

The Mountain Bike Experience

Mountain biking is a trail based passive recreation activity similar to:

- Hiking
- Trail Running
- Dog Walking
- Snow Shoeing
- XC Skiing

Mountain Biking is enjoyed by people of all age groups, gender and ethnicity.

Mountain biking is:

- Great way to get exercise and fight obesity
- Good way to stay active and fit as a senior
- Fun way to introduce children to the wonders of the outdoors
- Good way to relieve stress from our over scheduled lives
- Important way to socialize and meet other people in the community

The Mountain Bike Experience

Bicycles provide a sense of freedom.

Mountain bikers are drawn to a sense of challenge

- Challenge of making it to the top of a hill
- Riding further or longer than you thought you could
- Keep your balance in sections that have some technical difficulty

Mountain bikers also enjoy nature

- The experience of escaping an urban setting is similar to hiking
- Some use their bikes to experience nature because bikes are less disruptive to wildlife

Mountain bikers are also attracted to the social aspect of enjoying recreating with their friends

Most of all, Mountain bikers like well designed sustainable trails that go interesting places, have good flow and are shared with other users.

Mountain biking is a sound environmental activity.

- There are numerous studies which indicate that the impact of mountain biking on trails is similar to hiking.
 - List of research studies appended to this outline.
- There are no studies showing that mountain bikes have a greater impact than other users.

Mountain biking is safe for participants and for other trail users.

Why Mountain Biking is Important at the Fells

Though surrounded by development the Fells offers a natural setting where people can recreate and enjoy the outdoors.

For many thousands of people the Fells is their only outdoor recreational opportunity.

Mountain biking is a gateway activity which introduces people to the park and reinforces positive community values such as stewardship, conservation and tolerance for others.

What enhances or would enhance my experience?

A poll of a few mountain bike users elicited the following responses:

- Encountering others on the trails and sharing the Fells with them, adds to my experience.
- Cycling is a social experience. I enjoy greeting others out on the trails.
- Wandering about and exploring trails is key to my enjoyment of the Fells.
- Climbing to scenic overlooks and looking around points out to me how lucky we are to have such a wonderful recreational area in the middle of our urban sprawl.
- The beautiful locations of the Fells enhance my riding experience.
- Riding a bicycle in the fells enhances my appreciation for the Fells because I can cover more ground, see more, experience more, meet more people.
- On a bicycle I see many more woodland animals than I ever do on foot.
- Getting places with my camera on my bicycle is easier when I'm pressed for time.
- Good trail flow adds to my riding experience
- Beautiful scenery and well-designed trails are important to the MTB experience
- Some people really enjoy the solitude of mountain biking as well as the social aspect. Mountain biking can be a highly social shared activity, but it can also be contemplative and serene.

What Detracts from my experience?

The same group of people provided the following responses:

- Most frustrating in the Fells is one's inability to explore the trail network on a bicycle.
- Almost all narrow trails are closed to bicycles.
- Dirt roads offer only one experience that by itself is not enjoyable to many.
- There are insufficient trail options and insufficient trail mileage for cyclists.
- Trail policy in the Fells differs from everywhere else in the State. This is unfair and unjustified. It limits my ability to fully enjoy the resource.
- Trail conditions have been allowed to degrade over the generations. Cyclists are frustrated by poorly maintained trails and their inability to effect change.
- There are too few marked trails in the Fells. This is a detriment to ALL of the Fells' trail users as it concentrates trail use onto only a few trails.
- Negative encounters with pedestrians detract from everybody's experience.
- The current mountain bike loop is not suitable or enjoyable for any level of rider.
- The best trails are all off limits to cyclists.

Research Articles and Sources for Information on Mountain Bike Impacts

Bjorkman, A. W. (1996). Off-road Bicycle and Hiking Trail User Interactions: A Report to the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board. Wisconsin, Wisconsin Natural Resources Bureau of Research.

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Goedt, U. and J. Alder (2001). Sustainable mountain biking: A case study from the Southwest of Western Australia. Journal of Sustainable Tourism 9 3: 19.

Marion, J. L. (2006). Assessing and Understanding Trail Degradation: Results from Big South Fork National

White, D. D., M. T. Waskey, et al. (2006). A comparative study of impacts to mountain bike trails in five common ecological regions of the Southwestern U.S. Journal of Park and Recreation Administration 24(2): 20.

Wilson, J. P. and J. P. Seney (1994). Erosional impact of hikers, horses, motorcycles, and off-road bicycles on mountain trails in Montana. Mountain Research and Development 14(1): 77-88.

Wöhrstein, T. (1998). Mountainbike und Umwelt - Ökologische Auswirkungen und Nutzungskonflikte (Mountainbike and Environment - Ecological Impacts and Use Conflict). Saarbrücken-Dudweiler. Incomplete Reference, Pirrot Verlag & Druck.