

# Planning an Annual Rally

## Overview

This guide has been prepared to assist anyone given the responsibility of planning a BMW Motorcycle Club Annual Rally.

The Annual Rally is the Club's premier event each year. As per our constitution, the Rally must occur on a weekend in January of each year, and is to include the Club's Annual General Meeting. The Rally alternates between the North Island and South Island each year.

Traditionally, participants arrive on a Friday and enjoy a packed agenda of rides and activities before making their way home on a Monday.

Every Annual Rally includes the following elements, but how you design the Rally around these is entirely up to you.

- Gymkhana – an event testing skill, precision and speed of participants, generally around obstacles of various sorts but aimed at participation (Allow a couple of hours)
- Concours d'Elegance – an opportunity for participants to show off their bikes (Allow plenty of time for congregation and judging)
- Road rides – generally one on each day of the weekend.
- GS rides – adventure rides over the two days. Can have more than one of varying difficulty over each day of the weekend.
- Annual General Meeting – allow 1 hour, usually held around 5:00 pm before the main dinner on Saturday night.
- Main dinner – the heart of the event on Saturday night, should include appropriate entertainment.
- Prize giving dinner – held on the Sunday night.
- Partner's activities – Winery Tours, other points of local interest.

With the region selected to host a Rally done well in advance, you've got the best part of 18 months to plan, but the earlier you start working on it, the better — that way you'll be as prepared as possible when any issues come up (and they probably will).

### Top Tips

#### 1. Setting the Date

The date may well be driven by availability of suitable venues so setting a date goes hand in hand with the selection of the right venue (see 2) but it has to be a weekend in January and you will need to check suitability with the BMWMCNZ Board.

#### 2. Booking the venue

It's key to book the venue as soon as possible and that may well determine the date you set (see 1).

Your need a date and venue nailed down pretty much before you can do anything else so this needs to be completed as early in the planning period as possible, and it will be the first key driver in setting a budget (see 6).

Some flexibility around the date might also help you out at this stage and open up a wider variety of venues.

Some things to consider when picking a venue for the Rally are:

- **Accessibility:** Think of all the factors that go into choosing a venue that all participants will feel comfortable in and can mix and mingle with other participants or grab some quiet time to themselves if they wish to.
- **Size:** An event for 50 people will need a very different space than an event for 150. Consider how well the venue will cater for accommodating the number of people your planning for, or whether off-site accommodation will also be required/desirable, and how well it will cater for the range of activities planned over the weekend.
- **Parking:** Is there plenty of secure space for bikes?
- **Insurance:** Will you need to purchase separate insurance? What are their liability rules? Talk to one of the Board members about what the club’s insurance will cover.
- **Technology:** If you need speakers, microphones, data presenters or other audio-visual equipment, make sure it’s easy to set them up in the space that’s available. The same goes for Wi-Fi access (and cell phone connection!), or any other technological needs your event has.
- **Costs:** How much of a deposit is the venue asking for? Will there be additional costs? How much will you get back if you (heaven forbid) need to cancel? The Club’s Treasurer can help with this. Start getting an idea of what costs you’ll incur and what the likely cost to participants will be. Think about things like
  - Room rental
  - Food and beverages
  - Equipment
  - Entertainment
  - Rally committee expenses
  - Insurance
- **In-house support:** Many venues used to accommodating large groups of people have their own Event Manager, which is a great resource to form a very good relationship with early on. They can take care of a lot of the planning and administrative tasks associated with the event, freeing you and the team up to concentrate on the day to day activities of the Rally.

### 3. Getting A Team Together

You can’t do it on your own! Organising a Rally takes a concerted team effort to handle everything. Consider yourself also as the “Event Manager” but seek out others you trust and can work well with to form a Rally Committee, and find other volunteers to take on some of the responsibilities such as:

- venue management – even if it’s just a liaison role with the venue Event Manager if there is one;
- catering – could be combined with the venue management role;

- entertainment – could also be combined with the venue management role;
- publicity;
- sponsorship;
- Ride Masters – route planning, access management, etc.
- Non-Rider Activities management.

Assigning individual roles to team members creates a system of accountability, as well as preventing tasks from falling to the wayside. Plus, it allows you to delegate tasks to people with particular strengths – but don't forget to schedule in regular committee catch-up meetings.

#### Developing Rally Goals and Objectives

The very first meeting with the team is not about getting into the detail of who is doing what and how things are going to be done. It should be focussed on establishing tangible goals and objectives around what you want the event to be like for the people who are coming. Setting a couple of goals with quantifiable measures of success will make it easier for you and the team to be on the same page from the start.

Start by asking yourselves:

“What makes our region special?”

“How could we link the Rally to that regional speciality?”

“How many members are we aiming attract?”

“Who in the local community can help us make this an event to remember?”

Once everyone has agreed on the answers to these questions, then you can get into the nuts and bolts of how you'll pull off an amazing event.

#### 4. Creating an Rally Master Plan

Creating a Rally master plan helps to ensure every aspect remains on track, as well as making it easier to coordinate with committee members and other volunteers.

Your master plan should encompass all aspects of the Rally, including:

- Venue, logistics, & catering (contracts, permits, insurance, etc.)
- Activities and entertainment (identifying, confirming, logistics & management)

Publicity and promotion - Rally promotion starts with an initial notice on the Club's website and in the newsletter to save the date, but should then build to include online and off-line publicity. Some components you might want to include in the plan are:

- Web page announcement
- Social media
- Email blasts

- Press and media connections
- Printed materials
- And, no promotional plan is complete without the post-event thank-you, sponsor acknowledgements, and articles about the Rally.
- Registration (online sign-up, payment and tracking; on-site sign-in, etc.)
- Sponsor and partner management - if you're looking for local businesses to sponsor, keep in mind that they'll be more likely to do so if they can see the clear benefit to them. Make sure whoever is assigned to work in this area can articulate a compelling case for support when they initially reach out.
- Volunteer management and responsibilities

You also need to create a detailed timeline, so that everything moves smoothly. Include things like when any permits or insurance policies need to be submitted (especially if you're thinking about private access for GS rides), when Rally registration ends, and a detailed timeline of the Rally weekend itself.

Although it might be tempting to say, "It's all in my head! I'll be fine!" and not be concerned about writing it all down, it will make it much more difficult for you to assign accountability to others and keep track of that if you don't. It'll also make it more difficult to remember what you did the next time you're asked to run a rally in your region – so do your future self a favour and keep everything written down.

Finally, talking with other people who have run the Rally in the past can help you ensure you're not missing anything, and give you a few ideas.

## 5. Establish Your Budget

Based on the estimates you've got through finding a venue and other things you've considered in the master plan, establishing a budget is one of the most important parts of Rally planning. You'll need cost estimates for room rental, food and beverages, equipment hire, entertainment, expenses for rally committee, insurance, etc. so you can figure out per person costs for attendees to cover the budget.

The Club's Treasurer is a key point of contact around the budget as there is also a financial contribution from the Board toward hosting the Rally.

Some of the critical items you need to budget for are:

- Venue: not just the rental cost but any insurance you may need to purchase.
- Catering: Remember that the amount you can afford relates entirely on the fees you are able to charge for registration.
- Entertainment: Whether you're looking for a DJ, a band or even a talking pig, make sure you have wiggle room for travel, accommodation and catering costs as well as any fee charged.
- Marketing: Whether you decide to promote the Rally through Facebook or go old-school by posting stuff out, have a plan for it.
- Software: You might manage registrations etc. on a spreadsheet but if you're looking at using any sort of event management software, consider incorporating the cost of that into your planning.

- Technology: From projectors to Wi-Fi to speakers, you'll need to budget for it.
- Rally Committee expenses – spending time and petrol scouting out routes and undertaking other activities to ensure things are well planned does come at a cost to volunteers, you should factor in some re-imburement for these costs.
- Miscellaneous: Even the best-planned event will have un-anticipated costs. Accounting for a contingency in your budget will ensure you're not caught unawares.

## 6. Rally Weekend Processes

To ensure you're prepared for anything, document a detailed agenda that will walk you and the team through the whole Rally weekend from set-up to clean-up. Including every detail, no matter how small, will help you feel like you have it all under control!

Identifying exactly who needs to do what and when ensures that there's a clear line of accountability to the tasks needed to be done over the weekend.

## 7. Post Rally

Congratulations: you survived the Annual Rally! But it's not quite over.

The Board will ask for an assessment of the Rally to see what went well, and what, if anything, could help the next Rally organiser do better next time.

You'll need to consider a few things when you talk with the Board.

- **How did you perform against the budget?** If you ended up on target, great! But if not, what would you do differently if you had to do it again?
- **What was attendee feedback like?** Some one-off comments can be written off, but if there are some points that come up several times (whether positive or negative) they're worth taking into consideration.
- **How did the team perform?** You'll have some great feedback for everyone who helped you with the Rally – which helps the Board earmark volunteers for particular tasks in the future.
- **How did the marketing go?** Which activities provided the most ROI? Whether it was creating an event on Facebook or talking to the local press, determining which approach worked best will help future organisers decide a route to take next time.

## RALLY ORGANISING CHECKLIST

To help you out every step of the way, we've broken down this checklist into a few different sections by date:

### 18 - 12 months prior

1. **Select the date** - make sure it doesn't conflict with any other events taking place in your area.
2. **Identify and book venue.** You'll need to negotiate a few details. What kind of insurance does the venue require? Have they got enough rooms? Do they need a deposit? Can they serve alcohol? Will they do the catering in-house? Have they got an event manager to help? Determine all your main requirements before committing.

### 12 - 10 months prior

3. **Recruit a Rally Committee.** This includes assigning individual responsibility for all tasks or combination of tasks, and identifying any need for further volunteers.
4. **Establish your Rally goals and objectives.** Establishing these upfront will make it easier to plan and gauge overall success.
5. **Develop an event master plan.** Ironing out what the Rally is going to look like at a high level will help ensure you don't miss anything.
6. **Create an event budget.** Based on the cost estimates, you'll be able to determine how much the Rally will cost — and if you'll need to reduce any of them!

### 10 - 6 months prior

7. **Start working on detailed processes.** This includes ensuring Rally Committee members and/or volunteers are well placed to manage specific tasks
8. **Identify and confirm sponsors/entertainment/other partners.** Who will you need on hand during the event?
9. **Confirm registration processes.** Determine if you need event registration software to make the process easier. There are a variety of different software tools that can help streamline the process. Ensure registration forms are published and accessible.

### 6 – 3 months prior

10. By now you'll have all the foundational parts of the Rally figured out, it's time to start executing on the rest. You'll be focussing on building out the detailed itinerary of what needs to be done over the really weekend and who is doing it. Other activities might include:

**Entertainer liaison** - getting bio information and photo to publish.

**Financial/Administration** – confirming sponsors and amounts and identifying other items to be underwritten and accounting tracking details. Send reminders out regarding registration and participation.

**Venue and logistics planning** - confirming all details regarding menu, A/V equipment, registration set-up, parking, signage, etc. Reviewing security needs/plan with the venue manager. Making sure any need for special permits, licenses, insurance, etc. are taken care of.

## 4 weeks prior

11. You're getting there! At this point, you're probably spending more and more time focusing on the event and finalising some details but your plan is coming together nicely.
12. If it's in your plan, now's the time to release any statements to local media about the Rally.

## 1 week prior

13. You're getting so close! By this point, the majority of the Rally details are confirmed and all that's left will be final touches, such as:
  - getting the Rally Committee together to confirm all details against Master Plan (make sure you have some back-up for any situation where you need additional volunteers for registration or set-up)
  - briefing all volunteers about their duties and timelines
  - doing a final registration check to ensure everyone is catered for and providing final numbers to caterers
  - confirming media presence, if it's part of the plan

## The day before

14. Only a few last minute details you'll need to worry about.
  - Ensure all signage is in place — both around the venue and any other areas in which it's needed.
  - Ensure registration tables are prepared and stocked with whatever packs you've decided on for participants.
  - Ensure all plaques, trophies, etc. are on-site.
  - Ensure all A/V equipment is set up and working properly.
  - Get a good night's sleep!

## Rally Day 😊

15. The big day has arrived! Here's what you have to remember:
  - Take a few deep breaths — you've got this!
  - Ensure you have plenty of copies of the detailed plan for the weekend and stick with it.
  - Check in with each Committee Chair member and volunteer regularly to ensure the team is on track, and with catering staff and any of the sponsors attending.
  - Greet people as they arrive, and ask them how it's all going for them over the weekend.

## Post-Rally (as soon as practically possible)

16. Check in with venue. Ensure nothing important was left behind.
17. Gather all receipts and documentation, final registration data, etc. and update the budget.
18. Send a thank-you and acknowledgement letter to:

- Sponsors
  - Venue Management
  - Rally Committee  
Members/Volunteers
  - Entertainers
  - Media (if present)
19. Send out an email to all attendees with highlights, and ask what they enjoyed or where there was room for improvement (this is your post-event survey)
  20. Share Rally highlights on the club's social media.
  21. Conduct a Rally Committee debrief (over a pint or two is good!). What went well, and what could you/would you do differently if you had to do it all over again?