Get Your Bike Travel Fix On Route 66

Adventure Cycling Association

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Adventure Cycling's planned 2,400-mile bicycle-friendly route will revitalize the "Main Street of America" — this time with touring cyclists

Missoula, Montana — Adventure Cycling Association today announced that its next long-distance cycling route will be Bicycle Route 66. Embracing the spirit of "The Mother Road," the new route will follow the famous corridor from Chicago to Los Angeles on roads appropriate for cyclists and, when possible, on sections of the historic highway.

"Route 66 was the overwhelming favorite among our members for a new long-distance route," said Carla Majernik, Adventure Cycling's routes and mapping director. "It's a legendary corridor and, for our route network, a critical link through areas where we have no routes, such as Oklahoma."

Established 84 years ago in November 1926, Route 66 was one of the original U.S. highways, ferrying travelers and migrants between Chicago and Los Angeles along the 2,451-mile roadway. The route traversed Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California, connecting major cities such as Chicago, St. Louis, Oklahoma City, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Flagstaff, and Los Angeles. "The Mother Road" also flowed through small communities, which blossomed in the wake of the steady stream of travelers.

Small towns will be an important feature of Bicycle Route 66, and are favorite attractions for touring cyclists who look to get off the beaten path and make connections with locals during their journeys.

Similar to the flow of motor vehicle travelers along the original "Main Street of America," the influx of cyclists will provide an economic boost to small communities on the new route. There is growing evidence that touring cyclists spend more time in the towns that they visit, lingering (and spending) more than the average tourist. Wisconsin released a report earlier this year that out-of-state cyclists generate more than $530 million in economic development annually. And according to a 2008 study done along the Great Allegheny Passage (a nearly 150-mile bike trail situated between Cumberland, Maryland, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), bicycle tourism has become a major economic force. Business owners reported that a quarter of their gross income comes from trail users and two-thirds of the businesses saw an increase in their revenue due to their location on the trail. Despite the economic downturn in 2008, businesses saw an increase in gross revenue attributable to the trail (from $32.6 million in 2007 to $40.6 million in 2008) and paid nearly 20% more wages as a result.

Lon Haldeman, an experienced Route 66 bike tour leader said, "This route can be done as a camping tour in roadside campgrounds, however there are many unique motels along the route which make this a good credit card tour type route. Eating in the old cafes and diners is part of the charm."

Bicycle Route 66 will take in the historic highway's iconic urban hubs, such as Chicago and St. Louis, marking the first time that Adventure Cycling's routes, which generally keep cyclists on the outskirts of large urban areas, will mesh with the goals of the official U.S. Bicycle Route System (USBRS), which aims to connect rural and urban areas, from countryside to suburbs to city center. This will also be the first time that an Adventure Cycling route and an official U.S. Bicycle Route (USBR 66) will be developed in tandem.

"The vision for Bicycle Route 66 is the same as the original vision for Route 66, which was to connect the main streets of rural and urban communities," said Ginny Sullivan, special projects director for Adventure Cycling. "Bicycle Route 66 will be a perfect choice for traveling cyclists looking to explore the American heartland's natural beauty, history, and funky out-of-the-way places."

Work to create Bicycle Route 66 will involve partnerships between Adventure Cycling and organizations already working on implementation of state cycling routes that will follow the Route 66 corridor, for example in California, Illinois, Missouri, and Oklahoma. Kevin Musset, past president of the Oklahoma Bicycle Coalition, said, "We are very excited that Adventure Cycling is undertaking this project. We will work with them however we can."

Preliminary development of Bicycle Route 66 will begin this winter, with the publication of maps expected in about 3 to 4 years, a typical timeline for development of a new Adventure Cycling long-distance route and all the accompanying information on services that cyclists have come to expect. Once complete, Bicycle Route 66 will bring the Adventure Cycling Route Network to over 43,000 miles.

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Adventure Cycling Association is the premier bicycle travel organization in North America with over 44,000 members. A nonprofit organization, its mission is to inspire people of all ages to travel by bicycle. It produces routes and maps for cycling in North America, organizes more than 45 tours annually, and publishes the best bicycle-travel information anywhere, including Adventure Cyclist *magazine and* The Cyclists' Yellow Pages *online. With 40,699 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, or visit www.adventurecycling.org.*