

Ride and Shine with Parks



It's said that necessity is the mother of invention, and after the COVID-19 shut-down grounded her flight plans, Kari Cannistraro needed to get out of the house. With the help of her knowledgeable, bike-riding friend, Cheryl Anders, the travel-loving video producer took up bicycle riding. As she charted new territory in Fairfax County Parks, her wanderlust melancholy melted away.

"I was amazed," Cannistraro recalled of her discoveries along the trails. "I've lived in the area practically my whole life and did not realize what was right behind my house. Stunning scenery, history, horse farms, wildlife – it's like you're venturing into another world!"

As she explored the trails and encountered other riders, she noticed few were women. So, she decided to repurpose her production skills to create a YouTube video blog with Anders called "Ride and Shine Bicycling." By documenting their adventures, Cannistraro hoped to encourage more women to explore the fascinating wonders along Fairfax County trails.

"I have never seen so many eagles at one time," Anders recalled enthusiastically of a trail ride in the Pohick area. "It was such a thrill! They were beautiful!"

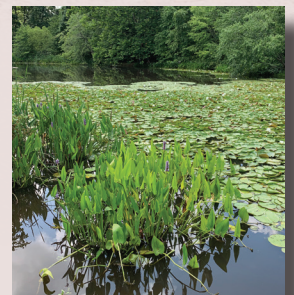
"We found another area in Burke Lake Park where eagles are nesting, and we check them out once in a while to see how they're doing," Cannistraro said. "It's such a peaceful wonderful trail."

In their videos, the two women also rate each trail's degree of difficulty so that prospective riders know what to expect. A standard bike works well on a paved trail, but a mountain bike or hybrid are needed for more rugged terrain. Regardless of the challenge, both women say each ride through Fairfax County parks has its rewards.

"The Rocky Run Stream Valley Trail brings you into Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, and when you enter the park grounds, it's gorgeous," Cannistraro said enthusiastically. "There's a big pond with lily pads, flowers and butterflies and turtles, and Cabell's Mill is one of my favorites."

"I'm learning a lot from historical markers," Anders said. "Seeing the area makes it more fun and more interesting to learn about history, and it's exciting to spot birds and animals you don't normally see every day."

Both women say each amazing ride through parks is like taking a mini vacation into the wilderness. Best of all, the adventures are just minutes from home.



Inspire your next bike ride with the video blog: www.youtube.com/c/RideShineBicycling. Then sign up for a Park Authority bike-riding class in the Outdoor Recreation section, or map your own route with the Park Authority's Trail Buddy online mapping tool: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/trails/trail-buddy.