

# About Cycling

**Cycling** is a means of **transport**, a form of **recreation**, and a **sport**. The bicycle carries riders across land, through tunnels, over bridges, or, much less frequently, over ice. **Cycling** involves the riding of **bicycles**, unicycles, tricycles, **quadricycle** and other similar human powered vehicles (HPVs).

==Introduction== As a sport, **cycling** is governed internationally by the Union Cycliste Internationale in Switzerland (for upright bicycles) and by the International Human Powered Vehicle Association (for other HPVs, or human-powered vehicles). Cycling for transport and touring is promoted on a European level by the European Cyclists' Federation, with associated members from the USA, Japan and elsewhere. Regular conferences on cycling for transport are held under the auspices of Velo City, whereas global conferences are coordinated by Velo Mondial.

===What to get=== World-wide, the vehicle most commonly used for transportation is a **utility bicycle**. These have frames with so-called relaxed geometry, placing the rider further behind the **pedals** and with a greater **helmet** or angle in the front forks. Both these factors reduce shocks from the road surface and make the **bicycle** easier to steer at low speeds.

The most popular types of bicycle in the western world, where cycling for recreation is more common, are **mountain bikes** and **road bike**. The latter tend to have a more upright shape and a shorter wheelbase, which make the bike more mobile but harder to ride slowly. The design, when coupled with low or dropped handlebars, requires the rider to bend forward more, which reduces air resistance as speeds increase.

The price of a new bicycle in the USA can range from US\$50 (on sale) to more than US\$23,000 from **Bicycle Shop**, depending primarily on the quality, type and weight (the most exotic road bicycles can weigh as little as 3.55kg (7.8lb)). Being measured for a bike and taking it for a test ride are recommended before buying.

The drivetrain components of the bike should also be considered. A middle grade **dérailleur** is most likely sufficient for a beginner, although many utility bikes come equipped with hub gears. If the rider plans a significant amount of hill climbing, a triple-crank (three chainrings) front gear system may be preferred. Otherwise, the relatively **lighter** and less expensive double-crank (two chainrings) system may be a better selection. Many **road bikes** include **clipless pedals** to which special shoes attach via a cleat mechanism, permitting the rider to pull on the pedals as well as pushing them.

A variety of accessories may be purchased for the bicycle and the cyclist. These include **bike lock**, mudguards/fenders, luggage racks and pannier bags, water bottles and bottle cages. For basic maintenance and repairs, cyclists can choose to carry a bicycle pump, a spare inner tube, a puncture repair kit and tyre levers. Cycling can be more efficient and comfortable with special cycling shoes, cycling gloves, and cycling shorts or pantleg clips. Riding in wet weather can be more tolerable with waterproof clothes, such as cape, jacket, trousers and overshoes. Items legally required in some jurisdictions, or voluntarily adopted for safety reasons, include **bike helmet**, generator or battery operated **bicycle lighting**, and audible signaling devices such as a bell or horn. Extras include studded tires and a cyclocomputer.

==Types of cycling== ===City=== Cyclists and motorists make different demands on road design which may lead to conflicts both in politics and on the streets. Some jurisdictions give priority to motorised traffic, for example setting up extensive one-way street systems, free-right turns, high capacity roundabouts, and slip roads. Other cities may apply active traffic restraint measures to limit the impact of motorised transport. In the former cases, cycling has tended to decline while in the latter it has tended to be maintained. Occasionally, extreme measures against cycling may occur.

In areas in which cycling is popular and encouraged, cycle-parking facilities using bicycle racks, lockable *mini-garages*, and patrolled cycle parks are used to reduce theft. Local governments also promote cycling by permitting the carriage of bicycles on public transport or by providing external attachment devices on public transport vehicles. Conversely, an absence of secure cycle-parking is a recurring complaint by cyclists from cities with low modal share of cycling.

===Commercial=== The postal services of many countries have long relied on bicycles. The British Royal Mail first started using bicycles in 1880; now bicycle delivery fleets include 37,000 in the UK, 25,700 in Germany, 10,500 in Hungary and 7000 in Sweden. The London Ambulance Service has recently introduced bicycling paramedics, who can often get to the scene of an incident in Central London more quickly than a motorised ambulance.

Police officers adopted the bicycle as well, initially using their own. However, they eventually became a standard issue, particularly for police in rural areas. The Kent police purchased 20 bicycles in 1896, and by 1904 there were 129 police bicycle patrols operating. Some countries retained the police bicycle while others dispensed with them for a time. Bicycle patrols are now enjoying a resurgence in many cities, as the mobility of car-borne officers is becoming increasingly limited by traffic congestion and pedestrianisation. They also have the advantages that the officers are inherently more open to the public, and the transport is quieter to permit a more stealthy approach toward suspects. The pursuit of suspects can also be assisted by a bicycle.

===Recreational=== Bicycles are used for recreation at all ages. **Bicycle touring**, also known as cyclotourism, involves touring and exploration or sightseeing by bicycle for leisure. A brevet or randonnée is an organized long-distance ride.

One popular Dutch pleasure is the enjoyment of relaxed cycling in the countryside of the Netherlands. The land is very flat and full of public **bicycle trails** where cyclists aren't bothered by cars and other traffic, which makes it ideal for cycling recreation. Many Dutch people subscribe every year to an event called *fietsvierdaagse* ? four days of organised cycling through the local environment. Paris-Brest-Paris (PBP), which began in 1891, is the oldest bicycling event still run on a regular basis on the open road, covers over 1200 km and imposes a 90-hour time limit. Similar if smaller institutions exist in many countries.

===Organized rides=== Many cycling clubs hold organized rides in which bicyclists of all levels participate. The typical organized ride starts with a large group of riders, called the mass, bunch or even peloton. This will thin out over the course of the ride. Many riders choose to ride together in groups of the same skill level to take advantage of drafting.

Most organized rides, for example Cyclosporives, Challenge Rides or reliability trials, include registration requirements and will provide information either through the mail or online concerning start times and other requirements. Rides usually consist of 25, 50 and 100 mile routes, each with a certain number of rest stops that usually include refreshments, first aid and maintenance tools.

===Mountain=== **Mountain biking** grew in the late 20th century, including recreation and racing.

===Racing=== Shortly after the introduction of bicycles, competitions developed independently in many parts of the world. Early races involving boneshaker style bicycles were predictably fraught with injuries. Large races became popular during the 1890s "Golden Age of Cycling", with events across Europe, and in the U.S. and Japan as well. At one point, almost every major city in the US had a velodrome or two for **track racing** events. However since the middle of the 20th Century cycling has become a minority sport in the US whilst in Continental Europe it continues to be a major sport, particularly in France, Belgium and Italy. The most famous of all bicycle races is the Tour de France. This began in 1903, and continues to capture the attention of the sporting world.