



**PETE SCHMELZER, AHBC PRESIDENT**

## How Far (Away) Will You Ride in '25?

As the best days of the 2024 riding season fade away, small talk among cyclists transitions from “Where have you been riding lately?” to “Where are you going to ride next year?”

I am amazed at the number of AHBC members who, in addition to regularly pedaling several times per week on our own local Club rides, will add one or more “destination rides” to their riding calendars. Club members travel to destination rides in the Midwest, elsewhere in the United States, and internationally.

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## 2024 Arlington 500 In Review

**MIKE PAULSON**

Now that the dust has settled and we have some perspective, we can safely say that our 2024 Arlington 500 was a terrific success!

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## A Different Kind of Biking

So, you have ridden a road bike, a mountain bike, a recumbent bike, maybe a tandem bike, but have you ridden a rail bike?

[CHOO-CHOOSE THIS BIKE!](#)

## Meet a Member

This month, we're gear-ing up for adventure with Loretta Rose.

[JOIN ON IN THE FUN](#)

## Kidical Mass

Getting families riding opens up a whole new viewpoint on what the road is like for smaller riders.

[I LIKE TO RIDE MY BICYCLE](#)



## Summer Celebrations

Enjoy photos from various AHBC events and member rides that happened this summer.

[SNEAK A PEEK](#)

## Biking Croatia

Scott shares his experience biking Croatia's Dalmatian Islands. No ifs, ands, or spots!

[ZIVJELI!](#)

# Upcoming Events

**WED., OCT 23**

**MEMBER MEETING**

**7:00 PM AT PIONEER PARK**

**RANDONNEURING: WHAT IS IT, AND IS IT FOR YOU?**

**ELECTION OF 2025 CLUB OFFICERS**

**SAT., NOV 9**

**ANNUAL CLUB BANQUET**

**6:30 PM AT STATION 34, MT PROSPECT**

**WED., JAN 22**

**MEMBER MEETING**

**7:00 PM AT PIONEER PARK**

**YOGA STRETCHES FOR CYCLISTS**

**WED., FEB 26**

**MEMBER MEETING**

**7:00 PM AT PIONEER PARK**

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Bill Kragh

**ARLINGTON 500**

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Mike Paulson

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Kim Heuer

**RIDE CHAIR**

Mitch Polonsky

**DESIGNER**

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# Meet a Member

## LORETTA ROSE

### **When and how did you learn to ride a bike?**

I don't remember learning to ride; I had to ask my sister. She said she and two of her friends taught me and my next oldest sister to ride. She said it only took me about fifteen minutes, so she can see why I wouldn't remember, I just took off.

### **When and why did you join AHBC?**

I have been wanting to join a bike club for several years and have been following a couple of clubs on Facebook. I was nervous to join because I didn't think I could ride fast enough. Last summer, 2023, I rode a lot on my own trying to increase my pace on my Trek Mountaintrack. Then at the end of the summer I bought my Specialized Allez and finally felt like I was fast enough. I chose Arlington Heights Bicycle Club because I felt it had the greatest variety of rides and many options that wouldn't drop riders. So I finally joined the club in September of 2023.



### **What paced group do you usually ride with?**

I usually ride with the intermediate group. I'm still afraid of being too slow for the advanced riders, although I did a ride with them this summer and they were all very encouraging of me!

### **What bike(s) do you currently own?**

I still have my Trek Mountaintrack and now the Specialized Allez.

### **What is your favorite lunch stop on club rides?**

I'm not a very picky eater; I've enjoyed all of the stops so far. I think actually that I most enjoy eating at new places!

### **Do you ride year-round?**

I don't ride when it gets too cold to be fun.

### **What was your favorite ride or cycling event last season?**

I really liked the rides to Elgin, and I always enjoy the rides where Mitch teaches me something new about a place I'm already familiar with. But I have to say that the North Shore Century that I just completed really left me feeling that I accomplished a great feat! It was a beautiful day, the route was gorgeous and I had a great team to ride with!

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**What is the longest ride you have ever done in one day?**

The North Shore Century, 103 miles!

**Did you volunteer last year at the Arlington 500, and, if so, what was your job?**

Yes, I did, and it's where I met so many members that I hadn't met on rides. I helped serve food to the riders.

**What are your favorite non-cycling activities?**

I like to garden, go to concerts, read books, work out, paddle board, and almost anything outdoors, especially if my family members join me!

**Is there anything else you want to share with us?**

I'm so glad I joined the club! I wish I had done this years ago, but happy I finally did.

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**ARLINGTON 500 REVIEW, CONTINUED**

We exceeded all of our goals, received very positive survey results, met a lot of happy cyclists, and served the cycling community by providing this event. This, of course, was only made possible with all of your efforts.

The overall rider survey results were positive regarding the registration, routes and marking, food, and facilities. The results were outstanding for the friendly volunteers and organization of our event. A big shout-out to the team leaders and volunteers for their top tier efforts! For 2025 we will likely use the same facility and routes. We will be exploring enhanced rider experiences such as a mass start for century riders, an Arlington 500 photo banner, and music at the rest stop(s).

Our internal 2025 goals will be 400 paid riders and continued positive survey results. Four hundred paid is only one more than this year, and every one of us must know at least one cyclist who should have been riding in our event this year but was not.

The financial surplus of this event allows us to operate the AHBC, provide a picnic and a subsidized banquet, and make charitable donations to groups supporting the sport of cycling.

As always, any experiences from the Arlington 500 and suggested improvements for volunteers or riders are welcome. You can always find Kim or me at meetings, events, and rides. Phone and email work too.

Thanks again to all. With good weather next year, we should have another great event in 2025.

# A Different Kind of Biking

## BILL KRAGH

So, you have ridden a road bike, a mountain bike, a recumbent bike, maybe a tandem bike, but have you ridden a rail bike?

Yes, you can pedal on the rails with the trains on a 750-pound four-person or two-person rail bike. At that weight you will be happy to know it is a pedal assist electric bike. What can you do on the rails? Well, there is the 800-foot-long trestle bridge 125 feet above the river, with no car doors or bridge sidings, that leaves you with a total feeling of soaring above the trees. There is also the quiet of cruising through the woods on a road of steel. Then as you come back towards the station, be sure that steam engine you are coming up behind is on a different track.

How can you do this? Check out Rail Explorers, which has several trips in different parts of the country. We went to the Boone, Iowa location and made a weekend of it. Boone is thirty miles northwest of Des Moines. In addition to the Des Moines attractions, such as an amazing state capitol, there are wineries in the area for taste testing and dining.

The Boone and Scenic Valley Railroad also has a nice train museum on the grounds. And if some in your party don't like the idea of pedaling a rail bike, the railroad offers lunch and dinner train rides pulled by their steam engine. Boone also has some history to it, as Mamie (Doud) Eisenhower was born in Boone and her childhood home has been restored for visits.

So, if you want to add another kind of biking to your cycling resume, I highly recommend trying a rail biking adventure.



# Biking Croatia's Dalmatian Islands

## SCOTT SCHAEDEL

"Zivjeli" (zhe vah lee) proclaimed our host as he raised his shot glass of rakija, a beverage with more bite than you might expect from a drink fermented using the leftovers from wine making. "Zivjeli!" we replied, raising ours. I had chosen the dark brown walnut flavored variety, others opting for the tawny sage or deep red cherry. It would not be our last encounter with rakija, also known as grappa or "firewater" by the locals. Rakija is ubiquitous in Croatia, as is hospitality. Everyone, it seems, has a home still and the desire to entertain friends and family, especially after a football (soccer) match or a night out singing with a local group or choir.

Our introduction to rakija took place on the island of Brac, just off Croatia's Dalmatian Coast and the mainland city of Split (more on this later). For our first night on the island, our tour operator, VBT (Vermont Bicycle Tours), had arranged a dinner for our 22-person tour group at a 14th century castle in the small village of Dol. Milan and Lada, our guides, told us a little about themselves as the rest of us did in turn. It was the first sign that they had, and would, think of everything possible to make the trip as friendly and enjoyable as possible – from the first-class hotels to engagement with local hosts and cultural sites to wonderful seafood sourced from the surrounding Adriatic Sea. All the while we had ideal weather – sunny days around 80 F and low humidity.



### The Island of Brac

If you consider that the typical club ride is composed mostly of pedaling effort and a modest amount of food, it was a little different for us. First, almost all of us chose to ride e-bikes (a quality European model with a very smooth 250-watt Bosch mid-drive motor). Our one road biker was fit with a Felt carbon fiber frame with Ultegra groupset. Although daily mileage was low for most of us (maxing out at 35 miles), the elevation gain was considerable: about 2,000 feet or more on most days. Using e-bikes allowed us to enjoy the ever-changing scenery with low to moderate effort, depending on rider choice of boost level. Excellent hydraulic disc brakes were equally appreciated on fast downhill segments that could last for miles.

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# Kidical Mass Ride

## BRIAN LARSON

The first ride was a failure. I didn't do extra advertising. I had to push the event back a week from the original date. The planned launch ride the prior month got rained out. I didn't send reminders. It ended up just my child and I, waiting at 9:00 on a clear and warm Saturday morning for no one else to join. I still rode the original route, enjoying a slow ride with my kid before ending the morning at the Farmers Market. But the first Arlington Heights Kidical Mass in July was more of a Kidical Bust.

In August, one other parent and their two kids joined. We had a nice chat, riding to Kimball Hill Park in Rolling Meadows, the adults on the street and the kids often taking the sidewalk since we were a smaller group. A one hundred percent increase in attendance? That was encouraging!

September exploded beyond my imagination. Nine other parents and at least 14 kids (I lost count) came for our ride to the Melas Park playground in Mount Prospect. Everyone who attended told me how much fun they had, and the parents said how glad they were to see a family event that reminded them of the adult Critical Mass they used to ride in Chicago. The kids loved riding in a big group, chatting both with adults and the other kids around them. I got to hear the entire Paw Patrol background from an enthusiastic young fan.

Riding with a younger cohort forces you to see the barriers they face to safely getting around. What might be bridgeable by a confident adult rider is now a dangerous chasm a child cannot reasonably cross. We were forced to take the sidewalk at Arthur and Davis when crossing to the sidepath on the north side of the street, but there wasn't enough room for everyone to both queue up on the sidewalk at the light and get through a single walk cycle, and the wait time for a new walk cycle is a minutes-long affair for those on the sidewalk. On a return trip, the sidepath ends at Arthur with no safe transfer to the Davis Street bike lane. What I used to consider a good route in a GPX file is now riddled with gaps.

People talk about why our kids don't get out more. The inherent dangers on the roads may be one factor worth fixing to empower kids to take back their streets.

Road barriers aside, Kidical Mass was a great, low-stress way to spend the morning, socializing with new people, both children and adults. And it was a great way to see and hear kids having tons of fun riding bikes.



## HOW FAR, CONTINUED

Destination rides are usually annual events sponsored by not-for-profit cycling organizations or for-profit tour companies. They range from single-day rides like our own Arlington 500 to week-long excursions such as RAGBRAI that include hotel or camping accommodations.

I encourage you to consider adding at least one destination ride to your 2025 riding calendar. When you are ready to start shopping, we hope to offer a central resource on the Club website that consolidates information about the most common rides.

Following are some good-to-know pointers for selecting a destination ride.

**Referrals** When exploring destination ride options, the best advice I can give is to find someone from our club who has been on that ride and ask them about their experience. First-hand knowledge of the cost, routing, SAG support, rest stops, and sleeping accommodations is invaluable.

**Routing** Most ride sponsors will provide a RideWithGPS file for each day, often offering routes of various distances for each day – 25, 50 and 75 miles, for example. You will most likely be sent these routes in advance so that you can save them to your device and choose which route you want to ride, even as late as the morning of the ride.

**Food** On multi-day rides, breakfasts are often included with your hotel accommodations, providing nutritious options cyclists need for the day. Lunch is generally on your own at sponsor-recommended restaurants on the route, or you can graze on PB&J and bananas at the rest stops. Some sponsors will include one or more group dinners in the registration fee.

**Luggage** For multi-day rides involving several hotels, you bring your luggage to a truck early in the morning and then claim it from a luggage room at the next hotel. This process allows you pack plenty of clothes for various weather conditions but carry with you only what you will need for each day's ride. It's likely that you will pack more cycling clothes than civilian clothes.

**Bike Storage** Most hotels allow bikes to be kept in sleeping rooms, allowing time for maintenance, although two bikes in a room can be a squeeze. And what could be better than sleeping with your bike? It's also fun to watch 100 riders all trying to jam their bikes on and off elevators during busy times. Hotels that prefer no bikes in guest rooms will make available a large bike storage room on the main floor.

**Bike Rental** For far away domestic and international destinations, renting a bike may be preferable to shipping and reassembling your own bike. Some riders customize the rental bike by bringing their own

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## HOW FAR, CONTINUED

bike seat and pedals/shoes. E-bike rentals are often available, allowing you to test-drive the technology and tackle hilly areas with ease. Some touring companies provide "rental" bikes free, others charge a daily rate.

### Considerations

- For your first bike tour, consider a single-day or 2-3 day ride that is reasonably close to home. This may be an especially good option if you are employed and cannot commit to a full week away on the bike.
- Multi-day rides of 35-75 miles per day require some advance training in the weeks leading up to the ride. You will enjoy the ride more when you are not exhausted after each day.
- Multi-day tours that do not use a central hub require you to ride your bike to the next camping area or hotel each day, rain or shine – they just can't SAG all 200 riders on a rainy day.
- The registration fees for single-day rides without hotels are usually in the \$40-\$80 range. Multi-day rides can be costly depending on the tour length and the lodging and food included in the registration fee. These rides can easily exceed \$1,000 a week.

### The Benefits

- Destination rides offer an exciting break from your usual routine of local rides. They provide a welcome change of scenery, often in some beautiful locations. Imagine several days during which all you have to do is eat, sleep and ride your bike!
- Cyclists and their bikes come in all shapes and sizes, yielding new friendships and lots of ideas about how to spend your hard-earned money on bike technology and clothing.
- There's a great sense of personal accomplishment when you complete a long single-day ride or a week-long tour covering 300 or more miles.
- You can eat all the lasagna and ice cream you want because you will burn off the calories the next day.

When you are out on a club ride in the coming weeks, ask a few other riders what destination rides they recommend, then visit those rides' websites. Even if the site still only shows details of this past year's ride, you will get a very good picture of what you need to know.

So...where in the world will you ride next year?

MY FAVORITE DESTINATION RIDE EXPERIENCE WAS IN DOOR COUNTY, WISCONSIN, WHERE I RODE TWO HOURS TO A DOCK WHERE I PUT MY BIKE ON A HUGE FERRY ALONG WITH 150 OTHER BIKES, CARS, AND TRUCKS FOR A 45-MINUTE "CRUISE" TO WASHINGTON ISLAND, WHERE I THEN ENJOYED A THREE-HOUR BIKE RIDE THROUGH AMAZING SCENERY!

## GRAND ILLINOIS BIKE TOUR



## AHBC CLUB PICNIC



# NORTH SHORE CENTURY, EVANSTON



## AIR AND WATER SHOW, CHICAGO



## PEDAL ACROSS WISCONSIN NORTHWOODS TOUR



## AMISHLAND AND LAKES RIDE, INDIANA



# PROGRESSIVE DINNER



## CROATIA, CONTINUED

Speaking of food, following a lunch of beer and cevappci (a delicious kind of ground beef brat on pita) at a small diner in Postira, our second day's dinner was held in two private homes. This was an unexpected opportunity to engage, language limitations notwithstanding, with typical Croatian families. We broke into two groups to make the numbers manageable. My group's host was a taxi driver and builder by day and an accomplished funeral singer (yes, it's a thing) by night. (Upon request, he performed a short operatic aria for us!) Then there was the table talk. One memorable interchange went as follows: Me: "How has life changed on the island during your life?" Host: "When I was a boy, it took us hours or even days to go from home to some other villages. My family had two mules, and we slept overnight on the road. Now, my son and I have five cars!"

Another noted change was the addition of fresh water piped over from the mainland. Previously, Dol was one of the few sources of fresh water on the island, seriously limiting population and development. With water (and the liberation of Croatia) came another change -- the skyrocketing cost of real estate. Whereas ancient populations tended to prefer inland locations to avoid pirates, present development is almost entirely coastal. With wealthy Europeans bidding up prices, coastal real estate is out of touch for families who have lived there for generations.

As we observed on subsequent daily rides, Brac is home to some ancient and still working limestone quarries, which formerly produced much of the material used to build (Roman Emperor) Diocletian's Palace in Split, as well as the U.S. White House. Throughout the Mediterranean, restoration of Roman ruins has created a new opportunity for Brac. The growing demand for quality stone and architecturally accurate decorative pieces, such as cornices and capitals, has been great. Renewed interest in traditional stonecutting skills resulted in opening a four-year stonecutters' school in the village of Pucisca. There, we saw the tools and techniques used to reproduce intricate pieces of stonework.

An even older "art" on the island is the making of olive oil. Our tour included a private visit to an olive oil museum. (And yes, more rakija, this time served with olive oil and fresh baked bread.) A few of us got to turn the grinding wheel while others ogled the dry-fit stone roof overheads. The museum owner, with typical Croatian humor, pointed to it, saying "No worries. If it starts to shift just follow me calmly as I run out the door!" We found that kind of ironic and self-deprecating humor to be common in Croatia. Also common: Tour guides (we had several) were also fond of naming things and people that Croatia is known for: 1) the parachute, 2) the necktie, 3) Nicola Tesla, and 4) the sculptor who created the Bowman and Spearman statues in Chicago's Grant Park across from the downtown Hilton. Another interesting fact -- Croatia has been continuously inhabited since the Paleolithic (Stone) Age, making it one of the oldest such places in Europe.

## CROATIA, CONTINUED

### On to Hvar

To get to Hvar Island, we spent our last day on Brac cycling to the port village of Bol, where we would rendezvous with a private ferry for the over-water passage. (Normally, going from Brac to Hvar, you would have to travel first to Split and board a second ferry.) Along the way, we passed through many medieval villages as well as Zlatni Rat, a.k.a. “Golden Horn,” a famous beach which attracts thousands of Europeans during high season. Fortunately, high season had ended by the time of our arrival, so we had it mostly to ourselves. Yet another opportunity to dip into the crystal-clear waters of the Adriatic. Like most other Dalmatian beaches, this one was entirely composed of small pebbles. (Sand beaches are a comparative rarity in this part of the Mediterranean.)

Following our brief sea passage of about 30 sun-drenched minutes on the ferry’s top deck, we landed on Hvar. Conde Nast Traveler magazine has called Hvar “one of the most beautiful islands in the world.” Its large and active harbor attests to its popularity. Boats and ships, both small private vessels and large ferry and tour boats, came and went almost constantly. The city’s 16th century architecture owes itself to a strong Venetian influence as Hvar held a prominent place in the Venetian Republic (697 to 1797 A.D.) . In Hvar, wealthy, egalitarian-minded Venetian merchants established the first known opera theater which permitted access to all social classes. Another prominent artifact is Hvar Castle, whose cannons are perched above the city facing the harbor entrance. Several of us climbed to the castle through the town’s narrow passages.



KEEP READING



## CROATIA, CONTINUED

In keeping with precedent, our tour guides, Milan and Lada, arranged another unusual and fun evening for our first night on Hvar. It was hosted by a professional Croatian chef who now runs a combination “Apartementi” and culinary demonstration restaurant. His specialty is teaching and interpreting local cuisine ([www.trisestrice.com](http://www.trisestrice.com)). As you can imagine, it would be difficult to teach very much to 22 hungry, post-ride cyclists, so he divided us into several groups for a friendly competition involving – you guessed it – eating. Each group was given a large plate of Croatian “salsa” with the task of identifying as many of the ingredients as possible. Paula and I were in the winning group, having correctly identified many of the following: tomatoes, parsley, eggs, red pepper, eggplant, red onions, olive oil, sugar, salt, and pepper. The salsa is prepared by slow cooking the ingredients until most of the liquid is removed. It was delicious served with crackers. The host also treated us (after dinner) to a talk on his method of harvesting sea salt from the Adriatic. The evening’s main dish was fresh swordfish steaks grilled over charcoal.

The cycling on Hvar was similar to Brac but with some different sights. There were the same olive and fig groves and red-tiled villages nestled around harbors. There were swimming opportunities, including a few rare sandy beaches. There was a well-provisioned picnic lunch on a quiet bay. But there was something else – more stone fences than you could possibly imagine. Some were clearly used to support terraced farming on the hilly terrain. Others, on flat ground had no apparent purpose, which seemed odd given the enormous labor required to build them. It turns out that the Romans, who were the first to plot property lines in the area, used the stone fences to demarcate ownership. Many of the now abandoned properties became too arid to farm and fell into disuse, leaving the much of Dalmatia covered with the artifacts. We also passed several stone huts built in the 16th century to serve as resting places for island travelers. We ducked into a few of these and found them claustrophobic and uncomfortable places. That plus the thought of a few tons of dry-fit stone overhead made our inside inspections brief. Near Stari Grad, our guides pointed out stone fences dating back to Grecian times, 400 B.C. or so. These were easily identifiable by the extent of weathering and discoloration.

All good things must come to an end, and so did our stay in Hvar and cycling. But not without a little excitement! There was, in our group, four lady friends known for their “Biker Babes” jerseys and strong affinity to wine at all times of the day and night. Always ready to chime in with a song, they composed a tribute to our trip leaders at the end-of-trip banquet. As a show of appreciation, they presented our hosts with a pair of pink wigs.

### **Dubrovnik and Split**

VBT offers optional 2-day pre- and post-trip extensions – the pre in Split and the post in Dubrovnik. Dubrovnik is known for its ancient walled “old town,” a UNESCO Heritage Site and recent filming location for some scenes in Game of Thrones. One surprising fact about the enclave old town is its curious mix of historically significant structures and high-end retailers along with low-rent and rent-free apartments which have been deeded down to families for generations. So, the tourist-heavy attraction combines both glitz and an authentic living culture. Unfortunately, Old Town was targeted by Serb navy bombs during the 1990s breakup of Yugoslavia. Many buildings had to be reconstructed or remain damaged to this day.

**KEEP READING**

# CROATIA TOUR PHOTOS



## CROATIA, CONTINUED

Split is best known as the site of Diocletian's Palace, built in the 3rd Century. To give an idea of its size, it currently forms about one-half of the entire city of Split, which is itself a major Adriatic port for inter-island ferries as well as for touring boat cruises. Today, the palace retains its original outlines with four corner towers and a walled enclosure, as well as an impressive network of underground crypts, rooms and passages. But the palace confines themselves have been transformed over the centuries into a network of streets and buildings with only an occasional glimpse into its Roman past. Still, the site is considered to be one of the most imposing Roman ruins in existence and a tribute to the greatness of the Roman Empire.

Midway between Split and Zagreb is Plitvice National Park, which some of us visited. The long bus ride gave us the opportunity to see many rural areas along the coast as well as to sample ordinary food from bakeries and local shops. (The Burek, a pastry filled with cheese, spinach and other fillings makes a good and surprisingly inexpensive lunch in Croatia.) Plitvice exceeded our expectations, consisting of several connected, terraced lakes and miles of walkways through scenic waterfalls and crystal-clear lakes. It formed our first impression of Croatia, and the rest only grew better with each passing day.

To wrap up, this group tour brought many delights that would probably have been inaccessible if done in a DIY trip. The logistics and people connections would certainly have been difficult without VBT's local guides. Another plus: the four- and five-star accommodations, whether in historic hotel or modern hotel, offered a pleasant luxury. If you choose VBT, however, keep in mind that they target a broad range of cycling levels from casual to advanced. In theory, you could dial up the rigor by choosing a road bike vs. e-bike. But both choices have their own unique advantages that made our trip an excellent adventure from start to finish.

## Ride with us today

### **NO MATTER HOW FAR, HOW FAST, WHERE YOU RIDE, OR WHY**

The Arlington Heights Bicycle Club has something for you: leisurely to advanced-paced rides; social functions; and a commitment to safe riding. And we don't take ourselves too seriously.

**[JOIN THE FUN!](#)**

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