

May 2011 | www.planetsave.com | Zachary Shahan | Health & Wellness

Top 10 Benefits of Bicycling



If you weren't aware, today is National Bike to Work Day in the U.S. That means that even if it is the only day of the year you do so, you should bike to work today!

Of course, biking is such a pleasant experience (for most people) if you get out there and try it out for transportation purposes, you'll probably find that you love it & want to do it more.

1. Bicycling is fun! Really, this is something that doesn't get emphasized enough by bicycling advocates trying to address environmental problems. While it's obvious once you get out there and do it, for the many people who haven't (for transportation purposes), these may not be so obvious.

2. You'll protect the climate and environment. Transportation is one of the leading causes (if not the #1 cause) of global warming. It is also what over 70% of oil is used for in the U.S. (So, if you're concerned about global warming or peak oil — AND YOU WOULD BE — bicycling is an easy, quick, fun solution you can implement today.)

3. It'll save you a ton of money. The average American spends about \$8,758 or 15% of their income a year on transportation, largely on automobiles — in DIRECT COSTS. If you add in the costs of war for oil, the increased cost of healthcare from air and water pollution, climate change, and other externalities, that will even go much higher. Luckily, if you want to save thousands upon thousands of dollars a year, you probably

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4. It's good for your health! Everyone wants to be healthier, right? Well, the moderate or rigorous exercise you get from bicycling (depending on how and where you bike) can go a loooooong way in helping you on that. It's definitely an easy, fun, and cheap way to improve your health and feel better.

5. You can skip the traffic headache. Traffic, it's generally one of the top complaints of Americans, #2 last time I saw (but that was awhile ago). While bikers do have to ride in traffic as well, the details are a bit different. While cars pile up at red lights and might have to sit through 3 or 4 light changes, bikers can easily coast to the front of the line and don't have to experience the boring torture of stop-and-go traffic. There's definitely a great feeling involved in coasting past dozens of cars stuck in traffic and then pedaling off as soon as the light turns green.

6. The bicycling community. Driving, you probably don't think much about connecting with or being a part of the same community as other drivers, but that's different when you're biking. Whether you just see a few bikers or see hundreds on your ride (like in Berlin, a great bicycle city I recently visited), you feel a sort of kinship with them all when

you see them out there in the same way. I think this is one reason why bicycle groups are so big and why mini bicycle communities seem to pop up wherever there are more than 5 bicyclists.

- 7. Bicycling makes streets and cities nicer.** There's no doubt about it — people don't like pollution, including noise pollution, traffic, or unsafe streets. Bicycling cuts down on pollution, noise, and traffic tremendously. Additionally, it makes streets much safer. I lived in Groningen in the Netherlands for 5 months, a city named "World Bicycling City" on a number of occasions and boasting a 50-60% bicycle commute rate. I noticed after awhile that I lived on one of the busiest and 'largest' streets in the city — I was right in between the city center (and the whole rest of the city) and the city's huge University. It took me awhile to realize because the street was so tranquil, only two lanes, and despite thousands and thousands of people going by my window every morning, I could mostly just here the clicks of broken bicycles (there are a lot in the Netherlands) or their bells (used well when bicyclists pass each other in the wide bike lanes). There's hardly a street nicer to live on, but if the bicycle commute rate were, say, 1% instead of 50-60%, the street and living on it would be an absolute nightmare!
- 8. Bicycles & bicyclists are cool.** Come on, everyone knows it. Want to be cool? Get on a bike. It can be a road bike, cruiser, city bike, folding bike, mountain bike, or something else, but chances are that no matter what kind of bike it is, it will make you cooler.
- 9. Bicycling is efficient and fast.** As perhaps the most efficient mode of transport, bicycling can get you someplace using minimal energy and time. In cities, in particular, which are, by definition, places where a lot of people live in relatively small areas, moving around by bike rather than a large automobile can be faster for many or most trips. 40% of trips in the U.S. are 2 miles or less, perfect distances for bicycling, and you don't have to spend time in traffic, finding parking, filling up on gas, or waiting for a bus or subway train.
- 10. You can forget about parking.** Another things Americans love — finding parking... not! It is a complaint of too many people. But what did I just mention above? Cities are dense places. Cars don't exactly fit well in them. Rather than struggle to find parking in a dense city, you can easily lock your bike up right outside the entrance of your destination and skip that whole mess.

Some good reasons to bike today (& every day)? I think so.

Now, I didn't mention this above, but since today is bike to work day... a lot of employers offer benefits or cash for bicycling to work these days (since it saves them money on parking, increases your work performance, decreases your sick days, and makes them look good). Check out if your employer does (or try to convince them to) and, if they do, add that to the list above somewhere.

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