

# 9 New Indicators that Bicycle Travel and Tourism are Booming



Adventure Cycling Association

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Contact: Winona Bateman

(406) 532-2759

[wbateman@adventurecycling.org](mailto:wbateman@adventurecycling.org)

*Globally and in the U.S., bike tourism is becoming more popular and lucrative*

**Missoula, Montana** — As 2012 winds down, bicycle tourism and travel are zooming upward. Recent studies and stories from around the world indicate that bicycle travel of all kinds — short trips and long, luxury and cheap, big events and small tours — is enjoying the kind of popularity not seen since the 1970s, when bike touring experienced a major renaissance. Here are 9 new indicators that bike travel and tourism are booming:

1. **European Bike Tourism Generates 44 Billion Euros Annually:** In September, researchers in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands found that bicycle tourism (including day trips and overnight trips) [generates 44 billion Euros \(or about \\$57 billion\)](#). The comprehensive study indicates that the bike-tourism sector generates 2.3 billion cycle trips in Europe every year and also takes visitors (and their money) to rural areas that are not often visited by other tourists.
2. **Greater Global Interest in Bike Tour Business:** This year at the [Adventure Travel World Summit](#) in Lucerne, Switzerland, there were [more bike tour operators than ever](#). There were also many tour operators, which have focused traditionally on walking and trekking tours, that are now edging into bike travel as an alternative (and growing) revenue stream. Companies also noted stronger demand for their bike-tour offerings. [KE AdventureTravel](#), based in England, has seen classic bike journeys such as Bhutan's Thunder Dragon Ride and Nepal's Pokhara to Kathmadu attract double the numbers that they did in 2011. KE has also added a variety of new road and mountain biking tours in Rajasthan (India), Toubkal (Morocco), and Phuket (Thailand). In the [European bike tourism study](#), researchers surveyed hundreds of bike tour operators on the continent and found that they were seeing rising demand for cycling adventures, whereas demand was flat in 2009.
3. **Bigger Bike Route Networks in Development:** Around the world, countries, states, and provinces are creating bigger and better bicycle route networks for use by locals and to attract tourists. In Quebec Province, [La Route Verte](#) — a system of urban, suburban and rural bikeways — has grown over the last five years from 4,000 km to more than 5,000 km. In Europe, work has accelerated on establishing [EuroVelo](#), a 70,000 km continental system of bike routes; the goal is to complete the network by 2020. In the U.S., agencies and non-profits have begun creating an official [U.S. Bicycle Route System](#) (USBRS). In the last two years, eight new U.S. Bicycle Routes have been approved, and 41 states are now involved in planning, implementing, and signing routes. At the state level, agencies are developing unique route networks, some which will dovetail with the USBRS. For example, last year, Oregon quadrupled the number of routes in its [statewide scenic bikeway system](#) and is researching and mapping others. The states of Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin are working to develop a bike route system around all of Lake Michigan. Also, in the Great Lake region, the [Waterfront Regeneration Trust](#) recently announced that the Waterfront Trail, which extends along the

shore of Lake Ontario, will now extend westward to Lake Erie, connecting 27 new waterfront communities along a signed, mostly on-road route.

4. **More North America States and Provinces Studying Bike Tourism's Economic Impact:** Until now, only two states in the U.S. (Wisconsin and Colorado) had conducted in-depth studies of the economic impact of biking and bike tourism. In Wisconsin's case, researchers found that bike tourism generated [an impressive \\$924 million](#) from in-state and out-of-state visitors. In 2012, three more states began economic impact studies, which will be completed in 2013: Oregon, Michigan, and Arizona. A new study of the economic impact of La Route Verte, the provincial cycling network in Quebec Province, is also underway.
5. **U.S. Bike Events Expanding, Re-branding:** Attendance and fundraising at large multi-day bike events — like [RAGBRAI](#) (Iowa), [Ride the Rockies](#) (Colorado), and the popular [Bike MS](#) events — are surging. In fact, the national organization of bike-event directors has re-branded itself as the [Bicycle Tour Network](#) (BTN) and, in November, experienced the largest turnout ever at its annual conference in Denver, Colorado. The BTN has begun conducting an economic impact survey of its member events and hopes to draw in smaller tour operators as part of the network.
6. **States Investing in Bike Tourism Public Relations:** In a clear indicator that states and tourism bureaus are realizing the financial value of cycling tourists, 2012 witnessed the rollout of major investments by [Oregon](#) and [Minnesota](#) in TV spots, websites, and other public-relation devices to draw traveling cyclists to their states. Particularly notable were videos produced for Oregon by the global ad firm Wieden+Kennedy, and for Minnesota with the backing of a unique consortium of health, tourism, and non-profit organizations. The race for the most bike-travel friendly state is on!
7. **Rural Communities Invest in Bike Tourism:** Over the last several years, more rural communities have discovered that attracting cycle-tourists is a low-cost, high-yield proposition. [Adventure Cycling Association](#) has documented the efforts made by many small communities — from [Twin Bridges, Montana](#) to [Monroeville, Indiana](#) — to develop special facilities for visiting cyclists. The most recent to come to its attention is a unique partnership in [Pittsburg, Kansas](#), to develop a cyclists' visitor center on the [TransAmerica Bicycle Trail](#).
8. **Bike Tourism-Related Sales Take Off in the U.S.:** In October, the influential trade journal, *Bicycle Retailer and Industry News* reported on the substantial increase in sales of gear and bikes for touring in its story, "[Touring market racks up mileage at retail.](#)" The same article also noted that bicycle travel is becoming especially popular with a younger demographic.
9. **Non-Profits Set New Records:** Cycling non-profits with a stake in tourism have enjoyed remarkable success in membership and activity in 2012, from the re-branded Bicycle Tour Network to the [International Mountain Bike Association](#) (IMBA) to Adventure Cycling Association. Adventure Cycling's membership reached an all-time high in 2012 at 45,225 members and it [recently reported records](#) in all the major revenue categories — including memberships, map sales, and tour sign-ups — a trend it attributes in part to the new boom in bicycle travel.

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*Adventure Cycling Association inspires and empowers people to travel by bicycle. It is the premier bicycle-travel organization in North America with more than 45,000 members. Adventure Cycling produces cycling routes and maps for North America, organizes more than 70 tours annually, and publishes the best bicycle-travel information anywhere, including Adventure Cyclist magazine. With 41,420 meticulously mapped miles in the Adventure Cycling Route Network, Adventure Cycling gives cyclists the tools and confidence to create their own bike-travel adventures. Contact the office at (800) 755-BIKE (2453), [info@adventurecycling.org](mailto:info@adventurecycling.org), or visit [www.adventurecycling.org](http://www.adventurecycling.org).*