Activity guide – Cycling
A guide for people wanting to learn more about cycling

As a form of transport, the bike is hard to beat. It is non-polluting, human powered, takes up little space and is often the quickest form of transport for journeys of less than 5 km, especially around towns and cities.

Beyond simply getting from 'A' to 'B', cycling can be a wonderful leisure-time activity and offers excellent health benefits for relatively little cost.

Whether you are into cycling to work or school, for leisure or for fitness, the information below can help make cycling more fun and effective for you and your whānau.

Choosing and caring for your bike

Bike selection
There are many different bike options, depending on your requirements. Bikes with a range of gears make cycling easier on undulating and hilly terrain, while bikes with narrow tyres can be more efficient.

The Bike Wise website www.bikewise.co.nz has a great Bike Buyer’s Guide to help you choose the right type and size bike.

Safety basics
• Be visible. Be aware. Be defensive. Be predictable.
• Remember the New Zealand Road Code and Code for Cyclists both apply to cyclists www.nzta.govt.nz
• Always wear a helmet – it’s required by law! Look for one that meets the Cycle Helmet Safety Standard www.nzta.govt.nz Helmets should have a hard shell and a foam liner, and feel snug and comfortable.
• Cycling at night and in low-light conditions calls for lights, reflectors and bright clothing.
• Padded shorts, gloves and cycling shoes may make you more comfortable and increase your enjoyment.

Keeping your bike in safe working order
Regardless of whether you cycle regularly or haven’t ridden for a while, it makes good sense to have your bike checked annually for safety and road-readiness.

Bike shops often do free safety and maintenance checks and offer reasonable servicing rates.

To find out how to carry out a bike safety and maintenance check on your own bike, see the Bike Wise self-help maintenance guide at: www.bikewise.co.nz

Starting out
If you are a real beginner, take it easy! If you are breathless and can’t maintain a conversation while you cycle, or your legs are very tired and sore, it means you’re pushing yourself too hard.
When you are starting out, three to four gentle rides a week of 15 to 20 minutes each are enough.

**Electric bikes**

Electric bikes are normal bikes with an electric motor attached. The bike can be powered by pedaling or by the electric motor, which is re-charged from an electric power source. Electric bikes have all the usual advantages of an ordinary bike in terms of fuel and parking cost savings, and some of the health benefits. They are ideal for longer or hillier commutes.

**Fitness**

The key to increasing your fitness is to gradually build up the length and intensity of your rides. A good rule-of-thumb to follow when building up your training volume is to increase the length of each ride and total riding time by no more than 10 percent per week.

Your body needs time to recover, so factor in rest days each week and an easier schedule every third week.

**Social cycling**

If you want to ride in the company of others, ask your local bike shop or regional sports trust www.sportnz.org.nz about cycling clubs in your area. Alternatively, get friends and family along on some fun rides or short trips to the shops, playground, library or pool.

**Cycling to work**

Cycling to work:
- benefits your health and the environment
- saves fuel and parking costs
- reduces traffic congestion
- reduces wear and tear on the road network
- reduces wear and tear on your car (if you have one).

Contact your local council to see if they have a cycling route map for your area so that you can find the safest route for your cycle to work.

If you have a long way to travel, you could combine your bike ride with public transport or even take your car for part of the journey.

If you intend to carry your bike on the back of your vehicle, the law requires the licence plate to be visible and unobscured. If your bike obscures the licence plate, an extra plate can be attached to the back of your vehicle. Visit the NZ Transport Agency’s supplementary registration plate webpage www.nzta.govt.nz for more information.

**Mountain biking**

Mountain biking is a great way to improve your health – and it is great fun. There may be dedicated mountain bike tracks in your area. Visit your local council’s website or tourist information centre for further information.

Be respectful to other trail users when out mountain biking. Keep left and give way to uphill riders, walkers and animals where possible.

Be prepared for all eventualities by riding with others and carrying a cell phone – you may be away from help if you have a problem. Visit ACC’s Sport Smart webpage www.acc.co.nz for information about injury prevention.
Touring

Bike touring can be a great way to have an active holiday and see the country.

It can take a while to get your touring gear just right, get ‘cycle fit’, and get your body used to being on the saddle for longer periods. It is a good idea to get out for some day trips before embarking on longer tours.

Nga Haerenga – the New Zealand Cycle Trail

Nga Haerenga – the New Zealand Cycle Trail www.nzcycletrail.com is a network of mainly off-road cycle trails around New Zealand, providing a healthy and enjoyable way to see the country. The trail consists of a series of ‘Great Rides’ that take in some of New Zealand’s most amazing scenery, culture and heritage.

Introducing children to cycling

Cycling is a great family pastime and offers many benefits for children, such as:

• spending time with parents or grandparents
• teaching them about road safety and bike handling
• sharing experiences
• increasing their confidence
• being healthier.

Children can be introduced to cycling from a young age by using child seats or trailers on a parent’s bike, tag-along bikes, tricycles, balance bikes and bikes with training wheels.

It is important to teach children the basics from the start. Get them used to riding safely by wearing a bike helmet from the start and practising in a safe area away from traffic. The official New Zealand code for cyclists has information about the skills needed for children to cycle safely www.nzta.govt.nz

Related websites

AA Travel: 101 Must Dos: Get Active: Cycling trails www.aatravel.co.nz

Information on must-do cycling trails in New Zealand.

AdventureSmart www.adventuresmart.org.nz

Tips, links and advice to help you plan and prepare your outdoors adventure.

Bike Wise www.bikewise.co.nz

Information on choosing a bike, cycle skills and training, cycle safety and more.

BikeNZ www.bikenz.org.nz

Advice for bike riders of different levels, including information on safety, finding a club or events, and more.

Cycling Advocates Network http://can.org.nz

An organisation promoting cycling-friendly communities.

New Zealand Mountain Safety Council www.mountainsafety.org.nz

Safety tips, resources and training courses to ensure you stay safe outdoors.

NZ Transport Agency www.nzta.govt.nz

Information for cyclists on safe cycling and road rules.

Tourism New Zealand www.newzealand.com

Advice on things to do in New Zealand, including ideas for cyclists and mountain bikers.

This information sheet was produced together with:

ACC www.acc.co.nz

NZ Transport Agency www.nzta.govt.nz

Sport New Zealand www.sportnz.org.nz

Toi Tangata http://toitangata.co.nz