

Stratford Cycling Tour



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An Easy Pedal Across the Town

For the Stratford visitor who has either brought, borrowed or rented a bicycle, we've devised a large, roughly-figure-8 cycling route covering 13.6 km, or 8.5 miles. It's a casual ride for the casual cyclist, and since it takes the form of several loops, there are several points at which you can decide whether to do the whole route or opt out at one of the central junctions.

Stratford is built on and around a valley that lines the Avon River and its tributary creeks, as well as a man-made lake, Lake Victoria, in the middle of the city. So there will be some inclines to pedal up and down as you ride back and forth across sections of the valley.

For the most part, the route is laid out for right hand turns and skirts the city's main traffic arteries so you can enjoy the surroundings as you tour our city.

So rather than barreling through the route, we encourage you to take a few minutes once in a while get off your bike, breathe, stretch and absorb the easy, generous atmosphere here in Stratford.

Stratford has its own colourful cycling history...

- The first bicycle, then called a velocipede, was shown off in Stratford by the mayor of Woodstock, who rode one here in 1869.
- In 1885, Stratford's first official cycling club was formed, including the appointment of a local doctor as the official club surgeon – these bicycles were the old high-wheelers, or penny-farthings, with a 5- or 6-foot front wheel straddled by the rider and an 18-inch wheel trailing, and they weren't so stable on the county's rutted dirt and gravel roads.
- By the Gay '90s, bicycles were being built in Stratford and the popular endurance races of the day were called century tours – a grueling hundred-mile road trip to Seaforth, Bayfield, Goderich and back, which had to be completed within 12 hours, certified by the postmasters' stamps along the way. This earned you membership in the Century Road Club of Canada. Wagering was common.
- The Stratford Cycling Club, in their snappy blue and silver uniforms, gave way to the YMCA Wheel'ems Cycling Club, which dominated track racing in Ontario in the early 20th Century, and Stratford produced more than its share of provincial and dominion champs, as well as Olympian competitors.

Okay, let's do some rolling of our own.

1. Beginning from Stratford's City Hall as our landmark, let's get out of the downtown core by taking Wellington Street, on the north side of the city hall, down to the lights at St. Patrick Street and turn right.

2. Take St. Patrick, across Erie Street, to the end where you'll come to a T-intersection. Turn left onto Birmingham Street and then right onto Worsley Street, which will take you across the back of the high school's sports fields.

3. At the end of Worsley, turn right on St. Vincent Street and then the first left onto T.J. Dolan Drive. T.J. Dolan follows the south bank of the lower section of the Avon River.

4. At the end of T.J. Dolan, where it meets Centre Street and John Street, we have a few options:
 - If you're on a trail bike, you could go straight on into the T.J. Dolan Natural Area– it's a hiking path surfaced with mulch that should be well-packed by this time of the season; you could either ride in and back, or exit at the far, southwest end and pick up the route again at **Lorne Avenue**.
 - If you'd like a shorter route, take a right here on John, and right again immediately after the overhead railway bridge onto McLagan Drive; follow the north bank of the river upstream to Huron Street and we'll meet you at the **traffic lights at Huron and Douglas Streets**.
 - If you're up for the full loop, turn left up John Street and follow it past the hospital as it swings into Queensland Road and ends with a T-intersection at Lorne Avenue.

5. At the end of Queensland, turn right, or north, onto **Lorne Ave.** on the west edge of the city. You'll pass a historical plot of gravestones and the southwest entrance of the T.J. Dolan Natural Area on your right.

6. At the bottom of the hill, turn right onto O'Loane Avenue and up the hill to where the road flattens out again. Stay on O'Loane, past the lights at Huron Street, and take the next right onto Hibernia Street.

7. Take Hibernia 4 blocks south and turn right on Avondale Avenue.

8. Take Avondale across Huron Street again, and into the Avondale Cemetery. You could either bear right to loop through the cemetery or turn immediately left to the bottom of the hill to the lower gates at John Street.

9. Pass under the overhead railway bridge to the left, and then go right on McLagan Drive. Follow the lower section of the Avon River until you come up onto Huron Street.

10. Just to your left, there are **traffic lights at Huron and Douglas Streets**.

- If you've had enough riding for now, you could head right, across the Huron Street bridge and finish downtown.
- If you'd like to do the other half of this cycling tour, we'll continue from these traffic lights.

11. We'd like to cross and go east along William Street, but this section is a one-way – the wrong way. So we'll have to cross Huron with the lights and take Mornington Street up and along the side of St. James Church.

12. Just past St. James Church, take the second right onto Elizabeth Street. Take Elizabeth, crossing Waterloo Street with care, and continue to the T-intersection where Elizabeth meets James Street.

13. Turn right on James, down one short block to William Street, and turn left along the north side of the park and lake. Near the end of William, swing down to the right along Lakeside Drive and across the bridge that crosses the east end of Lake Victoria.

14. After crossing the bridge, turn left and up Snake Hill, or Queen's Park Drive, which will swing up near the Festival Theatre. (There are public washrooms built into the band shell on the left.)

15. Follow Queen's Park Drive around to the left, nearly full circle to the opposite side of the park, and turn right on Confederation Drive, which is a short one-way.

16. At the end of Confederation Drive, turn right on Romeo Street. Romeo is busy, so we'll only take it a couple of blocks, crossing Ontario Street, to the second right, Brunswick Street.

17. At Brunswick Street, go right and you're now on a one-way that will pass the front door of the Stratford Shakespearean Festival Warehouse. Take Brunswick all the way down to the City Hall, but be careful at these intersections as drivers aren't always clear if they are 4-way or 2-way stops.
