

# How to Find the Best Miata Roads

## A Quick and Basic Guide for Planning a Rally

by Sara J McBride

Having participated in many rallies for the club, I decided maybe I should learn how to plan a rally. I couldn't find the "How to plan a Miata rally" book at the library, so how to do it? The answer seemed to be volunteer to help with someone else's rally. In April, my roommate and I volunteered to help with the "Post Tax Blues" rally, and we ran the route, checking the roads and clues. With that experience, we co-rallymastered the "Can't See the Forest For the Trees" rally. Here's a basic guide of what we learned.

First of all have a plan. What kind of rally are you having? There are many types of rallies, time and distance, poker runs, fun runs, etc. Whatever the type, the roads and instructions are the key to a successful rally.

The next thing is finding drivable roads. The most helpful guide I found is the Indiana Atlas & Gazetteer published by Delorme. Priced at \$16.95, I consider this guide an essential. It has 47 quadrangular maps covering the whole state, so it gives a detailed view of the roads, showing roads not on your average "gas station" map. Any good bookstore will have this guide, and I even saw it for sale in a mini-mart during a "rest stop" while planning a rally.

Be prepared to spend a lot of time in the car with a clipboard, paper and pencil. Never underestimate the time it takes to plan a rally, you should begin to plan your rally a minimum of eight weeks in advance. You really need a partner when finding your route as it's tough driving, checking out the road and, if doing what I call a clue or gimmick rally, finding items to write a question or clue about. Speaking of your partner, at least one of you should be able to actually read a map, and that one should be the one who is not driving. Of course, what looks to be a great road on your map, doesn't always turn out to be so good. This is why you'll spend some time in your Miata driving the proposed route. Any road that looks good on the map and you really want to use will be not be usable, it's almost guaranteed. Roads can unexpectedly turn to gravel, be more patches than original asphalt, or nothing more than a five foot wide cowpath. But be sure, you'll never get to use all of the roads you wish to. This is why you do the exploration. Another thing to remember, you may not be able to have a perfect road for the whole route. This though, is not always a bad thing. You may want to put more clues in the "suspension test" portion, as the cars will be driving slow. (Or you can devilishly put more clues on the smooth roads to slow the Barricks, I mean, the participants.) The basic rule of thumb to remember is that curves are good, gravel is bad.

Check, double check, and then check again your rally route instructions! There's nothing more irritating to the participants to have the incorrect instructions, get lost, end up in Egypt and have to backtrack (if they can). If you've been the navigator during all the previous planning sessions, take a turn at the wheel and let your partner in crime read the instructions. Offer a friend a ride and hand them the instruction sheet. Fresh eyes will see mistakes.

Try to run the route a day or so before the rally. Have alternate routes in mind, just in case. It's a guarantee that a clue will disappear, a bridge will be closed, a tree will fall closing a road, a lightning bolt will have made a SUV sized pothole in it, it's being repaved, re-oiled & chipped, or some act of God will flood it (Murphy's Law...). Quickly devise an alternate route (from all your miles of preparation) and carry on. If your clue sheets have been printed, a heads up can be given during the driver's meeting. Don't fret about it, everyone understands

that stuff or its equivalent happens.

A good starting and ending place is essential. Usually a fast food restaurant for the start and a nice restaurant at the end. The starting point should have adequate parking and a place for the driver's meeting. Using a fast food restaurant provides coffee and breakfast for the early starting rallies, restrooms, and usually easy access to the start of your route. The ending location should be a place that can accommodate the number of people you have participating. If you contact the restaurant in advance, they may be able to provide a private room or can be able to place all the participants in a common area. this will also give them advance notice that they will be busy! While the ralliers are eating and rerunning the rally with each other, the rally master(s) can score the sheets. The winners are announced and trophies and/or prizes are presented.

If you follow these simple guidelines, I'm sure you'll devise a great rally. Your number one goal should be to make sure everyone has a good time. You'll know you've succeeded when the participants ask for the rally sheet back so they can run it again on their own time. Start thinking about planning a rally for next year. If you need help, ask any previous rally master, they'll be glad to give you guidance.

Oh yeah, forgot the most important rule....the rally master is ALWAYS right!



Chuck Wills conducts the drivers meeting for "Can't See the Forest For the Trees" rally.