

Thinking of hitting the road with two wheels this summer? Try these tips to plan a memorable bike trip

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SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL

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A cyclist goes for a gravel road bicycle ride in the Kootenays region of B.C.

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I was riding along the southern edge of Montreal recently when something magical happened. As I came upon the St. Lawrence, I was overcome by a vivid, full-body memory of a two-week bike trip I took around the Gaspé Peninsula almost a decade ago. I saw the sun rise over riverside campgrounds all over again, remembered the freedom of biking along the St. Lawrence's shore, heard the seabirds, smelled the currents in the air. I was right there, even all these years later.

Seeing a place at the speed of a bicycle will do that to you. It imprints on your senses in a way that leaves you revived and full of memories.

“The adventure of a bike trip, even as local as an overnight, really changes your perspective and your rhythm. It's completely liberating,” says Jen Adams, a long-time bike traveller and co-creator of the new Log Driver's Waltz bikepacking route, a multiday cycling route in Eastern Ontario and western Quebec.

Adams is one of many Canadians who are making the most of the world being slowed down to slow down their travel, too. If you're looking for a way to restore your sense of adventure and discovery and appreciate what's in your own backyard, a bike trip is just the thing.

RV pros offer tips for hitting the road for the first time

Before you hit the road





The 800-kilometre bi-provincial bikepacking route meanders through the Outaouais region of Quebec and the Ottawa Valley on maintained paths and rail trails and along long-forgotten backroads.

MICHEL AUBRY PHOTO/ISTOCKPHOTO / GETTY IMAGES

Planning a bike trip doesn't have to be daunting. There are lots of ways to travel and an increasing number of destinations.

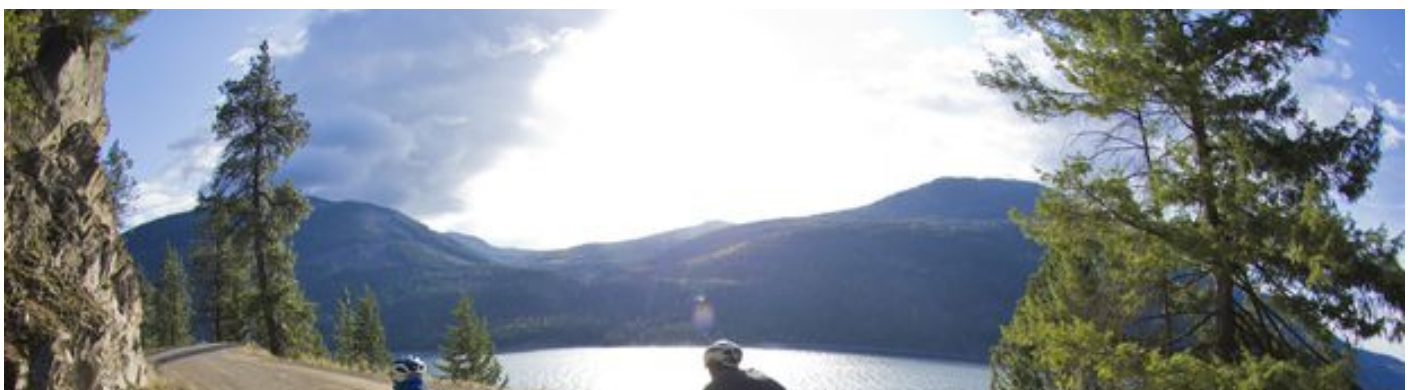
If you want to ease into it, pick a spot to stay and make daily outings from there. It'll allow you to get to know an area in depth while keeping planning easy. Bring your own bike or rent one – many bike shops now rent e-bikes as well as the manual variety.

Need a big break? Load up your panniers and hit the road for a multiday bike tour. You can camp – be sure to check campground availability and rules ahead of time – stay in motels, or check out the website [Warmshowers.org](https://www.warmshowers.org), which matches cyclists and hosts. If you'd rather be off-road, strap a bivy sack and other necessities to your mountain bike and hit the trails for an off-the-beaten-path adventure.

Want some support? In areas that are popular for bike touring, like Quebec's Le P'tit Train du Nord, outfitters ferry your bags from hotel to hotel each night so you can ride unencumbered. Or find a planned tour – many cycling tour companies offer both group tours and self-guided options.

“We're offering self-guided tours for the first time this year,” says John Bowden, founder of Kootenay Cycling Adventures, which leads bicycle tours in the B.C. Interior. “We're trying to respond to what people are looking for by giving them maximum flexibility, space and independence.”

Plan your route





This intermediate three-day loop ride in B.C.'s Kootenay region will take you from Nelson to Kaslo, around to New Denver and Nakuset and back, with a mix of lakeshore, towering peaks, mountain towns and hot springs along the way.

ISTOCKPHOTO / GETTY IMAGES

First, consider how many hours you want to cycle per day – use an average of 23 kilometres an hour as a guide. Then, check your terrain. Hills and unexpected road conditions are inevitable on a bike trip, but if you're not in the mood for a strenuous adventure, map your route accordingly. Rail trails like the 160-kilometre Simcoe County Loop Trail near Barrie, Ont., or Prince Edward Island's Confederation Trail, are low-elevation off-road options.

Regional tourism associations can be a great source of itineraries, maps and road-quality information. Apps like RideWithGPS and Strava can provide route ideas and inspiration. If you're heading out on a bikepacking adventure, bikepacking.com and *Messkit Magazine* have great detailed descriptions of routes. There are also lots of regional Facebook groups – Bikepack Canada is a good place to start.

Gear up

Many travelling cyclists have strong opinions about the gear they use, but here's a secret: It doesn't have to be complicated. Sure, having the right gear and tools is a must for longer trips. But if you've got a bike, water bottles, and a backpack you can plan a few day trips that will get your wheels whirring.

Roads to discover





Campobello Island, N.B.

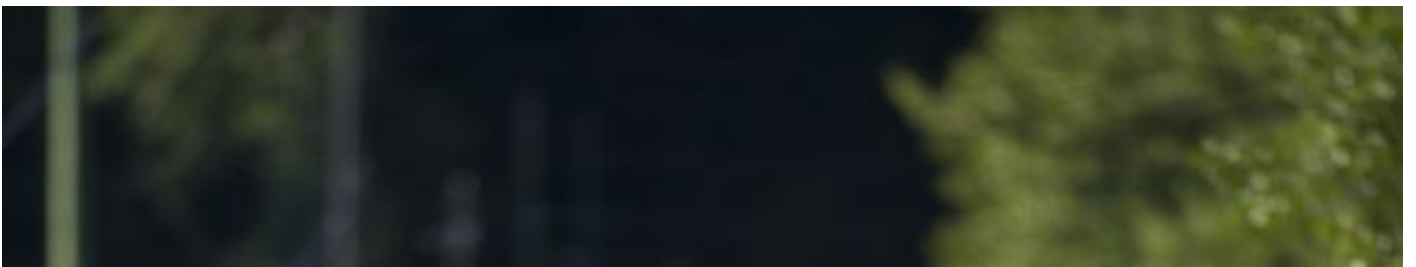
KEN R MORRIS JR/ISTOCKPHOTO / GETTY IMAGES

Here are trips of varying types, lengths and terrain profiles that will inspire you to look for adventure near you.

DAY-TRIP THE GREAT LAKES WATERFRONT TRAIL

Make Owen Sound, Ont., your home base and plan day trips along the rocky shores of Georgian Bay and quieter Lake Huron. County Road 1 between Owen Sound and Wiarton will take your breath away. The terrain on the peninsula is rolling on the bay side and flat on the lake side, and the Trail is well-signed. Marlaine Koehler, executive director of the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, the organization that supports the Trail, also recommends a hike out to Indian Falls, and a beach break at Hibou Conservation Area.

SELF-GUIDED ADVENTURE ON THE WEST KOOT LOOP





Seeing a place at the speed of a bicycle imprints on your senses in an way that leaves you revived and full of memories.

ISTOCKPHOTO / GETTY IMAGES

This intermediate three-day loop ride in B.C.'s Kootenay region will take you from Nelson to Kaslo, around to New Denver and Nakuset and back, with a mix of lakeshore, towering peaks, mountain towns and hot springs along the way. Prepare for some slow mountain climbs and fast descents. "It's just out of this world," says John Bowden, "chief cyclist" of Kootenay Cycling Adventures. "Almost Patagonia-esque, but in our own backyard."

BIKEPACK THE LOG DRIVER'S WALTZ

This 800-kilometre bi-provincial bikepacking route meanders through the Outaouais region of Quebec and the Ottawa Valley on maintained paths and rail trails and along long-forgotten backroads. It will introduce you to the beauty of the Canadian Shield – and some great bakeries to boot. Bike the whole thing, or choose a section. Either way, check the website for planning tips. "It was thrilling to think what people are going to feel when they see this view over the Gatineau Hills, or come around this corner," Log Driver's Waltz co-creator Eric Betteridge says of the joy of mapping the route.

ISLAND-HOP ON THE BAY OF FUNDY

"This trip will take you back in time about 20 years," says Gary Conrod, founder of East Coast bike-tour company Atlantic Canada Cycling. Kick things off in Saint Stephen, N.B., and head east along the coast, hopping over to three islands: Deer, Campobello and Grand Manan. "The Bay of Fundy is this amazing creature," Conrod says. "And this is an area that even many New Brunswickers haven't explored. Lords Cove on Deer Island is the prettiest village in the province."

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