



SOUTHEAST BUS NUTS



Rally Guide

Congratulations! You're at least thinking about hosting a rally for our club. It can be a fair amount of work, but it is a great deal of fun, and gratifying too.

A rally can be as simple or complex as you wish.

At the simple and easy end is something called a "No Host" rally, where all you have to do is get an interesting place, hopefully with some nearby attractions, and let folks go their merry way. Maybe throw some nibbles in a bowl at 5:00 p.m. and invite all attendees to join the Circle of Friendship with their camp chair and favorite beverage.

Of course most rallies are more involved than that, with printed schedules, meals, side trips, and entertainment, and these usually involve additional people to help you put 'em on.

As you read through this guide, you can decide where in the spectrum your rally will fall.

The good news – club officers and leadership will make this much easier for you than in the past. We will do the promotion (with your input of course), collect registrations and fees, and, if you wish, create the roster of attendees that you can hand out to arriving guests. If you need money for a campground deposit or entertainment, the club treasurer will work with you to get people paid promptly, or quickly reimbursed. No bookkeeping or recordkeeping!

The really important first task is to identify some dates and get an interesting place.

Getting help - the committee

One universal truth I've found is that people will rarely turn you down when asked to take a small part of a rally. This could be running a meal, signing in and parking attendees, running a game or activity. They're usually so relieved that they haven't been asked to run the whole thing that they'll readily agree to do a small portion of the work.

I have found this especially true when looking for strong backs and willing hands on the spur of the moment at a rally – helping set up tables and chairs, break down same, sweeping out the hall, peeling potatoes, etc. - there is usually plenty of help available on site – just ask!

One thing for sure, don't try to do this all by yourself. Recruit at least a few people you know, and who usually patronize the rally you are running.

Selecting a location

One reason we chose to own or convert a bus is because we like the RVing lifestyle, and that usually means we like to travel, and most of us like to go to new and different places. It's easy to fall into the trap of running a certain rally at the same timeworn place, but I encourage you to think of somewhere in our region that might be interesting, and where we haven't visited – either ever or for a while.

We've had small to medium-sized rallies at member's ranches and farms, and rallies of all sizes at fairgrounds, company parking lots, and of course regular campgrounds. The ones at a member's property are usually dry camping with generators, and they have been as much fun as any.

One "must" in my opinion is to have a shelter with water and electric, so we can gather in case of bad weather. Most campgrounds will offer the use of their activity building if we bring enough members out.

Interesting attractions that are located nearby really add to the appeal of any rally. In the past five years' rallies we have taken a side trip to the Okefenokee Refuge, toured a BMW assembly plant, toured a winery, went to a small engine show and tractor pull, toured a NASCAR track, took a lunch trip on a paddlewheel boat, browsed quaint antique shops, etc. Some things are free, some have a modest charge.

These kinds of activities can be important to our wives/girlfriends who don't want to just sit around and talk shop, but would prefer to get out and see new and different things.

Setting the rally fee

Decide if camping fees are to be built into your Rally Fee. Many rallies have folks register for the rally separately from reserving a campsite at a campground if that's where you are heading. When people reserve and pay for camping separately it keeps the apparent rally fee reasonable.

Depending on the location of your proposed rally, you might be faced with rental of certain items, including a tent, cooking grills, chafing dishes, etc. Build those rental charges into the overall fee.

Next is to calculate the cost of meals you might offer.

In general, when offering a continental breakfast of coffee, juice and roll, I figure \$1.00 per person per day.

Full Pot Luck Dinners ('Bring a casserole or dish to pass') are very inexpensive and usually the only cost is for incidentals such as paper plates, napkins, plastic cutlery, condiments, etc. In fact many rallies these days ask people to bring their own dishes and utensils. You decide. I figure about \$.50 per person per Pot Luck.*

Partial Pot Luck where the rally provides the meat and attendees bring sides and dessert can be found for about \$4.00 - \$6.00 per person. There may be a local BBQ house that will sell us only the pork. Even KFC can sell you the chicken without the sides.

Fully catered meals can usually be had from \$8.00 to \$10.00 p.p.

We've had meals fully prepared by club members, including omelet breakfasts, pancake breakfasts, spaghetti dinners, BBQ ribs, steer roasts, and so forth. The breakfast activities can usually be brought in for about \$2.00-\$3.00 per person. The dinner ones usually run about 5.00 p/p, especially if members are to bring a side dish or dessert.

A dine-out (night out at a nearby restaurant) is usually Dutch Treat, completely optional, and not calculated into the fee, but you may decide to cover it and add to the fee structure. Your choice. These are best if the restaurant has a private room.

Entertainment can range from free (Karaoke, story telling, audience participation TV type games, listening and dancing to recorded music, etc.) up to \$500 for outside, professional entertainment at our larger rallies. Look at past attendance figures to gauge whether there may be sufficient attendance to support the more expensive forms of entertainment. Cheap and enjoyable sources of entertainment are local singing groups, community theatre groups, volunteer and school bands and orchestras, etc. These groups might be willing to perform for free – they often crave live audiences.

Door prizes – about \$100 total. We've found it best to have fewer 'quality' gifts rather than two dozen cans of WD-40. Gift cards to popular restaurants or stores are always appreciated and about \$25 each seems the going value.

Overhead and contingencies – about \$5.00 per person. This includes printing, promotion, mailings, signage, hand-out materials and goody-bags, and miscellaneous out-of-pocket.

Using these rough figures you can see that depending on your degree of sophistication the rally can cost as little as \$10-15 per coach all the way up to \$100 per coach (two people), *exclusive of camping*. We don't have much experience with exceeding that top figure, but rising sentiment in the club points to perhaps more catered meals, which could drive up the fee.

*Here's another tip regarding Pot Lucks – ask a third of the members to bring a salad, a third to bring a side dish, and the last third to bring a dessert. Break up the alphabet to facilitate this, e.g. "Last names beginning A through G, please bring a salad..." etc.

Typical rally schedule

Our rallies generally run Thursday 'till noon Sunday. Sometimes there will be an 'early-bird' function on Wednesday afternoon/evening.

We usually offer Continental Breakfast Friday, Saturday and Sunday (rolls, juice and coffee). The club has coffeemakers if your rally facility has none.

Lunches are usually on-your-own.

Thursday dinner can either be a Dine Out or a Pot Luck.

Friday dinner is usually a Pot Luck. Side trips and excursions are popular on Fridays, and sometimes Saturday afternoons.

Please allow time after breakfast on Saturday for a club membership meeting. The Chapter president will organize this, and it usually lasts 1 to 1-1/2 hours. As rally chair you will be asked to report on the number of coaches present (and expected) and remind folks of plans for the rest of the rally. This is a great time to vocally thank the volunteers who are assisting you!

Saturday afternoons are popular for informal tech-talk sessions for the men (Howard Best loves doing these!), and in another location, crafts/homemaking/travel discussion sessions for the ladies.

Saturday dinner is usually a catered meal. And of there is to be one big night of entertainment, it is often Saturday night after dinner.

Promotion

We like to get the first announcement out to the membership about 60 days in advance. The Chapter will do this for you. This allows people enough time to think it over and send in the registration form and check. New to this process is registering through the chapter's website (www.southeastbusnuts.org) using PayPal. About 60% of recent rally registrants used this method. At any rate, you won't have to do any bookkeeping.

The promotion announcement will be done primarily through the internet. Only a few members are still not on-line. This first announcement will include a reg form, which will bounce back to the treasurer with the fee. The treasurer will be in regular touch with you regarding the growing attendance totals.

Depending on the rally, and if sufficient advance time permits, we may list it in FMCA's magazine. Technically our rallies are open to all FMCA members, regardless of owning a bus conversion. We will also list it on the Bus Conversions Bulletin Board:

<http://www.busconversions.com/bbs/index.php>)

We will generally send out a reminder announcement 3-4 weeks out, again primarily through the internet.

A couple of weeks before your event, the chapter will also send out confirmations to all registrants. This mailing often lists who's coming, any changes to the schedule, driving instructions and GPS coordinates, how to pay for camping if applicable, etc.

On-Site arrangements

The Chapter has some road signs and destination signs that will ID our rally as a function of the Southeast Bus Nuts. A well identified rally site can attract new members as long as passers-by know who is putting it on.

You'll want someone (perhaps yourself) to sign-in people as they arrive. Don't be surprised if some show up without advance registration. Many members are retirees and some have stopped paying attention to deadlines, etc. We generally take all comers, but if your catering guarantees could be exceeded, don't hesitate to tell late arrivals that they'll have to go through food lines last, and there's no guarantee that there will be food left. (Usually caterers bring more than the guarantee, but one of these days some of these latecomers will be disappointed.)

Often the rally host will put together a 'goody-bag' for coaches as they arrive. In addition to the latest schedule and roster of attendees, these bags often contain brochures for nearby attractions, some penny candy, product samples from nearby businesses and attractions, etc. Not necessary, but a nice thing to do.

Wrap-up

You'll want some help putting things back to normal at the rally site (stacking chairs, cleaning the kitchen, sweeping the floor, etc.). Once again, it is our experience that there is never a shortage of willing people to lend a hand with these on-the-spot duties. Just ask!

Don't hesitate to drop a note of thanks to those volunteers who helped you shoulder the load. It's always appreciated.

If you feel up to it, write up a brief recap of the rally for the club newsletter and website. If not, we'll do it for you!

Thanks for volunteering!