

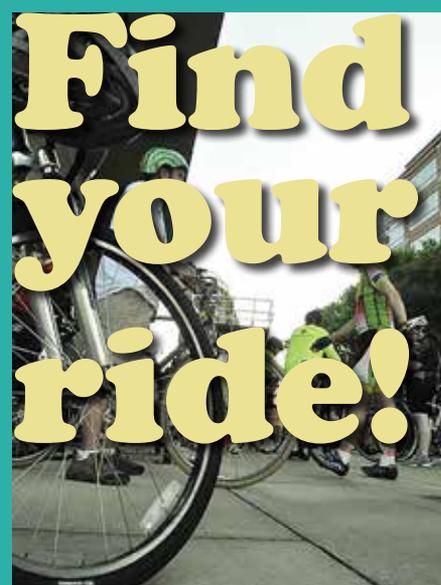


By raising awareness of cycling and providing education for new cyclists, the Montgomery Bicycle Club is creating new opportunities for safe cycling in the River Region. The nonprofit offers an array of services from sponsoring a challenging safety class to organizing recreational and competitive rides.

Bike club president Robert Traphan says the place to start for new cyclists is the organization's website, www.mgmbikeclub.org. Their free Smart Cycling Videos are designed to help you understand how to ride safely and comfortably and to know your rights as a cyclist. Lane changes, traffic laws and basic bike checks are just a few of the topics.

For hands-on learning, the Montgomery Bike Club sponsors the Smart Cycling Safety Course which is ideal for people who want to improve their bike handling skills and become more adept at riding in traffic. The course is comprised of drills and class discussion covering:

- ◆ Safety
- ◆ Basic mechanical techniques
- ◆ Traffic situations
- ◆ Emergency procedures
- ◆ Tire-changing techniques



◆ Hazard avoidance
The course is provided by the League of American Bicyclists and taught by certified instructors.

"It's a great way to develop your skills and confidence," Traphan says.

If you're a new cyclist, the club's social rides on Sunday afternoons are a good way to get pointers from more experienced riders, adds Traphan. The social rides are family friendly and cater to slower cyclists. Relaxed-pace rides, called My Happy Place, are also available Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

Century rides, Bike to Work Day and other activities are organized to meet the diverse

interests of club members, whether you're cycling for fun, searching for bike-friendly commuting ideas, or looking for competitive challenges. Fundraising rides benefit the group's mission of cycling education and safety. The club's calendar is available on their website.

Traphan recommends the Montgomery Bicycle Club's Facebook Group as another resource. The group has more than 1,000 members with a broad range of expertise. You can post questions, offer suggestions and participate in discussions. You'll also find information about the bike club's monthly meetings.

"We serve the River Region as a whole. Approximately one-half of our members are people from

By Patricia Surrett, Editor

Benefits of

The benefits of cycling include:

- ◆ increased cardiovascular fitness
- ◆ increased muscle

strength and flexibility

- ◆ improved joint mobility
- ◆ decreased stress levels
- ◆ weight loss



the communities surrounding Montgomery or people who work in Montgomery,” Traphan says. “We want to impact as much of the area as we can.”

Along with providing education and activities for riders, the Montgomery Bicycle Club works to increase cycling safety. The club was instrumental in getting the City of Montgomery to adopt a 3-foot passing ordinance, and it partnered with the Alabama Bike Coalition to get a statewide law approved. Motorists driving on any roadway in Alabama must maintain at least a 3-foot space between their vehicle and any bicycle it approaches or passes. More bike infrastructure, safe parking and more bike signage are also part of the safety initiative.

To learn more about joining the Montgomery Bicycle Club, visit www.mgmbikeclub.org. Membership includes insurance for group rides which covers accidents and liability.

cycling

Group rides offer the opportunity to make new friends and find support from other cyclists.

Choosing a bike

With so many types of bicycles and accessories, choosing equipment can be overwhelming. Montgomery Multisport’s Andy Steinhauer says he’s developed a few opinions over the years about how to shop for a bike along with what’s essential and what’s nice to have.

Before buying a bike, Steinhauer suggests researching a few questions.

♦ What type of terrain interests you?

If it’s paved, do you anticipate short rides in a park or near your home? Or do you plan long rides of 20 miles or more?

Or will you be off-road cycling in state parks or on mountain bike trails?

♦ What’s your budget?

With a minimum investment of \$400 for a quality bike, aspiring cyclists may be tempted to settle for low-cost equipment. That can be a mistake, says Steinhauer.

“It’s an investment. Quality equipment can prevent an

unpleasant experience. Save for better equipment so you have something that is reliable. Find a shop where you’re comfortable.

“Bikes are like shoes; they come in different sizes. A professional will use biomechanics to help you choose equipment that fits you well.”

A shop with a good mechanic can provide better maintenance and service. You’ll get more value from your investment, he adds.

The other essentials include a helmet which will cost \$40 or more and a floor pump (\$30).

For more information about cycling equipment, you can call Steinhauer at (334) 356-7271 or email andys@montgomerymultisport.com.

Montgomery Multisport is a swim, run and bike facility and race management company for multisport events and area runs. The MMS Charities has donated more than \$50,000 to local nonprofits. To learn more, visit www.montgomerymultisport.com

Xtras

& approximate cost

- ♦ Blinking tail light **\$10**
- ♦ Water bottle **\$5**
- ♦ Water bottle cage **\$8**
- ♦ Cycling shorts with padding **\$40**
- ♦ Rearview mirror **\$10**
- ♦ Flat repair kit **\$50**
- ♦ Auto rack for transporting bike **\$80**

- ♦ Cycling computer for tracking mileage, speed and other statistics **\$25**
- ♦ Weather-appropriate cycling apparel *Costs determined by personal preferences*

(Prices listed are the minimum costs you can expect when purchasing the item.)