more we will add or make improvements to it.

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1. Relax and Have Fun

Do not let yourself get so overwhelmed with task that you are not able to enjoy it as well. Ask for help and share the load. We have a lot of resources in the club that will be more than willing to help you out and work through the details together. If this is an event that you will enjoy then chances are so will everyone else. Though you want to be as thorough as possible in your planning, you don't have to have every minute or detail calculated out. Spontaneity and surprises are part of every great plan and usually provide some of the more memorable moments. We don't know of any event that hasn't had a curve or two thrown at it (pun intended) or a couple U-turns and even an unexpected road or restaurant closure. We improvise and keep going.

2. Planning Elements

a. Events Ideas and Activities

There are several things that can contribute to a good road trip idea. It can be fun and interesting place to visit and it can be fun and interesting getting there. If it is all four then you have hit the jackpot. Good sources of ideas are the state's visitor or park guides, search the internet for "good day trips near ... (pick a city)" and sometime just picking up and studying a map. They can be simple day trips or weekend excursions or even week(s) long events. Stating the obvious maybe, but the longer the trip the more planning is needed and recommend that you team up with a planning partner(s) on the weekend or week-long trips.

b. Duration and Travel Time

For day trips recommend that the events run 6-8 hours from start to finish. Assuming a start time of 8AM then that gets everyone close to home around 2-4PM. That gives everyone the evening at home if they want it and you only must plan for maybe only one meal while on the road. Longer events are fine, just understand that it may limit some participation and give you some additional planning to do.

Recommend that travel time between breaks (restrooms, gas or lunch) be 1 ½ to 2 hours maximum. This keeps everyone alert, and comfortable. When planning your routes, keep that as a consideration and using a route planner like google maps or Garmin BaseCamp will help with estimating the travel time, more on that later.

Keep in mind rush hours, if that may apply, and check for any special events scheduled for the day of your run that might affect traffic along the route, such as major sporting event traffic or parade routes.

For multi-day trips the travel time becomes important from both a scheduling standpoint and safety concern. Everyone wants to "get there" so they can enjoy the location, but driving fatigue needs to be considered. Frequent breaks will help but still should consider a driving distance of 400-500 miles in one day as typical and preferably not back to back. Get a feel from those who are likely to

attend what they think their driving duration tolerance is. Most safety resources recommend no more than an 8-10 hour driving day total, which includes breaks and meals.

c. Anticipated Attendance or Size Limitations

Attempt to get an early feel for the amount of interest you have in the event and give it your best guess at how many will be attending. This will help you to plan your event accommodations such as restaurants and hotels. As the event gets closer ask for a RSVP or utilize e-invite to get an accurate headcount

You may have to limit the size of the group or split it into two groups if there are restrictions as to the number of people or cars the venue can accommodate.

d. Route Planning

This can be the most time-consuming part of planning your event. Remember it is not just about the destination but the adventure of getting there as well. Look for Fun roads with some curves and hills, scenic views and interesting sites or attractions. Start with a map and look at the possible routes. Look for a starting point that makes sense logistically and can accommodate the gathering of Miatas, somewhere with a large parking lot with easy access to gas and to the start of the route. Avoid dirt or gravel roads and avoid intersections that may be difficult to cross. Recommend using a route planner like google maps or Garmin BaseCamp to help map your route and determine distances and run-times. Look for stopping points every 90 minutes to 2 hours for restroom breaks of 15-20 minutes (more under accommodations later). In congested areas plan ahead for rally points or pullovers if the caravan gets split up or separated.

If possible, the route should be driven to check the road conditions, stops and accuracy of directions.

e. Lunches and Dinners

Think out of the box when you can for lunch/dinner breaks. Locally ran restaurants unique to the area are a great treat over chain restaurants when possible. Make sure everyone is aware of the type of cuisine expected in case there are any dietary restrictions or concerns. Consider price and if gratuity is automatic. Research the restaurant for recent reviews if possible; first hand recommendations are even better. Plan ahead and make sure the restaurant can handle the anticipated size of the group. Also, you may want to discuss with the manager to see if there is a better off peak time to visit, for example 1PM verse Noon and will extra servers be available to speed the process along. Also, do not rule out picnic or box lunches if there are tables and restroom facilities available. Allow plenty of time for everyone to eat, visit and rest a bit before hitting the road.

f. Accommodations

When talking about accommodations we need to think of all the different events planned for the outing and what accommodations are needed.

1. Parking lots for gathering: Are they large enough, how busy are they, will it not disrupt business, easy exit
2. Gas Stations: can it handle multiple cars, area to park while waiting for others, restrooms, easy exit
3. Restrooms: can it handle a crowd, clean
4. Restaurant: seating, parking, number of servers, speed of service, menu, price,
5. Attractions: Price, associated parking, large group discounts, any capacity issues
6. Hotels: Could be a whole subject within itself. Location, Clean, recent reviews, Price, Available rooms, parking, breakfast included or availability of restaurants.

g. Rules of the Road

The first and last rule of the road is “Be Safe”. Do not drive beyond your own comfort zone. Follow the posted speed limits. Since many of our routes will include travel through small towns watch for changing speed zones.

Since we will typically be driving in a caravan, be aware of passing zones and move over if not passing. Keep a safe distance from the car in front of you, but do not allow such a wide gap that it encourages outside cars to join in. If you decide that you want to drive at a significantly different pace let the group know and we can adjust speed or agree to meet at one of the rally points.

h. Organizing the Caravan

Set up the caravan with a Lead, at least one Rocker, and Sweep. The Lead is usually the organizer of the event but not always. **The Lead** sets the pace and announces all upcoming turns or traffic issues. As the Lead you may not want to drive as fast as you normally might. The Lead and Rocker needs to keep an eye behind them, so they don't leave people. Keep in mind that the longer the line, the more the cars will get strung out and need to catch up. Give them a chance to do so without risking a ticket. **The Rocker** sits in the middle of the caravan and relays information/announcements to the back and front of the caravan. For larger groups there may be a need for two or more Rockers to make sure the messages get relayed. The Sweep is the last Miata in the caravan. **The Sweep** reports on cars dropping out the group, confirms clearance of intersections or turns, and relays forward any traffic concerns coming up from behind or if the group is getting too spread out.

Depending upon the route and location, the maximum manageable size of a caravan is typically 12-16 cars. If the group is much larger than that then consideration should be given to splitting the group into two caravans, separated by 15 – 20 minutes. However, each group will need to have it's own Lead, Rocker and Sweep. It is recommended that you set up the Lead, Rocker and Sweeps prior to the days event. All Leads and Sweeps should be familiar with routes and schedules and have a copy of the maps and itinerary.

You may also want to consider splitting larger groups into sub-groups based upon driving style such as leisurely drivers and more aggressive drivers. You could also utilize this approach just on certain sections of the drive as well.

i. Preparing for the Event

If possible, prior to the event the route should be driven to check the road conditions, stops and accuracy of directions. Several days prior to the event follow-up on any reservations that have been made and confirm the number of attendees. Prepare a handout for all the drivers with route agenda, directions, rally points, and the Lead cell phone number. Another good idea is to have a list of attendees with cell phone numbers so if the group gets separated and out of radio contact we have a way to make contact.

j. Itinerary and Maps

When you put your itinerary together make sure to allow plenty of time for breaks and lunches. Don't make the agenda so tight that we can enjoy the day. Keep everyone on schedule but don't feel you have to be the task master. We all will help with keeping the group on schedule. Allow for some slippage in the schedule so you don't have to stress out over it.

If you use a trip planner like google maps or Garmin BaseCamp then you can print out a map and turn-by-turn instructions with times. At a minimum you should include the address of all meeting or rally points so other drivers can plug the addresses into their GPS if desired.

k. Fees and Expected Expenses

Make sure to communicate to the group prior to the event any expected entrance fees or other charges that may be required. With restaurants you should give a general range of prices, such low priced, moderately priced, Moderate to High Price, or High Priced.

With hotels let the group know if we have a group rate and related reference number if needed, when reservations must be made by and reservation phone numbers. We should also know what the cancellation policy is.

l. Weather and Plan B

If the weather looks like it may become an issue, then that should be discussed at the drivers meeting. Remember the number one road rule is Safety. Plan B may be just to visit with friends at the local restaurant and cancel the event. That is OK, it happens. If the event is weather dependent (i.e. Trash Pick-up) let everyone know what the plan will be if it rains and to expect a call or text message if the event is changed.

3. Day of the Event

a. Drivers Meeting

Start the day off right by starting on time. Have the drivers meeting 15 minutes prior to planned departure time. Discuss the route, timing, special conditions or concerns, and radio channels. Pass out any agendas or maps you have created. Identify the Lead, Rocker and Sweep.

b. Headcount

Verify the headcount matches up with those who said they would attend. If someone is running late, they should contact you and agree to meet you at one of the rally points later. If you have not heard from them attempt to contact them by phone. You will have to decide how long you can afford to wait on someone running late, if at all.

c. Contact Information

Make sure everyone in the group has your cell phone number. If you do not already have a name list with contact information past a list around the group and have them print their name and number on the list and keep it with the leader. You could also let everyone take a photo of the list with their cell phone for reference if needed.

d. Radios

Each car should have a walkie-talkie with them. Confirm the Radio Channel to be used. We usually utilize channel 5. A lot of the drivers carry spare radio if needed. Encourage all drivers to use the radios to communicate concerns or issues to each other during the drive.

e. Rally Points

Review any rally points with the drivers in the event the group gets separated.

f. Road Conditions and Safety

Review with the drivers any concerns with the road conditions, weather and general safety precautions to be taken.

Keep the gap between Miata safe, but tight, so as not to invite other vehicles to interrupt the caravan.

They should not pass other Miatas in the caravan without notification.

Remind drivers that they need to take into consideration the drivers behind them by allowing room for following cars to maneuver or pull in as needed. A good example is when passing a slower vehicle: Once they pass the vehicle do not immediately slow down, create a gap for the following Miatas to pull into.

Encourage ALL the cars to use the radios to communicate concerns or issues to the group.

g. Returning Home

Some of the drivers may leave from the final direction straight back to their home and some may follow the group back to the starting point. Make sure you know who is departing and who is following so no one is left behind at the end of the day and all know how to get home.

4. After the Event

a. Evaluate

Take some time and evaluate how the event went. If you think of items that could improve the next event, please share them so we can add them to our check list.

b. Thank you

Reach out to those that helped you and thank them. Pat yourself on the back... you did a great job.

Updated ~~7/9/2019~~ 10/14/2021
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