

Sports | Recreation | Mountain Biking

Mountain Biking

New free program invites Bellingham cyclists to explore the art, odd and in-between

BIKE Bellingham provides themed self-guided cycling routes accessed through an app

July 23, 2026 9:00 p.m.



A cyclist looks up at Gretchen Leggitt's "Astrowhip" mural at the former Kona Bike Shop on BIKE Bellingham's Gretchen's Mural route. (Photo courtesy of Sarah Burch)

By Cameron Sires *CDN Contributor*

A free cycling program launched this spring offers casual, accessible routes meant to get both visitors and longtime Bellingham residents curious about where they live.

The BIKE Bellingham program provides themed self-guided cycling routes that are available through a free downloadable app called Ride with GPS, according to the [BIKE Bellingham website](#).

Routes range from 5–25 miles and include a detailed description of surface conditions, turn-by-turn navigation and stopping points that have detailed descriptions of the landscape, businesses and art.

“You don’t have to be a technical mountain biker or have a fancy bike or be in super great shape,” BIKE Bellingham founder Sarah Burch said.

Each route took around 40 hours to plan and develop, said Burch, who created and self-funded the program. Her inspiration for the pilot program came at a rare, sedentary moment in her life, when she moved to Bellingham in 2024 after 12 years of a nomadic lifestyle — much of it spent exploring the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, Patagonia and other locations on two wheels.



A cyclist considers a giant stray KFC Bucket, one stop of many on BIKE Bellingham's Quirky Quirks route. (Photo courtesy of Sarah Burch)

“Bike travel has been so influential to me in changing my life and how I see the world, and I just wanted to make sure that other people could have that same experience without any barriers to entry,” she said.

Built from a traveler’s perspective, the program draws attention to places people otherwise might miss in a vehicle. Traveling by bike taught Burch to see significance in the in-between places, even those along an ordinary drive to the grocery store or to work.

“I look at those places, and I ask the questions, ‘Why is it there? What’s the story behind this?’ And I follow my curiosities,” she said

Five themed routes are currently available on the app, spanning 62 locations across the city: Cats & Dogs, Gretchen’s Murals, Treemendous Trees, Salish Tribute and Quirky Quirks.



PNW Cycling Sisters group, including Janet Higbee-Robinson, rode the BIKE Bellingham's Treemendous Trees route in late June. *(Photo courtesy of BIKE Bellingham)*

Long-time cyclist and Bellingham native Janet Higbee-Robinson joined a group of women on the Treemendous Trees route, a tour through Bellingham's diverse and abundant arboreal history.

As a cyclist who savors the sensory experience of the ride, Higbee-Robinson said she appreciated the focus on exploring the community and nature rather than chasing speed or distance metrics.

"She [a group leader] took us to the trees, visiting the older big trees in my community, some of which I hadn't seen, some of which I'd ridden by and wondered about and got further explanation," she said.

Burch is also getting local organizations involved by developing routes for SeaFeast, Whatcom Water Week and Bellingham Bird Week in September and October.



BIKE Bellingham founder Sarah Burch led 15 cyclists on a 600-mile, 12-day tour she designed through the Pacific Northwest and Gulf Islands. *(Photo courtesy of Steedman Bass)*

With 25 themed routes in the works, Burch plans to roll out four more by the end of summer. While this particular program will stay rooted in Bellingham and its themes, she envisions expanding further under her business, **Curioocity LLC**.

Burch hopes to bring similar programs to other Washington state communities and envisions a 150-mile route across Whatcom County, linking the county's main cities while winding through the in-between places along the way.

“There are really a lot of avenues where I can take this,” she said. “This is kind of just the beginning.”

Rooted in the Pacific Northwest, Cameron Sires is a writer, editor and photographer serving newspapers and organizations across Western Washington.