

WHERE TO RIDE

Now that you have a properly-fit, good-quality bike, you are wondering where and with whom to ride. First the good news:

The ragtag smattering of local bike paths in southwest Ohio has finally come together in a big way. Paths linking such far-away and exotic locales as Piqua, Loveland, Xenia, Dayton, London, Urbana and Springboro are all now connected into one big web. Check out the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission (www.mvrpc.org) for path maps and updates. We have seen a whole new population of casual and commuter riders emerge as a result of these paths. Cool.

The Miami Valley has some beautiful, pastoral, rolling country roads and a very active and sociable bike club (Dayton Cycling Club, www.daytoncyclingclub.org). Hooking up with other riders will put you on the fast track to bike knowledge, although one should take all such amateur advice with a grain of salt. For casual-paced rides, start with the Sunday morning ride from the CVS parking lot in Tipp City. A warning to newcomers: although some of the riders may be old enough to be your parents, they can often maintain their “casual pace” for quite some distance. If you have any doubts about your abilities, have a bail-out plan ready ahead of time.

For riders with road bikes looking to stretch their legs a bit more, Dayton Cycling Club runs a ride out of Process Equipment’s parking lot on route 202. Riders of all levels show up for this ride but neophytes should probably hang toward the back until they develop the bike handling skills and etiquette (and lungs) to ride with the faster groups. Fast group rides will be very tightly spaced so one bad move will make a pile of expensive broken bikes and angry riders.

Now the bad news: challenging off-road dirt trails will generally require a drive to Caesar’s Creek or Houston Woods (from Tipp City, both 1 hour each way), although the Metroparks’ Momba facility and John Bryan State Park have more recently opened some trails to bikes (1/2-hour drive). Troy has a small smattering of trails behind Duke Park but the problem is a total lack of elevation change. Astonishingly, despite some potentially useful trails, all Miami County Parks and Dayton Metroparks forbid off-pavement bike use on any of their trails. Real off-roading will require a road trip to West Virginia or Kentucky.

BMX racing is a popular family activity and Dayton is a hotbed of racing. Dayton Indoor is located on Edmund Street in Dayton and is active November through April. This is a nice way to involve the entire family on a Sunday afternoon, whether racing or spectating. Both Kettering and Brookville have outdoor tracks that are very active. Most tracks require helmets (some require full-face designs) and long-sleeve shirts and pants. Pads for the bike frames are also a must. Kickstands and chainguards are usually forbidden. Lacking a formal race schedule, many local kids head for the dirt paths in the area and focus more on jumping and style moves rather than flat-out speed.