

Niagara British Car Club: How to organize a run

The purpose of this guide is to encourage and assist first-timers in putting together a moderate length run that the club as a group can enjoy together in their British cars. The very best way to get started is by volunteering to assist someone who has organized previous runs. However, if you wish to jump into the deep end and take charge of your own club run, it's still fun to have company along. We hope what follows is of some help.

Types of Runs: Some clubs enjoy competitive events revolving around driving and/or navigating skills. These might include timed rallies or gymkhanas. However, nearly all of our runs are simply scenic, social, and low stress, done in convoys with straightforward driving instructions and food as a reward at the end. Generally we enjoy two types of runs

1. **Close to home** is where we ply our favourite back roads within the Niagara Peninsula.
2. **Outbound** are day runs to attractions outside the Peninsula. E.g. Port Dover

It is understood that we want to show off and enjoy our vintage British vehicles, but members who are without the use of such vehicles at the time of the run are also welcome to join in.

Duration: Most runs are about 3–5 hours including a meal stop somewhere and usually in the range of 40 - 60 miles. Longer, overnight runs or weekend runs have been enjoyed by the club but require more extensive planning than shall be outlined here.

Themes: It can be fun to find a theme to build a run around...historic, geographic, common points of interest, a run to some other regional event etc. Such examples in the club calendar are the Blossom Run, the Sweet Run, the Friendship Festival and the Marshville Heritage Car Show.

Finding Roads, Criteria:

1. Pull together your own mental inventory. What are your favourite roads? Can they be linked together efficiently into a longer run? This is where a map or Google Maps comes in useful.
2. Obtain a large scale map. The Niagara Region Cycling map is only two dollars and is a good choice because many of the roads highlighted for cyclists are the twisty, hilly, picturesque roads we like to drive.
3. Less travelled country roads are what you want to find. That said, it is permissible to join interesting bits together with a limited amount of highway driving. Service roads are useful conduits for paralleling the Q.E.W.
4. Don't be too concerned if some of the roads on your route have been travelled by the club in the past. We always enjoy revisiting favourite roads. The variety comes in how we connect them.

5. No gravel roads. We care about our paint and out keeping our vehicles clean. Short stretches of gravel might be permissible in rare instances, but remember, the risk of travelling such roads is not from fellow club members, but other vehicles we may encounter.
6. Private property: Some of the prettiest roads in Niagara, particularly those paralleling shorelines, are marked as private. Ultimately we should respect private roadways. That said, the club has used such roads before, and a parade of vintage cars tends not to generate complaints. Use your discretion, or better yet, seek permission.

Planning the route:

1. Assuming you have plotted out a potential route in advance, take a preliminary drive along it. Unforeseen factors such as gravel surfaces or road closures are likely to force some alterations at this point so don't concern yourself with odometer readings, other than a rough overall reading of the total length. This can be a fun way to spend a quiet morning or a sunny afternoon in your British Car. There will likely be frequent stops for note taking, so take care not to obstruct any other traffic.
2. Try to choose a start point near a restaurant with ample parking. This way, club members have a chance to socialize over a meal or snack ahead of the run. A large restaurant or shopping centre assures there will be room for us to gather our cars together.
3. It's also important to have some sort of rest (and restroom) stop at about the halfway mark.
4. Where possible, try to plan the run to avoid left turns at busy intersections. It may be possible to substitute three, right-hand turns by travelling through the intersection.
5. Once you've determined the route will work, drive it a second time in a modern vehicle with an accurate odometer. This is when you want to mark down specific mileages for each turn along with route instructions. It doesn't matter whether your vehicle reads in miles or kilometers as one will need to be converted to the other when you write the instructions

Preparing Instructions:

1. If you need samples of past runs as a style guide, visit the *Cruise Library* on the NBCC website.
2. First, make sure participants are instructed to zero their odometers before starting out.
3. Remind them to drive safely and not to run lights to keep up with the convoy.
4. Write out the route instructions, identifying the turns by street/road names and odometer readings.
5. Odometer readings are in both miles and kilometers for both older and newer vehicles...
6. Mileages should be cumulative, i.e. ascending distances from the starting point.
7. Include cautionary instructions such as rough rail crossings or busy intersections.
8. Ask someone to vet your directions by testing the route themselves.

The Final Check: It's a good idea to do a final drive as close as possible to the event itself. Make sure that some of the roads you have picked have not since been torn up by paving crews, are freshly oiled, or

temporarily closed for special events. If there is no time to alter the printed instructions, then find your own detour, and lead the pack around.

The Run:

1. Just ahead of the run, send your instructions to the club Webmaster to post on our website. That way, members can print off their own route instructions.
2. Also, about a week ahead of the event, send the webmaster a reminder of when and where the run will begin, so it can be posted and emailed for the members' information.
3. Members should be instructed to be at the start point at least 15 minutes before the run starts. That's when you will deliver last minute verbal instructions and hand out printed copies of the run to anyone who may not have their own.
4. Again, remind the members to drive safely.
5. As organizer, you take the lead on the run. Watch your mirrors to make sure the next car is always in view. If the group gets broken up by traffic lights, stop for a few minutes along a quiet roadside to get everyone back together.
6. If possible, have someone familiar with the run (presumably the one who tested out your instructions) at the back, in case anyone encounters a problem.
7. Speed: As leader, try to move with other traffic or at least the posted speed limits. We do not want to frustrate following motorists by driving too slowly. If the pace is too fast for some of the group, invite them to take up the rear and drive their own speed. Instruct members to leave room between our cars so passing motorists have ample room to cut in.

In conclusion: Organizing a club run will burn up some of your gasoline and time but will be a lot of fun, especially if you enlist one or two helpers. There is no proscribed "correct way" to plan and organize a run so don't be afraid to use your imagination. Give it a go!