

Routes, RWGPS & GPS Setup

The official Gravel Birds 2026 routes are available on Ride with GPS:

👉 <https://ridewithgps.com/events/477360-gravel-birds-2026>

RWGPS is the **main platform for route planning and navigation support**, and all participants are strongly encouraged to use it as part of their preparation.

Using Ride with GPS

Getting started

1. Join the event using the link above
2. Open the Ride with GPS app
3. Go to **Events** → **Gravel Birds 2026**
4. Select your route
5. Tap **Save** → **Download for Offline**

This allows you to:

- Access the route without mobile signal
- Use your phone as a **navigation support tool or backup**
- View all checkpoints and support locations (water, food, etc.)

You can also:

- Export routes to your GPS device (**Send to Device**)
- Explore elevation profiles to better understand each section
- View all waypoints along the route

Optional (recommended)

A **free 2-month RWGPS Premium trial** is available:

👉 ridewithgps.com/dc/gravelbirds2026

GPX / KMZ Files

In addition to RWGPS, routes (including points of interest) are also available in:

- **GPX** (recommended for most GPS devices)
- **KMZ** (useful for Google Earth and some devices)

These files can be used to load the routes directly onto your GPS unit.

Using a GPS Device

Many participants will use a dedicated GPS device (Garmin, Wahoo, Hammerhead, etc.). Since Gravel Birds follows a **fixed route**, it is essential that the device displays the route exactly as provided.

1. Preserve the original track (no recalculation on upload)

When loading the route onto your device:

- Avoid options such as “recalculate”, “optimize”, or “follow popular roads”
- Ensure the file is used as a **track**, not converted into a dynamically generated route

→ Any modification at this stage can alter the official route and remove important details.

2. Disable re-routing during navigation

Make sure your device does NOT automatically recalculate the route if you go off course.

→ If enabled, the GPS may try to “correct” your position and suggest an alternative path, which can lead to navigation errors — especially if the deviation was only momentary (e.g. a missed turn).

3. Verify the route after upload

After loading the route onto your device, always check:

- Total distance
- Elevation gain (*note: total ascent values may vary significantly between devices and platforms, as they use different elevation data sources and smoothing algorithms to filter noise and define what counts as “climbing”*)
- Selected sections of the map

→ This confirms that the route was correctly transferred and remains unchanged.

Note: The official reference values for distance and elevation are those presented on Ride with GPS. Variations on individual devices are normal and expected.

4. Check track and waypoint limits

Some devices have limitations (e.g. maximum number of track points).

→ If the limit is exceeded, the route may be simplified or incomplete.

Make sure:

- The full track is visible
 - Waypoints (checkpoints, water, food) are included
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5. Test your setup before the event

Do a short test ride with the route loaded:

- Confirm navigation behaviour
 - Check visibility and alerts
 - Ensure everything works as expected
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Navigation rules

Participants must follow the **official track as provided by the organization**.

- The route should be followed as a **track**, not as a dynamically generated route
 - Any deviations (intentional or accidental) must be corrected by returning to the original track
 - Shortcuts or route alterations are not permitted
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RWGPS should be used primarily for **route planning and as a navigation support or backup tool**, even when using a dedicated GPS device.

A proper setup will make a significant difference during the event.