

2026 PRO-AM CYCLING SEASON GUIDE

The Definitive Amateur Calendar & Route Briefing

Ride the same roads. Feel the same roads.

THE PRO-AM LANDSCAPE

The 2026 professional cycling season is inextricably linked with the amateur experience through the Pro-Am model. Amateurs ride official professional routes — often the same weekend — benefiting from road closures, logistics, and the full atmosphere of WorldTour racing.

Two organizations control most of what matters: **ASO** (Tour de France, Paris-Roubaix, Liège-Bastogne-Liège) and **RCS Sport** (Giro d'Italia, Strade Bianche, Il Lombardia). Understanding which organizer runs your event shapes everything from registration to feed stations.

The 2026 Calendar Has Four Chapters:

- **The Five Monuments** — the oldest, most prestigious one-day races in the sport
- **The Cobbled Classics** — brutal northern Belgium and France tests
- **Grand Tour Etape Series** — full mountain stages on 100% closed roads
- **Global Events** — Australia, UAE, and North American fixtures

THE FIVE MONUMENTS: 2026 SCHEDULE

The Monuments represent the pinnacle of cycling endurance. Northern Classics run amateurs **the day before** the pros. Italian events run amateurs **the day after**.

MONUMENT	AMATEUR DATE	PRO DATE	LOCATION	SIGNATURE FEATURE
Strade Bianche	March 8, 2026	March 7, 2026	Italy	Tuscan sterrato roads, Siena finish
Tour of Flanders	April 4, 2026	April 5, 2026	Belgium	Koppenberg & Oude Kwaremont
Paris-Roubaix	April 11, 2026	April 12, 2026	France	Hell of the North + Velodrome
Liège-Bastogne-Liège	April 25, 2026	April 26, 2026	Belgium	Ardennes + La Redoute
Il Lombardia	October 2026	October 2026	Italy	Madonna del Ghisallo + Muro di Sormano

FULL 2026 CHRONOLOGICAL CALENDAR

Q1 — January through March: Early Season

EVENT	DATE	LOCATION	HIGHLIGHT
Tour Down Under (MAC Ride)	Mid-January	Australia	Willunga Hill stage
Cadel Evans Peoples Ride	Late January	Australia	Geelong coastal circuit
UAE Tour Challenge	Mid-February	UAE	Jebel Hafeet & Jebel Jais closed roads
Omloop Het Nieuwsblad Sportive	Feb 28/Mar 1	Belgium	Muur van Geraardsbergen & Bosberg
Kuurne-Brussels-Kuurne Sportive	Feb 28/Mar 1	Belgium	Full Opening Weekend double
Gran Fondo Strade Bianche	March 8	Italy	Sterrato roads, Via Santa Caterina wall

Gran Fondo Sanremo-Sanremo	March	Italy	120km with Cipressa & Poggio
Gent-Wevelgem Cyclo	Late March	Belgium	Kemmelberg & gravel Plugstreets
Dwars door Vlaanderen Sportive	Late Mar/Early Apr	Belgium	Ideal Flanders warmup
E3 Saxo Classic Cyclo	Late March	Belgium	"Mini Tour of Flanders"

Q2 — April through June: The Spring Classics

EVENT	DATE	LOCATION	HIGHLIGHT
We Ride Flanders	April 4	Belgium	75km to 237km; 16,000 riders
Scheldeprijs Ride	April	Belgium	Mass-participation sprint classic
Paris-Roubaix Challenge	April 11	France	70/100/145km; Arenberg + Velodrome
Amstel Gold Race Toerversie	April 18	Netherlands	30+ bergs; LOTTERY ENTRY
Liege-Bastogne-Liege Challenge	April 25	Belgium	80/150/250km; La Redoute
Eschborn-Frankfurt (Skyliners)	May 1	Germany	Taunus mountains + Frankfurt finish
Gran Fondo Giro d'Italia	May	Italy	Legendary Italian passes, closed roads
Gran Fondo Milan-Sanremo	June	Italy	Full 300km Milan to the coast

Q3 — July through September: Mountain Season

EVENT	DATE	LOCATION	HIGHLIGHT
L'Etape du Tour de France	July	France	100% closed roads; 15,000 riders; SELLS OUT
Clasica San Sebastian (Klasikoa)	August	Spain	Jaizkibel in the Basque Country
BEMER Cycclassics	August	Germany	Finish on pro's line in Hamburg
Gran Fondo La Vuelta	Late Aug/Sep	Spain	The Spanish muros (walls)
Bretagne Classic (GP de Plouay)	Late August	France	Technical circuit in Brittany

Q4 — October: The Autumn Classics

EVENT	DATE	LOCATION	HIGHLIGHT
Gran Fondo Il Lombardia	October	Italy	Madonna del Ghisallo + Muro di Sormano
Chrono des Nations (Amateur)	October	France	Rare sanctioned TT on pro course

DIFFICULTY MATRIX & BIKE SELECTION

Equipment choice matters more than most riders expect. Wrong tires on pavé or a heavy bike on an Alpine stage makes an already hard day significantly harder.

RACE CATEGORY	SURFACE	PRIMARY CHALLENGE	OPTIMAL BIKE
Cobbled Classics (Roubaix)	Flat ancient pave	Vibration & fatigue sectors	Endurance Road / 32mm tires
Flanders / Bergs	Steep cobbled hills	Grip & technical climbing	Endurance Road / 30-32mm
Ardennes (Liege, Amstel)	Steep asphalt	Total elevation & 20% gradients	Lightweight climbing bike
Amstel Gold	Narrow winding hills	Positioning & short bursts	Performance road bike
L'Etape / Grand Tours	Alpine/Pyrenean roads	Sustained 1-2 hour climbs	Lightweight climbing bike
Strade Bianche	Fine gravel (sterrato)	Traction on loose descents	GRAVEL BIKE — not optional

ICONIC ROUTE DEEP DIVES

Paris-Roubaix Challenge

70km / 100km / 145km

The 145km route from Busigny hits the Trouee d'Arenberg, Mons-en-Pevele, and Carrefour de l'Arbre before finishing on the legendary Roubaix Velodrome track. Flat but soul-crushing. The vibration from the pavé sectors is unlike anything else in the sport.

We Ride Flanders

75km to 237km

Belgium's premier cycling festival with 16,000 riders. Defined by steep, often muddy, cobbled bergs — the Koppenberg, Oude Kwaremont, and Paterberg. The 237km "beast mode" route is one of the most significant amateur cycling achievements available.

Liege-Bastogne-Liege Challenge

80km / 150km / 250km

"La Doyenne" is a vertical suffer fest through the Ardennes forest. Unlike flat northern cobbles, this is unrelenting climbs. La Redoute and Roche-aux-Faucons are the decisive landmarks.

Amstel Gold Race Toerversie

30+ bergs through Limburg

Narrow roads, highly technical, finishing atop the Cauberg in Valkenburg. Lottery entry system — if you miss the draw, tour operators offer guaranteed spots bundled into travel packages.

Gran Fondo Strade Bianche

Gravel roads of Tuscany

The monument most suited to gravel riders. The "sterrato" roads of Tuscany, finishing up the brutal 16% Via Santa Caterina into Siena's Piazza del Campo. Bring your gravel bike — the pros are pros; you want traction on loose, dusty descents.

ESSENTIAL LOGISTICS & REGISTRATION NOTES

The Amstel Gold Lottery

The Toerversie entry uses a lottery due to extreme demand. If you miss the draw, many official tour operators offer guaranteed spots as part of travel packages. Plan a year out.

The Two Sanremos

The March "Sanremo-Sanremo" is 120km with the Cipressa and Poggio. The June "Gran Fondo Milan-Sanremo" is the authentic 300km journey from Milan to the coast. These are very different training commitments. Do not confuse them.

L'Etape du Tour Sells Out

ASO's closed-road standard event for 15,000 riders goes fast. This is not a "register when you get around to it" situation. Set a calendar reminder for registration open dates.

ASO vs. RCS Events

ASO events tend toward larger, well-oiled mass participation with French-style logistics. RCS events have more of a local gran fondo culture feel. Both are excellent — just different vibes on registration process, feed stations, and road control density.

Gravel Bike for Strade Bianche

Expert recommendation is clear: gravel bike for the Gran Fondo version. The pros handle sterrato on road bikes because they are professionals being paid to suffer. You are not.

For more gravel cycling guides, race reports, and gear reviews, visit thegravelriders.com

The Gravel Riders | 2026 Pro-Am Season Guide | All dates subject to official confirmation