

# National Bike to Work Day – May 21, 2021

We love our work, but we wish our work commute would disappear into a fiery pit somewhere; that's why we love celebrating National Bike to Work Day each year on the third Friday of May, on May 21 this year. This day aims to incentivize us to switch our regular commute with bikes, and we're very thankful for it! Another key element to this celebration is the emphasis on safety awareness for cyclists and other commuters.

## HISTORY OF NATIONAL BIKE TO WORK DAY

Part of Bike to Work Week, which in turn is part of National Bike Month, Bike to Work Day was designated by biking enthusiasts League of American Bicyclists. The day began to be observed as a way to increase awareness about the health benefits of cycling every day.

Bikes, as we know them, did not appear until the end of the 19th century. Before that, a two-wheeled, steerable contraption designed by German Baron Karl von Drais de Sauerbrun, was a common sight for a brief period of time. This machine was known by various names — the 'velocipede,' 'hobby-horse,' 'draisine,' and 'running machine' — and earned Von Drais the honor of being called the father of the bicycle by many. Famous poet John Keats, however, was not very impressed by this invention. He famously called it the "nothing of the day".

Later inventors used von Drais’s invention as a starting point for newer versions, including French inventors like Pierre Lallement as well as Pierre and Ernest Michaux. They developed prototypes with pedals that were attached to the front wheel. These were called the first bicycles. Later, inventors like Eugène Meyer and James Starley improved this version by adding an oversized front wheel. These models drove the bike craze across Europe and the U.S. and spurred the creation of bike clubs and biking races. Newer and newer versions of the bike began appearing — a version with a four-foot-high saddle was common for a while and the first version of the ‘safety bike’ appeared, and so on — creating a template for the modern bike.

Each year, the local, regional, and national bike advocacy groups encourage people to try biking to work.

## NATIONAL BIKE TO WORK DAY TIMELINE

1818

### **The Hobby Horse is Invented**

German inventor Baron Karl von Drais de Sauerbrun designs the hobby-horse, which has no pedals or even a saddle, and the riders propel themselves forward by pushing their feet against the ground.

1863

### **French Inventors Create the First Bicycle**

Various French inventors create the vehicle that earns the name ‘bicycle;’ people called them boneshakers as riding on one was akin to shaking your bones.

1880s

### **The Forerunner of the Bike Comes Along**

John Kemp Starley develops the first avatar of the modern bike.

1890s

### **The Bike Craze Erupts**

The two-wheeled machines become even more popular across Europe and the U.S., kicking off a bike craze.

1896

### **Bikes Receive Praise in the News**

Bikes are praised in a “New York Times” article that reads, “the bicycle promises a splendid extension of personal power and freedom, scarcely inferior to what wings would give.”

# NATIONAL BIKE TO WORK DAY FAQs

## Is there a National Bike Day?

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Officially created by the United Nations, June 3 is celebrated as World Bicycle Day, in honor of the longevity, uniqueness, and versatility of this humble contraption.

## How do I start cycling to work?

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Take cycling training to refresh your skills, use a route planner, and maybe even ask a friend to ride along with you.

## Is biking to work enough exercise?

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If biking to work meant a 30-minute bike ride (both ways combined) at a casual pace, then you meet the normal aerobic exercise guidelines. This is great for a starter, although we recommend following up with some more exercise.

# HOW TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL BIKE TO WORK DAY

## 1. Make the work commute fun!

Let's face it, the work commute is many things, but not all of us can describe it as 'fun'. With a bike, you can change this experience completely. Go ahead and take a scenic route, or revisit childhood memories while biking to work. Biking into work helps fill us with energy on a sleepy morning and recharge our batteries on the way home after a long day.

## **2. Encourage others to bike, too**

Invite others to share in your love of biking. Post your traffic updates on social media and let friends and family know how much fun you're having with this activity. Drop little snippets about how easily you can avoid traffic and problems with limited parking, and see how quickly others might pick up this healthy habit, too.

## **3. Ask your company to sponsor an event on this day**

Approach your management with a fun CSR opportunity. Talk to them about the benefits of this day, and plan and organize a bike-to-work-related activity for this day. Your company can even take this one step further by planning biking challenges and activities year-round, for fitter and happier employees. Plus, you'll get recognized for taking initiative at work!

## **FUN FACTS ABOUT NATIONAL BIKE TO WORK DAY**

### **1. Free breakfast for cyclists**

In 2012 and 2013, 11 businesses in Boulder, Colorado, offered free breakfasts to more than 1,000 participants of National Bike to Work Day.

### **2. Participate to win free bikes?**

In 2012, a local bike club called Ziggy's in Kitchener, Ontario donated 12 commuter bikes to people who participated and blogged about National Bike to Work Day.

### **3. Metrolink is showing biking some love**

On Bike to Work Day, southern California commuter rail network Metrolink offers free rides to cyclists.

### **4. More free stuff**

Participants on National Bike to Work Day in Chicago once got free balaclavas and tune-ups in.

### **5. Countries that top the 'biking to work' list**

The Dutch top the list at 30% and they are followed by Japan at 15%.

## **WHY WE LOVE NATIONAL BIKE TO WORK DAY**

### **1. It's good for the planet**

There's strong evidence and data to prove cycling can help our planet. The Adventure Cycling Association states that adopting this habit could save between 700 million and 1.6 billion gallons of fuel yearly. Plus, biking everywhere reduces the carbon emissions your automobile might otherwise release into the atmosphere. So grab your bike, and get to work! One small change in your daily travel contributes to your healthy future and the planet's, too.

## **2. Awareness about bike safety (and subsequently, road safety)**

There's an increasing interest in biking to work. Subsequently, this interest needs to be supported by a parallel interest in road safety, so both cyclists and drivers can share the road safely. Knowledge of bikes and Bike to Work Day helps motorists, drivers, and cyclists learn more about traffic laws. This could even spur the construction of biking lanes for safer transportation.

## **3. It saves money**

Not only does biking keep you fit and fine, it even serves to cut down your transport costs. Calculate the money you spend on fuel each month (or the tickets you buy for public transport), then add up the cost of maintaining your car, versus what you would spend if you owned a bike. Now isn't that a great motivator to get yourself this two-wheeled money saver?