



RIDE CENTERS

Top Ride Destinations

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an IMBA Ride Center?

The IMBA Ride Center™ designation represents IMBA's recognition for large-scale mountain bike destinations that offer something for every rider. Visitors can bring their full arsenal of bikes to these diverse areas to enjoy everything from backcountry adventures to shuttle-served gravity trails, while finding options for every skill level from expert-only to family-friendly.

IMBA Ride Center locations demonstrate best practices in mountain bike trail design and construction while prioritizing the variety that most riders seek in their travel experiences. IMBA Ride Centers focus on providing enough variety that a rider can enjoy more than three days of riding without feeling like they have experienced it all.

As part of the Ride Center criteria, destinations will be awarded Ride Center badges for their accomplishments in four areas of trail development desired by both visitors and local riders:

- Frontcountry trail,
- Backcountry trail,
- Gravity trail, and
- Bike Park amenities.

By using these badges to promote their destination's highlights, communities can attract riders looking for those specific experiences.

Ride Centers also ensure that visitors find quality options for bike-friendly lodging, bike rentals, quality maps, signage and pre/post-ride amenities.

Designation levels:

- IMBA Ride Centers contain 60+ miles of quality trails plus a minimum of three badges.
- IMBA Premier Ride Centers contain 100+ miles of quality trails plus all four badges.

What Are the Benefits of Becoming an IMBA Ride Center?

1. Working with IMBA to receive the designation will provide your community with a focused road map to develop the ideal spectrum of trail amenities that will attract a broad base of visitation. Future trail development efforts can be guided by this plan to fill specific gaps.



2. Pursuing the designation can be used as an advocacy tool, persuading other stakeholders to align with the goal and its outcomes.
3. Ride Centers often bring significant economic benefits to their communities. A recent and compelling report on this information is [available on our website](#).
4. Trails in general offer many other benefits that can be improved through systematic planning of your destination::
 - a. Attracting & Retaining Residents: Communities with robust trail networks are more desirable places to live, drawing in new residents and encouraging existing ones to stay.
 - b. Supporting Workforce Development: Employers are increasingly looking for communities that offer a high quality of life and recreational opportunities, making trails a factor in attracting and retaining talent.
 - c. Improving Quality of Life: Trails contribute to a higher overall quality of life by providing accessible spaces for recreation, relaxation, and social interaction.
 - d. Improving Public Health: Trails offer an easy and appealing way to get people of all ages outside and exercising.
 - e. Fostering Community Pride & Connection: Trails serve as common ground, bringing people together and fostering a sense of shared ownership and pride in community assets.
5. The process of applying for the designation will bring together many different stakeholders, cementing a coalition of people that can work together on trail development for years to come, while setting the stage for further collaboration in community development.
6. The designation provides a tool for marketing the quality of your destination, which can be used in many types of marketing campaigns — not only for trail tourism, but also for companies recruiting employees, municipalities enticing companies to locate their businesses, and conference/event planners seeking additional ways to attract attendees. Trails also complement or even amplify other recreational or tourism draws already working in your community.

Who Should Apply to Become an IMBA Ride Center?

Interested applicants can be land managers, IMBA chapters or local trail groups, tourism or convention and visitor bureaus, and any stakeholder group in an area that desires to develop their community and trails system into a mountain bike destination. We highly recommend that applications are submitted by one organization or individual who is the lead on the project, but is part of a larger community group or committee working to elevate the area's status and engage all aspects of the surrounding region. It is also required that the relevant land management agencies are supportive of the community seeking the Ride Center designation.



How long does the designation last?

Ride Centers will hold their status for five years from the awarding date. After that time, they may re-apply, or at any time prior if they wish to be considered for a higher level or to be awarded additional badges. Re-evaluating Ride Centers at regular intervals ensures that destinations are maintaining their trails to the intended level of quality and rider experience, and that their trail offerings stay current with trail evolution and rider desires.

Is there a benefit to using the application without applying for the designation?

Yes! Any community looking to comprehensively improve their overall system of trails can use the application and trail inventory as a framework to guide their process. The criteria will reveal your gaps, opportunities and strengths, allowing you to prioritize your efforts. Your self-score can be used to:

- Make a plan to address gaps and opportunities
- Guide conversations with officials and stakeholders
- Support fundraising and grant applications
- Strengthen your case for trail development and stewardship

It's strongly encouraged to create a team of people, including land managers, tourism professionals and user groups to approach the process, because the relationships formed and strengthened through this effort are where the true benefits lie.

What is the process of becoming an IMBA Ride Center?

This designation is designed to support and advise local stakeholders and land managers in their effort to create the ultimate mountain biking destination. As a result, this designation is just as much about the process as the award itself. The application criteria serves as the blueprint for creating or improving a destination trail system and addresses multiple factors with both trail experience and surrounding community amenities being considered.

The designation and rating (and potential delisting or demotion) of a Ride Center is based on clear criteria. These criteria are a combination of objective and subjective elements, but in all cases they will relate to providing great riding opportunities.

The Ride Center application process consists of:

- A self evaluation using the criteria spreadsheet
- An in-person professional assessment and review (2-3 days)
- An evaluation of the existing conditions, opportunities for growth, and recommendations on next steps for improvement



- A report detailing the findings

Whether you are confident you will score well in the process or are highly motivated to develop a road map, this process will provide great benefit to your mountain bike community and beyond.

The evaluation criteria is comprised of key aspects that make an amazing mountain bike destination and includes:

1. Trail Experiences
2. Trail Variety
3. Trail Quantity and Quality
4. Services
5. Community Involvement

Application Timeline

- The application and criteria will be available year-round for communities to use at their leisure, with no commitment to apply.
- IMBA staff are available for introductory calls to discuss a community's readiness to apply, also with no commitment.
- IMBA will accept applications for Ride Center assessment year-round, although staff travel to a destination will be dependent on seasonality and availability.
- Once ready to apply, a community's process will begin with an initial consultation and review of the application.
- Once the completed self-evaluation is submitted, the in-person assessment will be scheduled based on the ideal timeline for both IMBA and the local stakeholders. Applicants must be prepared to host a full stakeholder meeting with the assessor in person.
- Before the assessor arrives onsite, the applicant will be invoiced and must pay for the assessment fee.
- After the completion of each destination review, the assessor and IMBA's Ride Center committee will complete any further evaluation and supply a report and decision.
- Ride Centers will be publicly announced as they are awarded, through the media channels of both parties.
- New Ride Centers will be added to IMBA's website and other relevant materials, including the Ride Center page on Trailforks.

If we have more than 60 miles, can we assume we'll receive the designation?

Not necessarily. A Ride Center is defined by a 30-minute drive-time radius around a center point within your community (chosen by you), so the 60 miles must originate within that radius. See the [Ride Center Application](#)



[Guide](#) for more details. Also, a worthy destination that riders want to visit contains high-quality trails with substantial variety and progression. Without intentional development to meet those goals, a location may fall short.

You'll be able to get a good sense of how your destination scores from your self-evaluation, so there's no commitment to apply until you feel confident that you meet the criteria. And remember, whether you qualify or not, you're not alone in the process of trail development! We're here to help you every step of the way, from visioning and trail planning to funding guidance and construction.

What if we have fewer than 60 miles, but we still think our location is worthy of recognition?

Although a community cannot qualify for the Ride Center designation with fewer than 60 miles, there's a good chance you may qualify for our IMBA Trail Town designation, which recognizes excellent places to live, work and play. You can [learn more here](#).

How much does it cost to apply?

You can use the application criteria at no cost, but if you want to be assessed for Ride Center status, it will cost \$250 for the initial consultation and review, followed by \$15,000 plus expenses for IMBA professionals to evaluate your location in person and develop a report on our findings. Renewals are \$7,500 unless we determine an in-person review is necessary. An upgrade will require an in-person review and a new application completed, with an application fee of \$250 followed by \$7,500 plus expenses for an in-person review of the new trails and amenities.

I'm interested! How do I learn more or apply?

You can learn more details from the [Ride Center Application Guide](#). When you're ready to apply or want to use the application on its own, fill out the [Ride Center intake form](#), and we'll be in touch!

What if my community is an existing Ride Center?

You've been grandfathered in at the IMBA Ride Center level for one year, while you decide how you'd like to proceed within the program. Reach out to marty.caivano@imba.com to discuss further.

We are always here to assist you. The [IMBA Resource Hub](#) is a great place to access resources to support each level of the trail development process. If you have any questions, reach out to marty.caivano@imba.com.