



A first reaction when asked about bike trails in Las Vegas could be: who takes time from the casinos to ride bikes in Sin City? It's difficult to envision gamblers getting up early in the morning to ride their Schwinns along traffic-choked roads.

It's usually safe to ride bikes along the Strip and downtown Fremont Street areas. Squads of bicycle cops roam day and night, and are very effective in preventing street crime, as well as herding millions of visitors safely as they make their way around the city.

Bike rental agencies cater to visitors who want to exercise or get around congested Strip areas much more quickly than they can in cars and cabs. However, unless you're an expert cyclist with daily experience in big city traffic, it can be difficult biking in Las Vegas during rush hours.

For Vegas visitors who want safer experiences, bike companies conduct guided tours in quieter desert and mountain areas beyond the Strip and downtown. Some take bikers out to Lake Mead, Boulder Dam, Mount Charleston and other areas where spectacular scenery adds to pedaling enjoyment.

If on your own on a rental bike, the secret of successful cycling in Sin City is to get out on the streets at dawn. This means about 4:30 am in summer and 6 am in winter, when cyclists can enjoy a safe hour before heavy car, taxi, bus and truck traffic begins. Also, many Vegas summer days quickly heat up to 100 degrees plus by 10 am, making cycling after early morning very uncomfortable.

Helmets are mandatory, and cyclists are advised to wear bright reflective strips or patches on backs, arms and legs. Plastic water bottles are a must, especially when in Vegas summer daytime heat,

Some of the best bike trails in the Las Vegas metropolitan area are located in the nearby suburb of Summerlin, a large planned community of more than 50,000 homes. The development includes over 150 miles of designated cycling and hiking trails. Streets have marked bike lanes, and neighborhood cycling club groups are common sights every day throughout Summerlin.

By far the most scenic bike trails are in the Red Rock Canyon of the Mount Charleston area, about a 30-minute drive from the Strip. The mountainside views are spectacular when the rising and setting sun emphasizes the brilliant red, copper and orange hues of the prehistoric rock formations. More than a mile above the dry desert floor, the Red Rock canyon boasts impressive growths of green forest trees that tower above the trails.

When riding in the cool mountain air, cyclists can feel they're a continent away from the gridlock traffic, desert heat and glare of Sin City. Additionally, at some crests, they can actually create photographic views of the far-away Strip, especially at dawn and dusk, when the glittering city lights up the sky for miles around.

Other designated cycling areas include Henderson Trails, Lamb State Park, the Blue Diamond Mountain Trail, Cottonwood Valley and Blue Diamond.