

Blue Ridge Relay: 2026 Team Handbook

Thank you for joining us for the 22nd consecutive running of the Blue Ridge Relay. If you've run before, then you've heard me say that as your race director and fellow runner, my desire in organizing this event is to share the beauty of the North Carolina and Virginia Blue Ridge Mountains, through a perspective that very few experience.

BRR has grown considerably since the Relay began in 2005 with 10 teams. It is an honor and a huge compliment that teams return year after year. Our growth over the last 2 decades is largely attributed to runners spreading the word. Thank you for running with us.

For those who are new this year, we know that runners thrive on stats...our starting line at Grayson Highlands State Park has an elevation of 4919' and the finish at Highland Brewing Company is 2124'. In total, the course has an approximate loss of 19,158' versus a gain of 16,368'. Even though the elevation will change, sometimes quickly, remember to enjoy the mountain countryside, the creeks, the mountain hollows and the big views.

Our excitement for the Relay is surpassed by concern for everyone's safety. The following pages highlight some information that is posted on the website and some that is new. Please be diligent to review information on the website, emphasizing Rules and Regulations, Driver's Info and the Captain's Corner. If you have not run an event like this, be prepared, because you will be challenged. During the relay, we will post course updates such as weather alerts, emergency notes, course updates, etc... in text messages to those runners who signed up for race day text messaging. However, the Relay Officials at the exchange zones will remain the primary contact for emergency and non-emergency items.

The Blue Ridge Relay has the most participants of any athletic event that occurs in the North Carolina and Virginia High Country, with the exception of the last Legs in Asheville. Even though we'll have 198 runners on the roads at any given time, the distance, the time spread, the time of day, the vans, etc... make the Blue Ridge Relay very visible to and impact many residents. Please remember that the Blue Ridge Relay wouldn't exist without the support of our local mountain communities, the people and authorities. Please respect, at all times, their mountain home.

Once again, WELCOME! to the Blue Ridge Relay. If we could assist in any way, please contact us (336-877-8888 or info@blueridgerelay.com.)

To The Start,

Ken Sevensky
Director, Blue Ridge Relay

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The notes of this Handbook apply to all competitors, team support staff, spectators, and event staff and volunteers. This was designed to make your experience safe, smooth, enjoyable, and rewarding.

Additional References

Runners, drivers, support staff, etc... need to reference the following documents, in addition to this Handbook:

1. Rules and Penalties (found under Team Information on the website)
2. 2026 Driver Info (found under Team Information on the website)
3. Leg Maps and Leg Map Links (found under Course Maps on the website)
4. RaceJoy (runner GPS tracking): (found on the RaceJoy page under Team Info)

Weather Conditions

Please be prepared for a variety of weather conditions. For every 1000' increase in elevation, expect the temperature to drop 2.2 – 5.3 degrees. The climate and weather is comparable to Canada! The average daily high temperature has a range of 50s-70s degrees and low temperature 30-59 degrees. Be prepared for rain, higher winds, and quickly changing weather at these higher elevations. To summarize, **be prepared for extremes**, as has been said, "If you don't like the weather, just wait 5 minutes."

Extreme Weather

In the event of extreme inclement weather or other major event, the Blue Ridge Relay will follow the advice of county emergency management. It is typical for BRR to be spread through several counties. As such, BRR will comply with the request/advice of emergency management of any county through which BRR runs. Therefore, there is a risk that BRR could be suspended or terminated at the advice of emergency management. Exchange Zone staff will be notified and will enforce the decision of race management. In addition, all runners who signed up for race-day text messaging will also be notified. All teams must comply.

In the event of localized extreme inclement weather, such as lightning, exchange zone staff have authority to suspend the BRR at a specific exchange zone for the safety of runners, staff and volunteers. All teams at that exchange zone must comply. Runners who signed up for race-day text messaging will also be notified.

If the race is suspended, all teams must retrieve their runner from the course so the runner has shelter in the team vehicle and then report to the nearest exchange zone. Before the race resumes, a decision by BRR management will be made regarding the progress of BRR. The decision may range from returning the runner to the course at the location of retrieval to advancing all teams a specified number of legs.

Time of day of suspension and when BRR resumes will be recorded. However, there are many external, uncontrolled circumstances that influence BRR and are part of BRR. As such, the time of suspension may or may not be considered in the BRR results. BRR management will consider the circumstances and make a decision.

Safety Concerns

We believe runners should always run defensively. Please be advised that you will be running on a course that is open to normal traffic. Roads will be posted with caution signs to approaching traffic. All runners should be alert to traffic, blind turns and road conditions.

Every year we receive questions about safety, especially at night. If you are concerned about safety:

1. County Sheriff Departments and Local Law Enforcement are informed of the Relay's presence, of the roads we're using and the respective time of day. They may be seen patrolling the course.
2. Companion runners are permissible, but must be a member of the team. Please refer to the rules for complete details.
3. Team vehicles are NOT permitted to "shadow" their runners and team vehicles are NOT permitted to "leap-frog" their runners (please see rule II-10). Vans must drive directly to the next EZ.
4. You can carry a small canister of pepper spray.
5. Carrying your cell phone may or may not offer comfort. Sections of course do not have cell service.
6. RaceJoy, runner tracking is available. The runner must carry a mobile phone for Race Joy tracking.
7. Partner with a runner from another team.

First Aid

Each support vehicle should carry a well-stocked first aid kit and ice. Be prepared to know how to use it.

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Communication

There are several sections of the BRR course that do not have cell reception. Dial 911 in case of an emergency. Blue Ridge Relay officials at each exchange zone will have access to emergency contact information.

Road Conditions

The roads used for the Blue Ridge Relay in the North Carolina and Virginia mountains are mostly rural, narrow and have little or no paved shoulder. Two Cautions:

First Caution to runners: when traffic is approaching, yield the road to approaching vehicles and be very careful when stepping onto the gravel/grass shoulder. Look before you step and step onto the shoulder earlier than normal to ensure good footing.

Second Caution to drivers: We need to drive with caution, awareness and on many roads below the speed limit regardless of shoulder conditions. In many places, if your tires leave the road, you risk damage to your vehicle, getting stuck and even sliding into a creek.

Rules and Penalties:

Please refer to the website for a complete listing. Every runner and driver **MUST** comply with the rules.

Course Markings

The course will be marked as follows:

1. One yellow directional sign (18" x 24") before each turn.
2. One yellow confirmation sign (18" x 12") with black arrow after each turn.
3. One yellow "EXCHANGE ZONE" sign will be posted approximately ¼ mile before the exchange zone. This is not the beginning of the exchange zone, but an alert sign for runners and drivers that the exchange zone is approaching. When approaching an Exchange Zone, drivers please slow and approach with caution.
4. Signs during the night legs will be highlighted with blue blinking lights.
5. Van directional signs are white with orange letters.

However, as noted in the Rules, it is the responsibility of the runner to navigate the course. Please note that signs may read "BRR" or "Relay". Signs will be posted on the Left side of the road. However, signs will be posted on the Right when the leg notes/description instruct runners to run on the right. Occasionally signs do disappear. So, memorizing or carrying your cue sheet is highly advised.

Grayson Highlands State Park

The Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Conservation and Recreation, and Grayson Highlands State Park have issued a Special Use Permit to the Blue Ridge Relay. Please refer to the Rules and Penalties on the website for a full list of Park rules.

1. Grayson Highlands State Park is 45:00 from Jefferson/West Jefferson, 1:15-1:30 from Boone. Please allow extra time for the drive. The roads, which access the Park, are winding, narrow and secondary.
2. Upon entering Grayson Highlands, each team vehicle must check-in at the gate. You must know your team name to check-in. Ultra teams are permitted to have one team vehicle, all other teams are permitted to have 2 team vehicles. Any additional vehicles entering the Park are required to pay a park fee of \$15 for high occupancy vehicles and \$7 for other vehicles, payable at the gate.
3. All Park rules apply. The speed limit is strictly enforced.
4. Team Packet Pick-up must be completed at least 30 minutes prior to the start of your team's wave. Sign-in at the starting line will take place 15 minutes prior to the start of your team's wave. The Start is at the Visitor's Center, located 4 miles after passing through the Park entrance gate. Upon entering the park, do not stop at the Ranger's Station, which is located just inside the gate. The Ranger's Station is EZ 1 and parking space is not adequate for additional vehicles.

Blue Ridge Parkway

The United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service and Blue Ridge Parkway have issued a Special Use Permit to the Blue Ridge Relay to access the Blue Ridge Parkway. In addition to the established rules and regulations of these organizations, the following will apply to the Blue Ridge Relay:

1. Runners are NOT permitted to run on or along the motor road. The BRR permit is to run the Mountains to Sea Trail (MST) only. It is permissible to run the shoulder of the Parkway when on MST.

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- Runners will cross the Blue Ridge Parkway motor road several times. When crossing, runners must yield to vehicles on the motor road and cross only when it's safe. The crossings will be staffed and runners must comply with instructions from race officials.
- Support vehicles may use the Parkway to navigate from EZ34 to EZ35. Support vehicles are NOT permitted on the Parkway south of Craven Gap (EZ35) and must follow alternative driving directions to navigate from EZ35 to the Finish.
- Use of drones within the National Park is illegal and is a federal offense.

Counties and Municipalities

The Blue Ridge Relay has received permission from the following counties: Grayson, Ashe, Watauga, Avery, Mitchell, Yancey, and Buncombe. Permission has also been received from the towns of Jefferson, West Jefferson, Blowing Rock, Newland, Spruce Pine, Burnsville, and Asheville. Please respect these communities, which graciously allow our event access to their roadways.

Team Sign-in

Teams have 2 options for packet pick-up: Pre-BRR Dinner Thursday evening and at the Start Line, Friday morning, at least 30 minutes before your team's scheduled start time.

- Runner Order must be submitted at packet pick-up. Bib# Order must match Runner Order.
- Race bracelets will be issued and used at the team baton, passed between runners at the exchange zones.
- Runner bibs will be issued. Bibs sequence must match runner sequence. Bibs must be worn on the front and must be visible. A bag of 50 safety pins will also be provided.
- Timing Chips will be issued and must be worn by your runner on Leg 36 only.
- Team bag and any merchandise that your runners pre-ordered.
- Bibs #13 and #14 (Bibs #7 for Ultra teams) are to be placed on the dashboard of the team vehicles.
- Not all team members are required to be at the start or packet pick-up.

Start Line

Teams should be at the Start Line a minimum of 30 minutes prior to their start to pick up their race packets and a minimum of 15-minutes if your team went through packet pick-up Thursday evening. All runners are welcome at the Start, but the team's lead vehicle and lead runners only need to be at the Start (if two vehicles are used).

Several items will be addressed at this time:

- Team packet pick-up
- Vehicle inspection
- Inspection of reflective vests, flashlights and blinking lights (if you have questions).
- Inspection of van decorations. Please decorate your vans in good taste.

Best Decorated Van Competition

The Best Decorated Van Competition will be judged at the Start Line by Blue Ridge Relay staff and volunteers. Please decorate in good taste.

Restroom Facilities

Restroom facilities and/or port-a-johns will be available at all Exchange Zones. Please use them.

Food and Beverages

Be prepared. The stores and gas stations in the rural towns of North Carolina's High Country may not be open around the clock. However, several community groups will have food and other services available for sale.

Please be prepared with cash. For veteran teams, please note that some EZs that had food in past years will not have food this year due to flooding from Hurricane Helene (e.g. EZ9 Riverside Restaurant no longer exists).

EZ 5: Friendly Grove Baptist Church Youth Group: Baked goods, concessions and iced drinks.

EZ12: Boone: lots of restaurants and grocery stores nearby.

EZ 17: Newland Elementary PTO: Baked potato bar with butter, sour cream, cheese, bacon bits, salt, chili. Sweet potato bar with butter, brown sugar, cinnamon. Regular Coffee, Chocolate Milk, Water.

EZ 18: Cranberry Middle School 8th Grade Field Trip: walking taco, cold drinks, coffee, hot chocolate.

EZ 20: Mt Carmel Baptist Church Youth Group: baked taters with all the fixins, protein bars, fresh fruit, coffee, Gatorade, water.

EZ 24: Bakersville Volunteer Fire Department: Fresh dug/fresh baked potato bar and all the fixins' and possibly bags of ice. Also, hot showers (Bring your own towel).

EZ 30: Pensacola Community Group: Pancakes, coffee, orange juice, and fruit cocktail will be available at our last Transition Zone (EZ 30).

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- EZ 32: Barnardsville Elementary PTO: Expect some energy restoring goodies...breakfast, lunch and snacks.
- EZ 33: Beech Community Center: Breakfast casserole, baked goods, baked potatoes, coffee, hot chocolate.
- EZ 34: Ox Creek Community: Homemade pizza, homemade calzones, a variety of homemade baked goods, zucchini muffins, banana bread, cookies, hot dogs, cold drinks, coffee.

Showers

EZ 24: Bakersville Fire and Rescue will have 2 portable shower units (4-6 showers/unit, 1 unit male, 1 unit female) set up in their bays. Cost \$. BYOT (Bring Your Own Towel, soap, etc...).

Running Resources

Mountain Running Company Boone: 691 W King St, Boone, 828-386-1009. If you have an emergency running gear situation or are coming up short on your running gear packing for BRR, Mountain Running Company is located in downtown Boone, just a few miles from EZ12. Stop by the store or give their knowledgeable staff a call.

Funky Exchange Zones/Legs

- EZ12: Elevation Chevrolet GMC (EZ12a) - Ted Mackorell Soccer Complex (EZ12b) Shuttle and Time Card.
- EZ 14: End of Leg 14 – Begin Leg 15: Approximate 1-mile overlap.
- EZ 22: End of Leg 22 – Begin Leg 23 1/10 mile overlap
- EZ 34: End of Leg 34 – Begin Leg 35 Approximate ¼ mile overlap.
- Leg 35: Chip Time

Finish Line Check-in:

Team Captains must report to the blue Officials tent immediately after their team finishes.

1. Any rules violations will be presented. The team will have 30 minutes to respond to the recorded violation.
2. Finisher magnets will be issued WHEN THE CAPTAIN CHECKS IN AFTER the team has finished.

Finish Line: Highland Brewing Company, 12 Old Charlotte Hwy, Asheville.

1. The Finish and BRR activities will be held in The Meadow. Runners are also welcome in the Tap Room.
2. If rain, the Finish will remain in The Meadow. Other BRR-related activities may be moved into the Tap Room.
3. Highland's outdoor bar and Taproom will open at 9:00am.
4. Food Trucks: A variety of food trucks are scheduled. Others are being added.
 - Ceci's 11am-7 pm
 - Bullhded Peanuts 12pm-8pm
 - Grush's Cajun Dino Grill 12pm-8pm
 - Garage BBQ 12pm-8pm
 - Trucking Delicious 1pm-9pm
 - Sweet Cub 2pm-6pm
 - Charley King's Jamaican 2pm-10pm
5. Teams may finish with their last runner. We will have a staging area for the team to gather as your last runner approaches. Do not interfere with finishing runners from other teams. If your runner and another team's runner are finishing close, please allow the active runners to pass before entering the finish line chute. Alcohol is NOT permitted on the BRR course.
6. Please respect the other events occurring at Highland Brewing. The front of Highland Brewing and paved parking lot is a Quiet Zone. BRR will have fun in The Meadow.
7. BRR parking is permitted only in the rear gravel parking area adjacent to The Meadow. Parking will be directed by HBC staff. At peak times, BRR teams may be parking off-site and will be shuttled to the Finish.
8. Alcoholic beverages brought from the outside are NOT permitted on the Highland Brewing campus.
9. Glass containers are not permitted on the Highland Brewing campus.

Finish Line Awards Ceremony

Award ceremony & post-Relay drawing starts about 6:00pm. The following awards are planned, but may change.

1. First Place in the team categories with 5+ teams: Open, Women, Ultra, Mixed, and Master. (Grand Master, Master Mixed and Ultra Master combined with Master. Ultra Mixed combined with Ultra. Ultra Women and Women Master combined with Women).
2. Second Place in each team category with 10+ teams. Third place in team category with 25+ teams.
3. Best Decorated Van.
4. Runners Raffle: open to all runners who deposit the tab of their bib number in the Raffle box at the Officials' Tent prior to 6:00pm. The runner must be present and must have his/her bib number to win.

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BRR Merchandise For Sale at Finish (cash, check or credit card)

1. Extra Race Shirts.
2. Legacy BRR ball caps.
3. "Blue Ridge Relay" short sleeve T-shirts and hoodies.
4. Vintage T-shirts: \$5 all short sleeve and \$10 all long sleeve, including tech, Recover and Comfort Colors.
5. BRR water bottles, magnets, Hoo-rags and more.

Charitable Partners

Our charitable partners are the community organizations based along the Blue Ridge Relay route. Please see the website "DONATE" page for a listing of community groups. Teams/runners are encouraged to raise funds to support these organizations, separate from the contributions made by the Blue Ridge Relay. These donations do not go through Blue Ridge Relay hands. All donations will be made payable to the selected charity.

Course Records

Category	Team Name	City, State	Year	Total Time	Pace/Mile
Course	Asheville Running Collective	Asheville, NC	2017	19:12:03	5:35
Open	Asheville Running Collective	Asheville, NC	2017	19:12:03	5:35
Ultra	KTC – Shaving Time	Knoxville, TN	2010	21:25:26	6:11
Women	Bull City Track Club Ladies	Durham, NC	2024	24:10:23	6:52
Mixed	CRC StacheFo	Charlotte, NC	2019	21:50:57	6:18
Master	Bull City Masters	Durham, NC	2022	21:41:24	6:15
Mixed Master	Let Me Run	Charlotte, NC	2017	27:14:36	7:55
Grand Master	Bull City Track Club Grandmasters	Durham, NC	2025	24:23:26	7:02
Ultra Women	Lady Regerts	Asheville, NC	2021	26:41:36	7:42
Ultra Mixed	Jus Running Ultra Maggots	Asheville, NC	2017	23:42:56	6:54
Ultra Master	Goats, Gazelles & 3 Englishmen	Raleigh, NC	2025	25:24:35	7:19
Women Master	Sisterhood of the Traveling Bracelet	Chapel Hill, NC	2013	29:05:31	8:24
Solo	No Goats, No Gazelles, Just One Englishman	Davidson, NC	2023	50:31:01	14:34

Sponsors

Gum Ridge Mill & Flying Pig Furniture: Host Sponsor Since 2005, Gum Ridge Mill & Flying Pig Furniture has proudly supported the Blue Ridge Relay. Crafting custom farm tables, flooring, cabinets and whatever you imagine from reclaimed wood since 2000. www.gumridgemill.com

Schuster Physical Therapy: Start Line Sponsor Based in Jefferson (near Leg 5). Our good friends at Schuster PT have long been a part of the BRR family, frequently serving as one of your BRR Start line hosts, announcer and Relay starter...and as a past BRR runner. It is always a pleasure.

Grayson Highlands State Park, VA: Start Line Host The spectacular setting of Grayson Highlands State Park and the very gracious staff of Park Rangers has served as host of the Blue Ridge Relay Start Line since 2005. If this is your first or eighteenth visit to the park, you are in for a treat. Mountain balds, cool temperatures, wild ponies and big views are the norm. Previous sightings included buck in velvet, black bear and much more.

Highland Brewing Company: Finish Line Host After 208 miles of running, The Meadow, on the campus of Highland Brewing is the perfect finish. A pine grove, manicured lawn, canopied picnic tables, food trucks and Highland Brewing. <https://highlandbrewing.com/>

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Emergency and Medical Care Contacts

Call **911** for all emergencies. Drivers and runners should know their location on the course at all times.

Race Day course, weather, emergency, etc...updates will be posted on the **Blue Ridge Relay Facebook** page.

Become a Friend to stay in-tune during the race. Race related questions must be directed to EZ Relay Officials.

Exchange	Local Hospital	Address	Town	Phone
1-8	Ashe Memorial Hospital	200 Hospital Ave.	Jefferson	336-846-7101
9-13	Watauga Medical Center	336 Deerfield Rd.	Boone	336-262-4100
14-19	Cannon Memorial Hospital	434 Hospital Dr.	Linville	828-737-7000
20-24	Blue Ridge Regional Hospital	125 Hospital Dr.	Spruce Pine	828-765-4201
23-24	Bakersville Fire and Rescue			
25-26	Bradshaw Fire and Rescue			
27	Clearmont Fire and Rescue			
25-30	Yancey Comm. Med. Center	320 Pensacola Rd.	Burnsville	828-682-6136
29-31	Pensacola Fire and Rescue			
31-36	Mission Hospital	509 Biltmore Ave.	Asheville	828-213-1111

Gas Stations and Grocery Stores

Legs	Store	Town	Address	
5	Walmart Gas & Grocery	West Jefferson	1149 Mount Jefferson Rd.	
5	Ingles Gas & Grocery	West Jefferson	60 Ashemont Dr.	
5	Other Gas and Grocery options in West Jefferson and Jefferson			
12	Food Lion Grocery	Boone	1864 Old Hwy 421 S	
12-13	Walmart	Boone	200 Village Dr (off of Hwy 321)	
12-13	Other Gas and Grocery options in Boone on Hwys 321 and 105			
13	Food Lion Grocery	Blowing Rock	7533 Valley Rd.	
13	Tanger Outlet Gas	Blowing Rock	Hwy 321 & Tanger Outlets	
13-14	Other Gas and Grocery options in Blowing Rock			
16	Gas	Linville	After 1 st traffic light	
21	Gas – 24 Hour/Valero	Spruce Pine	6121 Hwy 19E, Middle of Leg 21	
29	Gas and Grocery	Burnsville	Time of day dependent	

Garbage Disposal (DO NOT leave trash at other exchange zones)

Legs	Location	Other
Near EZ6	South on 221, just after the 194/221 intersection. Located on the Left side of 221.	Community garbage and recycling center. May require a tag.
Near EZ12	Just off 421, behind Friendship Nissan of Boone.	Community garbage and recycling center.
EZ 24	Bakersville Fire and Rescue	
EZ 30	Pensacola	