

# Outfitting Vehicles For RAAM

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The importance of a well-equipped vehicle is of vital importance in RAAM. Nothing can be thought of as over-the-top when it comes to RAAM. What might seem extreme on the one hand is most likely just barely adequate in the harsh environment of RAAM. Below I will discuss the various issues involved with each of the vehicles, which make up a RAAM four-rider relay team.

## **The RV**

The RV is of utmost importance, as it becomes a sanctuary during the race. It is a place for the crew to escape from the intensity of the race for awhile. It is also the vehicle where the crew meals are prepared, extra gear is stowed, whatever sleep you might get is likely to take place here. It should be kept as organized as is possible in a RAAM race. Keep the trash picked up and throw it away whenever you get the chance while re-fueling, shopping for supplies or doing laundry. The RV is also the medivac; this is where emergency hydration procedures take place, the mending of wounds and other ills that might occur during the race.

## **The Roaming Vehicle**

While the roaming vehicle might seem like a luxury to some people it is in reality a secret weapon in RAAM. Not only is it the shuttle between all vehicles in the caravan, it is also a great scout vehicle which can be used to stay behind or go on ahead to scout the other teams and their progress. It can also be put into service in the case of a relay vehicle breakdown and in turn save the day and by its nature can become a second sanctuary when some momentary peace is called for. This vehicle should also be outfitted with the same set-up as the relay vehicles in case it becomes necessary to call it into service as a relay vehicle.

## **The Mechanic Vehicle**

It is a very good idea to have one vehicle, preferably a large panel van, to act as the bike mechanic's van. In this van any bike issues can be dealt with by having ample access to tools and room to work. The vehicle should also be equipped with the same lighting gear as the relay and roaming vehicles just in case it is pressed into service in the event of a relay vehicle malfunction. It can also double as a message vehicle by putting a mattress in the back or as a sleep area for crewmembers however unlikely this might be as there is really no sleep during RAAM.

## **The Relay Vehicle**

The relay vehicles are the vehicles used by the riders and crew of the RAAM relay team. The preferred vehicle is a mini-van with sliding doors on both sides. These vehicles will be used by the riders and assigned crew for the duration of the race. These are the most important vehicles in the whole caravan because if one of these goes down without a replacement the race is pretty much over. Each relay vehicle should be totally self-sufficient with all supplies and safety gear needed. There will be two relay riders per vehicle, one message therapist, one driver and one navigator. The driver and navigator are also responsible for getting the bikes off the racks and assembled for each transition. They must work together as a well-oiled machine for hours at a time, doing the same routine over and over again. Be mindful when choosing your driver/navigator teams because if you get the wrong match it could just lose you the race. Remember this, team RAAM is won or lost by the efficiency of the transitions. This is a very vital part of the overall strategy of this race, do not take transitions lightly or you'll pay the consequences. Each relay vehicle is also required to have mandatory flashing lights mounted on the rear roof of the vehicle. These lights must be functional at all times during the race or the vehicle will be disqualified. My preference was to have a back up set of flashing lights that were battery operated with magnetic bases in the case of a malfunction of the primary flashing lights. A magnetic orange slow moving vehicle triangle sign is also a requirement during the duration of the race. The sign will need to be removed when speeding ahead to the next transition point as it has a

tendency to blow off with high vehicle speeds. It is also vital to remember to place it back on the rear of the vehicle each time a rider from that vehicle is on the road racing in the race. A very important set of lights that is not required but is highly recommended are known as the work lights. These are high brightness white fog type lights, which are mounted on the rear roof near the flashing lights and shine down on the rear area behind the vehicle. I also recommend a second set of these lights be mounted on either side of the van over the sliding doors, which shine down on the area just outside the vehicle's doors. You never know what you'll be stepping out into at three in the morning in some rural area. There could be snakes, holes, rocks someone crouched down tying their shoelaces. Also, if something vital is dropped it is better to have ample light to locate it than to rely only on flashlights. And speaking of flashlights, every crewmember should have at least one flashlight and one headlight to be worn at night. It can get very dark in remote areas of our country in the middle of the night. You can never have too many light sources in RAAM and you always want redundant sources of light as well as extra batteries. Don't even think about using light sources with built-in re-chargeable batteries, as you need lights with batteries that can be changed in a hurry when the heat is on. There will be no time to wait for lights to re-charge and there is also a good chance that the charger will get lost anyway. It is also preferable that each member of the crew, including the riders, have some sort of bag or fanny pack that stays with them at all times with essential items such as first-aid kits, flashlights, batteries, food bars, things to write with, toilet paper, and most importantly hydration liquids.

### **In Conclusion**

The RAAM will most likely be the most intense experience that you have ever had in your life. It is a life changing opportunity, which can be positive or negative depending upon your attitude and beliefs. It is not a race to be taken lightly or gone into without serious contemplation. The only other piece of advice that I can give is the same advice that I give everyone doing RAAM for the first time who wants to know how to prepare for the race. Everything that you have ever done or experienced in your life is what you will need to take on this challenge as it will take everything that you've got to make it from the starting line to the finish line. With this I wish you the best of luck and welcome to RAAM, the toughest race in the world. Enjoy the pain!