



FUN DAY TRIPS  
FOR ALL AGES

EXPANDED AND UPDATED

# EASY CYCLING

*around* **VANCOUVER**

JEAN & NORMAN

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**GREYSTONE BOOKS**

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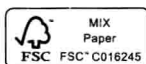
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## CONTENTS

. . . . .

Index Map 1

Introduction 2

How to Use This Book 4

Bicycles and Equipment 8

Touring and Hybrid  
Bicycles 8

About Bicycle Fitting 8

Bicycle Essentials  
and Accessories 9

Maintaining  
Your Bike 13

A Suggested  
Wardrobe 14

Cycling Safety 16

A Note about Cycling  
Behaviour 19

### **SQUAMISH/VANCOUVER/ EAST OF VANCOUVER**

1 Paradise Valley 20

2 Brackendale 24

3 Seymour Valley Trailway 28

4 Burnaby Trails 31

5 Barnet-Inlet Trails 34

6 Sasamat Lake 38

7 Coquitlam River 42

8 Traboulay PoCo Trail 46

9 De Boville Slough 50

### **SOUTH OF VANCOUVER**

10 Iona Island 54

11 Terra Nova Circuit 57

12 Richmond South Dyke 60

13 Millennium Trail 64

14 Westham Island 68

15 Ladner Dyke 71

16 Boundary Bay 74

17 Mud Bay 78

18 Semiahmoo Peninsula 81

### **PITT MEADOWS/ MAPLE RIDGE/MISSION**

19 Pitt Polder 86

20 Pitt River Regional  
Greenway 90

21 Alouette River 94

22 Golden Ears Park 98

23 Whonnock Lake 101

24 Stave Dams 105

**LANGLEY/ALDERGROVE/  
ABBOTSFORD**

- 25 Barnston Island 108
- 26 Fort-to-Fort Trail 110
- 27 Glen Valley 114
- 28 Campbell River Valley 118
- 29 Aldergrove 122

**MISSION TO HARRISON**

- 30 Miracle Valley 126
- 31 Nicomen Island 130
- 32 Harrison-Agassiz 134
- 33 Seabird Island 138

**ABBOTSFORD/CHILLIWACK**

- 34 Bradner-Mt. Lehman 140
- 35 Matsqui Prairie 144
- 36 Sumas River—  
Barrowtown 148
- 37 Sumas Prairie 152
- 38 Vedder River 156
- 39 Columbia Valley 159
- 40 Fraser River Islands 162

**SOUTH OF THE BORDER**

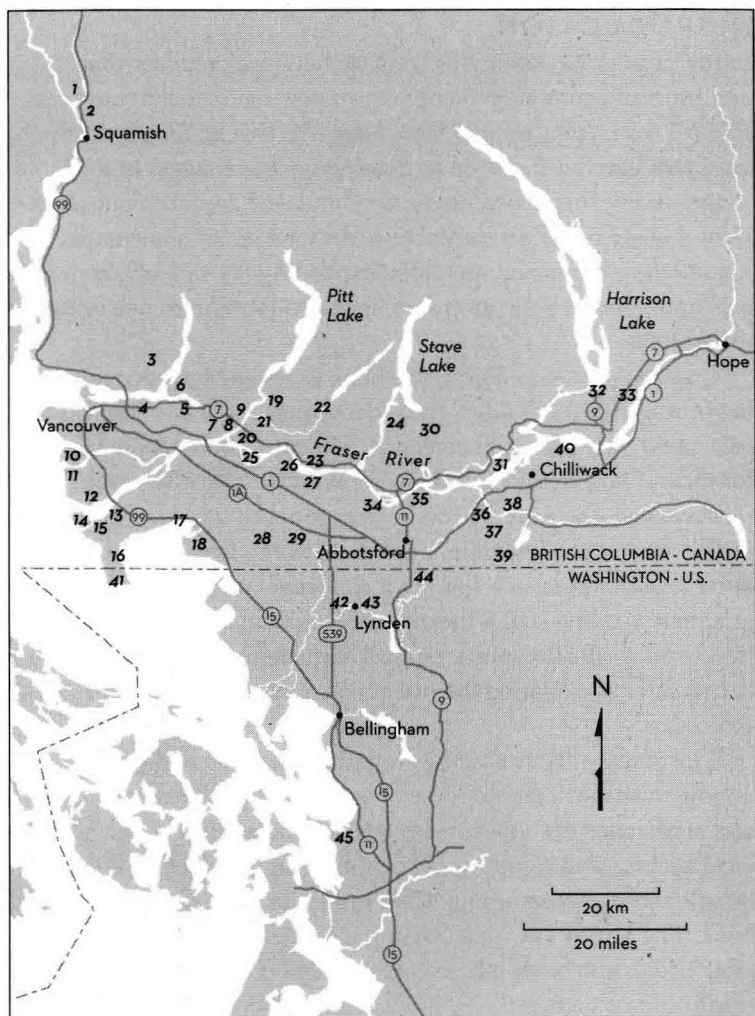
- 41 Point Roberts 166
- 42 Nooksack Valley—  
Ferndale 170
- 43 Nooksack Valley—  
Everson 174
- 44 Sumas River 178
- 45 Lower Samish Valley 182

Alphabetical Index 185

Index to Rides  
by Duration 186

Index to Rides  
by Distance 187

Acknowledgements 188



Key to maps:

- Bike route on road
- Bike route on trail
- Highway
- Road
- Other trail

- Railway
- Dyke
- Parking
- Park
- Picnic spot

## > INTRODUCTION

In revising and updating this book we have explored new roads and trails and combined them to form new routes that fit our criteria for *Easy Cycling around Vancouver*. We have re-routed existing rides that have been altered by development or changes in road usage—everywhere becomes busier—and we have taken out some rides that are no longer satisfactory. We have added some more off-road cycling by making use of the expanding network of greenways and trails around Vancouver. We have also introduced one or two urban routes.

Like the previous edition, this book is designed to encourage beginning cyclists, families and older or perhaps “rusty” cyclists to get out on their bikes and explore at whatever level is appropriate for them. Our cycling philosophy remains the same: We cycle for pleasure and discovery. We do not aim to reach our destination in the shortest possible time; we stop when the fancy takes us. We don’t regard cycling as a sport or a challenge—although effort does go into it. Cycling is fun, inexpensive and kind to the environment. Best of all, it lifts the spirits to travel at the leisurely pace unique to this activity, exploring the byways on a personal journey of discovery.

The routes in *Easy Cycling* are just an example of the many options available. Perhaps some of you, after gaining experience and confidence from these rides, will be encouraged to join a local cycling club. Community centres, outdoor clubs and some bicycle shops organize group rides similar to those described in this book. The Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition organizes a series of Great Rides and other bike events throughout the year. Through organizations such as these, you will be introduced to the cycling possibilities around the city.

Do not be afraid to put together your own cycle tour, perhaps based on one or two of our rides in the Fraser Valley or Washington. Arm yourself with a detailed map (International Travel Maps & Books, 12300 Bridgeport Road in Richmond is a good source) and pick out some secondary roads to link up with the routes in *Easy Cycling*. Arrange convenient overnight accommodation along the

way, pack your panniers and set off. You will have embarked on a freewheeling style of holiday that knows no boundaries.

The forty-five rides presented are short—between 10 and 45 kilometres. They are routed on paved roads, on good gravel surfaces and occasionally on informal trails. Most use safe, rural roads and avoid areas of heavy traffic as much as possible. Many are circular tours. You will notice that many of the rides are located in the Fraser Valley and northwestern Washington. We've tried to cover most areas around Vancouver in our collection, including Squamish to the north and Harrison to the east, but some parts of the Lower Mainland, though delightful, do not lend themselves to easy cycling. Similarly, we omit popular city cycle routes and paths (which are well covered in other books) because they fall outside our category of countrified tours.

A descriptive summary precedes each ride, enabling you to find a route that's appropriate for your riding ability. A following paragraph gives an overview of the area or mentions places and facts of local interest. Sometimes optional routes or side trips are suggested. In most cases, the recommended lunch stop offers a picnic table or bench, often in a park. The Bicycles and Equipment section offers practical advice on bicycles, equipment and clothing, with hints on comfort for the beginning and out-of-practice cyclist. An important section on safety will help to reassure the fearful and encourage responsible cycling.

Researching and revising these rides has been a pleasure—there have been new neighbourhoods and byways to explore and beautiful parks and picnic spots to discover. What you make of the rides is up to you. The French have a delightful expression for being out and about on a bicycle: They describe it as being *en vélo*. We hope that you will enjoy being *en vélo* around Vancouver.



## > HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

We hope you will start by reading and becoming familiar with the following introductory chapters. If you're an experienced cyclist, the advice may be unnecessary; but if you're a novice, you will benefit from the recommendations, at least in the beginning.

Until you have some experience cycling, it is a good idea to start with short and easy rides, building your confidence and ability until you can judge what you are capable of.

How do you choose a short, easy ride? At the beginning of every ride description is a list of features:

**ROUND-TRIP DISTANCE:** The rides in this book range from 10 to 45 kilometres.

**TERRAIN:** Our routes mainly follow paved roads, but this section tells you if you will also encounter gravel dykes or shared footpaths and whether the ride is level or hilly.

**TRAFFIC VOLUME:** We try to avoid busy roads, but it isn't always possible. Here we tell you how much car traffic to expect.

**TIME TO ALLOW:** This section suggests the approximate length of time you will need for the round trip. Our estimate includes a lunch break of 30 minutes plus up to 30 minutes extra if there are unpaved roads, hills or other features that might slow you down. The range indicated—e.g., 2 ½ to 3 ½ hours—allows for riders' different paces.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** We point out scenery and items of interest you may enjoy. This still leaves plenty for you to discover for yourself.

**PICNIC SPOT:** Whenever we can suggest a suitable spot for a picnic, we do. Most sites fall about two-thirds of the way through the ride's total distance.

**STARTING POINT AND HOW TO GET THERE:** This section gives you instructions on where to start the ride and how to get to that spot by road or by transit. We usually transport our bikes by car to the starting point. We give road instructions to reach the starting point of each ride, and we've done our best to find suitable places to leave a car, most often in municipal or regional parks that are easy to locate. There are increasingly more options to get around.

If you plan to ride near the area where you live, you might be able to reach the starting point by using a neighbourhood cycle route, such as the Frances-Union Bikeway in Burnaby or the Railway and Garden City Bikeways in Richmond. The City of Vancouver has 300 kilometres of on- and off-road bikeways, such as the Central Valley Greenway linking Vancouver, Burnaby and New Westminster, and the Midtown and Ridgeway Bikeways running east to west across the city. Several bridges across the Fraser River now have dedicated bicycle lanes, including the bridge beside the Canada Line SkyTrain route linking Marine Drive Station to Bridgeport Station. In each municipality, bicycle maps and descriptions of local trails can be obtained from city hall and often from community centres, or downloaded from their websites.

Transit might be an option for some. All Metro buses carry a limited number of bicycles, as do SkyTrain, SeaBus and the West Coast Express; a free shuttle service transports cyclists through the George Massey Tunnel. Greyhound services Squamish and Bellingham (bicycles must be boxed), and Amtrak will transport riders and their bikes with a reservation; northern Washington State also has buses equipped with bike racks. We encourage you to check schedules and be flexible with your plans: The West Coast Express commuter train, for example, runs weekdays only and in set directions at specific times of day; SkyTrain has some restrictions on carrying bikes during rush hour, and the shuttle through the George Massey Tunnel runs at one- or two-hour intervals and on a reduced schedule from October to May. Information on these options and more can be found in the latest edition of TransLink's *Metro Vancouver Cycling Map*, available wherever maps are sold, and on the TransLink website. The website also features handy trip planners to help you work out your approach by transit or by bike (or a combination of both).

**WHEN TO GO:** Here we note any seasonal attractions and events.

**CONNECTS WITH:** Rides that are adjacent to or slightly overlap with others are noted here, allowing you to combine the routes for a longer ride.

Now that you know how to discover what is in a ride, you can begin to make choices.

Our route instructions use the elapsed distance from the starting point to help identify turnings or alert you to points of interest. You can keep track of these distances with a bicycle computer if you have one; otherwise simply use the figures as a guide together with landmarks and other information in the route descriptions. Because of a number of factors such as surface conditions and the computer's calibration, these figures may not always be accurate. Do not be dismayed if you come across minor discrepancies between the distance you have travelled and what we have written down.

Our maps are intended as a guide to be used in conjunction with the route instructions. We strongly recommend that you carry a standard map of the area, such as MapArt's *Greater Vancouver & Fraser Valley* mapbook or TransLink's *Metro Vancouver Cycling Map*, at all times. If you get off course, you'll find the complete picture helpful for getting you back on track.

You might find it convenient to photocopy the route instructions and the map for easy reference on the ride. You can keep these handy in a pocket or in the map case on the top of a cycling handlebar bag. The rides are laid out on facing pages in the book, so they are easy to copy.

If you can, start early in the day before the roads become too busy. Note that on summer weekends the parks also can be very crowded.

You're ready to set out on your chosen ride. One thing will lead to another, and before long you'll discover for yourself other byroads to explore on your bicycle.

## > BICYCLES AND EQUIPMENT

### **Touring and Hybrid Bicycles**

If you already own a bicycle, you'll probably want to use it for these rides, and who are we to say you shouldn't? However, some types of bike are more suitable for our purpose than others.

We prefer a "hybrid" bike, though you could also use a touring bike. Both of these are intermediate bikes (between the extremes of racing and mountain bikes) appropriate for our intermediate rides. They combine wider, more stable tires and a more comfortable seat and upright riding position than racing bikes, and they are faster and lighter than mountain bikes.

Racing bikes and mountain bikes were designed for purposes other than the leisurely meanderings we describe. But if you already own one of these types of bike, you can use it on these rides. Cycling these routes is enjoyable, no matter what your choice of bike.

### **About Bicycle Fitting**

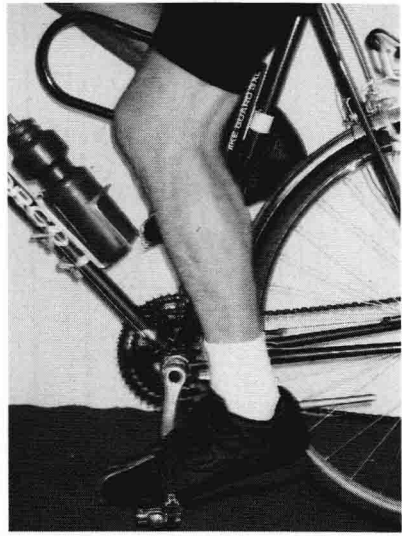
Many cyclists, including long-time owners, have not adjusted their bikes for proper efficiency. While this is not crucial for local shopping trips, it will make a difference in comfort and safety on longer rides. The subject of bicycle fitting is too detailed to cover properly in this book, so in addition to the tips below ask for on-the-spot advice at a bicycle shop or refer to a book on bicycle maintenance.

Bicycles are manufactured in various frame sizes for people of different stature. Once you've chosen a frame size, you can adjust the bike at several points to make it comfortable for you.

For instance:

- > Saddle posts can be moved up or down.
- > Saddles can be moved backward or forward, and their front end tilted up or down.
- > Handlebars can be raised or lowered.

- Your bike adjustments are correct if:
- › When you sit on the bike, your leg is almost, but not quite, straight at the lowest point of your pedal revolution. If it is not, you are losing some of the downward force your legs are capable of producing. Your knees are lined up over your feet so you are not straining your hips, knees or ankles.
  - › Your handlebars are within easy reach, and your body is not angled too far forward. Your back is flat rather than rounded, and your neck, shoulders and wrists are relaxed.
  - › You are not slipping forward or backward on your saddle.



Correct leg position at bottom of stroke

Getting these adjustments right is essential. If they are not correct, you will tire easily and be uncomfortable to the point where you will not enjoy cycling and might give it up. So it's worth taking the trouble to ensure that you are completely at ease on your bike.

### **Bicycle Essentials and Accessories**

Most touring and hybrid bikes come well equipped for touring, but those that don't can easily be fitted with the desired equipment. Some bikes come with shocks (suspension), but they are not really necessary for these rides. Ideally, your bike should have:

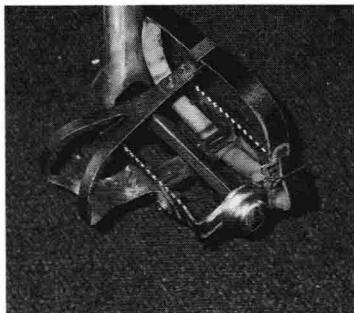
**MEDIUM TIRES.** A tire between 1  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches and 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches wide is suited to both paved roads and reasonably smooth gravel dykes. A slightly raised tread helps the tire grip on uneven surfaces.

**STRONG BRAKES.** Cantilever and V-brakes are widely used, and both have strong pulling power.

**EIGHTEEN SPEEDS OR MORE.** A range of gears is good because it includes easier gears for hill climbing.



Warning of approaching danger



Toeclip

**A REAR-VIEW MIRROR.** This is one of the most important safety accessories you can have. A medium to large mirror attached to the handlebars lets you see more than a tiny one attached to a helmet.

**MUDGUARDS.** When you're caught in a rainstorm, these tire protectors (sometimes called fenders) will prevent you from getting soaked in the spray from your tires.

**A REAR LUGGAGE RACK AND PANNIER(S).** The metal rack bolts to your bike so you can carry panniers. These saddle bags can hold your rain gear, lunch, extra clothing, tools, farm produce, etc. A bungee strap on top of your rack is a convenient way to hold articles of clothing you may want to slip on or off. While we much prefer panniers, which keep the bikes balanced and our backs free of sweat, others use a well-padded and lightweight backpack to carry their gear.

**A HANDLEBAR BAG.** This bag can carry items to which you want easy access, such as emergency tools, rags, energy rations, sunscreen, cash, a camera, maps and route instructions.

**TOECLIPS.** These curved plastic or metal pieces fasten onto the front of your pedals to properly position your feet. Adjustable straps hold your feet in place. Toeclips force you to put your weight onto the ball of your foot, which is the most efficient position for getting the most power from your pedal stroke. If you are a novice rider, delay fitting toeclips to your pedals until you feel totally comfortable on



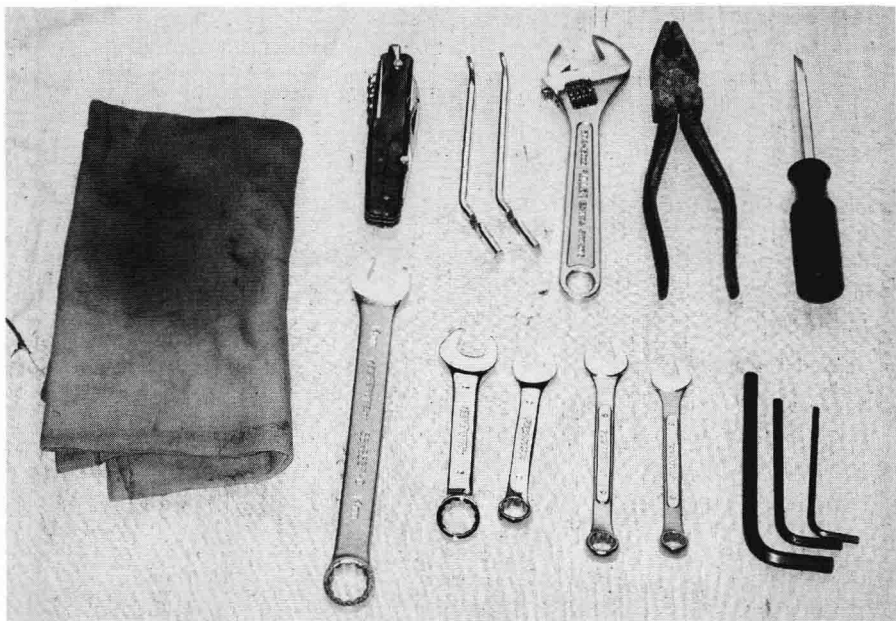
Equipped for easy cycling

your bike. Always make sure the fasteners are loose enough to allow you to withdraw your shoes quickly when necessary, and remember to pull your feet backward before dismounting.

**A WARNING DEVICE, MOST COMMONLY A BELL.** A bell is required by law, and it is particularly useful to warn others on a shared pathway that you are approaching. Please do not ride at high speed, ring your bell, then expect other users to avoid *you*.

**A WATER BOTTLE AND CARRIER.** The metal or plastic cage fits on your bike frame and holds a water bottle. Drink often; dehydration can be a serious risk when you're exerting yourself.

**A BICYCLE PUMP AND A PRESSURE GAUGE.** If the pump doesn't come with a mount, you may need to fasten it to the bike's frame with accessory clips that you can obtain at a bicycle shop. Make sure the pump fits the valve on the inner tube in your tire and keep your tires properly inflated. (The maximum pressure is noted on the side of the tire itself.)



Left: rag for wiping oily hands; Top, left to right: penknife, tire levers, adjustable wrench, pliers, two-ended screwdriver; Bottom, left to right: 15mm, 13mm, 10mm, 9mm and 8mm wrenches, CR-V6, CR-V4 and CR-V3 Allen keys

**A SPARE INNER TUBE, TIRE LEVERS AND A PATCH KIT.** Tire punctures are the most common breakdown on a ride. Before you leave home, know how to change the tube; repairing the punctured one later is easier than trying to mend it on the spot. The spare should be the same size as the original tube. It may come with either a Schraeder (fat) valve or a Presta (thin) valve—it doesn't matter which, but the valve should be the same type as on the original tire.

**A TOOL KIT.** Bicycles are subject to constant vibration, causing components to loosen. Regular maintenance will prevent most problems, but there will be times when, for want of a simple adjustment, your bike becomes unrideable. You will need some basic tools in order to make these adjustments when out on a ride. BCAA members now get free roadside bicycle assistance with their membership, so in a real pinch you can call a mechanic to help you out.

In order that their edges don't become burred and eventually useless, your tools need to be an exact fit for the parts they're being used on. It is also essential to tighten parts firmly to prevent