



It's Easy, Riders!

Learn the secrets of daily bicycle commuters

The shortest distance between two points can still feel too long, which is why Dave Cranor didn't think it was possible to bike the 12.5 miles from his Capitol Hill home to his office in Greenbelt. That is, until he tried it.

"I was exhausted the first time," he recalls of that fateful ride four years ago. "But I got addicted." The 35-year-old scientist now makes the hour-plus ride (each way!) almost every day. He sold his car, saved tons of dough and lost 13 pounds. "And I'm not rail-thin now," he says. "I had 13 pounds to lose."

Bike to Work Day 2007 arrives

this Friday to popularize the idea that if folks like Cranor experience the trek just once, they'll do it regularly. Because not everyone is so easily swayed, we've collected tips from locals who have conquered the challenges of commuting.

Plan Your Route. Plenty of streets have bike lanes, and trails can bypass traffic-clogged arteries. To help new employees find such shortcuts, the National Institutes of Health's Bike Commuting Club pairs rookies with cycling mentors who live in their neighborhoods. That came in handy for Jenny Haliski, 31, who started in December and found that biking to work shaved

15 minutes off each leg of her commute. "It makes people more likely to try it out," she says.

If your colleagues can't lead the way, pore over some bike maps (there's a huge library available for download or purchase at the Washington Area Bicyclist Association's site, waba.org). If you live or work in NoVa, sign up for the Arlington and Alexandria Community Bike Ride (June 3, bikearlington.com). The 23-mile tour shows how everything in the area is easily accessible by bike.

Plan to Sweat. "Unless you have the discipline not to work that hard, you'll end up with sweaty clothes,"

says 35-year-old Scott Walsh, who commutes five miles to Dupont Circle. "I don't have that discipline." If you also have trouble slowing yourself down, it's probably best to avoid rolling in wearing suits and skirts. Instead, don exercise garb and pack a change of clothes. Storing dress shoes, ties and jackets at work means less to lug back and forth each day.

Many office buildings offer

Store clothes at the office so you can freshen up after the ride.

shower facilities for employees, but if yours doesn't, think about joining a nearby health club if you need to cleanse. Plus, biking is a great warm-up for a little pre-shower weight work.

Plan for Safety. The only downside Cranor has found for bike commuting? Missing "Morning Edition." He prides himself on being visible, predictable and alert, which means wearing reflective clothing, but not headphones.

Paul d'Eustachio, president of the WABA board and a cycling commuter for 35 years, rides a hybrid; with wider tires than a road bike, it can survive potholes and broken glass (both features of his 11-miler from Takoma Park to Crystal City). "If you're in the Tour de France, you need a racing bicycle, but if you're just commuting, get one you're comfortable riding," he says.

He's certainly at ease on his ride: "I could sell it to tourists. The Capitol to the left, the sun rising over the Reflecting Pool. It's just beautiful." How many car commuters can say the same? VICKY HALLETT (EXPRESS)



Pamper yourself with pole dancing or a trip to see dead bodies on display.

Ladies Luck Out

■ When the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched the annual National Women's Health Week eight years ago, it's doubtful those government works considered marking the occasion by taking off their clothes while gyrating their hips.

But the P Spot (210 Rhode Island Ave. NW; 202-299-9604; thepspot.net), an exercise and personal training facility, is dealing with that oversight by offering a free strip aerobics class at 6:30 a.m. on Wednesday. (There's also a tamer sounding nutrition and health seminar at 12:15 p.m.)

For gals interested in exploring the exotic-dancing arts further, the free class is a good way to check out the facilities—owner Michaela Brown claims to have the only pole studio within city limits.

Ladies who wish to celebrate the week (May 13-19) in other ways can find options at womenshealth.gov. At Union Station, the Heart Truth Road Show is on display Tuesday and Wednesday to get women to focus on their risks for cardiovascular disease. And there are some deals, too: This week, women can get 20 percent off admission to the "Bodies... The Exhibition" at the Rosslyn Spectrum. Not so surprisingly, the majority of events associated with the week are exhibits, not exhibitionism. v.h.

TO DO LIST ►► BIKE TO WORK DAY

How to Join the Road Warriors

■ Don't have a bike? Sorry, even that isn't a valid excuse for burning gas instead of calories come Friday. Bike the Sites (202-842-2453, bikethesites.com) is offering free rentals. Just pick up your wheels Thursday between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. at the Old Post Office Pavilion or Rosslyn locations and return them between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. on Friday.

If route planning isn't your strong point, WABA volunteers are leading commuter convoys from 16 locations across D.C., Maryland and Virginia. There's no need to register ahead of time—just show up at the spots listed at waba.org. (There are



maps of the routes if you want to know exactly where they're headed.)

And don't forget to leave some time during the ride to celebrate your accomplishment at one of the 25 pit stops around town. They'll have free T-shirts (if you register in advance, also at waba.org), breakfast munchies, entertainment, speakers and the chance to win bikes and other stuff. v.h.

VITALSTATS

10

THE PERCENTAGE OF AMERICAN ADULTS WHO ABUSE DRUGS AT SOME POINT, REPORTS THE U.S. NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON DRUG ABUSE.