

Biking



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Pedal your day away

Here's how to explore the Northeast's most bikeable state

Bicycling experts regard Delaware as one of the most bikeable states in America, thanks to rider-friendly legislation and its extended system of bike trails and bike lanes along roadways. Most recently, the League of American Bicyclists named Delaware as the fifth most bicycle-friendly state in the country, ranking No. 1 in the northeastern U.S. – that's up from a ranking of 31st in 2008.

For bikers, that means endless possibilities for discovery, whether it's the flat and leisurely topography of the southern part of the state, or the more challenging hills (and gorgeous scenery) of Northern Delaware. Here's a selection of trails that shows that diversity best:

DAY 1

Grab a quick coffee and pastry at Delaware's own Brew HaHa! Espresso & Newsstand before taking on the David English Trail at White Clay Creek State Park (near Newark), one of the county's largest areas of forests and trails. This packed-earth trail boasts equal parts excitement and beauty as it winds through hardwood forest and hayfields. The 2.4-mile single-loop trail is known for its nature and quiet solitude, with abundant wildlife along the ride, which has a total elevation change of 144 feet.

Next, refuel at Caruso's Bistro in Middletown before heading south to nearby Lums Pond State Park and enjoying an easy 8.1-mile ride on the Little Jersey Trail around the beautiful pond. The visit could (and probably should) be supplemented by an excursion on Go Ape! the popular zipline course in the park. The Little Jersey Trail links to the park's campground, Equestrian Center, and boat ramp.

Head over to the charming colonial town of Odessa for dinner at Cantwell's Tavern, then call it a night at the nearby Hampton Inn.

DAY 2

Kick off the day's adventures with a taste of local ambiance at the Smyrna Diner, then head back toward the Delaware River coast to Woodland Beach, where the freshwater pond is often filled with waterfowl.

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A great spot for sea-glass hunting, fishing and crabbing. When you're all geared up, set off south on scenic Del. 9 toward Little Creek Wildlife Area.

This spot is known as a hot spot for birders and is a great place to see the annual Delaware spectacle of thousands of hungry shorebirds feasting on eggs laid by prehistoric horseshoe crabs (in late May).

You'll be ready at this point for lunch at a truly iconic Delaware crab house, Sambo's Tavern in Leipsic (check to make sure crabs are in season). Next up is a soothing, scenic ride through the peaceful farm fields of Amish Country, west of Dover. Take a rest stop at the nearby Amish shops selling handmade goods, including Byler's Country Store, Country Furniture & Crafts, Daniel Yoder Furniture Shop, and the American Heirlooms by Kenton Chair Shop.

Dinner will have a casual, contemporary charm at Cool Springs Fish Bar & Restaurant near Dover, and the day's end can be celebrated with a well-deserved snooze at the nearby Hilton Garden Inn.

DAY 3

Now it's time to breathe in the breezy charm of Delaware's coastal areas. But first, a coffee and bagel at Surf Bagel in Lewes before heading off on the trail that connects Roosevelt Inlet in Lewes to the entrance of Cape Henlopen State Park, a beautiful natural area where the peaceful dunes and beaches are popular for sunbathing, nature watching and fishing.

It's a quick jaunt to the 6-mile Junction Breakwater Trail, a one-time railroad bed that connects Lewes and Rehoboth Beach. You'll pass through thick forest, across wetland boardwalks and through farm fields. "During the summer, we hit the trail in Rehoboth by 8, eat breakfast in Lewes, then cycle back before noon (thus beating the heat)," one fan writes, calling the trail a "hidden gem."

For lunch, stop by the popular Big Fish Grill in Rehoboth Beach for some luscious seafood, then head south along the coast to Delaware Seashore State Park. It's a great place to relax on the beach before setting off to the south over the soaring Indian River Bridge. Enjoy the peaceful dunes on one side, quiet bay on the other. Soon, you'll pass through (and probably stop by) some of the state's most charming seaside towns: Bethany Beach and Fenwick Island, which lies right on the Maryland border.

Dinner at Bluecoast Seafood Grille in Bethany Beach will re-emphasize that coastal charm, leading smoothly into a night of relaxation at the nearby Holiday Inn Express.

For more information, go to www.VisitDelaware.com/Outdoor, call (866) 284-7483, or e-mail Visit.Delaware@state.de.us.