



Celebrate Cycling In Monterey County

BY MARI LYNCH

MAYBE BIKING IS ALREADY A FUN PART of your lifestyle. Or perhaps you've watched wistfully as cyclists glide along Monterey County's 29-mile coastal trail, and other bikeways, and wondered what it would take to get you biking.

The health benefits of biking include burning not limited oil supplies but about 500 calories an hour for fuel. Cycling increases energy and libido, improves mood, and reduces anxiety, heart disease, and hypertension.

California State University Monterey Bay Transportation Planner Megan Tolbert points out, "Each bicycle commuter keeps approximately 8,000 lbs of CO₂ annually from damaging the health of one another and the Earth." Even part-time bike commuting matters.

Too busy? "Bicycling saves time on trips less than three miles," Tolbert emphasizes. Zipping past traffic jams and getting close-up parking motivates many people to shop and do errands by bike.

For longer trips, bike-and-ride options — like bicycle racks on buses or personal vehicles — expand a cyclist's territory, and leave the prospect of biking open even when rain threatens.

SEA OTTER CLASSIC

The bike-and-ride concept is foundational to Sea Otter Classic's "Ditch the Car" webpage. The Sea Otter Classic Powered by SRAM is Monterey County's world-renowned bicycle festival, now in its 21st year. Drawing 50,000 competitive and recreational cyclists and fans every April, Sea Otter's environmental stewardship practices include encouraging attendees to bike while here. Sea Otter's "Visiting Monterey County" webpage goes beyond pointing out tourist attractions to highlight the bike-ability of the neighborhoods that surround the county's many crowd-pleasers.

As "A Celebration of Cycling," Sea Otter provides inspiration, support, and just plain fun for people of all ages with varied interests in bicycles. Judy Freeman, a pro cross-country racer for Kenda/Felt Professional Mountain Bike Team, notes "Sea Otter brings out the nation's best talent to race." The Gran Fondo's fully supported recreational rides, offering Carmel Valley, Coastal, and Mountain Bike Routes, are another cool part of Sea Otter.

Females are a robust presence in cycling — from the hardest mountain bikers like Freeman to cycle chic fashionistas, from elders traveling with folding bikes to preschoolers on trikes — and Sea Otter celebrates that with its first Ladies Day, April 17.

Lorri Lee Lown, founder/coach of the San Francisco Bay

area's Velo Girls, is "thrilled to be putting together an exciting day of activities for women and girls," including a demo ride, clinics, panel discussion, and a reception including those health-building antioxidants found in wine and chocolate!

Women and girls are encouraged to make it a party with their gal pals, because a free festival pass is provided to all females on Ladies Day. The pass gives entry to Sea Otter's expo — North America's largest bike exposition — and other festival areas, along with Ladies Day activities. The expo has everything from sweet bike gear for teens to classy panniers for running errands to samples of organic and gluten-free nutrition bars. Healthy fare like smoothies, salads, and vegetarian entrees are available for purchase at the festival, too.

As a family event, Sea Otter nurtures children's interest in cycling with free activities for ages twelve and under. A Bike Play Zone gives kids a place to try out budding abilities, and Kids' Races happen on a course designed to stretch skills and build confidence. A Kids' Carnival and Sea Otter Egg Hunt add to making this annual event a springtime favorite for families.

Whether motivated by personal or planetary health, economics, or sheer joy, more and more people are bicycling. The Sea Otter Classic and other local resources are here to support you and your loved ones in being part of Monterey County's year-long celebration of cycling. ■

RESOURCES

California State University Monterey Bay:

<http://transportation.csumb.edu/biking>

HER Helmet Thursdays Project:

<http://marilynch.com/blog/her-helmet-thursdays/goals-and-overview>

Monterey Off Road Cycling Association:

www.MORCAmtb.org

Naval Postgraduate School Foundation Cycling Club:

http://www.npsfoundation.org/index.cfm/cycling_club.htm

Sea Otter Classic:

www.SeaOtterClassic.com

Tips for Bicycling Monterey County:

www.BicyclingMonterey.com

Transportation Agency of Monterey County:

<http://www.tamcmonterey.org/bikeweek/resources.html>

Velo Club Monterey

www.vcmonterey.org

