

JIM SERVI

World Class Biking Right Here In Wisconsin

Get in shape, explore and have some fun

Riding along the river, my legs begin to burn as I pedal the bike over the top of the hill. The pain is pushed from my mind as I watch a flock of ducks land in a shallow bay. "I'll have to remember this stretch come duck season," I think to myself. Gliding down now, almost in a freefall, I'm reminded why I love to ride. It's easy to see why biking has grown in popularity and has expanded as a tourism activity here in Wisconsin.

The League of American Bicyclists ranks all 50 states on how bike friendly their state is each year and looks at five categories. Wisconsin ranked ninth in 2015 and third in 2014 with two impressive top ten finishes in the last two years. The Chequamegon Area Mountain Bike Association annually receives accolades as one of the best places for mountain bikers in the entire country. This year was no different. It was ranked #11 in the pop culture magazine Complex's list of the 50 best trails in America. Located in the heart of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, you'll find yourself surrounded by almost a million acres of land with trails galore. Get started at cambatrails.org.


If you're looking for a place to start close to home, sco.wisc.edu/find-maps/bicycling-maps.html has maps for nearly every biking trail in the state, including a map of each county. It's hard to believe, but there are more than 1000 miles of trails designed for mountain bikers on public land across our great state. Not counted in that total is my favorite place to ride: quiet country roads or old logging roads. Wildlife is abundant during these quiet rides, and you'll be sure to see a variety of birds, deer, and, if you're lucky, something a little more exotic. Plus, it's an excellent way to discover a new fishing or hunting location and stay in shape for all your outdoor adventures.

The Wisconsin DNR has designated bicycling trails that are broken down into three

categories. Bicycle touring trails are designed to be relatively easy and made for any bike. They are often paved or made from old railroad right-of-ways and go through some of the most beautiful places that Wisconsin has to offer. Mountain Bay State Trail is one of these touring trails, running from Green Bay to Wausau. Here, you'll get a great mix of countryside, farmsteads, small towns and woodlands. The Elroy-Sparta Trail is another favorite. Travelling through railroad tunnels and the rolling hills in the area you'll be physically challenged but inspired by the scenery along your journey. Bearskin State Trail and the always popular Peninsula State Park, along with many other parks, consist of touring trails throughout the state.

Off-road bicycle trails are the next category of trails managed by the Wisconsin DNR. These trails are tougher and designed for riders ready for a more challenging environment. Not any bike will do. You'll need a hybrid or mountain bike to tackle these trails. These off-road trails are located in Brule River State Forest, Wild Rivers State Trail, and over 470 miles in the Northland Highland American Legion State Forest, among others.

The last category of constructed mountain bike trails is something that is relatively limited, with approximately 50 miles of trails built according to International Mountain Bicycling Association standards but expanding yearly.

Whether you're a beginner or an advanced rider, Wisconsin has something to offer all levels of bikers. It is an excellent way to get some fresh air and stay in shape while exploring the vast outdoor opportunities offered here in Wisconsin. 

Jim Servi is a freelance writer who spends every opportunity he can in the great outdoors with his wife and three boys. Contact Jim at jimservi10@gmail.com.