

24

Cycling Enhances Oregon Wine Country Experience

BY DAN SHRYOCK

McMinnville and Yamhill County, renowned as the epicenter of Oregon's vibrant wine industry, are gearing up with new, exhilarating reasons to escape into the vineyards and the nearby hills.

For years, Yamhill County's roads have not been conducive to safe cycling. A recent convergence of efforts, however, is making wine country the place to ride. A guided tour of selected wineries is an option. Or take a self-guided ride to tastings of your own choosing. Not interested in wine? Consider following a quiet valley road or a gravel path up to the forest.

Rent a Bike

Mac Bike Rentals, a recent offshoot of Tommy's Bicycle Shop, now rents traditional and pedal-assist e-bikes and offers some ideas on where to go. One popular loop leads from downtown McMinnville into the countryside along paved, low-traffic roads. E-bikes can tackle the steep driveway up to Youngberg Hill winery. Riders using manual bikes have been known to walk the most difficult parts for the reward of a glass of pinot noir and sweeping



valley views. A short detour includes a trip to Erratic Rock State Natural Site. The rock is a massive, 90-ton stone left by Ice Age floods more than 12,000 years ago. It's a local landmark.

An e-bike helps extend riding distances, so perhaps a day trip is in the plan. Consider starting at the Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum and pedaling across lush, rolling farmland to Grand Island along the Willamette River.

Rental information is available at macbikerentals.com.



Take a Tour

Lisa Gilbertson has the bikes and a curated excursion mapped for everyone taking a Wine de Roads tour from Newberg. Lisa and husband Phil Amaya have been leading guests to small wineries since 2019. A recent outing, for example, included stops at Eminent Domaine, Anacréon, and Domaine Divio wineries, all in the Ribbon Ridge and Chehalem Mountains American Viticultural Areas (AVAs). A six-hour trip includes rentals and van shuttles to and from selected area hotels.

"People visiting the area are unlikely to find some of these wineries on their own because they are so small," Gilbertson says. "It is always a treat for our guests to meet and possibly even taste with an owner or winemaker."

Don't worry about carrying souvenirs collected along the way. All bottle purchases are gathered and delivered by the end of the day.

"We try to provide some education at the wineries as well as helping the guests interact with the staff at the wineries, so we don't want that time to be rushed," Gilbertson says. "We can do longer custom routes for people who really want more mileage."

Learn more at winederoads.com.

Head for the Hills

Cycle Yamhill County, a non-profit group working with local government and tourism offices, is developing a series of gravel rides that take advantage of the region's verdant forests and remote scenery. "We're trying to get people off the paved roads and onto gravel," says group spokesperson Adam Stone. "We're focusing on projects that are of high significance to the community, both for people coming to visit and for local residents."

Six available routes, accessible using the Ride with GPS website or app, range from 12 to 66 miles and are designed for a variety of cycling abilities. Some are local loops from McMinnville or the nearby town of Yamhill while others stretch the legs with challenging efforts into the Coast Range. The 66-miler, which Stone calls "an adventure ride," ends at Cape Kiwanda on the Oregon coast. All include some uphill pedaling. Soon, these routes and others will include wayfinding signs and bicycle repair hubs.

Maps for suggested rides are online at visitmcminnville.com.

