BUDGET OUTLINE

A GUIDE FOR NEW RACERS AND TEAMS

A Note From A Crew Chief

Budgeting for the Race Across America can be an overwhelming experience for new racers and teams. This document outlines average costs of essential items every team will need to compete in RAAM. This is not a how-to guide for crewing or completing RAAM, rather a general outline to project rough cost of the event.

For the most part, there is a fixed cost for entry fee, fuel, and crew. Costs increase as additional crew and vehicles are added to your team. Many teams and racers adopt the *more is better* approach their first time out, but too many crew members and vehicles can be just as difficult to manage as too few.

In 2012, I was a rookie Crew Chief and had as close to a blank check as possible. We showed up in Oceanside with 15 crew members, 2 follow vehicles, 3 auxiliary vehicles, a 40 foot RV, and anything we could think of that might break. We spent over $75,000 on 10 days and 22 hours of hell. There were so many people and vehicles to manage I felt like I was in a constant state of damage control.

The following year we had a firm budget. The credit cards stopped working at $13,000 no matter where we were. We showed up in Oceanside with 5 crew, 2 vehicles and the bare essentials. We didn't sleep much and when we did it was on the side of the road or in a twisted heap in the back seat of the auxiliary vehicle. It was a light and fast RAAM, we fixed everything with tape and zip ties and sustained ourselves on peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. We hit our shoestring budget with $500 to spare. It bought us 9 days and 16 hours of discomfort and poor hygiene but other than that it was a piece of cake compared to the year before.

In 2014, I was given a blank check again (this time for a 4-Person team) and having tested both extremes. I was confident when I requested or vetoed items on the checklist. We brought 8 crew members, 2 follow vehicles and a small RV. We spent some nights in hotels and others on the side of the road, ate out of coolers a lot and occasionally bought take-out from restaurants. Other than a few bumps here and there the team finished within 3 hours of my projected finish time (7D12H).

The reality of the situation is that there is no magic number of crew or vehicles that will be correct 100% of the time and no amount of planning will make up for experience on the course. If this is your first RAAM, read this document and calculate a rough "Mid-Range" budget. This will give you a general idea of how much you are going to spend. From that point you can add and remove line items as you plan out the systems you will implement.

As a final note, finding a balance is essential. You can spend a lot of money to make RAAM more comfortable for the racer(s) and crew but most times a comfortable race and a fast race are inversely related. A rider with a big comfortable RV that has a shower and a bed will almost always spend more time stopped than a rider with only a musty minivan, a camping pad in a corn field, and a bucket of cold soapy water for cleaning.

Sincerely,

David Stiles

RAAM Budgeting

Entry Fee: The cost to enter the race is arranged in a three (3) tiered structure with: (1) an early registration discount, (2) a standard registration fee and (3) a late registration fee. Please visit the RAAM website for this year's official entry fees.

Race Category	Early Registration	Standard Registration	Late Registration
Solo	$2950	$3450	$3795
2-Person Team	$4495	$5295	$5795
4-Person Team	$7450	$8550	$9450
8-Person Team	$12995	$13995	$14995

Support Vehicles

Support Vehicles will be a large part of your overall budget. Personal vehicles are often the cheapest but many teams rent vehicles for the race. The downside to renting a vehicle is if you are returning the vehicle to a different location than from where you picked it up the cost is much higher. The upside is, provided you purchase additional insurance (highly recommended), you can spill as much soda and coffee on the seats as you like without feeling too bad.

Follow Vehicle: The most popular follow vehicle is a minivan. The **Chrysler Town and Country** is available through most companies. They have rear sliding doors and windows which make rider support easy and plenty of space for gear and riders. They also have Sto-and-Go seats which can be folded into the floor in a couple seconds to make a large open space a rider can sleep in.

Mini Van Rental Same Pick-up Drop-off Location $1,500-$2,000

Mini Van Rental One-Way Rental $2,500-$4,000

Auxiliary Vehicle: An Auxiliary Vehicle is a vehicle used to shuttle gear, riders and supplies forward along the course. These vehicles are not primary Follow Vehicles but can be made into one if need be (see *RAAM Rules* for details). They are often vans or SUVs. It is not uncommon for a 4 or 8-Person Team to require 1-3 extra Auxiliary Vehicles.

Recreational Vehicle (RV): Many teams use an RV as their primary living space during the race. Over the 7-12 days your team will be racing, anywhere from 5-18 crew and racers will be living out of your vehicles. An RV is a great way for crew and racers to rest while on the road. Even if you never use the amenities of an RV, a rolling bed is worth its weight in gold to a sleep deprived crew or racer. The best solution for an RV is to have your own or to borrow one from a friend. Renting through Cruise America or a local dealer in your area is always an option but make sure you reserve early because mid-June is prime RV season.

RV Rental: $3,000-$4,000 Same Location, $6,000+ One Way Rental. (if available)

RV Amenities

Teams who plan to use the air conditioner, toilet and kitchen in an RV should budget an **additional $200-$500 in propane and waste dumps.**

Fuel: Fuel is often underestimated by first-time RAAM teams. It is a good idea to expect your Follow Vehicle to average 12 MPG for the 3,000 miles of the race. This is due to the fact that it will be running nearly continuously for the duration of the race and will be driving at about 10-15 MPH most of the time.

How Far Will We Drive? If you live near or along the race course you need to factor, at the bare minimum, 6,200 miles for any vehicle that will make the round trip. One-way trips (rentals) will drive somewhere between 3,200 and 3,600 miles depending on how much driving you do off course. Standard Cruise America RVs are gasoline and average about 10 MPG but some smaller diesel RVs can average upwards of 20 MPG which should be

taken into account.

Follow Vehicle: One-Way $1,000 on course (3,200 miles at 12MPG), Round Trip $1,500-$1,800*

Auxiliary Vehicle: One-Way $500-$800, Round Trip $1,000-$1,600*

RV: One-Way $1,200, Round Trip $2,400*

* Average fuel price calculated at $3.50 a gallon.

Follow Vehicle Setup: Expect to equip each Follow Vehicle with organizational supplies such as plastic drawers or baskets. Some teams build a bed for Racers to sleep. A Follow Vehicle will need a bike rack (a roof rack or rear rack), rear lights, and a slow moving vehicle triangle (rear lights and slow moving triangle can be purchased through the RAAM online store).

Follow Vehicle Setup Budget $250-$500

PA System: Each Follow Vehicle should be equipped with a PA (public address) system that allows the crew to communicate directions to the rider on course. The cheapest and easiest way to do this is to purchase a CB radio ($40-$50) with a “PA” function and a 15-25 watt PA speaker ($20-$30). Mount the speaker to the roof rack of the follow vehicle with pipe clamps and wire the radio to the battery of the car (Speaker wire, connectors, fuse, tape, and pipe clamps = $20)

PA System Budget $100

External Music System: Most Solo racers and some teams have external speaker systems to play music to the rider while the follow vehicle is behind them. This may be considered a luxury to 4 and 8-person teams because riders are taking shorter pulls, but for the Solo racer who spends upwards of 22 hours a day in the saddle they are almost a

necessity.

A base music system will include: a car stereo, amp and two speakers in boxes (wrap them in Tyvek) you will mount to the roof of the vehicle. Consult your local jack of all trades to build and wire this.

Music System Budget $400

Navigation Equipment: Navigation is fairly straightforward, but having a few supplies is necessary for each vehicle. At the very least this is the route book and pens (lots of pens). You should also consider: calculators, headlamp, batteries, a clip board, and highlighters.

You can take this further with electronic navigation such as handheld GPS devices, in-car GPS devices, or computers.

Navigational Equipment Budget $100-$250

Additional Vehicle Supplies: Additional supplies include: Tools, Fuses, Jumper Cables, Spare Keys, Contact Paper, Sunscreen for each vehicle, notebooks, etc.

Additional Vehicle Supplies $100-$250

Communication Equipment: You will need to communicate between Crew members, Support Vehicles, to the Racers, and to Race Headquarters. Most people have mobile phones now but for international teams and crew who do not want to use personal phones your best option is to use a pay as you go SIM card or a pay as you go phone. All of the top providers have plans you can pay for a month at a time. It is recommended to purchase an unlimited plan with SMS so you can call and text without worry of extra fees. Remember that about 2/3 to 3/4 of the race has cell coverage so you should have an alternate means to communicate.

You can purchase handheld GMRS radios at most electronic and department stores. These are relatively inexpensive (less than $100) and have a range of about 1-2 miles depending on terrain. They are very useful for teams to coordinate rider exchanges.

You can purchase or rent professional radios as well. These are similar to CBs and can have a range of 5 to 15 miles depending on terrain. The cost of these radios varies greatly and should be sourced in your local area prior to the race.

A relatively new product available is a Bluetooth Cycling Headset. The Cardo BK-1 is quite popular and allows riders to communicate with the follow car very easily. **These headsets cost about $200 each ($400 a pair)**

Communication Budget $200 ($600 with Bluetooth headsets)

Racers

Nutrition: Most Racers have a preferred liquid nutrition that they will bring a full supply of for the race. Racers of 4 and 8-Person Teams don't necessarily need liquid nutrition and can eat regular food. It certainly doesn't hurt to use liquid nutrition as it is normally cheaper per calorie.

A full supply of liquid nutrition for the race is about $450-$600 depending on brand. You will have to assess what you use, how much you need and how much is costs per calories. On average: A Solo Racer or a racer on a 2-Person Team will consumer in excess of 7000 calories a day. A 4-Person Team racer may consumer 5000-7000 calories a day while an 8-Person team racer may consumer 4000 calories a day.

With liquid nutrition, you will generally only need to buy water and ice and perhaps some food here and there. **Consider budgeting $15-$25 per day on course.**

For racers that will eat solid food, they will have a good appetite. **Consider budgeting $20-$40 per day per racer.**

Bikes and Equipment: This is a wide open category. Most racers have a couple bikes and all the gear they need but be sure to factor in things like: additional water bottles, chamois lube, spare bike parts, inner tubes and all the other little things that could end your race in the middle of nowhere.

Crew

Crew Food: It is common practice for the racer(s) to pay for all of the Crew food within reason. It's also common practice to expect crew to pay for some of their food that is above normal meals. An easy way to budget is to allocate $15-$25 per day of cash up front. If a crew member spends beyond that, they are on their own. Another method is to have someone in charge of buying Cooler Food (deli meat and cheese, peanut butter and jelly, bread, fruit, water, juice, nuts, crackers, etc). If you always have plenty of this on hand, the crew can eat as they get hungry or tired. Anything extra they want they can buy themselves. The cost ends up being about the same in the end.

Solo Crew: $225-$375 Per Crew Member 15 days total (11 on course, 2 on either end)

2 and 4-Person Teams: $180-$300 Per Crew Member 12 days total (8 on course, 2 on either end)

8 Person Teams: $165-$285 Per Crew member 11 days total (7 on course, 2 on either end)

Crew Transportation: Another common practice is for a racer(s) to pay for their crew's transportation to and from the event. On average, a North America based racer will spend **$300-$500 per person in flights** to San Diego (closest to Oceanside) and from Baltimore-Washington (closest to Annapolis). International flights vary but are often **$700-$1000 depending on the origin.**

Lodging: Oceanside

Oceanside: Teams often arrive in Oceanside at least 2 nights before the start. There are a number of budget **hotels in the area for $100-$120 a night**. Most sleep four (4) people in a room for crew and one to two (1-2) per room for racer(s).

Oceanside is somewhat of a destination community. Rental houses and condos for several days are often available through real estate agents or can be found on Craigslist. This may or may not be cheaper than a hotel, however, it will be cozier than a hotel and allows for cooking of team meals. Just be sure a rental property has sufficient parking for your vehicles.

If you have rented or borrowed an RV, there are a few campgrounds nearby with full hook ups or the city parking lot for dry camping.

Lodging: On Course

Hotels During the Race: This is entirely up to each race plan. For teams, plan for 1-2 nights in a hotel (2 or 3 rooms) to shower and get a few hours of good sleep. For Solos, consider 1-3 nights (1-2 rooms) for the crew to shower and sleep.

A good way to maximize your hotel rooms is to have the crew and/or racers coming off a day shift (in the evening) drive ahead the estimated distance it will take the racer(s) on course to catch them by the end of the overnight shift. When the night shift riders go off shift they can utilize the same hotel room until checkout (normally 10 or 11am).

Costs can vary significantly, as low as $40 per night all the way to over $150, depending on where you are. If you are in a medium size city expect an **average of $100 a night**

Lodging: Annapolis

Annapolis: Most crews stay in Annapolis 2-3 nights after they finish. Depending on when a team finishes they may have to wait a day before their scheduled banquet.

Annapolis does have does some rental properties but they are not as abundant as in Oceanside. Also, renting a house in Annapolis is a little more risky because the chances of accurately predicting finish time are pretty low. A hotel is often more flexible with adjusting your reservation. Again, you can stay in your RV if you have rented one, but at this point you are more than likely ready for a real bed.

Expect to spend in excess of $120/night at the finish

Miscellaneous

Banquets: Each team is given a number of banquet tickets for the Crew and Racers (Solo = 8, 2-Person = 10, 4-Person = 12, 8-Person =16). It is general practice that the Racer pays for any extra crew members above the number of tickets provided. **Banquet tickets are $50 per person.**

Clothing and Memorabilia: Many racers have team clothing – polo shirts, t-shirts, jackets – with the team and sponsors names on them. Even a simple t-shirt can build team unity. Expect to spend $50-$100 on design and setup costs. T-shirts are usually relatively inexpensive **around $10 each.** Some Racers have custom jerseys, jackets, or shorts made for the race. These look great and very professional. A jersey design can be several hundred dollars and each piece of cycling clothing is likely to be **$50 or more.**

Shipping: If you are not driving at least one Support Vehicle to the start, you will likely have to ship some of your supplies to the start, including bikes, spare wheels, and perhaps some other supplies. **Budget $300-$500 for shipping**

Plus 10: There are always unexpected expenses. An additional 10% should be added for the unexpected. Flat tire(s) on support vehicles, an extra night at a hotel, bicycle and vehicle mechanical issues.

Crew and Vehicle Examples: These are recommendations for average Solo Racers and Teams. There are outliers like the 2014 8-Person Team that completed the race with only two crew members or a Solo Racer with a 45' RV, five support vehicles, and fifteen crew members. The bullet points listed below are to give new racers and teams a starting point to work from.

Use these recommendations in the RAAM Budget Workbook to calculate a base budget.

- **Solo Low-End:** 2 vehicles (1 minivan 1 SUV), 4 crew members. Lodging on course: camping and 1-2 hotels.
- **Solo Mid-Range:** 2 vehicles (1 minivan, 1 RV), 6 crew members. Lodging on course: dry camp RV and 2-3 hotels.
- **2-Person Team Low-End:** 2 vehicles (2 minivans), 6 crew members. Lodging on course: camping and 1-2 hotels.
- **2-Person Team Mid-Range:** 3 vehicles (2 minivans, 1 RV), 8 crew members. Lodging on course: dry camp RV and 2-3 hotels.
- **4-Person Team Low-End:** 3 vehicles (2 minivans, 1 RV), 8 crew members. Lodging on course: dry camp RV and 1-2 hotels.
- **4-Person Team Mid-Range:** 3 vehicles (2 minivans, 1 RV), 10 crew members. Lodging on course: dry camp RV and 2-4 hotels.
- **8-Person Team Low-End:** 4 vehicles (2 minivans, 1 other, 1 RV), 6 crew members. Lodging on course: dry camp RV and 1-2 hotels. Note: Riders will help drive vehicles
- **8-Person Team Mid-Range:** 5 Vehicles (2 minivans, 2 other, 1 RV), 10 crew members. Lodging on course: dry camp RV and 2-4 hotels.