

Randonneuring Terminology

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Like all other sports, randonneuring has a vocabulary of special terms and phrases not readily found in a dictionary. Most of the terms are French words or adaptations of them, owing to the origins of randonneuring over 100 years ago in France. Today, these terms are commonly used by randonneurs around the world. Informal definitions and pronunciations of these terms are provided to enhance your understanding and enjoyment of the sport.

allure libre (ah lure lee bruh) - Self-paced, long-distance bicycling as promoted by the Audax Club Parisien, Randonneurs Mondiaux, and Randonneurs USA. Each rider is free to go as fast or as slow as he likes, so long as he stays within the time limits of the brevet. This type of riding might resemble conventional bicycle road racing when practiced by the swiftest front-runners; behind them riders form or dissolve groups on the road as they see fit and it looks more like bicycle touring. Nonetheless, no matter how fast one goes, randonneuring brevets are not competitive events per Article 12 of the Audax Club Parisien Regulations. One may strive to ride fast for a "personal best", but not to defeat one's fellow riders, as in a race. Friendly camaraderie is frequently seen in randonneuring, so too, uncommon determination. Finishing the ride is everything in this style of cycling, not how fast it was done. In randonneuring, tenacity is more celebrated than speed.

ancien (ahn see yi'n) - A (male) veteran. Originally a male Paris-Brest-Paris finisher, this term has now come to describe a randonneur who has successfully finished some other 1200-kilometer randonnée.

ancienne (ahn see yin) - A (female) veteran. Originally a female Paris-Brest-Paris finisher, this term has now come to describe a randonneuse who has successfully finished some other 1200-kilometer randonnée.

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category for amateur Paris-Brest-Paris riders.

brevet (bruh vay) - Literally, the word means "certificate", "patent", "diploma", or "right" in French. In randonneuring, it means two things: certification of having successfully done a randonnée—indicated by a small numbered sticker placed on a completed brevet card—as well as, by extension the long-distance event itself (at least 200 kilometers in length). Completing a successful brevet means one's ride has been certified and registered in France, and the rider's name is added to the Roll of Honor with other randonneurs and randonneuses, going all the way back to 1921. These challenging rides can also entitle the rider to enter longer events such as Paris-Brest-Paris or Boston-Montréal-Boston. As used in the randonneuring world, the terms brevet and randonnée are often interchangeable, but in common cycling usage, a randonnée might be considered to be less structured or less formal than a brevet.

contrôle (cone trohll) - A checkpoint where randonneurs' passport-like route cards must be signed and stamped to show their passage. There may also be secret contrôles to keep riders honest. Missing any checkpoint, (or arriving outside its time window) is grounds for disqualification since earning one's brevet is based on making all the contrôles in time. In English-speaking countries, randonneurs frequently use the word "control" in place of *contrôle*.

départ (day pah) - The starting line of a randonnée or brevet.

Flèche Vélocio (flesh veh low chi o) - A popular team ride of 24-hours' duration in France, held over the Easter weekend. They are becoming increasingly popular among American randonneurs, where various regional events are grouped under the national label of **Flèches-USA**. A team may consist of three to five machines (a tandem counts as a single machine) and at least three machines must finish together to receive official credit. In French, *flèche* means "arrow", so the traditional method is to ride from one point to another, like an arrow flying into the bulls-eye. In France a multitude of flèche teams, having left from various cities

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randonnée or ramble, or it could be on a formal randonnée like Paris-Brest-Paris. On the other hand, a brevet would always have time controls. The term "grand randonnée" usually means a 1200-kilometer event done in 90 hours or less.

randonneur (rahn doe ner) - A male long-distance allure libre cyclist.

Randonneur 5000 (rahn doe ner sank mill) - Probably the most prestigious award for randonneurs. To earn it a cyclist must do a full series of 200, 300, 400, 600, and 1000km brevets, a Paris-Brest-Paris randonneur event, a Flèche team ride, and the remaining distances ridden on sanctioned brevets for a total of 5000 kilometers. The qualifying events must all be completed within a four-year period.

Randonneurs Mondiaux (rahn doe ner moan dee oh) - An "umbrella" organization of national randonneuring leagues. Its primary functions are to organize foreign participation in Paris-Brest-Paris and other 1200-kilometer brevets, encourage the exchange of information of interest to randonneurs, and reward clubs' and individuals' participation in long-distance randonnées with various medals and trophies. The Randonneurs Mondiaux was created by Audax Club Parisien leader Robert Lepertel in 1983. Major member nations currently include France, Spain, United Kingdom, Holland, Belgium, Australia, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Austria, Germany, Russia, South Africa, Canada, and the United States, among others.

Randonneurs USA (rahn doe ner) - The national randonneuring organization for the United States. Created on August 17, 1998 to encourage the growth of randonneuring in this country, RUSA oversees and coordinates the randonnées of regional brevet series. RUSA also collects and sends all American brevet results to France for processing and registration, as well as dispersing French randonneuring medals and awards to American riders at the end of each season via their Regional Brevet Administrator. Every four years RUSA collects and coor-

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arrivée (ah ree vay) - The finishing line of a brevet or randonnée.

audax (oh docks) - A style of group bicycle touring found mostly in France, but also in Holland and Belgium to lesser degrees. A steady pace is set by a road captain, who is in charge of a group of teammates. In modern times the pace is 22 km/h between stops; the itinerary and resting places are planned in advance. Audax groups often ride about 16-20 hours per day until they reach their pre-arranged sleeping point. In the case of Paris-Brest-Paris, each group's objective is to finish inside the 90-hour limit with all its riders together. ("All for one, one for all" is their motto.) A service car is allowed to follow each group, unlike the ethos of self-sufficiency stressed in the *allure libre* style of randonneuring. Note that some randonneuring clubs and organizations emulating the Audax Club Parisien have incorrectly used the word "audax" in their names. They promote *allure libre* long-distance cycling events, not *audax* ones, which are *always* ridden in a group. When founded in the 1970s to get foreign riders into the randonneur version of Paris-Brest-Paris, the divisions between the Audax Club Parisien and the Union des Audax Français may not have been clear to foreigners. (See Audax Club Parisien, below.) Nonetheless, the distinctions are important and that is why we are the Randonneurs USA, not the Audax USA.

Audax Club Parisien (oh docks club pah ree zee yi'n) - A cycle-touring club in Paris, France. Begun in 1904 to promote the audax style of randonneuring, it became a free-paced, allure libre randonneuring club in 1921 after a bitter split within its membership over which style of randonneuring should be promoted. The Audax Club Parisien grants approval for, and registers the results from, every allure libre brevet around the world. (That it kept the word *audax* in its name hasn't been helpful since it does not practice audax-style cycling except for the Easter-weekend Flèche Vélocio team rides). The Audax Club Parisien began the randonneur version of Paris-Brest-Paris in 1931 after the race organizers dropped the slower touristes-routiers

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and villages, will converge 24 hours later on the bulls-eye, which is the traditional Easter cycling rally in Provence. (Note: there are other events in France with this name as well, e.g., the Flèches de France, which are not the same sort of event.) The RUSA 24-hour Arrow and 12-hour Dart rides are similar team rides, but with minor differences too. Full details are listed on the RUSA Web site.

Le Grand Livre (luh grahn lee vrueh) - The "Great Book" which lists every Paris-Brest-Paris finisher going back to 1891. Originally hand-written in large, leather-bound ledger books, modern Paris-Brest-Paris rolls are now computer-generated. The Audax Club Parisien has custody of these books, along with similar lists of the finishers in every allure libre brevet from around the world, going back to the first one ridden on September 11, 1921.

permanent (pair ma nahn) - a type of individual brevet that is ridden alone, or in a small group at a time and date of the rider's choosing. The routes are overseen by local randonneurs, who then submit each rider's result to RUSA for processing. All the control times and regulations of a normal brevet apply to a permanent brevet. Full details are available on the RUSA Web site.

populaire (pope u lair) - A shorter randonneuring event usually run under the regulations and pace of a standard brevet, but being less than 200 kilometers in length, they lack the official sanction of the Audax Club Parisien. Populaires are often 100 or 150 kilometers in length and frequently used by experienced randonneurs for training and/or socializing, as well as introducing new riders to the ways of randonneuring.

randonnée (rahn doe nay) - A long ramble in the countryside, by foot or bicycle. In common cycling usage, it means a long touring ride, often somewhat strenuous in nature. In the United States 100-mile "century" and 200-mile "double century" club rides would be considered somewhat similar to the French events, but compared to an official randonneur event, they lack the strict time controls and checkpoint procedures. To be precise, one could go for a low-key

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dinates the entries of all Americans into Paris-Brest-Paris. It also publishes a national brevet calendar and quarterly newsletter devoted to randonneuring. RUSA has an elected leadership and strives to serve the needs of its members while upholding the traditions and regulations of randonneuring.

randonneuse (rahn doe nuhz) - A female long-distance allure libre cyclist. In France it also is used to designate a bicycle specifically designed for randonneuring use. Since the French word for "bicycle" must have a feminine article, it is thus a randonneuse, not a randonneur. (Note: *le vélo* — a "bike" — is masculine, while "*la bicyclette*" is feminine and "*la petite reine*" — an old-fashioned euphemism for the bike — are feminine.)

Super Randonneur (rahn doe ner) - A special medal awarded to those randonneurs who successfully complete a challenging series of brevets (200, 300, 400, and 600-kilometers) in a year. A hard-earned honor unto itself and worthy of being any randonneur's goal for the cycling season, the Super Randonneur series of brevets is usually needed to enter most 1200-kilometer events.

touristes-routiers (too reeste roo tee eh) - Predecessor to today's randonneur. Slower than the professional racers, this amateur category was used in the 1901, 1911, and 1921 Paris-Brest-Paris events. In 1931 the race organizers turned the amateur segment over to the touring clubs and the randonneur and audax Paris-Brest-Paris formulas began.

Note:

The pronunciations are only approximations. Some sounds that exist in French simply do not exist in English. Without special training, there is little hope of a native English speaker accurately reproducing these sounds. In particular, the use of "y'in" above is meant to produce the clipped ending typical of the Southern pronunciation of the present participle, eg. *runnin'* for running. The sound is not a completely accurate reproduction of the French nasal 'in', but it's somewhat close. (JVB)

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