

HAVE FUN BIKING

NATIONAL GUIDE

4 Great BIKING Adventures

Amsterdam

Cedar Falls

Mississippi River Trail

Tampa/St. Pete

Finding the Right Bike & Gear

The Latest
on eBikes
and more!



2017 Edition



Welcome

From all of us at HaveFunBiking.com (HFB), I am pleased to introduce you to our inaugural issue of the *Have Fun Biking National Guide*. We began with the HFB website in 2006 and have been publishing bike guides ever since. Like the [Minnesota Bike/Hike Guide](#), our goal is to help cyclists easily access the latest information on bicycling, including the best places to ride a bike, plus helpful tips on gear, maintenance and safety for the next bike adventure. That vision and process still holds true today as you page through the following feature stories, tips and reviews in this new digital publication.



Many of the articles and tips in the guide are also on our blog at HFB. So if you are looking for updated details, along with additional descriptive photos and links, we have you covered. Furthermore, if you want a sneak peek at what might be in our next issue of this guide or further details when on the go, please sign up for our weekly eNewsletter on the next page. I promise your email address will not be sold to, or shared with, a third party. Also, if you would like to view our daily photo 'Pic of the Day' please like - our [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) page.

Whether you are new to bicycling or a seasoned cyclist, we hope you enjoy and bookmark this handy guide to your favorite electronic device. Our goal is to continue publishing biking information to help you stay active and healthy.

To make future issues available, please check out all the links our sponsors have provided and let me know what you would like to see in our upcoming issues. This publication is a partnership between HaveFunBiking, our sponsors and you, our readers. We need your input to be successful, so please feel free to share your opinions, ideas, photos and stories on bicycle related topics with us. Just send an email to poke@havefunbiking.com and we will get back to you.

Read on and have fun!



Russ Lowthian
Editor
HaveFunBiking.com

P.S.

I would also like to acknowledge John Brown and Pete May for the long hours they have both put in to make this new publication a reality. John has a knack for sharing his passion of all things mechanical on a bicycle, as you will notice in the product tips and gear section. Whereas Pete's graphic design talents makes this guide flow for your enjoyment. A special thanks to Gail Weinholzer and AAA-The Auto Club Group for all their help and support. We would also like to thank all our sponsors with ads and/or links throughout the guide. Without these people, companies and organizations this new, handy e-guide would not be possible.



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Our cover, photographed in Iowa by Russ Lowthian, shows a cyclist enjoying her time on the annual RAGBRAI bike tour across the state in July.



Selecting the Right Bike

Step one, determine where you want to ride.

Typical choices are: road, path/trail and off-road.

Step two, how frequently do you plan on riding?

A bicycle can range in cost from around \$300 to the tens of thousands. More basic models use less durable materials like plastics rather than metals in the shifting components and mild steel rather than stronger alloys for the drivetrain and cockpit. As the purchase price increases, stronger materials replace less durable materials lending to a bicycle that will hold up better to frequent use. At a certain price (*different for every category of bicycle*), the durability doesn't increase, but instead the weight begins to decrease. A lighter bicycle is easier to control and accelerate (*making for a more enjoyable ride*).

Step three, why are you riding?

Fun and fitness, speed and adrenaline or competition all put different strains on a bicycle. Be sure to match your riding style with the bike you get.

Step four, what to ride.

What is the right bike? Start with the three main categories road, path/trail, mountain biking.

Road Bicycles

Designed with speed and efficiency in mind, road bikes are best suited on roads due to their narrow tires. Don't let the narrow tire deter you, road bikes use narrow tires because pavement offers ample traction, so a wider tire only slows the bike down. Road bicycles are the lightest of the three categories. Some are equipped with flat handlebars, but most come with a drop bar. Many riders love the speed and light weight of these bicycles. Click for more info on road bikes.



Path/Trail Bicycles

These bicycles are the largest volume of bikes sold. This style uses an upright handlebar and offer a more comfortable seating position. The tires range from something narrow (*a little wider than a road bike*) to as wide as a mountain bike.

Some are also fitted with a suspension designed to make the bike feel smoother over rough paths. While not as quick as a road bike these bikes offer great efficiency on longer bike tours. Click for more info on path/trail bikes.



Mountain Bicycles

Made for off-road use, they sport a design to keep the rider in control on rough trails. These bikes have low gearing so riders

can pedal up steep grades of loose and rocky terrain. A lot of riders enjoy the stability and position of a mountain bike for path/trail riding as well as true off road riding.

[Click for more](#) info on mountain bikes.



Test Rides

To learn about the subcategories and individual models, it's best to visit your local

bike shop and start taking test rides. As you test ride bicycles, the differences and your own preferences become clearer as you ride more bikes.

For your first test ride, take a bike that fits you properly, is in a price range you feel comfortable with, and is in the category you think you want. Pay attention to how much effort it takes to get up to speed, how quickly it turns, how stable it feels at different speeds, and how comfortable you feel on it. When you try a second, third, etc. (*typically I recommend you try the same type bike in a slightly lower or higher price point*) compare them. Even with as few as three test rides you can begin to feel the differences between the bicycles. You will find that making a final decision on the right bike is easy after a day of test riding.

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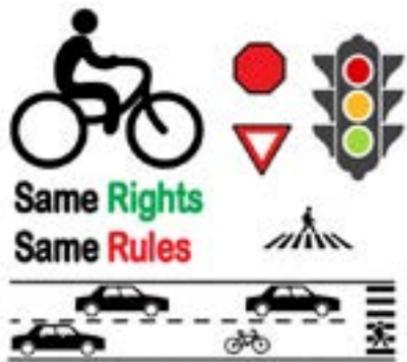
Safety for a Fun Group Ride

by John Brown

Before heading out for your group ride it is a good idea to brush up on your local traffic laws. Bicycles are given the same rights and requirements as vehicles in most municipalities. This becomes even more important as you ride in a group. Be cognizant of stopping at all traffic lights, stop signs and crosswalks. Ride with the flow of traffic in a manner that is as safe and predictable as possible.

What to expect on your group ride – Know the rules!

Group rides are typically categorized by speed and distance. If you are joining a ride, investigate the route and ensure that the group will be riding at a speed you can manage. When you are organizing a group ride with friends it is helpful to share the route and expected speed with



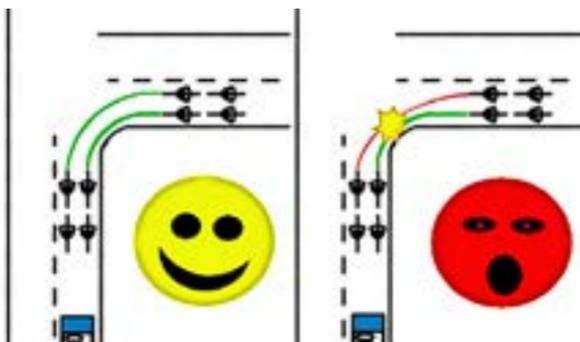
all riders beforehand. Additionally, many rides are categorized as “no-drop” rides. This type of ride is one where everyone rides together for the duration of the planned ride. However, if a ride is not categorized as “no-drop,” the group is under no expectation to wait for riders who cannot keep up.

As a side note for people putting together their own rides with friends, try to find riders who are all about the same level of fitness and have similar interests. This will help to maintain the groups connection while fostering great conversation. It’s not a race, the best part of a group ride is the shared experience of rolling through the countryside together. Whereas there are some

group rides designed to see who is king of the mountain, most are designed to use the strengths of a group to add to safety and efficiency. Trying to go at full speed and drop all those around you will only damage to a great experience.

Hold your line

In a group ride you are responsible for the safety of yourself and those around you. Those riding with you are also responsible for your safety. Consider the group before you make decisions or change direction. While riding solo, you naturally carve through the apex of a turn to maximize speed and maintain momentum. In a group, you cannot cut the corner like this. You need to offer as much space as the rider to the right or left of you needs to complete the turn.



Ride close

This is probably the most important tip for riding in a group. Ride two by two, side by side as close to the other riders as everyone feels comfortable with. By riding in this formation, when single file isn't mandatory, you can be more efficient and allow traffic to move seamlessly around you.

Give warning

Unless you are first in line, you can't see what obstacles may be coming down the road. If you are the rider up front, it is your responsibility to let the riders behind you know if the group encounters grates, potholes, other riders, pedestrians or automobiles. Usually a simple hand signal will work, a quick waive of the hand lets riders behind you know what's happening. As a rider who is following, it is requisite of you to signal to riders behind you the signals you see ahead. You can call out the obstacle, but in many cases the riders behind you may not hear your voice.

Ride confidently and safely

As you ride with a group more, a natural confidence and comfort level will develop. As you become more comfortable in the group, it's possible to lose focus on yourself and those around you. Always remember to stay alert and follow the tips above.



Please feel free to share your opinions, ideas, photos and stories on bicycle related topics with us. Just poke@havefunbiking.com





EXPLORING

**Bike Travel Ideas
For Your Next Bike Adventure**

**11 States with
BIKING
Destinations**



Please note:

Throughout the next 11 pages you will notice many cities are termed a Bike Friendly Community. This title is awarded by the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) to recognize communities throughout the U.S. that actively follow a rigorous set of bicycling standards.





FLORIDA



1 Tampa/St. Petersburg

Biking in this Bike Friendly Community is a popular and fun way to explore the Gulf Coast Bay area offering plenty of designated bicycle routes and trails to make your visit here memorable. [Find more here.](#)

2 Jacksonville

This Florida destination, inland from the Atlantic Coast and on the St. Johns River, offers incredible mountain biking trails, unpaved nature trails and designated street routes. [Find more here.](#)

3 Tallahassee

Recently named one of the 50 best bike cities in the U.S., this Bike Friendly Community continues to create comfortable riding opportunities on designated street routes and trails. [Find more here.](#)

4 Orlando

Central Florida's theme-park area is another Bike Friendly Community area perfect for family and friends to explore the 150 miles of paved bike trails network that winds around Orlando and its attractions. [Find more here.](#)

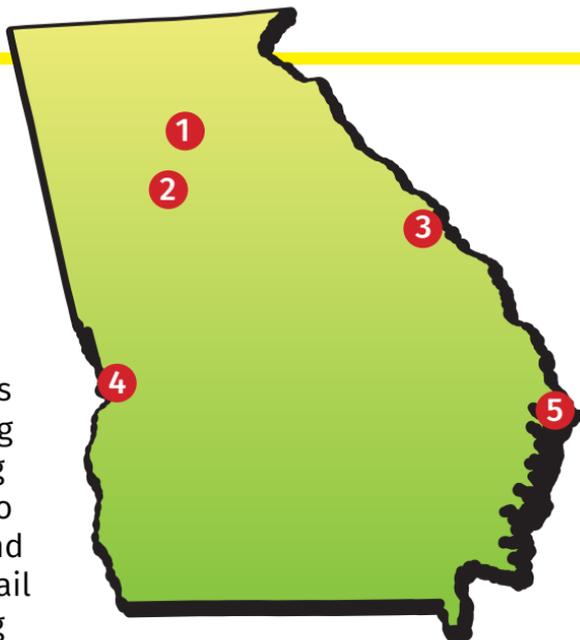
5 Miami

When visiting for a couple days or a week, this Bike Friendly Community has evolved immensely making it easy for cyclists and their families to explore the Miami-Dade County area by bike. [Find more here.](#)





GEORGIA



1 Roswell

The first Bike Friendly Community in Georgia, Roswell is committed to making all aspects of cycling activities available to both its residents and visitors with road, trail and mountain biking opportunities. [Find more here.](#)

2 Atlanta

Even with its population density and traffic this Bike Friendly Community offers both residents and visitors many safe and fun ways to enjoy all the designated bike routes and trails here. [Find more here.](#)

3 Augusta

Along with many prime mountain biking opportunities in the area, ride the Towpath Trail along both the Augusta Canal and Savannah River exploring the historic sites and scenic wildlife areas. [Find more here.](#)

4 Columbus

Along with the Bike Friendly Community LAB designation, the area boasts two beautiful and inspiring trail systems: the Chattahoochee Riverwalk and the Dragonfly Trail for your next two-wheel visit. [Find more here.](#)

5 Savannah

In this Bike Friendly Community, a bike is one of the easiest ways to navigate the downtown and historic areas of the city on designated bike trails and paths that wind through the area. [Find more here.](#)





ILLINOIS



1 Aurora

Sitting at the south end of the 65-mile Fox River Valley Bike Trail System, the city with its trail systems and designated bike lanes is a Bike Friendly Community both residents and visitors enjoy.

[Find more here.](#)

2 Naperville

As a Bike Friendly Community, there are many bike lanes and bike paths around town. Plus, the Knoch Knolls Mountain Bike Park offers some adrenaline fun while visiting the area. [Find more here.](#)

3 Champaign - Urbana

A Bike Friendly Community located in the heart of Illinois, just a few hours drive from Chicago or St. Louis, you will find plenty to see biking the designated streets and trails here on your next bike getaway. [Find more here.](#)

4 Chicago

One of most beautiful assets of this Bike Friendly Community is its scenic Lakefront Trail and the many miles of on-street, protected and buffered bicycle lanes used by both residents and visitors to get around. [Find more here.](#)

5 Springfield

Where presidential history meets Americana, in the Land of Lincoln, you will find several trails and designated bike routes to explore museums, festivals and other attractions in the area. [Find more here.](#)





INDIANA



1 Muncie

A Bike Friendly Community, with many trails and designated lanes, the city connects to the paved Cardinal Greenway, a 62 mile rails-to-trail system that connects to towns in five counties. [Find more here.](#)

2 South Bend

On the St. Joseph River, this Bike Friendly Community is known for the adjacent University of Notre Dame and miles of designated lanes, hard surface and mountain biking trails as well as a huge BMX park to visit. [Find more here.](#)

3 Fort Wayne

Nicknamed “Summit City” for the highest point on the canal, this Bike Friendly Community offers miles of trails and designated bike lanes to allow you and your family a safe bike vacation. [Find more here.](#)

4 Goshen

A central stop along the Heritage Trail, this Bike Friendly Community, with bike designated lanes and more than 30 miles of paved trail, is also filled with eclectic shops, cozy cafes and lively entertainment. [Find more here.](#)

5 Warsaw and Winona Lake

Offering both paved and off road trails along with designated cycling routes, this Bike Friendly Community, next to the lake features a restored historical district with quaint artisan shops and cafés. [Find more here.](#)





IOWA



1 Des Moines

With miles of paved trails and designated streets in the area, catch a glimpse of this Bike Friendly Community's downtown architecture, distilleries and public gardens before riding up to the High Trestle Trail. [Find more here.](#)

2 Bettendorf (*Quad Cities*)

This Bike Friendly Community, in the Quad Cities and where the Mississippi River Trail and American Discovery Trail meet, offers more than 100 miles of trail for riverfront bicycling, in-town cruising and mountain biking. [Find more here.](#)

3 Cedar Falls and Waterloo

Known as 'Iowa's Gateway to Trails', this Bike Friendly Community area offers cyclists more than 100 miles of hard surface trail loops, designated road routes, plus mountain biking, BMX and cycle cross opportunities. [Find more here.](#)

4 Coralville and Iowa City

This Bike Friendly Community has something for recreational and competitive cyclists offering miles of hard surface trails, county and gravel road options as well as mountain bike trails to explore on two wheels. [Find more here.](#)

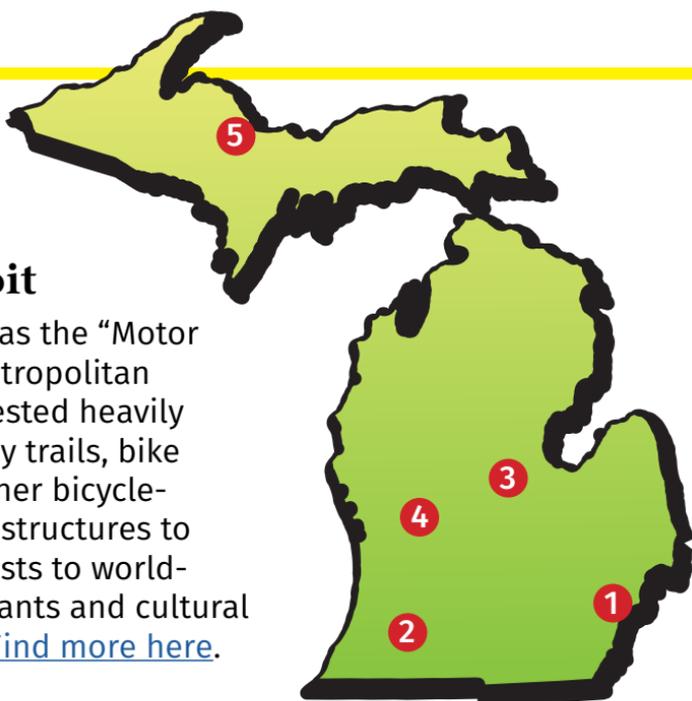
5 Mason City

Home of the Music Man Square, located in northern Iowa off Interstate 35, the area offers incredible mountain biking trails, unpaved and paved nature trails, and designated street routes. [Find more here.](#)





MICHIGAN



1 Detroit

Also known as the “Motor City”, this metropolitan area has invested heavily into greenway trails, bike lanes and other bicycle-friendly infrastructures to connect cyclists to world-class restaurants and cultural attractions. [Find more here.](#)

2 Kalamazoo

This Bike Friendly Community offers cyclists of all abilities a wide variety of designated road routes and scenic trails meandering through meadows, also challenging single track adventures. [Find more here.](#)

3 Midland

Here by the Saginaw Bay, this Bike Friendly Community lets you forge your own path, using the areas linking bike trails, on designated bike routes that will help you connect to several mountain biking options. [Find more here.](#)

4 Grand Rapids

Earning national recognition for its biking environment, even the Bike Friendly Community buses here are bike-friendly so you can access local trails without riding through traffic. [Find more here.](#)

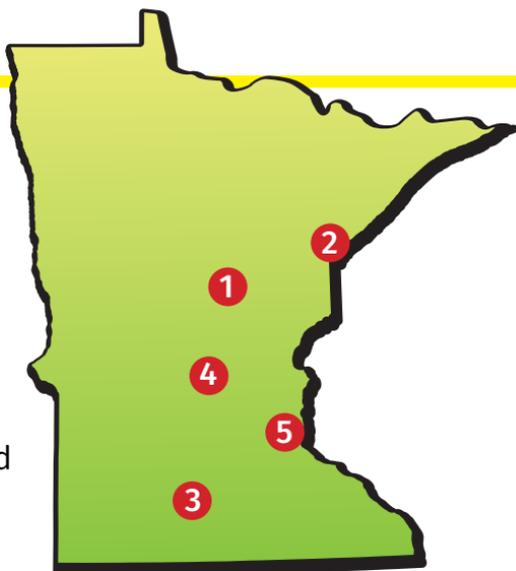
5 Marquette

Along the Lake Superior shoreline, this Bike Friendly Community offers recreational riders an adventure not soon to be forgotten. Enjoy leisure trail rides, fat biking and mountain biking to scenic road routes. [Find more here.](#)





MINNESOTA



1 Brainerd

With 464 lakes in the area, this Mississippi River Town is a great getaway destination for riding the Paul Bunyan Trail as well as several road loop options around the lakes and mountain biking trails.

[Find more here.](#)

2 Duluth

At the far western shores of Lake Superior, this Bike Friendly Community has it all; well-marked street routes, a scenic trail system that follows the north shoreline and more than 45 miles of single-track trails. [Find more here.](#)

3 Mankato

In the Minnesota River Valley, this Bike Friendly Community offers cyclists designated street routes that connect to an extensive system of bike trails, open country roads to ride and downhill slopes for mountain biking.

[Find more here.](#)

4 Saint Cloud

A Mississippi River Trail town, this Bike Friendly Community offers residents and visitors many safe routes through the city that connects to the Lake Wobegon Trail and several area mountain bike parks. [Find more here.](#)

5 Twin Cities Gateway (Anoka to Arden Hills)

A bike adventure in these north metro communities will make you feel as if you are deep in the country. As the Mississippi River Trail rolls through enjoy hundreds of miles of trails in this nine city area with a velodrome track. [Find more here.](#)





NEBRASKA



1 Lincoln

This Bike Friendly Community is the state capitol of Nebraska and the first city in the state to offer protected cycle lanes as part of their LAB designated bike routes. You will also find many miles of trails. [Find more here.](#)

2 Omaha

The 85-mile trail system in this Bike Friendly Community is appropriately called 'Paths of Discovery' as each twist and turn winds through a different part of the city, connecting to many other designated bike routes. [Find more here.](#)

3 South Sioux City

The Siouxland area is a progressive Bike Friendly Community linking their trails and bike routes to the city, with more trails to explore across the Missouri River. [Find more here.](#)

4 Beatrice

This charming little community offers designated bike routes and trails perfect for biking! Trails are well-marked with mile markers for cyclists to check their distance. [Find more here.](#)

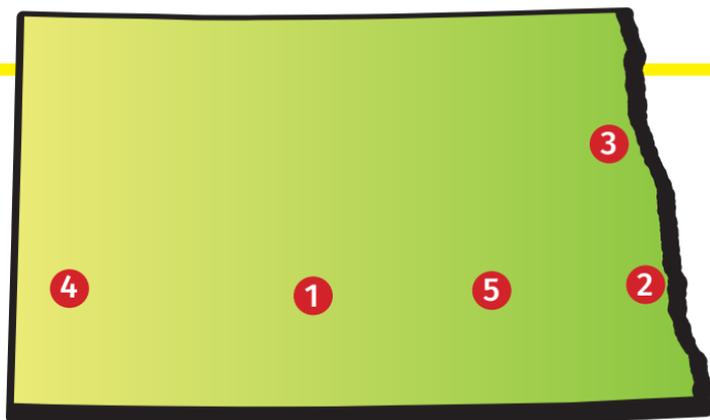
5 Columbus

Steeped in pioneer history, this is where settlers began their western journey. Today the city's main tree-lined trail meanders around two lakes, connecting it to several other recreational trails. [Find more here.](#)





NORTH DAKOTA



1 Bismarck

The capitol city of North Dakota, this Bike Friendly Community has developed a vast network of trails and road routes that allow cyclists a safer way to travel through the city and to all the mountain biking parks. [Find more here.](#)

2 Fargo

As a prairie breeze stirs the excitement in this Bike Friendly Community offering more than 200 miles of connecting trails, there is hardly ever an issue with congestion. Plus, courtesy on the road is exceptional. [Find more here.](#)

3 Grand Forks

A Bike Friendly Community, all about two-wheeled transportation for commuting and recreation, the area offers many miles of 'Greenway' bike routes and trails in town and out along the Red River Valley. [Find more here.](#)

4 Medora

A mecca for mountain bike adventures, experience the wilds of the Badlands and the single track Maah Daah Hey Trail that showcases some of our country's most unique and breathtaking terrain. [Find more here.](#)

5 Jamestown

Home of the largest bison and rich pioneer history, the community today offers a wonderful outdoors experience with paved trails for family fun and challenging mountain bike runs. [Find more here.](#)





TENNESSEE



1 Chattanooga

This Bike Friendly Community sits along the Tennessee River in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains offering cyclists of all abilities: paved trails, designated bike routes and prime mountain biking adventures. [Find more here.](#)

2 Clarksville

A river city, at the confluence of the Cumberland and Red Rivers, this is a perfect place to start an adventure by riding along the river trails, designated bike routes or checking out the mountain biking opportunities. [Find more here.](#)

3 Cookeville

If outdoor adventure for the family is in your bike vacation plans, this charming community is the place for you offering fun riding on the Tennessee Central Heritage Rail Trail or the Cane Creek Mountain Bike Trail. [Find more here.](#)

4 Knoxville

Bicycling in this Bike Friendly Community, in Eastern Tennessee, means you can meander trails along beautiful rivers and creeks, ride the scenic designated road routes or explore the mountain biking vistas. [Find more here.](#)

5 Memphis

On the Mississippi River Trail, this Bike Friendly Community is known for its legendary music and historic landmarks that are easily reached by paved trails and designated bike routes. [Find more here.](#)





WISCONSIN



1 La Crosse

A Mississippi River Trail town, this Bike Friendly Community offers a network of connecting trails and scenic road routes, mountain biking and BMX fun. [Find more here.](#)

2 Madison

The capitol city of Wisconsin, this Bike Friendly Community, has developed a vast network of trails and road routes that allow cyclists a safe way to travel around the city and to the mountain biking parks. [Find more here.](#)

3 Menomonie

Nestled in the Red Cedar River Valley and home to a popular university, this Bike Friendly Community offers a scenic trail system along the river, designated bike route loops, plus mountain biking fun. [Find more here.](#)

4 Milwaukee

On the shoreline of Lake Michigan, this Bike Friendly Community, known for its breweries and museums, offers a network of family fun trail systems throughout the area, designated bike routes and mountain biking. [Find more here.](#)

5 Wausau

Near the center of the northern half of the Western Hemisphere, this Bike Friendly Community offers miles of fun bicycle routes and trails with several mountain biking challenges for every skill level. [Find more here.](#)



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A memorable experience

Exploring Amsterdam

by bike for the first time

by Russ Lowthian



On the front end of a bike/barge trip in the Netherlands earlier this year, I added three days to explore Amsterdam by bike. Taking the extra time was a great choice and using a bike as my mode of transportation was by far the best way to see the city. This allowed me many opportunities to sample the fare this bike friendly mecca had to offer. Winging it a bit, I rented one of the locally popular trekking bikes to roam alongside the canals like a true 'Amsterdammer', even though I stuck out a bit wearing a bicycle helmet. I was comfortable navigating the bike lanes, even with motor scooters buzzing up from behind and pedestrians stepping out in front of me. As bikes are an important part of Amsterdam, I felt as though I was a part of the city.



Amsterdam is a bike-friendly place to ride, if?

The cool thing about using a bike to get around this city is that you can easily get anywhere quickly. Amsterdam is perfect for bicycles. The city has generous bike paths throughout; some even have specialized traffic lights, with the bicycle symbol illuminated. It seems Amsterdammers go everywhere on their bikes. They attach wagons and load them with cargo - sometimes their children. They also like to chat on

their cell phones, run red lights, daringly weave in and out of traffic and the vast majority of them do not wear helmets. Most of the Dutch bikes all have the same basic look. Old fashion looking, reminiscent of bikes you would see in movies from the 1950's, with wide-set handlebars.



Need a bike rental shop? Options are endless

Looking on the web for a rental bike, there seemed to be an ample supply of bikes around the city. I assumed that I could wait until mid-morning to go out and rent

a bike for the next couple days, my mistake. Even though it was a midweek day, the best bikes in two shops I stopped at had most of their fleet checked-out. Only a few of their older, well used, bikes remained. Luckily a bike was being returned that fit me well. So I was on my way, taking with me a valuable lesson in renting bikes in a popular tourist area. Unless you can reserve a bike ahead of time, get there early to get a pick of their best.

Navigating Amsterdam and what you can see

Handy bike maps are available, free, at most hotels and bike rental shops. With a couple versions in my pocket for occasional review, they worked well for me. Pedaling the streets along the canals, there is way too much for the eye to see, from gorgeous architecture, charming flower boxes, crowded cafés, etc. So forget your iPod, your ride will have its own soundtrack.



Some of the sounds you may hear include the whirring of a canal boat's motor, the peal of church chimes, the hum of motor scooters as they zip up behind you triggering your brain to move over to the right to let them by and the tinkle of a bike's bell, maybe yours? I found that my right hand stayed pretty close to the bell on the bike's handlebar, warning sightseers to move out of the bike lane.

My first day riding in Amsterdam

As I mentioned above, I started late checking out a rental bike. Then getting acclimated to the designated bike lanes and



tourists walking out in front of me. It was amazing how much I experienced in such a short time. I had no planned route; it was fun to get lost in the city with its maze of streets (*straats*) and canals (*grachts*). Of course, those maps in my pocket were helpful in finding my way back to my hotel. In the first few hours, I rode through Amsterdam's finest sections including the [Jordaan District](#) which could be referred to as the heart of the city. Then I rode past the [Anne Frank House](#) where I had a tour scheduled the following day. Next I passed the house of [Rembrandt](#) and then by the awesome architecture of the [Rijksmuseum](#). Finding my way back, I wandered through [China Town](#) and then the [Red Light District](#) before meeting friends for dinner.

Overcoming the intimidation of biking in this popular city

In just a few hours riding my bike around Amsterdam my confidence was high ... and so was my thirst. Meeting friends for beer, several who just arrived in town for the bike/ barge cruise, there was some envy as I pulled up on my rental bike. Several asked, as I walked in with my helmet still on, "where have you been?" I replied with an accomplished grin, "I've biked all over town!" as I shared my first day's adventures in Amsterdam riding a bike.



A full day to explore Amsterdam

With a loose itinerary, only the Anne Frank Tour scheduled mid-afternoon and dinner plans in the evening, I was off. First, I found myself at Amsterdam's bustling [flower market](#), where crowds come to buy or just admire a wide array of flowers. After enjoying a cup of coffee and the fragrance of the market,

I pedaled across a series of canals to one of the city's [street markets](#). Here, I found another Dutch treat, a [herring stand](#). In warmer weather vendor stands spring up around the city offering this delicacy. If you appreciate sushi or at least pickled herring, give it a try! You can order herring in a bread roll and eat it like a sandwich. Though “the Amsterdam way” is to eat the herring cold, with only diced onions and pickles as garnish. It was great and one of my favorite must-have snacks on the trip.



Now pointing my bike towards the [Central Station](#) up through the city center, at the river's edge, I took a ferry across to the northside of Amsterdam. Following the designated bike route several kilometers, I found this part of the city was newer with many parks.

Another perspective of the city

After the Anne Frank tour, which was well worth the extra time of waiting in line, I was off to the east side of Amsterdam. This area, with several blocks of modern architecture in between canals, gave me another perspective of the city. I planned to take in a few more tours, but I ended up spending more time on the bike. On my way back through the inner city of canals, as late afternoon turned into happy hour along the way, the activities along the sidewalk cafés was something fun to see.

Sure, you could see Amsterdam other ways. But, in a city with roughly 250 miles of cycle lanes, over 140 bicycle rental shops, and estimated million-plus miles collectively pedaled by bicyclists each day, why would you want to waste carbon fuel?



So in my opinion, assuming you survive the pedestrians wandering out in front of you, biking here cannot be beat. A half-million Amsterdammers can't be wrong. Just be sure to look both ways before heading out into traffic and don't be afraid to ring your bell!

The World of e-Bikes



e-Bikes are the newest, easiest way to experience your next adventure

by John Brown

What happens if you love riding your bike, but struggle (*like most of us*) when going up hill? How about trying to keep up with friends who are more avid riders? Well, as a matter of fact, the solution for these issues is a lot closer than you may think. Thanks to the development and refinement of electric motors, e-Bikes have become commonplace on the roads, paths and forests all over the country.

These bicycles are typically a normal looking bicycle with a motor that kicks in when you need it most. These assisted riding bicycles allow you to ride farther with less effort than a standard pedal bike. While they aren't usually faster on a flat road, the benefits going uphill or when a headwind shows up are amazing. People all around the world are enjoying rides they previously thought were too difficult or too long; enjoying destinations and vistas that were previously unattainable.

What types of e-Bikes are most popular?

While there are thousands of e-Bike models out there, the most common form uses a motor located in the center of the bike. There are some kits that replace a front wheel, like the [GeoOrbital](#) system, but that is more of an accessory to an existing bike than a purpose built e-Bike. For the purposes of this article, we will talk about bikes built with an electric motor and battery. The two most common types are path/trail bikes and mountain bikes.

Path/Trail e-Bikes

These bikes have an upright riding position, comfy saddles, wide tires for great traction and they often come with a rack for storage. Recently, I saw the [IZIP E3 Path Plus](#) as the perfect example. It has disc brakes for powerful and confident stopping,



a [Shimano brand motor](#), and a really cool articulating stem to easily adjust the handlebars to your desired position. Imagine riding the E3 Path Plus and easily cruising down the road at 20mph. With its maximum distance of 50 miles your weekends can be filled with new roads, and fun destinations.

Mountain Bikes (MTB)

If the trail turns rougher and a mountain bike is the best tool for the job, Focus has you covered with their [Bold2](#). This e-MTB is also using a [Shimano motor](#), but this one is designed specifically for off-road use. It has a great aluminum frame and [RockShox](#)



fork with 120mm of travel. While the motor will help you with those pesky uphill sections, the Rockshox suspension fork and Shimano Deore disc brakes will help you keep control when the trail pitches down.

Know your limits

Many riders were hesitant to try early e-Bikes because they were afraid of running out of charge and carrying the extra weight of a battery and motor needlessly. Thankfully all the new e-Bikes come with simple yet super informative [handlebar mounted readouts](#). They let you know how much power you are using, how much charge you have remaining and even allow you to tailor the amount of e-assist you use.



Who's riding e-Bikes?

With all the advancements in electric bike technology, this is an amazing product for everyone. Recently I was in conversation with a parent whose son rides in the Minnesota chapter of [NICA](#). He mentioned that although he had never been a bike rider before, now that his son is competing, he enjoys riding with him. The only issue was he couldn't keep up with those teenage legs.

An e-Bike ended up being the perfect product to help with that father/son bonding. Whatever your reason for riding don't count out an electric bike until you test ride one.



Where can you ride an e-Bike?

Trying an e-Bike is as easy as going to your local bike shop and taking a test ride. If that's not your cup of tea, look to bikeshare programs like [Mobike](#) which just launched an e-Bike share program in Washington DC. When riding an electric bike for



the first time, take a long ride. The fun and novelty of an e-Bike is apparent on the very first surge of power, but on a longer ride, you can really appreciate the convenience and possibilities.

What else is out there?

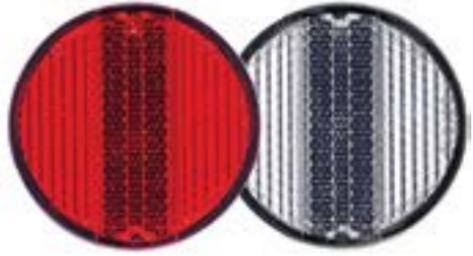
Beyond the basic two types of e-Bikes we talked about, there are some new possibilities emerging. Look no further than the [Tern GSD](#), this e-Bike has capabilities well outside a normal bicycle. This folding electric bike can carry more than one person, hundreds of pounds of gear or large objects on the back. It can also use two batteries extending its range.





Visibility

The main forms of visibility we focus on are passive and active visibility. Things like reflectors and bright colors are forms of passive visibility, while lights and blinkers are great examples of active visibility.



Passive visibility

Many rides start in the light only to pass into darkness as the ride stretches on. Provided that your ride is under street lamps or some form of light, passive visibility will get you home safely. The lowly reflector is the most common form of passive visibility. Luckily, reflectors are required by the CPSC to be installed on all bicycles sold in the United States. Reflectors come in two colors, white (*front and wheels*) and red (*rear*). Additionally, many apparel companies install reflective materials onto their products and work like the reflector on your bike, taking any light thrown at you and returning it back to the source. Where passive reflectivity falls short is when there is no light source to activate the visibility.



Active visibility

When the area is lacking a light source, you need to create that light to keep yourself safe. For cyclists, lights and blinkers are the most common visibility products. Where the light and the blinker differ is that blinkers are designed to be seen while lights allow a rider to both see and be seen.



Great lights are usually rechargeable and use an LED bulb. For riders who spend a lot of time off-road or on unlit paths, these lights are a necessity. While most mount onto the handlebar or helmet, there are a few companies who integrate lights into the bike or helmet.



Blinkers are usually battery operated and use an LED to flash intermittently. These blinkers can easily be mounted to your bicycle and in some instances, are incorporated into helmets, gloves, shoes, saddles and handlebars.

What to use?

Overall, think ahead before your next ride and pack to ensure you can see while others can see you. Mount a pair of blinkers to the bike (*one front and one back*) so when you get stuck in low light conditions, you can simply switch the blinkers on. If your route is going to be unlit for any distance, a front light makes riding safer. Additionally, be sure to wear highly visible clothing in combination with any other gadgets.





Mississippi River Trail (MRT)

**a bike adventure
of a lifetime in
Minnesota**

by Russ Lowthian



Picture yourself riding the MRT (*Mississippi River Trail*) through the wilds of Minnesota. Pedal along with family and

friends at your own pace on this Star of the North adventure. This is the first leg of America's famous 3,000 mile bicycle trail system, using bike-friendly roads and multi-use pathways. Leading several MRT bike tours over the years and referencing my book [Road Biking Minnesota](#), you may find some of my observations of interest.

The full Minnesota journey, from the Mississippi's headwaters, near [Park Rapids](#), to the Iowa border is roughly 620 miles. To keep the daily mileage comfortable for plenty of time visiting the river towns along the way, the following route descriptions are spread over nine days. Depending on how much time you can spend on any given bike vacation, this overview makes it easy to break it apart for multiple bike getaways.

As you read the following, please visit the embedded links offering short video clips and [maps](#) of the trail system. To get a better feel for what



you will see and experience leaving Itasca State Park on the MRT, see the first [video clip here](#). The information in this video and subsequent videos are made possible by: the MN DNR; the MN Historical Society; Explore Minnesota Tourism; and the National Park Service.

MRT - Day1 from the Mississippi Headwaters to Bemidji.



After enjoying a hearty breakfast at the historic Douglas Lodge, in [Itasca State Park](#), it's time to roll out. First you will need to pedal a few miles through the towering pines to where the Mississippi River begins. At the Headwaters parking lot, walk your bike rear wheel in the stream to celebrate the beginning of

your journey. You may hear one of Minnesota's loons cheering you on. Departing out of the parks north entrance, follow the internationally recognized Mississippi River Trail. Pedaling a scenic county road in a northeasterly direction this 30-plus mile stretch offers a beautiful rolling terrain. Smell the air as you pass by patches of pine forests and an occasional old farm setting. Soon you are pedaling into the first city on the Mississippi River.

Rolling into Bemidji

Arriving in Bemidji, the MRT enters on a city trail that connects to the Paul Bunyan Trail. As the current of the river flows into Lake Bemidji, this is a good place to consider for your first evening. While here discover all this community has to offer. A League of American Bicyclists (LAB) [Bike Friendly Community](#), it's easy to get around and



explore the city by bike.

In the downtown area you will find metal sculptures, murals and historic architecture on just about every corner.

Don't forget to stop by the visitor's center to have your picture taken with Paul Bunyan and Babe, his blue ox. For lodging and more things to do when not riding, see our [Bike Bemidji](#) article. You will find camping options in [Lake Bemidji State Park](#).

MRT - Day 2 from Bemidji to Grand Rapids

Back in the saddle the MRT takes the Paul Bunyan Trail north to where the Mississippi River pours out of Lake Bemidji. As the current flows east enjoy the sites along the Great River Road as it rolls into Chippewa National Forest. This next stretch of the MRT to Grand Rapids is roughly 80 miles. To get a better feel for what's ahead after leaving Bemidji watch the [2nd video clip here](#).

With an abundance of wildflowers along the road, pedal through the enchanted treasures this forested area offers. Along the way notice a huge population of bald eagles and hawks as the river meanders from one huge lake body to the next. Soon the river flows into Lake Winnibigoshish (*Lake Winnie*) and the MRT takes a course around the lake's south shoreline.

To the first Federal Dam on the Mississippi

Passing several resorts, you may want to stop for a selfie by the big fish monument. Riding up the east shoreline through



towering pines, the MRT is soon up to the [Federal Dam](#) where Lake Winnie spills back into the Mighty Mississippi. This dam was created in the late 1800's making it the largest reservoir on the Mississippi River system. Approximately 45 miles from Bemidji

there is a campground. A couple miles further east, you will find a restaurant and some lodging options.

As the river meanders, now in a southerly direction, the MRT follows suit, passing through a Native American village called Ball Club. Here the river dips and then flows to the east again. Soon the MRT rolls into Schoolcraft State Park where it meets back up with the Mississippi. This secluded park is the perfect place to take a break. Quiet and peaceful, the park offers a relaxing environment with a virgin white pine forest that is more than 300 years old. Take a [panoramic virtual tour](#) of the area here and then it's on to some Wizard of Oz trivia.

Rolling into Grand Rapids

This is the town where [Judy Garland](#), from the Wizard of Oz, spent her childhood. Today the community offers visitors many fun options to explore, along with the Judy Garland Museum. Once settled in, visit



the [Forest History Center](#) and the local art scene. Not only is this area rich in forested beauty, it also offers a number of art forms including many bronze sculptures and historic architectural sites. Another LAB [Bike Friendly Community](#), it's easy to get around this river town and explore the city by bike. Grand Rapids is also the western gateway to the [Mesabi Iron Trail](#) and Range. If you have a few extra days, the mining communities along the Mesabi trail are worth checking out. For [lodging](#) and more things to do when not riding, see our [Bike Grand Rapids](#) article.

MRT - Day 3 from Grand Rapids to Aitkin

As the Mississippi River pushes against the western slope of the St. Lawrence Divide, it flows south and the MRT hugs the west bank as it rolls out of Grand Rapids. This stretch of the MRT is 70 miles to Aitkin. To get a better feel for what's ahead after leaving Grand Rapids watch the next [video clip here](#).



you're in the town of Jacobson. If you turn onto this half-mile side-trip, you will discover many pieces of unusual lawn art and a rest stop option.

Rolling into Palisade

Back on the route continue south and you will soon be in a town named for the high banks on each side of the river. This is another intriguing place to stop. The community has a restaurant and a convenience store if you want to have a picnic or stay the night in the campground alongside the river. Back in the saddle, out of Palisade, there are two options to reach Aitkin.

You can depart on the Great River Road, now a hard gravel surface for the next 15 miles, enjoying a peaceful ride along the river. Or take the alternate route, adding eight-miles to your trip for the day riding on a busy highway with a narrow shoulder.



Rolling into Aitkin

Regardless of the route selected above, you will be rolling into a community with riverboat history. Once a popular meeting point for both Native American Indians and explorers, today the town makes a good overnight choice offering both camping and lodging options. After you settle in, check out the [museum](#) converted from



the Burlington Rail Depot. Here you can learn about the town's steamboat history and other interesting facts. For more things to do and lodging options [click here](#).

MRT - Day 4 from Aitkin to Little Falls

As the Mississippi flows in a westerly direction the MRT rolls into [Cuyuna](#) Country. Here the river passes on the north side of an iron range of the past. While the bike route meanders around these abandoned open mine pits you can see some of Minnesota's newest lakes. Now as the river bends to the southwest, the MRT is rolling towards the Brainerd Lakes Area.

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Rolling into Brainerd

Just imagine riding in an area sometimes referred to as Paul Bunyan's playground. Legend has it that Paul and his blue ox, Babe (*remember that mythical figure you took a selfie with in Bemidji?*) were having fun, wrestling around after a long rain spell. Stomping and tromping the two made a lot of large depressions that eventually filled with water to create the 464 lakes in the area. With the MRT and Paul Bunyan Trail merging back together in Brainerd/Baxter, you will find many fun adventures and good



things to eat here. For more things to do when not riding, see our [Bike Brainerd/Baxter](#) article.

Back in the saddle, the trail and river both head south again. As the Great River Road rolls along the east bank, passing [Crow Wing State Park](#), agriculture now replaces the forested landscape. Further down the MRT, cross over to the west bank and visit Camp Ripley which

offers a very interesting [military museum](#). Here see hundreds of exhibits showcasing vehicles and field equipment of Minnesota's military past. It's still ten miles of pedaling to reach the next river town where the river pauses.

Rolling into Little Falls

For centuries Little Falls has been a place where native inhabitants, early settlers and recent visitors have used as a gathering place. Located where the Mississippi River pauses; this river community is the town of Charles Lindbergh's childhood. After settling in, check out the historic attractions and museums, while experiencing the town's original murals and frescoes. While here, if interested, you can discover who helped finance the original production of the "Wizard of Oz." For lodging and more things to do when not riding, see our [Bike Little Falls](#) article.

MRT Day-5 from Little Falls to Monticello

At the edge of town cyclists will pass by [Charles Lindbergh State Park](#), where his childhood home still stands. Then the MRT passes by the [Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Memorial Museum](#) before the river valley floor opens up to more agriculture. To get a better feel for what's ahead after leaving Little Falls watch the [4th video clip here](#).



Rolling into St. Cloud

Through this stretch, the river offers several sets of rapids as the MRT rolls into St. Cloud. Another [LAB Bike Friendly Community](#),



it's easy to get around this river town and explore the city by bike. While in this river community check out some of the attractions, including the [Munsinger-Clemens Botanical Gardens](#). For lodging and more things to do when not riding, see our [Bike St. Cloud](#) article.

Back on the east side of the river, the MRT and river both swing back to the southeast. Using county roads that parallel several irrigated potato fields the route takes you to Clearwater. Then, crossing the Mississippi again, cyclists will notice the river is a bit wider here as they pedal to Monticello.

Rolling into Monticello



Here you will find a river town, full of charm, tucked up against the Mississippi River and conveniently located between St. Cloud and the Twin Cities. This vibrant community with many scenic parks is also home to thousands of geese and [swans](#) each winter. After settling in, check out the attractions in Monticello. For lodging option visit the local chamber, [here](#).

MRT - Day 6 from Monticello to St. Paul

Leaving Monticello, the MRT crosses the river and meanders through the farm fields of specialty crops to Elk River. To get a better feel for what you will see as you ride into the Twin Cities, watch the [5th video clip here](#). Stopping in Elk River, cyclists passing through the downtown area will notice the fresco mural on Main Street. You will also find plenty of options for a [rest stop here](#).

As you head out of Elk River, on the Great River Road, you will cross over the Mississippi River again. Soon you are passing through Dayton and entering the northern edge of the [Mississippi National River and Recreational Area](#).



Now, in the next twenty-five miles, MRT enthusiasts will enjoy stopping at several of the [Twin Cities Gateway](#) community attractions. From here enjoy paved bicycle paths through Minneapolis, before reaching the St. Paul suburb of [Inver Grove Heights](#).

MRT Day-7 from St. Paul to Frontenac



Currently, as the Mississippi River Trail leaves the St. Paul area, the route tentatively detours to the south on its way to Hastings. To get a better feel for what's ahead after leaving St. Paul, watch the [6th video clip here](#).

Hopefully by mid-summer, of 2018, the paved trail out of South St. Paul will connect to the [Mississippi River Regional Trail](#) allowing cyclists a direct route to our next river town. This new trail near Schaar's Bluff is already completed on the far end and will take cyclists into the downtown Hastings's historic district. You can find more about Hastings in our [At-A-Glance](#) article, along with a place to stop for cool refreshments or a meal.

Leaving Hastings, the MRT follows the Mississippi, winding along the rivers backwaters and past the Prairie Island Indian Community. About ten miles further and the route enters Red Wing, the next river community on the Minnesota section of the Mississippi River Trail.



Rolling into Red Wing



As the MRT runs alongside the river bank on the Great River Road you will find the atmosphere in Red Wing both unique and charming. From the beautiful bluffs, historic sites and world famous boots and pottery, this river town also offers several dining opportunities for a stop here. If you decide to spend the night, see [Visit Red Wing](#) for more options.

Back on the Mississippi River Trail, it's approximately another 10 miles to [Frontenac State Park](#) for the night. The city is on the National Register of Historic Places and contains a number of homes dating back to the Civil War era. Here you will find the Whistle Stop Café and a convenience store if you choose to camp in the state park for the evening.

MRT Day-8 from Frontenac to Winona

Back on the MRT, the route continues to use the wide paved shoulder of the Great River Road to Minnesota City. With a wide shoulder and a rumble strip, dividing you from the traffic, the the Mississippi River is in sight to your left most of the time. When you start to notice the river widening, the Mississippi is now flowing into Lake Pepin and you are close to the birthplace of water skiing.



Rolling into Lake City



Here discover the quaint shops and restaurants next to the harbor in the downtown area of Lake City. This river town is also a popular place for touring cyclists. In addition to the Annual Tour de Pepin bike tour, the area offers several other mapped rides. See the [Lake Pepin Area Bike Map](#) and checkout [Visit Lake City](#) for more options.

As the river flows out of Lake Pepin, the next river community on the MRT is a town known for eagles and grumpy old men.

Rolling into Wabasha

The oldest city on the entire upper Mississippi River, this community has been thriving since 1826. As touring cyclists roll into town they will find 50 buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. If time permits enjoy their historic walking tour and discover the stories that have made this town so unique. With eagles in abundance along the river, this is also home to the [National Eagle Center](#), located downtown. Also, with the popular movie “Grumpy Old Men” and its sequel shot here, dine at Slippery’s Bar & Grill for a nostalgic look at this river town. You can find more options at [Visit Wabasha](#).



Rolling into Winona

Taking the MRT out the back road through the village of Kellogg, it's about 30 miles of pedaling to Winona, along the



bluffs. Arriving in this pristine river town enjoy several views of the city nestled into a valley bordered by bluffs along the Mighty Mississippi. Here in Winona, there is plenty to discover with so many attractions and museums. Be sure to visit the [Minnesota Marine Art Museum](#). You will

also notice many of the downtown buildings are on the National Register of Historical Places and self-guided history tours are an option. Being a [LAB Bike Friendly Community](#) it's easy to get around this river town and explore the city by bike. See our [At-A-Glance Winona](#) article for more tour, dinner and overnight options.

MRT Day-9 from Winona to the Iowa Border

Leaving Winona, the Mississippi River Trail creatively takes you up into the bluffs past the historic Pickwick Mill and then onto the Apple Blossom Drive Scenic Byway. Here at the top of the byway, cyclists in the area enjoy a remarkable view of the Mississippi River Valley.



Then it's a cruise down the byway, into La Crescent.

From La Crescent, the last leg of the Minnesota section of the Mississippi River Trail is approximately 24 miles to Albin, IA. Enjoy!



Equipment to Make Paths and Trails Fun

by John Brown

See the world in a new way!

Leisurely spinning through the countryside to your favorite watering hole or experiencing nature first hand on a bicycle is what memories are made of. Whatever your reason, riding a bicycle for fun and fitness is an experience like nothing else. Recreational riding is one of the most popular activities in the world for people young and old. It has been a way of life in Europe for centuries. In the United States, it has finally taken off over the last few decades. With that said, here in the U.S. we are making up for lost time with hundreds of miles of bike trails and dedicated cycling routes being



built every year. As more bike friendly infrastructure opens, here are a few tips to get you riding comfortably.

Bike options for recreational fun

With so many different types of riding surfaces and even more types of riders, the choices of bicycles are nearly infinite. The easiest way to figure out the best bike for you is to think about where you will be riding most. The spectrum of bikes matches closely the variety of riding conditions. As an example, if you think you will be riding on gravel paths and dirt trails, dual sport bikes like the [San Rafael](#) from Marin may be the perfect choice. It has the widest tires of all the path/trail bikes and the suspension design squelches the vibration from gravel and rocks. Conversely, if you



a



know your rides will always be on paved surfaces and are focused on fitness the Marin [Fairfax](#) would be a great option for you.

Overall, consider where you want to ride, learn about the types of bikes and then pick a bike that matches your riding interest.

The right gear for comfort

On your first ride you may feel some discomforts that may limit the time you can spend on your bike initially. The first is endurance and with more time on the bike your stamina will increase. Beyond fitness, you will see that there are a few initial points of discomfort. Most common of these aches is from your sit bones. Initially, a new rider's aches come from the soft tissue immediately forward of the sit bones. Like lifting weights at the gym, the



more you ride the tougher those tissues become. After a few rides, the ache should go away. If discomfort persists, look for a new saddle and padded cycling shorts. For saddles, few companies are doing as good a job as Ergon, with their new [ST Core](#) saddle. It isolates your sit bone movement while riding, thus allowing you to be much more

comfortable. Additionally, cycling shorts add padding to the part of your body that contacts the saddle. Cycling shorts also maintain their position on your body as movements are made on the saddle.



Happy hands and feet

Other touch points that can determine if your ride is comfortable are your hands and feet. Where your hands are concerned, you can wear gloves like the ones from [Sealskinz](#) or you can change the handlebar grips to something contoured like an [Ergon GP](#) series. Either option does a good job individually, combined they are heavenly.

You see, most hand discomfort is associated with the nerve bundle that is routed through the base of your palm. When excess pressure



is applied to that nerve, you can get pain or numbness in your fingers. By using a padded glove and contoured grip, you disperse the weight on your hands over a larger area, making less localized pressure and far greater comfort.

While most comfort features have very little effect on efficiency, taking care of your feet will make your ride both more enjoyable and faster. The best way to take care of your feet is to use a cycling specific shoe like a [Lintaman Adjust Comp](#) (one of the most adjustable and comfortable cycling shoes in the world). Notice these shoes look a lot like sneakers and where they differ is what's on the inside. Cycling shoes have a stiff nylon sole that disperses the pressure of a relatively small pedal along the length of your foot. These shoes direct all your pedal thrust directly to the pedal, rather than having your foot flex over the pedal. These two things in combination will make you more comfortable and more efficient.



As your comfortable level increases, you will most likely want to know where you're going or where you've been. There are scores of cycling guides like the [Minnesota Hike/Bike Guide](#) that spell out the best routes to ride and you can mate those resources with onbike GPS units like the [Bolt](#), from Wahoo. Not only can a computer tell you where you've been, but it can also help track progress with cool functions like recording your average speed, maximum speed and distance traveled.

While riding is fun, it's a lot more enjoyable with company. Bring the kids along on the next ride with the [Thule Cadence](#) child trailer. With this trailer, you can bring two children (*maximum 100 lbs total*) along all the trails and paths you love.



If you plan to ride with friends, there are amazing events like [RAGBRAI's](#) ride across Iowa. If an organized ride isn't in your future and you would rather explore the world unguided, consider buying an [American Automobile Association](#) (AAA) membership. Why AAA you ask? Well, not only does AAA have great travel information but, in some states, they now offer emergency transportation service for you and your bike! Check with your local AAA office to see if they offer this benefit.



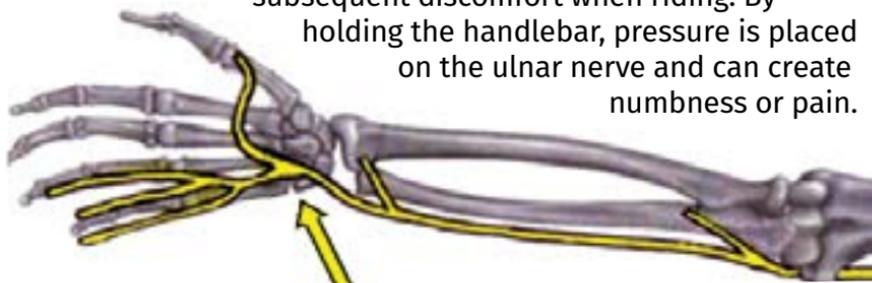


Cycling Gloves

Cycling gloves help you maintain proper grip on the bars when things get hot and sweaty. They protect your skin in the case of an accidental dismount and can help alleviate soreness and numbness in your hands.

The ulnar nerve

Through the palm of your hand runs a nerve called the ulnar nerve (*yellow*). It's the nerve responsible for the shock you feel when you hit your funny bone. It's also responsible for sensation in your pinkie, ring finger or other parts of your hand and any subsequent discomfort when riding. By holding the handlebar, pressure is placed on the ulnar nerve and can create numbness or pain.



Many gloves include padding on the palm to disperse the force being applied to the ulnar nerve. The pad acts as a little bridge over the nerve eliminating hand discomfort and allowing you endless miles of comfortable riding.



Finding the perfect pair of cycling gloves

When trying on cycling gloves focus on the webbing between your pointer finger and thumb. The webbing will give you a great indication of fit when holding a handlebar. If the glove is snug enough to avoid scrunching up and chaffing, then it's a good fit. However, if the glove is too tight through the webbing, then holding the bar will only intensify that pressure.



Cycling gloves come in two major categories; full finger and half finger. Both types offer the same sizing and padding options. For road and path riding half finger gloves work great. They allow for good feel on the controls and manage sweat well. If you are riding off-road, a full finger glove offers better protection in case of an accidental dismount.



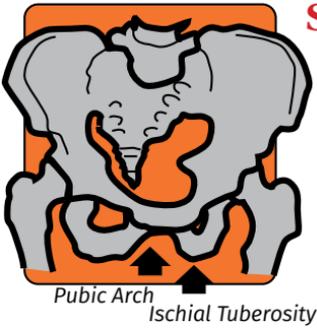


The Right Seat

Finding the [right seat](#) that allows you to spend more time in the saddle can be easy with the following tips!

Bigger isn't always better

A bigger saddle is not always more comfortable. A saddle's shape determines how comfortable it will be. The ideal saddle's shape will also determine where the pelvis contacts the saddle. Typically, riders sit on either their sit bones (*Ischial Tuberosity*) or pubic arch.



Sit bones (*Ischial Tuberosity*)

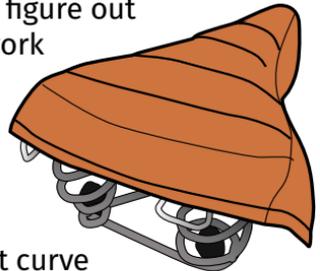
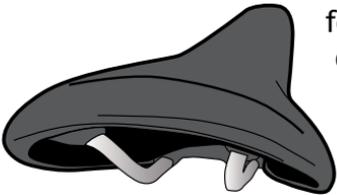
Your sit bones are the pointy ends on the bottom of your pelvis. They rest on top of your gluteal muscles while riding. If you have an upright seating position, your pelvis is positioned so that your weight is placed on those sit bones. For a sit bone rider, a saddle with a flat profile typically ends up being the most comfortable.

Pubic arch

Riders who lean forward toward the bars, rotate their hips forward and usually rest on their pubic arch. For these riders, a saddle that is curved from right to left offers a comfortable perch on which to sit.

How do you tell the difference?

The easiest way to figure out which saddle might work for you is to look down the length of the saddle from behind. Look to see if the saddle shape is a constant curve from right to left, or flat.



More shapes

Saddles will also have other shapes that contribute to the comfort. Many saddles will have holes or depressions down the center of them. These shapes are designed to relieve pressure on anatomy where nerve clusters and sensitive arteries exist.



Time for a test drive

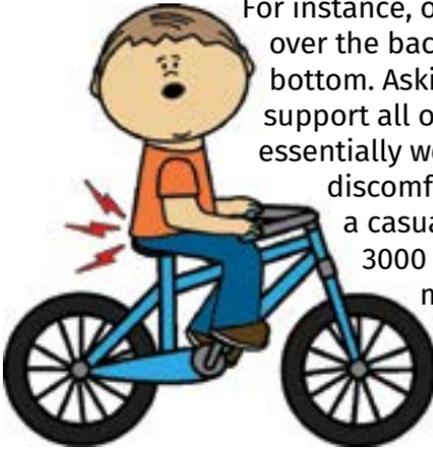
Once you find a few saddles that match your riding position try them out. Install the saddle on your bike and take it for a short test ride while focusing on how you are resting on the saddle. It's a good sign if you can rest in one spot comfortably. Even if the new saddle is unfamiliar, you should feel even support without any single or localized point of pressure. By contrast, if you find yourself shifting around to find a good spot on the saddle, that seat probably doesn't fit too well.





Why Do You Need Bike Shorts?

Most people aren't used to sitting only on their backsides.



For instance, on chairs we disperse weight over the back of our thighs as well as our bottom. Asking our gluteus maximus to support all our weight on a small seat is essentially weightlifting for your butt and some discomfort is normal. Also, when riding at a casual pace, you can easily complete 3000 pedal strokes in one hour. That much movement over a bike seat can cause some chaffing. So bike shorts help combat the most common discomfort for bike riders – a sore rear end.

How do I pick bike shorts?

Shorts come in all shapes and sizes. Tight shorts are popular because they offer great comfort as well as unencumbered movement around the bicycle. Baggy shorts are very popular for their casual look and add vents to pockets. There are even cycling skirts (*called skorts*) that offer excellent comfort and great off-the-bike look.



Pad

First, let's talk about the pads (*also called the chamois*). A single density pad consists of a single thickness foam pad with a soft material bonded to the outside. Multi-density pads are made from a similar material as a single density pad. Multi-density pads offer thicker padding where a rider contacts the saddle and less padding where pressure is not as direct. Multi-part pads use very different materials depending on location. Typically, these pads have denser foam where you sit, smoother materials on either side to resist chaffing and often incorporate anti-bacteria materials. When buying shorts be aware of the pad that's being used, it's the most important part of the short.



How do I know if my shorts fit?

Bike shorts are cut to fit snugly while seated on a bicycle. When you try them on and stand upright, you may feel as if the back of the pad is "loose". Place your hands on your knees (*replicating the leg/back angle on a bicycle*) and the shorts should be snug throughout. If the shorts still feel too snug or too loose, it's best to try a different size.



Visit Cedar Falls, Iowa

'Gateway to Trails'

by Russ Lowthian



On my first visit to this part of Iowa, I was amazed at the intricate network of hard surface bicycle trails the Cedar Falls/ Waterloo Area had to offer. On this trip I had the opportunity to ride with several of the Cedar Valley Cyclists and enjoy some of the road and trail loops in the area that they frequent. The Cedar Falls area has something for both the seasoned cyclist and novice rider. This is also a bike friendly community for the off road cyclist (*cyclecross, fat bike, mountain biking and BMX*), with several opportunities waiting your arrival. Not to mention the wide array of historic, educational and entertaining attractions to take in when not riding.



About Cedar Falls and the Valley Lake Trail options

The Cedar Valley Lakes Trail system, running through Cedar Falls and Waterloo, offers more than 100 miles of scenic trails. As I discovered, some of these trails connect and meander through neighboring Waterloo for additional cycling opportunities. A

[Bike Friendly Community](#) designated by the League of American Cyclists, see the Cedar Falls [bike map](#) for an overview of the vast trail systems and designated bike routes you can enjoy, as I did.

My first ride while visiting

On my first day there, before the rest of my group arrived from Minnesota, I had the opportunity to ride with Brian Will. A [local realtor](#), Brian is a member of the Cedar Valley Cycling Club. He volunteered to show me some of the trail loops and bike friendly street routes used for connectivity. The first thing I notice

as we explored the trails, the majority of the system is paved in concrete, with only a few patches of asphalt to remind me of home. Our first adventure was on the Big Woods Lake Trail. This is a perfect trail loop for biking while viewing birds and wildlife.

In the afternoon, after stopping for lunch on Cedar Falls 'promenade' (Main Street)

we went out and rode sections of the Prairie Lakes Trail. A part of the [American Discovery Trail System](#), we found several loops that took us into charming and historic neighborhoods in Cedar Falls. Further along, from the trail, we viewed the agricultural test field at the University of Northern Iowa. Then we stopped at the [Hearst Center For The Arts & Sculpture Garden](#), before returning to the promenade, to check out the new brewery.



Road bike and trail touring options



The next couple days, with a group of my friends now in town from the Twin Cities, we joined the [Cedar Valley Cycling Club](#) on a couple rides. With several of their members showing up we explored the trails and roads in the area, first visiting Waterloo and a couple other outlying communities. Periodically stopping to visit, they shared information on the communities [Bike to Work, Bike to Play program](#).

Mountain bike, cyclocross and BMX fun opportunities

If you prefer the off road side of cycling you may be surprised at the number of mountain bike trails in the Cedar Falls and Waterloo area. They include: [George Wyth State Park](#), [Katoski Green Belt](#), [Riverview Park](#), [Tondro Pray Bike Park](#) and [Ulrich Park](#).

At the Tondro Pray Bike Park you have several additional options along with the mountain bike trails. This park's amenities also includes a: BMX/pump track, a mountain bike skills area and a cycle cross course.



Things to do in the Cedar Falls area after your ride

For this trip, to accommodate 18 of my cycling friends from the Twin Cities, we used one of the [hotels](#) on the west side of Cedar Falls not far from the University of Northern Iowa. Being a bike friendly community, the [AmericInn](#) that we stayed at was convenient, just two blocks on quiet streets to the trailhead and less than 20 minutes, by bike, to the promenade.



Coming off the trail the first thing I noticed as I approached downtown Cedar Falls was the Ice House Museum. This building along the Cedar River was built in 1921. The museum houses an extensive collection of ice harvesting relics that visitors can see and learn what life was like before refrigerators.

On the promenade, you will find a wide assortment of local shops and unique restaurants that will entertain you for hours. Shops include everything from: repurposed antiques; two bike shops; contemporary clothing; a cupcake shop; breweries; fair-trade artisan products from around the world; and [more](#).

Things to do in Waterloo

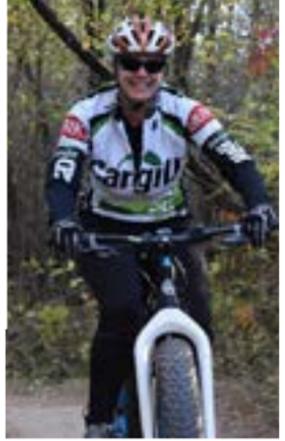
A 10 minute commute by car or 30 minute trail ride, Waterloo offers several more opportunities when not in the saddle. One of the must-sees when in the area is the [John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum](#). The newest exhibit here highlights the history and contribution John Deere has made to agriculture and farm families through their nearly 100-year history in Waterloo. Notice the John Deere Bicycle from the 70's?

Another option if you are into plants and flowers is the [Cedar Valley Arboretum & Botanic Gardens](#). This 40 acre center of beauty features: an award-winning Children's Garden;



4-acre Butterfly Meadow; a Rose Garden; a stunning daylily and hosta collections; unique Mosaicultures; and a 1-acre Master Gardener's Orchard.

[Check here](#) for more attractions and museums in the Waterloo Area.



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Kids Bikes, Gear and Programs That Add Character

By John Brown

How many times have you heard “it’s like riding a bike”? Any skill that is easy to learn as a child and is usable for the rest of a person’s life gets compared to riding a bike. Not only is riding a bike easy, just ask any kid (*young or old*) and they will tell you its fun. So how do you keep the interest of riding a bike alive within your kids even as the temptations of digital gadgets expand? Let’s talk about why riding is fun and then discuss some products to pique their interests.

For most kids learning to ride a bike can be their first major accomplishment. They need to persevere through learning to ride, using a balance bike or training wheels before eventually graduating to two wheels. The great feeling of that achievement is reinforced every time a child throws a leg over the bike. Additionally, when a kid is on a bike they feel in control. For a child who is told when to go to sleep, what to eat and generally parented, the opportunity to be in complete control is exciting. On top of those two issues, we cannot forget the main reason kids like bikes – remember above, it’s fun!



Fun starter bikes

If you want to share the fun of riding a bike with your children you must first get them a bike. Over the years children’s bikes were determined simply by size. More recently bike companies have invested heavily into the kids bike segment so there are now loads of options. To start, companies like [Strider](#) have made huge inroads into the kids bike market. Strider is the leader in the [balance bikes](#) which are amazing pedalless bikes designed to teach the youngest kids to balance on two wheels. The balance bike has no pedals and allows kids to stand over the bike, push off with their feet, then coast. In my experience, teaching children to balance on a bike is the most difficult part of riding. With a balance bike, kids can learn to ride without the confusion of pedaling. Then, once a child has the act of balancing down, they can quickly transition to a two wheeled pedal bike.

Speaking of two wheeled bikes, you should check out [Frog](#) brand bicycles. Frog is a UK company that is actively changing

the way kids bikes fit. They are focusing on making all the touch points (*pedals, grips, saddle and brake levers*) scaled for a child's smaller size. So these bikes will fit your child better than anything else on the market.

Cool helmets protect



Once you figure out the right bike for your child, be sure to find a helmet that fits well for them. The safety that comes from a helmet, like the [Frog Team Sky helmet](#), is well worth the added investment. Even though helmet use for kids is lax in parts of the country, they are crucial for safety.

Riding in tandem

Another great way to teach your kids to ride is taking them along for the ride on a tag along bicycle. These bikes attach to the back of an adult bike, turning an adult bike into a de facto adult/kid tandem. A great example of a tag along bike is the [Trek MT-210](#). With a tag along, you can ride at a normal pace, have your kids help pedal and not totally wear them out on longer rides.



Developing off-road skills

Another huge movement with childrens bikes is to get them off-roading as early as possible. Thanks to the great work done by many mountain bike trail crews around the country, there are thousands of trails that are friendly to unskilled riders. These trails have fewer obstacles and most of the turns have a berm for easier riding. Even though the trails are a bit easier, they still maintain the fun of getting outside and into nature on a bike.

Keeping kids on bikes longer

As kids grow through school age, it is common for them to put the bike away and replace them with your car keys. One incredibly successful program to keep kids





on bikes is the [National Interscholastic Cycling Association \(NICA\)](#). NICA is a high school league for mountain bikers and is committed to keeping kids on bikes. Specifically they want to grow the number of girls who participate in the sport. There are currently 28 states involved, a very impressive number considering the organization began in 2009.

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Start by placing the helmet on your head so it is level. Adjust the retention mechanism (*in the back*) so the helmet is snug on your head (*you should be able to lightly shake your head without the helmet falling off or shifting*). If the retention mechanism sits too low for your head (*or hair*) to be comfortable, look inside the helmet to adjust the retention up, if possible.



In tandem with the retention device, the straps hold your helmet in place. Start by adjusting the side toggles on the straps so they sit just below your earlobes.



Once the toggles are in place, tighten the buckle enough so it can't be pulled past your chin when closed. Be sure to not make the straps so tight that they choke you when you open your mouth. With the retention device, toggles, and straps adjusted properly you should be able to speak comfortably.

All bicycle helmets will have a production date on the inside. Pay attention to that date because most manufacturers recommend you replace the helmet every 3 to 5 years after production. Over time, the padding and foam inside a helmet can degrade, leaving it unable to absorb impacts adequately.

Follow the above tips and learn how to use the head protection you need. You'll be on your way to a safer, more enjoyable ride.



Fergus Falls, MN

The Central Lakes Trail

Starts Here

VisitFergusFalls.com



Signal your turn!



STOP



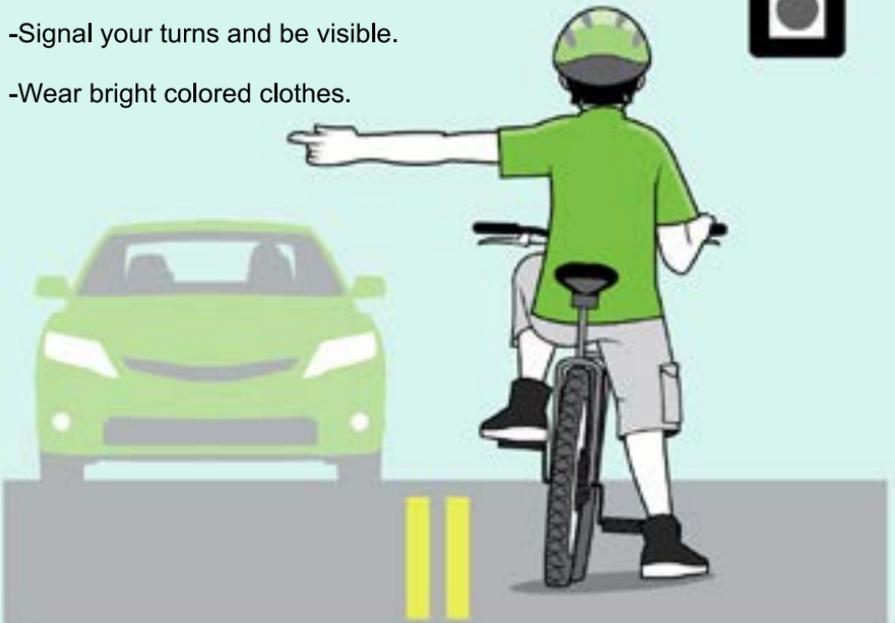
LEFT TURN



RIGHT TURN

Vehicles use turn signals to let traffic know what they will do next, bicycles should too! Using hand signals will show traffic if you plan to turn or stop.

- Watch for vehicles, pedestrians, and road hazards.
- Ride on the right side of the road in a straight line.
- Come to a complete stop at stop signs and red lights.
- Tell someone where you will be before you leave.
- Signal your turns and be visible.
- Wear bright colored clothes.



When turning left, stay as close to the center of the dividing line as possible. Signal your direction clearly and let traffic pass on your right. Only make the turn when traffic is clear.



Exploring Tampa/St. Pete

bike trails for your next vacation

by Russ Lowthian

Everyone needs a break, especially after the weather turns cold here in the upper Midwest. Recently I attended a bicycle tourism conference in Florida. Having heard many good things about the bike friendly options in the Tampa/St. Pete area, I wanted to check it out for myself. It also



helped my decision learning that these two cities have spent several million dollars improving their bike friendly infrastructure.

Compared to my visit several years back, cyclists today will find dedicated or protected cycling lanes and more bike trails. These bike lanes make it easy to connect to many popular trail systems. With many improvements in place, I found several safe routes perfect for any family bike outing. As you will note below many of the trails link up with parks, museums, aquariums, beaches, etc.!

Bike rental options in the Tampa/St. Pete area



Like most of the southeast coastal region of the U.S., the area here is pretty flat and the only hills are pedaling over bridges. That said, wind can be a factor and unless you are hanging around the beach, look for a [rental bike](#) that fits you with multi-speeds. If you are going to the rental shop, understand they usually operate on a first come first serve basis, so be sure to get there early if you are trying to ride on a busy weekend. Googling bicycle rental in St. Petersburg, I found

numerous options. Many would deliver and pickup from my hotel and were competitively priced.

Trails in the Tampa/St. Pete area to explore by bike

On my last trip to the area, here are some of the bike paths and routes I have briefly checked out. I look forward to a return visit to explore these trails further and find other hidden jewels I missed.

Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail

From St. Petersburg to Tarpon Springs, this [38 mile trail system](#) lets you explore a scenic blend of bustling downtown areas and residential neighborhoods. Here palm trees shade the trail inbetween the parks. With several cities that dot the trail, you will find many options for beaches, breweries, dining and shopping along the way. This trail also gives you the option to visit Honeymoon



Island State Park where you will find a beach. Nearby, a half mile off the trail, you will also find the children's museum at the Dunedin Fine Art Center. It is a 20 mile bike ride up the trail from St. Pete to Clearwater. Here in this progressive downtown area, with a beautiful waterfront, enjoy breweries, restaurants and shopping.



The North Bay Trail

This trail picks up in the southern part of St. Petersburg, where the Pinellas Trail ends. A [6.3-mile-long trail](#) it curves along the waterfront in downtown St. Pete and takes riders out to the Gandy Bridge, near Weedon Island Preserve. I hear this trail gets pretty busy,

especially along the southernmost reaches that meander through Vinoy Park and a few small, sandy beaches.

The Tampa Riverwalk

In downtown Tampa, the [Riverwalk](#) hugs the Hillsborough River. Only 2.6 miles long this is a great thoroughfare for bikers and a place you might see manatees and dolphins.

The Riverwalk starts at [Curtis Hixon Waterfront Park](#) and stretches 2.6 miles to the intersection of Channelside Dr. & Beneficial Dr. If you want to make a day of it with the whole family, the Riverwalk connects to the Florida Aquarium and to the Glazer Children's Museum, not to mention many restaurants and beautiful parks.

Bayshore Linear Park Trail

Home to [Gasparilla](#), the third-largest parade in the U.S., the [Bayshore](#) is billed as the longest sidewalk in the world, clocking in at 4.5 unobstructed miles of pathway. The sidewalk runs along the eastern coast of the Tampa peninsula, offering a view of the bay to the east and some of Tampa's most stately homes to the west. The Bayshore also connects easily to the Tampa Riverwalk, via the Platt Street Bridge, if you're looking for a longer ride. Starting at Platt Street this trail ends at West Gandy Boulevard where there is a dedicated bike lane, if pedestrian traffic is heavy.

Selmon Greenway

This [Greenway](#) is a shady trail, less than two miles long, that starts where the Selmon Expressway crosses over the Tampa Riverwalk (*just south of Brorein Street*).

A shady trail, less than two miles long. From Tampa's historic district it follows the shadows of the expressway rolling northeast to the outskirts of Ybor City. Along the way you will find plenty of breweries and restaurants to visit when not biking.



Courtney Campbell Causeway Trail

This trail system, over Old Tampa Bay, connects the city of Clearwater to Tampa. If you are on a single speed bike, this 11 mile trail system can be brutal if you are not in shape. First you will need to climb your bike up onto the bridge. Then, the wind coming across the bay can be strong. That said, the Courtney Campbell Trail makes for a scenic and fun bike ride. From

Tampa, this is the perfect bike route to visit the Ream Wilson Clearwater Trail or ride up to Safety Harbor.

Ream Wilson Trail

Back in Clearwater/St. Pete, from the Courtney Campbell Trail over Tampa Bay, check out the [Ream Wilson Clearwater Trail](#).

If you take the trail that parallels North Bayshore Blvd., at the middle of the trail system you have two options. Continue up the bay and you will hit the charming downtown of Safety Harbor. There check out the [Whimzey Bowling Ball House](#). If you ride the trail to the west, from Bayshore Blvd., the trail doesn't make it all the way to the Pinellas Trail. It will only get you about halfway across riding along Alligator Creek and ending in Coachman Ridge Park.

Have fun enjoying the trails I have covered so far in the Tampa/St. Pete area. If you discover another route or an interesting experience riding in the area please, let us know - Thanks!

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2018 CAPITOL RIDE



Cure on Wheels, Inc. cureonwheels.org raises money to help individuals and families in the Tampa Bay area cope with



a diagnosis of cancer. This advocacy ride begins in Tampa at the Moffitt Cancer Center on Sunday, January 14 ,

arriving at the Capitol in Tallahassee on Wednesday, January 17, 2018, 325+ total miles, over 4 days. \$485.00 participation fee, per person pays for individual accommodations each night (*Marriott Fairfield Inns & Townplace Suites*), breakfast and lunch each day, jersey, SAG support, insurance, Moffitt Day Celebration party, transportation home for you and your gear.

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Mountain Bike Fun & Fitness

By John Brown

For some of us there is an undeniable call to immerse ourselves in fun moments in activities like mountain biking that gets us out in mother nature's natural settings. As we experience the thrill of off-road trail riding, we search out stunning vistas while enjoying the feeling of life around us, craving the type of solitude only found in wooded areas and rocky terrains. Now, as the explosion of mountain biking continues, there is a wide array of new bicycles, gadgets, gear and trails we want to share with you.



Fun moments for a mountain biker

When an outdoors person is introduced to life on two wheels, fun moments are experienced and a mountain biker is usually born. In fact, the mountain bike revolution began 35 years ago by road riders who loved to be out in nature. That group



of riders from the San Francisco Bay area quickly shared their passion which spread across the globe.

With the mountain biking explosion, we have seen the development of bicycles that offer better control, clothing that keeps us comfortable, helmets that protect us in our moment of need and countless gadgets that keep us informed.

The latest in mountain bikes for better control

As mountain biking develops further as a sport, different interests and capabilities are allowing for new types of bicycles.

Most commonly, people begin on a cross country bike which is usually a bike with a suspension fork and a rigid frame.



The Marin Bobcat Trail is a great example of this type of bike, with an aluminum frame, [Shimano Disc brakes](#) and [RockShox Suspension fork](#). It's ready to explore any trail. In the case of mountain bikes, many shops have demo bicycles they let you take to your local trails for a ride. Riding a demo bike is a great way to get the feel for a bike on the trail, but is best done once you have test ridden a few models around the shop and are closer to a decision.

Mountain biker with more control

If you want a lot more control look no farther than Marin's B-17. This full suspension bike utilizes 27.5+ tires in combination with a lightweight aluminum, full suspension frame to offer limitless confidence on even the most technical trails.

Mountain bike gear

Now that you have found yourself on the back of a two wheeled wonder machine, the real fun starts. I remember my first ride in jean shorts and a t-shirt as a kid. Just blasting through creek-beds and rocky trails at what felt like breakneck speeds. In retrospect I realize my relative speed was substantially lower than it felt, but I had fun. What wasn't fun was how I felt on the bike. As an example, my propensity to



rocket through creeks in jean shorts resulted in a lot of time pedaling in wet denim (*uncomfortable and bordering on masochistic*). In time, my clothing transferred into more traditional bike gear and my body loved the change. I learned that something like the Primal [Onyx Modena short](#) and [Brix men's jersey](#) made long miles more comfortable.

is necessary to ride with greater efficiency. With that in mind, no accessory offers more efficiency than shoes and pedals. As an example, [Lintiman Adjust Comp shoe](#) offers a stiff sole to transfer more effort to the pedal while relieving strain on your foot.

With comfort in place, you will want to do whatever



Couple those shoes with a pair of [Egg beater 2 pedals](#) and you can now drive force into the pedals throughout the entire pedal rotation (*both pressing down and pulling up*). I



will admit after a few fun moments the mountain bike bug bites pretty hard. In fact, it can become

difficult to find time in the day to fit everything you have to do with riding your bike. As a result, you can either slough off all responsibility and ride your bike (*not too likely*) or start riding at night! Night riding is one of the most fun parts of mountain biking. In fact, if you have traversed your local trails during the daylight, they will look and feel completely different at night. Simply strap a light like the [MagicShine MJ-880R](#) to your bike and enjoy all the features nighttime trails have to offer.



Where to ride for fun moments

There are plenty of places to learn where to ride. For instance, if you live in the State of Minnesota, I would recommend paging through the [Have Fun Biking Minnesota Guidebook](#). Regardless of how you find the

trails, knowing where to go can be a concern. That's why many riders are using GPS cycling computers like the [Wahoo Element](#). With a GPS computer, you can track where you are going as well as where you have been.



Mountain bike gadgets to help determine where to ride

If you are headed out of town, a great way to ride unknown trails is through organized rides. An annual pilgrimage to British Columbia for the [BC bike race](#) is the highlight of thousands of riders seasons. Additionally, you can ride at many of the

same locations you ski at, as lift service for bicycles is a growing attraction to mountains around the world.

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Bike Maintenance After Riding in the Rain

Sometimes it's unavoidable to ride in the rain. Here are a few helpful bike maintenance tips to keep your bike running great after a storm.

Get it clean!

The first step after a rain ride is to get your bike clean. Road grime, mud and other muck that has accumulated on your bike will hold moisture and encourage corrosion. A bucket of warm soapy water and a sponge is the best way to clean off crud. Resist the urge to use a water hose because pressured water can force grease out of bearings, promoting wear.



The second tip – get it dry

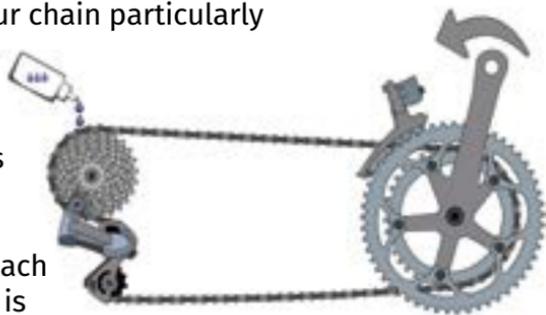
Once your bike is clean use an old towel to get it dry. Rubber parts like tires and grips don't need a lot of attention so focus on all the metal bits, especially the steel hardware.

Then, clean the rims

Riding a bicycle in rain can take a toll on both the rims and brake pads. Road grime attaches itself to the rim and works like sand paper quickly wearing the rim and the brake pads when you stop. If the grime is left in place, your brakes can start making noise, be less efficient and wear out quicker.

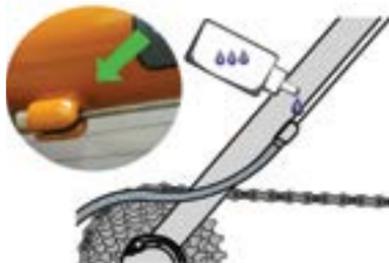
Lube the chain

Water and motion do a good job of scouring all the lubricant off your chain leaving your chain particularly susceptible to rust. To lube your chain, start by propping the bike up so you can rotate the cranks backward freely. Next, backpedal the bike while dripping lubricant onto each chain link until the chain is well saturated. Finally, wrap a rag around the chain, backpedal and remove all the excess lubricant. Done!



Lube the cables

Drip a small amount of lubricant onto the cables where they enter the housing. Once a few drops of lubricant seeps into the housing shift through your gears a few times and squeeze the brakes repeatedly.



Drain the bike

A bicycle may appear to be sealed from the elements, but it is, in fact, able to take on water when you ride in the rain. Pull the seat and seatpost out of the bike and turn the bike upside down. Leave the bike for a few hours to drain and then replace the seat and post.





HAVE FUN BIKING



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Spring Edition