



By Mauricio Matusiak

Biking Off Road

Saturday, 9:30 a.m., Scott Marr prepares his breakfast: a bowl of cereal, a slice of pineapple, a couple of bananas and a canned energy drink- the meal of a weekend athlete. He puts on sweats, a tee shirt and tennis shoes, grabbing his gloves and helmet on the way out. Marr is one of many San Franciscans who choose cycling for weekend recreation.

Both cycling and mountain biking are popular activities in the San Francisco area, especially on the weekends.

Many people take their bikes out on Saturdays and Sundays for long rides around the city as well as short runs through Golden Gate Park.

However, most bikers prefer off road trails to the city's traffic infested bike lanes. Currently, a favorite spot for bikers looking for adventure can be found just minutes from the city, beyond the Golden Gate Bridge, in Marin County.

The diversity of the Golden Gate National Park trails in Marin, coupled with beautiful views and contact with the wildlife, add to the draw. People from all over and from diverse occupations, such as engineers, teachers, students, and of course athletes navigate the many trails and roads in such close proximity to the city. "I come here every weekend because the outdoors makes me feel so good. Every time I come over here I find a new trail," said Marr.

The Golden Gate National Park roads lead to the wild trails that go from the bottom of the bridge all the way west to Point Bonita and north to Muir Beach. An incredible view of the Golden Gate Bridge with the City in the background can be seen from the top of the hill. It's a perfect place for photos and the start of a biking adventure.

Cyclists can choose a short bike run to Rodeo Beach (2.7 miles), a medium run to Tennessee Valley (7 miles), or a longer run to Muir Beach (12.2 miles) for serious bikers.

"It's always good to remember that it's tough exercise. Always stretch before and after, no matter if it's your first time or your weekend routine," advises Marr.

The trails also vary in length and level of difficulty.

The Bobcat Trail is a long run in a natural setting providing the biker with beautiful views along with wildlife. "I've seen a lot of deer and also bobcats. It feels like you're in the country but not far from the city" said Ray Labonte, a weekend cyclist in the computer software industry. "This is the best place because you can enjoy the scenery, get in contact with the wildlife and exercise at the same time," he added.

The Coast Road goes along the ocean all the way to the Point Bonita lighthouse and offers an amazing downhill speed that pumps up the adrenaline. "It's kind of dangerous but that's what makes it a good trail," explains Marr.

The Rodeo Trail begins with a tiny bridge before going off road. "It's such a cute place. I've been coming here since my first ride. It's better than working out at the gym or watching TV," said Melissa Mayer, who goes biking with her boyfriend Eric Stock. "You can see so many incredible views in a 30 minute ride," agrees Stock.

As you can see, if you are thinking about doing some off road biking, Marin County is one of the best places to go.



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