

Heart-to-Heart



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Tour Director Musings

In December the TV ad about four women watching the sledding hill hit a note with several friends and family members. On Christmas morning what did I find under our tree but 2 new plastic sleds! This week presented a perfect day for getting outdoors for some snow shoeing on Grand Mesa and taking the sleds out for a run. A few runs later and one bump with air time followed by a hard landing led to a sore tailbone for several days. Guess I should have ordered the extra thick cushion like the women on TV.

It is two months till my first bike tour of 2024, so time to switch from winter snow sports to also doing some bike rides. Have fun this year, make new friends and explore some new roads with HeartCycle.

Judy Siel, Tour Director

Why Winter is a Great Time for a Bike Fit

By Pat Casey - Cycling West

In case you hadn't noticed, winter is upon us. For those of us in higher elevations, normal training roads are probably becoming questionable and wet. The days are getting shorter, and many of us are transitioning to indoor riding until that long-awaited desert training camp. Maybe you're adding some strength work to prepare for ski season or to lay the foundation for long winter base miles. As you migrate inside, the nature of your riding will change from the dynamic, terrain-driven variability that the road presents, and riding becomes a bit more static and stationary. It's not uncommon for riders begin to notice new sensations when they transition to being indoors.



As you're making changes to your training, and you're allowing space to adapt to new stimuli, you might consider getting your bike fitted, or re-fitted this winter. Let's discuss why getting your bike fitted this winter is a smart move and how it's all about you – your body, your style, and even those annoying previous injuries that might affect your movement and patterns more than you realize.

Pat Casey performing a bike fit for Melisa Rollins. Photo by Heather Casey

1. What does it mean to be 'optimized'?

- There is not a template or a formula for a great bike fit. Each bike fit session should consider an athlete's goals, history, and most importantly, the quality of their movement, and current limitations.
- Optimized for what? Comfort? Aerodynamics? Endurance? Are you racing IRONMAN, or local Sprint and Olympic distance races? Are you racing hill climbs, or criteriums? Do you want to race gravel, or just explore on gravel roads with your friends? These are questions that we hope to answer as you and your fitter embark on the road towards a more appropriate position for you, your body, and your goals.

2. Gearing Up for the 2024 Season

- Improve your *capacity* by helping you produce more watts without placing more demand on your metabolic or musculoskeletal system.
- Improve your *technique* through improved biomechanical accuracy. This allows you to home in on the purpose of each session, especially as you target different cadence ranges in your training throughout the winter.

3. Why Winter? Why Not!

- Time spent on indoor training can feel more arduous than it needs to be if you're not comfortable. Getting your fit dialed in over the winter will make training feel much more attainable.
- Adjust and Adapt: Most fitters encourage a follow up as part of your bike fit service. After a month or two of riding a new position, you might want some tweaks to the position. They expect to see you again and especially appreciate adherence to the movements suggested to address your limitations identified in the first session.

4. Long-Term Riding Comfort

- Along with your dynamic measurements like knee extension, reach, and knee tracking, the major contact points take precedent in the fitting process as well. This means saddle selection, insoles, and possible shims to accommodate anatomical characteristics, and handlebar interfaces like how your hoods are positioned, how the tape is layered around your shifter, and where your hands like to land while riding.

- Posture, balance, and stability are three overarching themes to fit, and not only will you leave with a renewed sense of what this means for you, but adhering to a consistent routine of exercises and movement will help you adapt to any changes in position, as well as manage issues you might be experiencing.

5. Fitting Tools and Applied Technology – No “Eyeballing”

- There are several reasons why fitters leverage technology in a fitting process. Mainly, this is meant to help objectify measurements, and collect pre-fit data to help guide the process. Measurable data points in knee tracking, hip stability, and pelvic rotation are not visible, even to the most trained eyes. So, utilizing data to analyze details is crucial to a great bike fit.
- Bike fitting should be driven by objective measurements, an honest movement screening, and subjective feedback to help drive the process forward. Rather than a “one size fits all” philosophy which might try to force you into a riding position that might look good in a vacuum but is not conducive to your goals or for long term growth as a cyclist or triathlete.

Ready to get dialed in? Winter doesn't have to be a downtime for your cycling. Consider getting a fit if you're looking for some marginal gains this off season, and especially if you're looking to manage aches and pains while riding and hoping to enjoy riding even more when Spring rolls around!

Pat Casey is a USA Triathlon Level 2 Coach, CSCS, Team USA Age Group Coach, an author for Cycling West, and is co-owner of Peak State Fit in Salt Lake City, Utah. Pat's background as a Cat 1 cyclist sparked his consulting and coaching career. He uses his skills and knowledge to improve people's quality of life and realize their athletic potential through endurance sports.

Quick Tips for Renting a Bicycle When Traveling

by John Brown - Browns Bicycle, Richfield, MN

Taking your bicycle when you travel is not always possible, but don't give up on the idea of riding altogether. Renting a bicycle or e-bike is an easy way to experience new places. Plus, it lets you try a new bike you may want to buy when you get home. So, before you travel, here are a few tips to get you going



In the photo above, a visitor to the Twin Cities is being helped by the staff at [One Ten Cycles](#) in Mendota Heights, a couple of miles south of the MSP Airport.

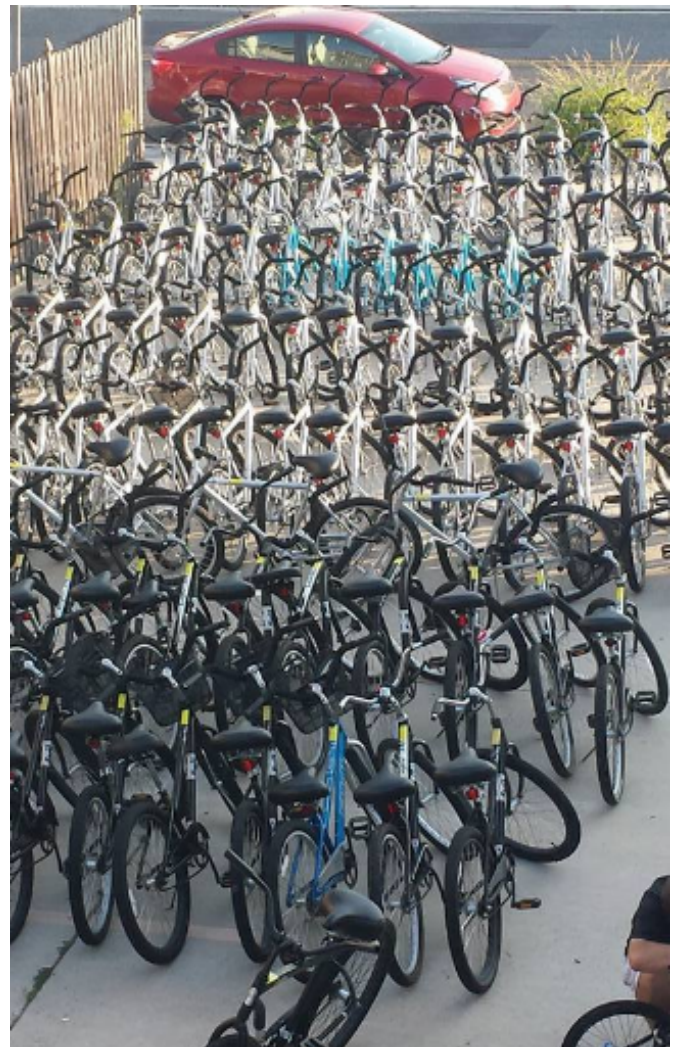
Renting a Bicycle At One of Many Bike Shops

As bike trails and paths become more commonplace, bike shops are entering the rental market. Before you travel, find a few area bike shops and call about renting a bicycle. Be sure to ask about both rental fleets (*typically made up of basic mountain bikes, cruisers or hybrids*) as well as “Demo” bikes. Many shops that don’t rent bikes have demo units to let potential buyers try before buying. The fee for a demo is usually higher than that of a standard rental, but the bicycle quality is also typically higher.



Renting a Bicycle From a Rental Company

In most major cities or tourist destinations, some businesses only rent bikes and e-bikes. Finding one of these companies is as easy as a Google search or asking the hotel you are staying in. Many rental companies have services to deliver a rental bike to the hotel. If you are going to the rental shop, understand they usually operate on a first-come-first-serve basis, so be sure to get there early if you are trying to ride on a busy weekend.



Or Bike Share Programs

Bike shares are becoming very popular throughout the US and abroad. Companies like [BCycle](#), and [Citi bike](#) are a couple of the companies that offer options to rent “as you go.” With tons of locations around the US, bike shares are a great option if you are touring a city. Because you can pick up a bike in one location, explore, and then drop the bike off at another docking station any time of day or night.

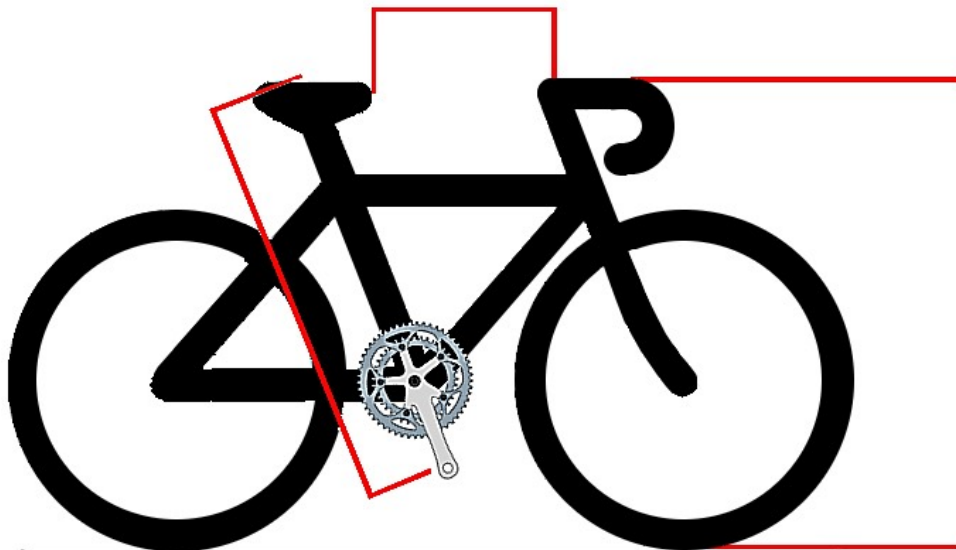


Renting From A Bicycle Touring Company Is Another Option

Many bike tour companies have bike fleets. Tour companies such as [Trek Travel](#) and [Backroads](#) offer tours around the globe and supply bikes as part of the cost. The benefit of taking a dedicated tour is support. Lodging, Equipment, route, food, and guides are all included in the cost of the trip.

Getting Comfortable

The most important trick to a great bike rental experience is to ensure the [bicycle is comfortable](#). Your own pedals, [saddle](#), and the right size bike are great ways to start.



Key Measurements

Size

If you don't have a bike, ask for the brand and model of the bike from the rental company. Then, try to find a local bike shop that sells that model. If you stop into the shop and explain your situation, they can tell you what size you ride. As a side benefit, If you like the bike you rented, that local bike shop would be a great place to buy one to keep at home.

Pedals

If you use [clipless pedals](#), remove them from your bike, drop them in a ziplock bag, store them in your riding shoes, and bring them with you. Once you get your rental bike, have your pedals installed. Having a familiar pedal can go a long way to make a new bike feel like your bike at home.

Position

Measure your saddle height. Do this by rotating your pedals until a crank arm is in line with the seat tube of your bicycle. Use a tape measure from the top of the saddle to the middle of the pedal (*in line with the seat tube*). Also, measure the distance from the tip of your saddle to the handlebars and the height of your handlebars. Once you get your rental, ask to adjust it to be as close to your bike's measurements as possible. Remember that one bike will never fit exactly like another, so close is great.

Saddle

After measuring the height of your saddle, remove it from your bike and bring it with you. Having the rental company install your saddle on the rental is a nice way to make an unfamiliar bicycle comfortable.

About John Brown, the author

John operates Browns Bicycle in Richfield, MN as a lifelong cyclist and consummate tinkerer. It all started for him in grade school when the bike bug bit him, and that particular fever is still there. Now, and over the past thirty years, he has worked at every level in the bike industry. He was starting by sweeping the shop floor while learning anything he could about bikes. He eventually graduated as a service manager and then a store manager. Through the years, he has spent extensive time designing and sourcing bicycles and parts for some of the largest bike companies in the world. All the while focusing on helping as many people as possible enjoy the love of riding a bike. In that pursuit, he has taught classes (*both scheduled and impromptu*) on all things bikes. John also believes in helping every rider attain their optimal fit on the bike of their dreams. Please feel free to stop in any time and talk about bikes, fit, and parts or share your latest ride.

2024 Tours with Available Space for You!!

HeartCycle 2024 tours are open and just a few have filled: so it's not too late to get your plans set for next year and biking touring with your favorite friends.

Spring Training in Texas Hill County: our most requested tour is back in Fredericksburg, TX March 15-22. Capture the spring wildflowers as you pedal through hilly terrains, meandering county lanes and picturesque ranch road. A fixed based adventure with a fun team leading the way. Fredericksburg is a charming old German town with art galleries, boutiques, fascinating museums, lively music venues and renowned restaurants.

Underground Railroad Year #1: a two week tour starts next April with your start of a three year adventure series. Year one starts in the deep south at Mobile, Alabama and heads north to Nashville, Tennessee. Imbed yourself into the history of the Civil War and spirit of what this country is all about. Bike through pine forests, past old plantation, along the Mississippi Blue Trail, follow rivers, Civil war battlefields, Natchez Trace Parkway and time to be a tourist with several rest days. (Years #2 & #3 will continue northward till finishing at the Canadian border.) Don't miss year #1!

Springtime in the South Bay Area, CA: May brings this six-day tour that will travel over the Coast Range to Half Moon Bay, down the CA coast to Santa Cruz and then back over those coastal mountains. Wildflower and green hill slopes make this area a beautiful place to ride in May. Challenge your legs with iconic climbs to the top of Mount Hamilton and Morgan Hill.

Basalt And Aspen: Come ride the Roaring Fork Valley in July on lightly travelled roads and bike paths with grand vistas and some gravel connecting roads. Another fixed base tour in a historic CO mountain town with nearby fishing or relaxing along the banks of the Frying Pan River. Hotel one room available.

Over Hill & Dale NW Vermont: Come August we would love to have you join HeartCycle in Vermont for a weeklong tour, biking past Lake Champlain to the peaks of the Green Mountains. Vermont is home to many 19th century covered wooden bridges, maple syrup, historic general stores, waterfalls and wonderful New England Inns.

West Virginia: A new tour for HeartCycle in a state we have not biked till 2024. The Appalachians are green and hilly. We will visit a new national park-New River Gorge National Park. Bike along small creeks, up & down knobs, through small hamlets, thick forests and see the largest arched bridge in the western hemisphere.

These tours have a few limited spaces available.

Balkan Quartet: Space for a male to share a room.

Bike & Barge Belgium: Space for a male to share a room.

Tuscany: Space for a female to share a room.

Full tour descriptions and contact information is on the website:

heartcycle.org

Colorado HeartCycle 2024 Tours

Spring Training in Texas Hill Country

Fredericksburg, Texas

March 15 - 22 Status: Open
 6 days, Int./Adv. \$1,900.00
 Jim Schroeder, jimmyschweb@gmail.com
 Tina Vessels, tina.vessels@gmail.com

Springtime in the South Bay Area

Campbell, California

May 19 - 25 Status: Open
 6 days, Advanced \$1,900.00
 Carol Fredrickson, swmcarol@yahoo.com
 Janet Slate, jslate@ultrasys.net

Portugal: West Coast & Algarve

Lisbon, Portugal

April 7 - 17, 2024 Status: Waitlist
 11 days, Intermediate \$4,900.00
 Judy Siel, judy.siel@gmail.com

Explore the Door in '24

De Pere, Wisconsin

June 2 - June 9 Status: Waitlist
 8 days, Intermediate \$2,000.00
 Jim Bethell, bethell.jim@verizon.net
 Cindy Dore, cdorecycle@gmail.com

Paso Robles Wine Country

Paso Robles, California

April 13 - 20 Status: Waitlist
 6 days, Int./Adv. \$2,000.00
 Cindy Alvarez, sindelou@cox.net
 Helayn Storch, helaynstorch@hotmail.com

Bike & Barge Beautiful Belgium

Bruges, Belgium

July 20 - 27, 2024 Status: Open
 7 days, Easy/Int. \$2,150.00
 Rita Kurelja, ritakurelja@hotmail.com

Underground Railroad Year 1

Mobile, Alabama

April 27 - May 12 Status: Open
 14 days, Int./Adv. \$2,840.00
 Jim Schroeder, jimmyschweb@gmail.com
 Ron Finch, blouie-rfinch@comcast.net

Basalt & Aspen - Road & Gravel Tour

Basalt, Colorado

July 24 - 28 Status: Open
 4 days, Int./Adv. \$1,100.00
 Ron Finch, blouie-rfinch@comcast.net
 Robin Heil, heikrobin1@gmail.com

Balkan Quartet

Tirana, Albania

May 17 - 31, 2024 Status: Open
 14 days, Int./Adv. \$2,600.00
 Lisa Evans, lceski@comcast.net

Puget Sound Island Hopping

La Conner, Washington

August 3 - 11 Status: Waitlist
 7 days, Int./Adv. \$2,560.00
 Cindy Alvarez, sindelou@cox.net
 Helayn Storch, helaynstorch@hotmail.com

