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Two Wheels, One Rider: The Endless Benefits of Biking Around Town

LIVING

POSTED ON OCTOBER 17, 2013 BY IVANNA ELLIS



road throughout the city to keep those wheels rolling.

Benefits of Bike Riding: Slimmer waistline, fatter wallet!

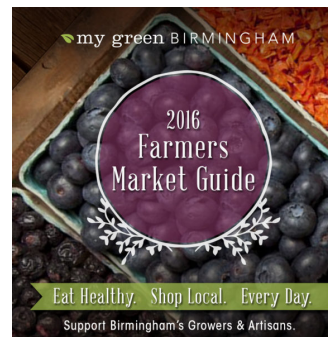
Biking can save money and time by reducing trips to the gas station, the car repair shop, and not to mention, trying to find—and even pay for—parking spots.

Birmingham resident and avid cyclist Darrell O'Quinn says he would never trade his bike for a car. "It makes a person feel better *and* feel better about [his or herself] because you know you're doing something good for yourself, the environment, and society in general." He explains that bike riding opens up a whole new world,

In recent years, Birmingham has become more of a cycle-friendly city. An increasing amount of residents have begun to incorporate biking into their everyday lives as an ideal way to be healthy, cost efficient, and environmentally conscious.

Neighborhoods such as 5 Points South and Highlands now offer a range of accessibility for residents biking to class, work, or just recreation. Whether you're riding solo or with a group (which is always more fun), Birmingham is more suited for cycling than ever before, setting aside plenty of bike-friendly

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offering the chance to meet more people in person, and providing a completely different view than typically seen while in a car.

Why you should ride: In addition to being a more cost-effective way of transportation, bicycling is a great place to start with an exercise routine.

O'Quinn explains that he loves biking because it's easy to forget that you're exercising. "I immediately fell in love with the sensation of zigging and zagging up and down through trees and over hills on tight twisting trails. It's a ton of fun -- so much fun that you really don't think about it as exercise, you're just out there playing in nature."

- It's a low-impact exercise, meaning there is low strain on the joints in the knees, ankles and hips.
- Cycling builds strength, muscle tone, stamina and coordination by exercising virtually every part of the body. It also improves cardio-vascular health. A study done by the British Medical Association reveals that biking as little as 20 miles a week can cut the risk of coronary heart disease by as much as 50 percent.
- Cycling at a steady pace for an hour burns approx. 300 calories. Because it builds muscle, it boosts your metabolic rate so you're still burning calories even after your ride.

Biking keeps the environment in gear: If the environment could eat, a bicycle would be an apple and a car would be a jelly-filled doughnut. Riding a bike impacts the environment in many positive ways, which helps people as well.

- Bike riding reduces the use of non-renewable fuels like the millions of barrels of oil the U.S. uses every year to gas up cars. According to the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, about 40 percent of the state's particle pollution is soot from fires and automobile tailpipes.
- A study done at the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center showed that about 60 percent of pollution from motorized vehicles is emitted within the first few minutes of driving. Riding a bike for short trips can easily decrease that problem.

Join a cycling team: There are dozens of cycling teams in Birmingham full of dedicated pedal pushers.

Joining a team can offer exclusive rewards like access to group rides, a variety of races, unique events, and even discounts. "There are some regularly scheduled rides that happen almost every day of the week. Groups on Facebook like Birmingham Ride Finder and SYN-Urban Cycling for the 99% also make it easy to link up with other riders all over Birmingham," explains O'Quinn. Some prominent rising local biking teams include:



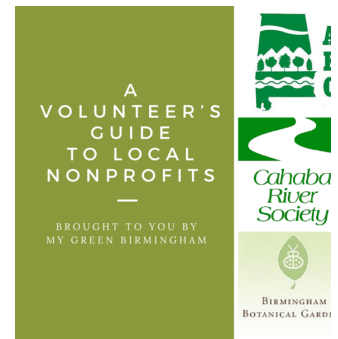
- The Vulcan Triathletes
- The Birmingham Urban Mountain Peddlers (BUMP)
- Birmingham Bicycle Club
- The Trak Shak of Homewood
- The Red Nose Run Training Group
- The Birmingham Track Club
- Alabama Is Better

Find a new trail: Take your pick of one of the many biking trails around Birmingham. Some of the more popular trails include:

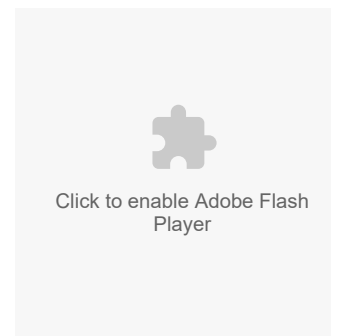
- [The Oak Mountain Red Loop Trail](#): This trail is located in Oak Mountain State Park and runs 17 miles.
- [The Maplebridge-Horseshoe Ramble](#): This trail is located in the Trussville Sport Complex and runs a quarter of a mile.
- [The Black Creek Trail](#): This trail is located in Fultondale and runs one mile.
- [The Mountain Brook Greenway](#): This trail is a part of the Mountain Brook Village Walkway System and runs 35 miles.

With a growing number of benefits, biking continues to be a timeless way to keep moving, improve overall health, and reduce your carbon footprint. Birmingham bike enthusiasts couldn't agree more. Let today be the day you join them — get those gears in motion!

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