

# To live and bike in L.A.

## Los Angeles hosts BikeSummer 2005

by Cecilia Gearyson

I thought I was dreaming when I heard the news: Los Angeles, the land of gargantuan highways and Hollywood excess, is hosting BikeSummer 2005. That's right, the annual month-long celebration of alternative transportation (hosted in other years by Portland, San Francisco and Vancouver) is in Orange County from June 3 until July 4. Matt Kucigino, a local cyclist, has been invited to give a talk at the event. "Has there ever been a LA that concrete overpasses and lanes of grid-locked traffic?"

In fact, it seems that bicycling in Los Angeles is not an impractical fantasy. "Riding a bike is a better way to see L.A.," says Matt Kucigino, the media contact for BikeSummer 2005. During a phone call after cycling home from a film festival in Hollywood and taking a quick drive of hills around, he was eager to describe the benefits of two-wheeler in the City of Angels.

"People over here and they say, 'That's Los Angeles, I'm always stuck in traffic all day,' and I say I don't know anything about that because I'm never stuck in traffic."

Cyclists in the city take advantage of over 40 miles of bike lanes, pleasant weather year-round and reasonably flat terrain. The Los Angeles Bike Coalition estimates that approximately 100,000 hard-core riders take their bikes on a daily basis. But it is really possible to rely on petal power and public transportation to get around.

"I haven't owned a car for six years," states Kucigino. After years of cycling in New York and Philadelphia, he didn't miss a beat when he moved to L.A. two years ago. "I commute four miles to work, so I ride an eight-mile round-trip each day," he says. On weekends he's busy spending out of town on his road bike with the spandex crowd. "I can ride my bike to miles and be at a lake surrounded by pine trees. I can just take off and be in the mountains. Or I can hop on a bike trail that's



When riding in L.A., you stop for the trees.

five miles from here and be at the beach in 45 minutes," he says with enthusiasm.

Don't worry about freeways; it's easy to avoid the massive concrete arterial highways that L.A. is famous for. "I don't know the freeways that well because I'm rarely on them," says Kucigino, who goes quiet streets and dedicated bike lanes for his daily jaunts. An online service, Bikemetro.com, allows cyclists to create individualized biking maps for their adventures around the city. Surprisingly, the public transit system is stroller- and cyclist-friendly with bike carriers and rapid express bus lanes, getting around from place to place can be easy.

Despite the efforts made by advocates and planners to encourage cycling, Los Angeles remains dominated by personal vehicles. Organizers of BikeSummer 2005 are hoping to change perceptions of what is possible and enjoyable for citizens and visitors.

"L.A. is an amazing city because it is so diverse," says Kucigino. Both ethnically and culturally rich, Los Angeles is a fascinating mix of cutting-edge artistic expression and extreme kitsch. That diversity sounds to the cycling community. "It's not all veggie bike paths here," laughs Kucigino. "You still have your cross of kids on fixed gears and your wannabes, but you have a lot of people who aren't categorized who ride bikes."

By hosting BikeSummer in L.A., the organizers are hoping to promote bicycle travel as an efficient, fun, sustainable, healthy, and environmentally friendly way to get around Los Angeles. And, if the planned events listed on the BikeSummer website are any indication, the cycling community in L.A. is dedicated to having a good time. Some of the festivities include a bicycle-themed art show, a pedal-powered fair of vegetarian restaurants, and a bicycle-jenny-sewing party thrown in honor of Nancy Sinatra's birthday. "Orlando's Hangover Relief Ride" takes place on Sunday mornings for those waking from late-night



**BiCi Verano**  
Bike @ Summer  
LOS ANGELES 2005

BikeSummer poster  
by Joe Linton

nightlife. As well, the "Starlight Riders" event mid-month continues the L.A. tradition of after-dark, costumed and themed tours through city streets.

Inspired to try a week-cultural vacation? From the seat of your bicycle, you could slack antibodies, practice your Spanish and work on your French as you sail in the company of bike-friendly locals. For Vancouverites itching for two-wheeled travel under palm trees and Hollywood hillside, Los Angeles is just a hop, skip and three-hour flight away.

### BikeSummer 2005 Orientation

#### Getting There

Cheap flights - about \$200 - direct.  
Check Alaska Airlines or southwest.com

#### BikeRitz

Cheap digs are also plentiful - [www.bikebiz.com](http://www.bikebiz.com)  
for locations in Santa Monica, Venice Beach and Hollywood.

#### Bike Rentals

Hollywood Pro Bicycle: [www.hollywoodprocycle.com](http://www.hollywoodprocycle.com) - Reservations encouraged

#### About Los Angeles

Official Tourism site: [www.losangeles.com](http://www.losangeles.com)  
Map your bike routes online: [www.bikemaps.com](http://www.bikemaps.com)  
Public transport: bikes on metro bus and rail: [www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net)  
Bike paths: [www.bikepaths.com](http://www.bikepaths.com)

#### Bike Culture

[www.bikesummer.org/2005](http://www.bikesummer.org/2005)

#### The Bicycle Kitchen

LA's co-operative bike repair shop. Check out the photo gallery of local cyclists - 100 bike geeks in L.A. look the same as those at home! [www.bicyclerkitchen.com](http://www.bicyclerkitchen.com)

#### Bicycle Advocacy in Los Angeles

[www.labcyclists.org](http://www.labcyclists.org)