



PHOTO CREDIT: John Holman

Let it Ride: Local Bike Paths for Fun and Safety

By Stephanie Forté

"It's just like riding a bike," is said of things that feel second nature. A bicycle can mean exploring, connecting with nature, and having fun. It's also a mode of transportation and a fitness tool. "Locally and nationwide, since 2020, there's been a surge in the number of people riding bicycles," said Keely Brooks, Southern Nevada Bicycle Coalition president.

For those who don't own or prefer not to mountain bike, riding on the road comes with risk. In 2022, the Las Vegas Review-Journal reported a 46% increase locally in citations for people driving over 100 mph between 2020 and 2022. Added to more bicyclists, it may explain why Clark County hit an all-time high last year for the number of bicyclist fatalities; 14 people were killed. In some areas, cycling on the sidewalk isn't permitted. Fortunately, bike paths that are separated from the road are worry-free adventure zones.

Henderson offers nearly 200 miles of protected bike paths, and the long-anticipated Red Rock Legacy Trail on the west side was recently funded. When completed, the paved multi-use trail will connect Summerlin to Southern Highlands alongside SR-159 through the Red Rock National Conservation Area.

PICK YOUR PATH

All four of Heather Fisher's kids ride bicycles. "Riding a bike is so liberating; it feels so free. But we just don't have enough safe opportunities, especially for children," said Fisher, a longtime cyclist and founder of Save Red Rock. She's been advocating for the Red Rock Legacy trail for years. Until it's done, she has another favorite.



River Mountains Loop Trail (RMLT)

The RMLT is a 35-mile paved path on the east side of the valley. The 12-foot-wide two-way trail connects the communities of Boulder City, Henderson, Lake Las Vegas and Lake Mead National Recreation Area while offering non-stop panoramic views. Since its official opening in 2012, the RMLT has become a hot spot for cyclists, runners, and walkers. Even an equestrian trail parallels the path for 15 miles. Wildlife sightings are common, as the trail encircles the River Mountains, home to desert bighorn sheep. Trail users may spot desert tortoises, jackrabbits, lizards, and snakes. "On the RMLT, I don't have to worry about my kids getting ahead or lagging behind me," said Fisher. Motorized vehicles are prohibited on the trail, so there's a sense of ease with only a few spots to cross roadways.

The RMLT has various starting points with parking. A favorite is the Railroad Pass trailhead, the trail's mile 0 start. Mile markers along the trail make it easy to anticipate features like The Sisters—a trio of climbs at mile marker 6 that stretch 1.5 miles with up to an 8% grade. It's the spot to crank up the power.

RMLT trail connectors links to other paths. At mile marker 5, the 3.2-mile Burkholder Connector Trail links up with the Lake Mead Parkway Trail (6.7 miles), and at marker 9 is the Wetlands Trail Connector, a 2.1-mile paved route that leads to another local favorite.



PHOTO CREDIT: Heather Fisher

Clark County Wetlands Loop Trail

"I love that I can ride while enjoying the varied landscape—there's rugged desert, water and even lush greenery," said cyclist Melissa Dunn of Henderson about the Wetlands Loop Trail. The 11.5-mile trail's dips and climbs travel along the Las Vegas Wash. Like the RMLT, this paved multi-use trail connects to paths like the Lake Mead Parkway and Flamingo-Arroyo trails. The route isn't just a spin in the park; in some spots, be ready to pop out of the saddle and climb. "I really enjoy the rolling hills. A few are challenging, but the descents are the best part," said Paulson.

The loop trail is 14 miles; the final 2.5 miles are unpaved, so it's more suitable for a mountain bike. Trailheads with parking include the Wetlands Neighborhood Park and Wells and Pabco trailheads.



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1-215 West Beltway Trail

On the west side of the valley is the I-215 West Beltway Trail, a paved 17-mile out-and-back route that travels alongside I-215 W. The trail is used by bicyclists, both commuters and recreational riders, along with runners and walkers. An urban route, users hear the hum of the highway, though mountain views are plentiful, along with offering a few steep climbs and fast descents. It's also conveniently accessible from Summerlin neighborhoods, with parking close to trail access points.

Currently, the trail starts at Tropicana and travels northwest turning into the Northern Beltway Trail. In late 2022, it was extended and now ends at Grand Montecito Parkway. It crosses under and over the highway's cross streets in some places. In other areas, however, users must cross busy intersections like W. Sahara Ave. and W. Charleston Blvd. Fortunately, plans are in the works to create a much safer underpass at W. Charleston Blvd. ♦



Stephanie Forté is a freelance writer in Southern Nevada covering health, fitness, and outdoor recreation. She's an avid cyclist, hiker, and longtime rock climber. Learn more at www.stephanieforte.com.



The background of the cover is a close-up photograph of several autumn leaves in shades of red, orange, and yellow, resting on a weathered wooden surface. The leaves have prominent veins and serrated edges. In the top left corner, there is a small red pushpin.

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