

Guide to Cycling in Edinburgh



Edinburgh **Health and
Social Care** Partnership



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Keeping Up to date

We have included services and projects in this guide with the intention of providing as comprehensive useful and accurate listing as possible about Counselling Services in the Capital. Please email us with any changes or additions that you are aware of and we will update the entry.

Email:

ConnectHereUpdates@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

Disclaimer

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If you have concerns about a service listed here please contact the service provider in the first instance and their professional body if one exists. Please update us in your experience by emailing us and we will take account of this when we compile the next update of the guide. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information in this guide, neither Edinburgh Health and Social Care or NHS Lothian cannot accept liability for errors or omissions and any resulting harm.

Email:

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Guide to Cycling in Edinburgh

[The Nervous Cyclist](#)

Have you been told to exercise more? Has some bright person suggested getting on your bike and pedaling your way to fitness. Not been on a bike in years, nervous? We understand and suggest some ways to lay your fears to rest.

[Protecting your bike](#)

Edinburgh comes second in the national league table for bike theft. You are going to have to think carefully about how to protect your bike from thieves.

[Buying a Cycle Helmet](#)

Cycling Helmets are a hot issue amongst cyclists. We look at the issues and try to guide you through the maze.

[Cycle Routes round Edinburgh](#)

Getting around Edinburgh on a bike is getting safer and easier. We show you how you can get round Edinburgh and enjoy cycle tracks and quieter roads.

[Bicycles at the National Museum](#)

Have you ever wondered who invented the bicycle? The National Museum of Scotland may hold the answer.

[Recycle your old inner tube](#)

Do not bin your old inner tube recycle it. It is amazing to see what clever tailors in Malawi can do with an old pile of rubber.

[Conquer the Hills of Edinburgh](#)

At last the answer to Edinburgh's seven hills, the electric bike.

[Unusual Facts about Cycling](#)

[Scotland's Cycle Repair Scheme](#)

Free bike repairs worth up to £50 for those who need it most right now.

[Classified listings](#)



The Nervous Cyclist

My Doctor recently advised me to lose some weight and get more fresh air. He suggested: "Why not take up cycling? The very thought filled me with dread. I had not been on a bike in years and I worried about my balance and all that traffic. However, walking home from the surgery, I wondered if I was making excuses and seeing problems that did not exist.

Health concerns can inspire people to either take up cycling or get back on a bike but there are other motivations. Persuasion from friend and family, concerns about the environment and wanting an alternative to the car have all helped people to get on a bike. Spoke, a local cycling group, has an interesting article on what [inspires](#) cyclists.

I am glad that I reconsidered my view about cycling in Edinburgh. Once you stop to look, the city is really cycle- friendly. (OK hills notwithstanding) It has lots of off-road bike paths, on-road cycle lanes, forward stop lines at traffic lights, and other bike priority measures. And the city is trying to do something about lower speed limits on many of its roads. You should have a look at: [Edinburgh Bike Paths: A Cyclist's Guide](#) This gem of a site clearly explains all about the city's cycle routes and tells you how to locate maps and guidebooks for Edinburgh based cyclists. But let us start with the bit about feeling nervous about getting on a bike after so many years. Perhaps you are getting an old bike out of the shed or somebody has given you their old one. Before you jump on the bike, stop and think, to look at the condition of the bike? Think: "A,B,C": air, brakes and chain:

- Air—Do the tires need pumping up?
- Brakes — Do they work?
- Chain—Does it spin freely? It shouldn't be too loose or rusty.

If you will be cycling after dark you need lights, and if you want a helmet see page 7 below. If there are things about your bike that are defective it is time to visit the bike shop. There are some really friendly bike maintenance services in Edinburgh: [The Bike Station](#) – It recycles old bikes, and offers adult training. Cycling after a long break is a bit like anything that you have not done for a long time. To be safe on your bike, here are 4 really important points...

- choose routes that avoid motor traffic as much as possible - a [Spokes map](#) may help
- when you are on the road it is important to cycle in the way that drivers expect, i.e. follow the rules of the road
- make certain your bike is in good condition, particularly brakes and tyres
- do not expect that special clothes and helmets make you safe, although they may help sometimes

I found that "YouTube" videos were a great source of information to deal with my beginner's worries e.g.

How to build your cycling confidence
www.youtube.com/watch?v=c10GWQRoDq0

How to improve your balance on a bicycle
www.youtube.com/watch?v=PweYjt6Yz9Q



Protecting your bicycle

Bicycle thieves are opportunists, make it easy for the thief and your bike will disappear. Nearly 400,000 bicycles are stolen each year in the UK and Edinburgh comes second on the [league table of theft hotspots](#). Protecting your bike from the thieves involves a lot of different steps.

1. Buy a decent lock

Bike thieves need to operate quickly to reduce the chance of being caught, so a decent bike lock is literally worth its weight in gold. The industry's rule of thumb is to buy a lock for a price equal to 10% to 20% of the bike's cost. Thieves are lazy and mostly target cheap locks.

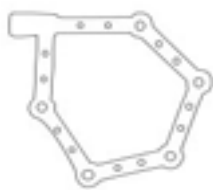
A heavy-duty bike lock can make a thief's job more difficult, with the result that they abandon attempts to steal your bike or move onto a bike with a less secure lock. Buy a decent lock, preferably two. But which type should I buy?



D Lock

Pros: Cheaper and Lighter than chains and folding locks.

Cons: Complicated to carry and will not fasten around bigger objects.



Folding Lock

Pros: Very easy to carry and a practical length.

Cons: Limited choice and there are doubts about their durability.



Chain Lock

Pros: Easier to carry and fasten around bigger objects.

Cons: Can be heavy and are usually expensive.



Cable Lock

Pros: Long, light and cheap.

Cons: Your bike may not be safe.



Armoured Cable Lock

Pros: Much better option than the cheaper cable lock.

Cons: More expensive

1. Lock up your bike in a sensible place

A bike lock should not be your only line of defence against the determined bike thief. A 16mm thick chain or D Lock may halt somebody with manual bolt cutters but it will not stop a person with an angle grinder. Locking and leaving your bike outside for a couple of hours during the day is in fine but leaving it overnight may well result in disaster.

Bikes which are locked up and left overnight should be stored in a sensible place. The ideal place is a bike shed but not everybody living in an Edinburgh tenement has that luxury. Many people living in tenements have to resort to taking their bicycle into their flat overnight. Spokes have released a useful [information sheet](#) in ways to deal with this issue.

This kind of situation is hard for those living in cramped conditions therefore many have warmly welcomed the City of Edinburgh initiative to introduce Bicycle Pods outside of tenement blocks. The city council will roll out on-street bike storage across the Capital. For a map of their location click [here](#). An annual lease on a pod is not cheap, many people complain that the £84 annual fee is more than some car parking permits on the periphery of the city. For more information about the scheme go to: [Bicycle Storage and Security City of Edinburgh](#).

2. Make your mark

Marking your bike with a unique code ensures that Police will be able to trace your bike back to you if it is stolen and recovered.

[BikeRegister](#) is a Police - approved marking scheme. [BikeRegister](#) kit is Police Service's preferred bike marking product.

The police regularly set up marking events to provide cycle security advice and offer security marking and registration onto [BikeRegister's](#) online database.

If you are marking your bike yourself:

- ensure the security mark is clearly visible. This in itself will act as a deterrent to bike thieves.
- apply a tamper-proof sticker to the frame, warning that the bike has been marked
- Make sure you register the bike online at BikeRegister and download a registration log book, proving ownership.

4. Insure it

A bike can cost as much as an item of jewelry, an antique or a painting so make sure you are well covered by insurance in case of theft.

Check whether your home contents insurance covers your bike. Make sure it covers you for thefts outside the home too. If your bicycle is particularly valuable you may need to insure it separately.

5. Follow the Three R's:

3 Golden Rules

(As recommended by the Metropolitan Police Service)

Register

Get your bike security marked at BikeRegister.com - Police have free marking events.

Record

Record details of your bike - frame number, BikeRegister number and other distinguishing features. And remember to take a photograph of your bike as well. You can put all of this information in a Bike Log book which you can obtain when you register with BikeRegister.com

Report

More and more marked bikes are being recovered and returned to their rightful owners, so if your bike is stolen you should definitely report it to the police.

Ask for your CAD (Computer Aided Despatch) or CRIS (Crime Reference Information System) number. This will help you trace the progress of your case and may be needed for your insurance claim.



Buying a Cycle Helmet

The topic of Cycle Helmets is a hot issue amongst cyclists. Many highlight their benefits of cycle helmet wearing in reducing risk of serious injury in a crash. ([See Journal of Epidemiology February 2017](#)) Others argue that the over promotion of Cycle Helmets makes cycling appear more dangerous than it is and so risks scaring people off and losing the multiple health and other benefits of getting about by bike. Secondly, for those who do choose to cycle, helmets may give them added confidence to use more dangerous roads than they otherwise would. They go onto point out that over reliance on a cycle helmet stops us from addressing the causes of accidents. They may have a point, a 20 mile an hour speed limit and dedicated cycle tracks do improve cycling safety.

For those of you interested in an in depth assessment of this discussion have a look at the helpful commentary from "Spokes" [Informed Choice about Helmets - Spokes](#) and very useful commentary from "The Bicycle Helmet Research Foundation" [Cycle Helmets an overview](#) However, if you do decide to use a helmet, see the following advice...

Choosing a bike helmet

Let's start with the basics. Nearly all helmets are built the same way. They consist of an outer plastic shell, an inner padded liner used to dissipate impacts, extra padding for comfort, air vents and an adjustable fitting system.

Bike helmet types

Bike helmets are only designed to give your head some protection in certain types of crashes, for example if you fall off the bike and hit your head on the kerb. Sadly they are unlikely to help much in a crash with a motor vehicle travelling at more than a very slow speed. In the shops you will find Recreational bike helmets, Road bike Helmets and Mountain bike helmets. Look for a bike helmet that matches your style of riding.

Bike Helmet Fit and Comfort

When choosing a bike helmet, good fit is vital because an ill-fitting lid can actually compromise effectiveness in a crash. And you'll be wearing it for every mile of every ride, so you want it to fit comfortably.

To find your head circumference, To find your size, simply take a tape measure and measure the circumference of your head about two finger widths above your eyebrows. If you are falling in-between two sizes, your best bet is to pop into store and try the two sizes on. When the helmets on, it should not be so loose that it wobbles around; nor should it be so tight that it is digging in or pushing on pressure points. A nice, snug feeling is what you are after.



Cycle Routes

Edinburgh has a surprisingly large cycle route network. There 192 miles of bike routes and 100 miles of traffic-free cycle routes. You may also be surprised to read that 45% of us in Edinburgh live within 125 metres of a cycle route.

Edinburgh former rail tracks for an important back bone of the cycling network, smoothly paved with good off street lighting, they offer an enjoyable and quick way to get around the city. The [Bike Station](#) has produced a map based on the design of the London Tube Map that shows the routes which are cycle friendly: www.innertubemap.com

Parks also play a big part in the network, local parks are fun but you really need to explore the Royal Mile Holyrood Park. Offering great views and well surfaced roads, the route through the park gives you Dynamic Earth, the Scottish Parliament and the Holyrood Palace. For those who would like to explore this route have a look at "[Laid Back Holyrood Park Circuit](#)"

[Cycle routes in Edinburgh](#) are even beginning to appear in the centre of the city. There does appear to be a conscious effort on the part of the City of Edinburgh Council to make it easier and most importantly [safer to cycle in the city centre](#). OK, they need to do more when it comes to crossing tram tracks but the move towards a 20 mile an hour speed limit, the extensive reorganisation of the road lay out at the top of Leith Walk and a safe place to lock up your bike are all positive developments.

Route Maps on Your Phone - [CycleStreets Journey Planner](#)

Cycle journey planner for cyclists, by cyclists. Plan routes from A to B anywhere in the UK, with a choice of three routing modes to suit a range of cyclists from beginners to regular commuter. And the Photomap lets you submit photos of infrastructure problems or good practice around the UK.



The Future

But there is more, much more about to happen. This year saw the publication of the CEC plan to link the off-road path network to Leith Walk! Section 1 will go from Roseburn to Haymarket. Section 2 will go from Haymarket to Charlotte Square. Section 3 will go from St Andrew's Square to Picardy Place. The planned improvements include: new cycle routes with protected cycle tracks on the main road; cyclist and pedestrian priority at key junctions and more cycle parking. For more information go to:

<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cycling-walking-projects-1>

The impact of of COVID-19 may affect the time tabling of these developments but cycling in the centre of Edinburgh is definitely set to improve in the years to come.



Bicycles at the Museum

It is great to hear that after months of closure that the National Museum of Scotland in Chambers Street is soon to reopen! But remember [advance online booking is required](#)

One exhibition worth booking for is [the Museum's collection of historical bicycles](#). It is a small but interesting journey through the history of the bicycle from Karl Drais invents invention of the Laufmaschine in 1817 to the Gold medal won by cyclist Sir Chris hoy at the Commonwealth Games in 2006. My favourites are the reproduced models of early bicycles



Wooden Draisine c:1820



Penny Farthing c.1884

Scottish Bicycles and Tricycles

You may also be interested in this recent National Museum publication: “**Scottish Bicycles and Tricycles**”. It is a fascinating account of cycling in Scotland in the twenty-first century. This title offers a comprehensive look at the trials and tribulations of developing and perfecting the art of pedal-powered transport. To obtain a copy access the National Museums shop on:

shop.nms.ac.uk/collections/books-scotland/products/scottish-bicycles-and-tricycles



Recycle your old Inner Tubes!

Don't bin your old inner tubes, [Cycle of Good](#) are collecting them! “We are collecting blown out inner tubes for Cycle of Good who send them to Malawi for use in training tailors so they can earn a decent living”.

It is surprising what they can make from an inner tube, have a look at their great range of [products](#). There talented and resourceful tailors then use them to produce Belts, Bags, Wallets, Tablet and Lap top cases.



Conquering Edinburgh's Hills

One of the disincentives to cycling in Edinburgh is the city's hills. The city's seven hills: Arthur's Seat; Castle Rock, Calton Hill, Corstorphine Hill, Braid Hills, Blackford Hill and Craiglockhart Hill can make getting around Edinburgh on a bike seem like hard work. At last salvation is at hand, Edinburgh now has a fleet of 168 electric bikes. You can hire one from a Just Eat Cycle stand. They can be unlocked for £1.50 using the existing Just Eat Cycles app, plus 10p per minute.

You still need to pedal when you are on an e-bike but it has a top speed of 15mph and you do not have to break into a sweat. Go to: edinburghcyclehire.com for more information.



Unusal Facts about Cycling

1. The longest tandem bike ever built had **20 seats** and was about 41.42 m (135 ft 10.7 in) Source www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/29562-longest-bicycle
2. **Damien Hirst designed the world's most expensive bike.** The most expensive bike ever, a Trek Madone or the "Butterfly Bike" designed by artist Damien Hirst, was auctioned for **\$500,000 at Sotherby's**. Source: coastinbikes.com/most-expensive-bicycles
3. The **largest rideable bicycle** has a wheel diameter of **3.3 m** (10 ft 9.92 in) and was built by Didi Senft from Germany. Source: www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/largest-rideable-bicycle
4. The fastest speed ever recorded on a bicycle was attained by American **Denise Mueller-Korenek**, when she reached **183.932 mph** in **2018**. Source en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cycling_records
5. **Paved roads** became mainstream not because of automobiles, but because of bicycles. While cars could go across cobblestones fairly well, bicycles could not. Source: www.theguardian.com/environment/bike-blog/2011/aug/15/cyclists-paved-way-for-roads
6. In the **1904 Tour de France**, 12 riders were disqualified for reasons varying from 'taking a train' to using cars. The reasons were never published, but, so many riders were disqualified, the fifth placed rider Henri Cornet, aged 19 was eventually crowned the winner. Source: cyclinguphill.com/cycling-facts/
7. **Steepest Residential Street in Scotland - Middle Brae, Tobermory**
Source: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-49480309



Scotland Cycle Repair Scheme

Through the Scotland Cycle Repair Scheme, bike shops across Scotland are providing up to £50 worth of free bike repairs to those who need it most – whether it’s for an old bike that needs some work to make it roadworthy, or one that’s well used but requires some care.

Who can get their bike fixed?

People who wouldn’t otherwise be able to afford these repairs.

The COVID-19 crisis has hit many people hard, so we know it can be difficult to pay for essential bike repairs right now.

What repairs are covered?

- Punctures or old tires
- Problems with brakes
- Gears that don’t work properly
- Other issues that stop you using the bike

All cycles are welcome in the scheme including adults’ and children’s bikes, e-bikes and non-standard cycles e.g. tandems, tricycles, hand cycles and side-by-side cycles.

How do I use the scheme to get my bike fixed?

Search for your nearest participating bike shop either online via the Scotland Cycle Repair Scheme map

www.cyclinguk.org/ScotCycleRepair

or look out for a bike shop displaying our poster or window sticker.

You simply contact the bike shop to book your bike in for repairs. They will look at the bike and let you know what work needs doing, before going ahead with any repairs.

Cycling UK is a trading name of Cyclists’ Touring Club (CTC) a company limited by guarantee, registered in England no: 25185. Registered as a charity in England and Wales charity no: 1147607 and in Scotland charity no: SC042541. Registered office: Parklands, Railton Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 9JX.



Classified Listings

Bicycle Hire - Electric

Edinburgh Cycle Hire - Just Eat W:
edinburghcyclehire.com/

Bicycle Maintenance

How to: <https://www.cyclescheme.co.uk/blog>

Cycling Campaign Group

Cycle for Good

T: 01543 888494

E: info@cycleofgood.com

W: <https://www.cycleofgood.com/>

Bikes for Refugees

E: <http://www.bikesforrefugees.scot/-contact>

W: <http://www.bikesforrefugees.scot/>

SPOKES: The Lothian Cycle Campaign T:

0131 313 2114

E: spokes@spokes.org.uk

W: <http://www.spokes.org.uk/>

Sustrans Scotland T:

0131 346 1384

E: scotland@sustrans.org.uk

W: www.sustrans.org.uk/

FB: www.facebook.com/Sustran/

Cycling Exhibitions

National Museum

W: <https://www.nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/stories/science-and-technology/bicycles-at-national-museums-scotland/>

Cycling News Services

Cyclist

W: <https://www.cyclist.co.uk/news/412/bicycle-crime-statistics>

Cycling Routes

City of Edinburgh: Cycling and Walking Projects

W: <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cycling-walking-projects-1>

City of Edinburgh: Exploring Quiet Routes

W: www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cycling-walking/explore-quietroutes/1

Cycling Edinburgh

E: mike@cycling-edinburgh.org.uk

W: www.cycling-edinburgh.org.uk/index.php

Edinburgh Bike Paths: A Cyclist's Guide

W: www.cycling-edinburgh.org.uk/bike-paths.htm

Edinburgh's City Cycleway's

Inner Tube Map

W: www.innertubemap.com/

Edinburgh Evening News

W: <https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/politics/new-plans-cycle-segregation-lanes-across-edinburgh-unveiled-2917326>

Laid Back Holyrood Park Circuit

W: www.plotaroute.com/route/141289

Route Maps on your phone – CycleStreets

Journey Planner

W: edinburgh.cyclestreet.net

Cycle Helmets

Bicycle injuries and helmet use:

a systematic review and meta-analysis

W: academic.oup.com/ije/article/46/1/278/2617198

Cycle Helmets an overview

W: www.cyclehelmets.org/1009.html

Informed Choice about Helmets - Spokes

W: www.spokes.org.uk/documents/advice/helmets/

Cycle Security

Bike Register – Online Police Database

W: www.bikeregister.com/

How to be a cycling flat dweller

W: <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Spokes-Tenement-Parking-Kweb2-FINAL-FOR-WEB.pdf>

Listing of on-street bike storage across the Capital

W: <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cycling-walking/bicycle-security-storage/1>

Bicycle Security and Storage

W: www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cycling-security-storage/1

Cycling Shops

Edinburgh Bicycle Cooperative

Bruntsfield

T: 0131 228 3565

W: <https://www.edinburghbicycle.com/info/shop/bruntsfield-edinburgh/>

The Bike Station

T: 0131 668 1967

W: thebikestation.org.uk

Rules of the Road

The Highway Code

W: www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code

On Shared Paths....

W: http://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/1210-Topics_for-web_SpWeb.pdf

You Tube Videos

How to Build Your Cycling Confidence

W: www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIOGWQRoDq0

How to improve your balance on a bicycle

W: www.youtube.com/watch?v=PweYjt6Yz9Q

