

2nd Annual Bonfire Tweed Ride: November 6 from 1-10 p.m. O'Shaughnessy's Public House (4557 N. Ravenswood Ave.) British Bicycles of Chicago is hosting the 2010 Bonfire Tweed Ride. Don your best woollies, strap some wood to your bicycle rack, and join us. The route will be from North to South Sides with stops along the way at a very relaxed pace. We will take in parkland, industrial, and residential areas as darkness falls. The finale will be the building and lighting of a bonfire! Warm yourself by the glow of the fire after riding in style with friends old and new. Cue sheets, spoke cards, and prizes will be provided.

The Chicago Neighborhood Bike Tours are back!
Register now: tinyurl.com/fall2010biketours

Tour of Forest Glen: November 13 from 1-6 p.m. Indian Woods Forest Preserve. Forest Glen is community area #12 and sits 10 miles northwest of downtown Chicago. Bordering the Northern border suburbs of Niles, Skokie and Lincolnwood, Forest Glen was a suburb itself until it was annexed by the city in 1889. The surrounding forest preserves, golf courses, parks, cemeteries, bike and hiking trails, and beautiful homes of varying vintage and styles still preserves a suburban-community look and feel on the edge of the city. The ride itself contains several miles of trail.

Tour of North Park: November 21 from 1-6 p.m. Peterson Park (5801 N. Pulaski Rd.) North Park is Chicago Community Area #13 and sits just 9 miles northwest of the Loop. It is cradled between the two branches of the Chicago River and is part of and/or adjacent to some of the most developed and realized bike trails in the city. It is a quiet residential area, sharing parks, tree-lined streets, and marvelous buildings with adjacent Albany Park, Forest Glen, Lincolnwood, Lincoln Square, and West Ridge. It is the home of several in-city universities and the north side's own Chicago Park District-run nature center.

The temperatures are very cold, wear wool socks or ski socks; on frigid days, your toes may get numb quickly if you are wearing cotton socks or dress socks. Make sure that your boots or shoes are big enough to accommodate thick socks; you want enough room for a warm air pocket. When your toes get cold, wiggle them or get off your bike and run briefly. Some cyclists prefer to have synthetic liners between their boots and their shoes. If you are using your bike to commute to work, you may want to leave a pair of regular shoes at your work location or else use shoe covers.

Hands: The main challenge here is staying warm without losing dexterity. You need to be able to brake and lock or maintain your bike. A glove liner with mittens can work. You can use lobster gloves, which are somewhere between a glove and mitten. Some cyclists prefer to use a simple winter glove; choosing ones that have an insulation layer on the inside will help keep your fingers warm on long rides. If you use leather gloves, be careful of ones with dyes that smudge easily; you'll arrive at your destination with smudges under your nose, not realizing that you had been wiping it!

Torso: Many cyclists swear by the three-layer approach. The innermost layer is the wicking layer/base layer, the middle layer is the insulation layer, and the outer layer is the wind/rain/snow protection layer. Avoid cotton base layers because they retain moisture and will leave you cold and clammy. Instead, use synthetic, silk, or cashmere fabrics that wick moisture away. The middle layer keeps you warm. It can consist of one or more sweaters, fleece shirts, etc. A waterproof windbreaker is useful as the outer layer. Coats with armpit zippers prevent overheating. One advantage of the layer approach is that you can add or remove layers as needed to keep you comfortable on the ride.

Legs: The layer approach can also be adapted to your legs. Rain pants or techno-pants can block the wind, keep you dry, and protect you from road spatter. Thus, they can work well as an outer layer on bad weather days. Some of these pants are also heavy enough to serve as insulation. Tights or light pants can serve as a middle layer. Synthetic long johns make a good base layer.

THE DERAILLEUR

An unofficial publication of Chicago Critical Mass



For most folks, the key to getting through the winter is personal climate control. Your torso generates plenty of heat while your extremities suffer—sort of like an apartment with a central heater; the warmth just never seems to reach the bathroom.

Head: The wind can be brutal on our ears and eyes. A thin scarf wrapped around your head and neck under a helmet is all many people need during brisk fall days. (If you do wear a scarf, it should be a short one or one that you wrap around you well enough that the ends do not dangle. You don't want even the slightest chance of the scarf getting caught in your own wheels or caught up on a passing vehicle.) For colder weather, try a balaclava (face mask) that covers everything but the eyes. Use non-metal wrap sunglasses or goggles to protect your eyes.

Glasses: On frigid days, treat the lenses with a bit of gel toothpaste to prevent fogging. This toothpaste trick is a much cheaper alternative than getting the expensive lens spray sold at skiing stores. However, do not use toothpaste that has baking soda in it or you will scratch the lenses.

Feet: On days with snow and slush, get some waterproof boots that are tall enough to prevent slush from easily spattering onto your socks. On days where

Get Layered! Dressing for Winter Cycling

Not ready for Bike Winter? No worries! Bike Winter volunteers are ready for you. Visit bikewinter.org for cold-weather riding tips and fun events. Free balaclavas and gaiters are passed out at most Bike Winter events.



Welcome to the October 2010 issue of The Derailleur. This month's issue is full of tips from BikeWinter.org on how to keep you and your bike happy all winter long. Thanks to Lee Diamond of Big Shoulders Really for printing the zine! Donations of any amount are always appreciated since they help offset paper costs. Take a button as a token of thanks for your support. Happy Friday and enjoy the ride!—willow

Where can you get winter cycling stuff?

Thrifty stores, Army Surplus, Kmart type places, local bike shops (Cycle shops that give attention to commuter cyclists and year-round cyclists often have some great winter clothing.), swanky sporting goods places. For women tired of not finding stuff that fits them: titeline.com For a big array of silk stuff: wintersilks.com For reasonably priced outdoors stuff: campmor.com BigHorn's Tips on Thrifty Dressing for Winter: bikewinter.org/tipsAndResources/thriftybikeclothing.php

Warming up after a cold ride by Eve

November is always such a tough month. I am either too warm or too hot. It is easy to take layers off, but warming up can be a little difficult. This piece gives the basics of getting warm after getting too cold.

One morning I went for a 30-mile ride with some friends. Although I had received tips on what to wear, I do not have booties for my feet and only wore my long tights. The temperature seemed to drop and then it got wet. There was snow flying in my eyes and slush was flying into my face from the bike in front of me. Upon getting home, it was time for me to leap into action. My feet hurt from being cold and my legs that were not properly layered for the temperature/snow.

So here is my ritual with dealing with this all-too-common November situation: Take all that cold, wet stuff off. Dry off as much as possible. Fill the tub, sink, or mixing bowl with cold water. Put feet in the tub, sink, or bowl and they will feel hot in the cold water. Let feet sit in the water until they find the water cold or stop hurting.

If you have the luxury, fill the tub with warm water and soak. This is an ideal opportunity to stretch any muscles that may have tightened in the cold. Dry off, moisturize (be nice to your skin) and get dressed, or don't. When I have landed myself in this situation, I also try to make sure that I drink lots of water rather than tea and coffee. Not drinking enough water can leave muscles sore and make riding the next day seem like a chore.

- Under icy conditions, consider alternate routes. Many of us are creatures of habit, taking the same route to a given destination. But sometimes we need to break these habits while winter cycling. On some roads, motorists are prone to drive too fast even when roads are slippery. Such motorists may be breaking the law, but, worse, they endanger others on the road...including cyclists. You may want to investigate alternate routes during good conditions, so you don't have to do guesswork when you are out cycling under bad conditions. (An unplowed side street where cars are poking along at 15 mph might be better than an icy artery where cars are sliding across the road at 40 mph or more.) Fortunately, many City of Chicago roads have frequent stop signs or stop lights to tame cars, but be especially careful of any long stretch where cars can go long distances without expecting to slow down or stop.

Maintaining Your Bike in the Winter

The main problem with winter is not snow, but salt. Slush gets street grime and salt in your bike parts, which can cause rust and wear and tear. Here are some tips for maintaining your bike in the winter:

- Use fenders. Fenders will keep you and your bike clean.
- Lube your chain and moving parts once a week. The dampness and the salt can dry out the existing lubrication in the chain, causing the chain and the cogs to wear out much faster. If you keep the chain lubricated, then the chain is much less likely to suddenly break.
- If conditions are icy, lowering your seat may help. That way you can drop your feet down to help maintain balance or to have your feet act as brakes.
- Check your brakes. You might get 11 months out of a pair during fair weather, but wear them down in one month of slush. If you let them go too long, they will wear down to expose metal, which will gouge your rim.
- Wipe off your wheel rims if they have obvious gunk on them. The gunk will reduce the effectiveness of your brakes and possibly cause them to wear out more quickly.

Bike Handling in the Winter

Poor street conditions and visibility can make winter riding seem a dangerous ordeal. But the skills that get you through the next few months will only make you a better rider all the time. The streets are slickest when it first begins to rain or snow. Don't race to beat the downpour! Manhole covers, leaves, and metal bridges are particularly slick and dangerous when wet. Plowed snow reduces operating room on the roads. Fresh snow makes traction difficult. And then there are the regular old hazards: potholes, cracks, and RR crossings.

Strategies

- Know your route so you can anticipate the rough spots—pinch points, bad pavement, RR crossings, manhole and construction covers, etc.
- When it is wet or icy, pump the brakes, ride more slowly, keep your weight stable and on the back wheel, and don't lean into turns as much. Stay the course and keep pedaling—your bike wants to stay upright and momentum will help.
- Don't feel you have to ride on a metal bridge when it is icy or wet. Walk or ride slowly on the sidewalk, being mindful of pedestrians.
- When it is wet or icy, make turns much more gradually. If you turn too abruptly, you might skid and lose control.
- When it snows, follow the ruts created by cars, avoiding ridges that can deflect the front wheel and cause a spill.
- Under particularly extreme conditions, you might fall even if you have excellent bike handling skills. While there is always the risk of injury when falling; taking a martial arts or gymnastics class and learning how to fall may be beneficial. Many people try to bend their wrists in an effort to use their hands to catch themselves. However, during a hard fall, this can break your wrists. It's often better to take the impact flat along your forearms. Also, do whatever you can to avoid landing on your head. If you learn how to fall correctly, it could be the most important thing you learn from a martial arts class.

- If possible, keep the keyholes of your bike locks covered, or keep them pointed away from the direction of downpouring sleet/snow. Having the lock freeze shut is no fun. Lock deicer used for cars can help unfreeze a frozen keyhole, but this stuff can dry out your lock more rapidly. If you use deicer, put some lube or oil in the keyhole later.
- Knobby mountain bike tires provide better traction when there's snow accumulation that hasn't been plowed, but these same knobby tires will slow you down when there's no snow on the street.
- Even if you normally patch your flats, carry a spare inner tube with you. When it's sleeting out, it's much easier to just change an inner tube than to try to use the patch kit.
- Consider using a beater bike in the winter. You might consider an older model that has fenders and fewer parts. Bikes with many gears require thinner chains that tend to wear faster. A three- or single-speed might be better for winter.
- Cleaning your bike regularly is especially important in the salt- and grime-soaked days of winter. Make sure that when washing your bike, you don't spray high-pressure water horizontally into the cassette (gears) area on your rear wheel. This can cause water to enter the cassette or freewheel mechanism, making it freeze up or slip and throwing you from the bike in the process. When washing, make sure the section of cable housing that meets the back of the rear derailleur is dry on the inside. If water is trapped there, it can cause the cable to freeze and prevent shifting. Shift the chain onto the smallest gear in back and lift it by hand onto the largest gear. This should add enough play to the cable so that the housing can be removed from the back of the derailleur. Dry the cable with a rag, lube it thoroughly with chain lube, and replace it. Ask a mechanic to do this for you if you have trouble. Make sure that no water remains on the bike before riding it in freezing temperatures. Water can cause parts to freeze to each other. The types of problems caused by freezing water are especially vexing. They manifest themselves only outdoors in freezing weather and may quickly vanish as soon as you bring your bike inside to "repair" the problem.