

The World's Top Biking Cities



<http://www.travelandleisure.com/articles/the-worlds-top-biking-cities>

From [July 2009](#)

By Stephen Regenold

Find Out More

[See our slideshow of The World's Top Biking Cities.](#)

Dedicated lanes for two-wheelers, bicycle-friendly laws, and even free rides mean these spots are paradise for pedalers.

[See our slideshow of The World's Top Biking Cities.](#)

Open the garage, grip the handlebars, stand on the pedals, and go. That's all it takes for Joseph Duffy, a graphic designer in [Minneapolis](#), to start his morning commute to work. But what lies ahead—a 15-mile route starting on converted railroad beds in the suburbs and ending on the dedicated bike lanes of the city's downtown core—is a trip made possible only by a decade of planning to make the city fully compatible with two-wheeled transit.

Like many of the world's best biking cities, [Minneapolis](#) has built an infrastructure that promotes bicycling on many fronts. From bike lockers and designated street lanes to recreational trails and snowplows dedicated to clearing off-street paths, a system exists to make transportation on a bike efficient, safe, and hassle-free.

The humble bicycle has been seeing a resurgence with commuters and city dwellers around the world. From [Amsterdam](#) to Perth, [Australia](#), people bank on the premise of bicycles as low polluting, cost effective, and a healthy way to move about. They're also faster than cars in many cities. "If I need to grab lunch across downtown," says Duffy, "a bike is twice as fast as driving, finding parking, and walking in."

- [See our slideshow of The World's Top Biking Cities.](#)

For travelers, bikes offer an intimate way to see a city. You can coast along a canal in Amsterdam, or pedal uphill for arguably the best view in [Montreal](#) on the twisting road in Parc du Mont-Royal. In [Paris](#), grab one of the 20,000 vehicles available at the Vélib' bike-rental stations around the city, which rent for less than \$1.50 an hour. Checkout stations around the metropolis—more than 1,000 in all—put a bike close by at all times.

"The best cities make biking easy and convenient," says Andy Clarke, president of the League of American Bicyclists, an advocacy group in [Washington, D.C.](#) Clarke grew up in England and has biked in cities around the world. A trip to [Amsterdam](#) in the late 1980s was a life-changing event: "I was blown away by the sheer volume of riders on the road."



Clarke took note of the city's dedicated lanes for cyclists and the established biking culture, which was unique at that time. And by the numbers alone, European cities still win out as top spots for cyclists. In Amsterdam, up to 40 percent of city commuters ride a bike to work or school some days.

But U.S. cities are working fast to catch up. [Portland, OR](#), has built a massive network with 270 miles of on-street bike lanes and paved paths. [Portland](#) is the only large U.S. city to receive the League of American Bicyclists' top rating, which quantitatively ranks dozens of communities on bike infrastructure, education, and share-the-road programs.

From the U.S. to Australia, across Europe and down in South America, people are choosing pedals instead of a car as the most efficient means to get around. So whether your plans include seeing the world on two wheels or just getting across town, read on for our list of the world's best biking cities and our tips on where to rent.

 **play slideshow**  **PAUSE**

SLOW **FAST**

 **BACK** 9 of 11 **NEXT** 



[Minneapolis](#)

[Minneapolis](#), the country's number two bike-commuting city, according to a recent U.S. Census Bureau report, is a case study in policy promoting bicycling as a viable means to get around. From federal government grants to local volunteers building trails, the Minnesotan metropolis has been rearranged in the past five years to facilitate transportation as well as recreation on two wheels. There are miles of off-street paths and a single-track mountain-biking trail in a park near downtown. The city even plows bike paths when it snows. For visitors, a tour on the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway system provides a car-free trip from the banks of the Mississippi River to Minneapolis's famous chain of urban lakes.

Find a Bike: Near the city's famous chain of lakes, [Calhoun Bike Rentals](#) is open daily to rent road bikes, tandems, and cruisers. A bike-share program, [Nice Ride Minnesota](#), launches next spring.

[The World's Top Biking Cities](#)