

# Cycle Tourism Development Case Study 2012: Oregon, United States

## Background

Oregon Bicycle Tourism Partnership is a working group that supports activities and helps to implement plans to make Oregon the premier bicycling destination in the country. The organization partners with leaders in the bicycle industry, who work together to develop Oregon as a popular bicycle tourism destination. The goal of the organization is to promote Oregon as a premiere cycling destination in North America to be the place that bicyclists dream about.



## Governance

Travel Oregon convenes the Oregon Bicycle Tourism Partnership which has been in existence since 2003. The Partnership is a joint venture spearheaded by Oregon State Parks, Travel Oregon and Cycle Oregon. The 120 organizations that are involved are affiliated with tourism promotion and bicycle tourism in Oregon. Included are representatives from the Bicycle Transportation Alliance (BTA), the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), the City of Portland Office of Transportation (PDOT), Washington County Visitors Association, Travel Portland, and the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA). Meetings occur three to four times a year.

The loose knit partnership structure encourages the sharing of information. Industry organizations and their representatives are more open to communication and contributing resources because of the lack of mandatory investment and ability to network within the industry. As the partnership has evolved, different organizations are partnering with the organization, helping to increase the amount of communication and information within the industry. There is no charge or fee for organizations to participate in the Oregon Bicycle Tourism Partnership.



## Operations

The primary activities of the group include research, promotion, and marketing which includes campaigns such as the Adventurecation. The organization partners with other organizations to discuss strategies and to support the increased economic potential of the bicycle industry.

Oregon Bicycle Tourism Partnership products and activities also include:

- The promotion of Oregon as a premiere destination for bicycle tourism by using the [www.RideOregonRide.com](http://www.RideOregonRide.com) website to encourage bicyclists' involvements.
- Informing bicyclists about upcoming events and cycling resources such as bike shops and tour company services.
- Meeting with organizations to discuss past, current, and future goals and missions to plan for improved bicycle tourism marketing.
- Creating annual events such as the annual Oregon Bike Summit which sends representatives to the National Bike Summit to support safe, fun cycling experiences.



**Revenue and Funding** The organization supports its operations primarily through economic and tourism development funds provided by the government. Additional funding comes from bicycle tourism partnerships with tour companies, bike shops, event organizers, local destination marketing organizations, policy organizations, transportation authorities, and public land managers.

One of the main avenues of marketing of bicycle tourism comes under Travel Oregon's Adventurecation marketing campaign. The annual budget for this is over \$1 million. The funding for this marketing campaign comes from economic development and has been justified by the fact that it comes back from to the state in form of tourism spending.

## Strategic Plan

At present, there is no formal strategic plan for this working group. However, activities and priorities are centered around promoting bicycle tourism in Oregon and working together to further develop the states' cycle tourism assets by creating safe scenic byways for cyclists. There is also a focus on marketing, making use of creative advertising campaigns such as the Adventurecation campaign 2010 and publishing inserts for magazines such as the popular Outside Magazine, featuring cycling in Oregon.

The development and promotion of bicycle tourism in Oregon has proven to be very effective to date. As the Oregon Bicycle Tourism Partnership moves forward, it has been indicated by Cycle Oregon's President, that a strategic plan may now be needed.

## Research Projects

Research in this sector is considered important. The following studies have been completed, are underway or are considered for future research projects.

- Public research to discover the best cycling routes, favourite trails, road rides, and events. This type of research includes: finding out the most popular trails; looking at trends in cycling; demographics; types of cyclists – recreation vs. transportation. Public research is also important as it allows bicyclists in Oregon to voice their opinions.
- Examining what bicyclists are interested and disinterested in when it comes to trails, scenery, and convenience and what differentiates one trail from another to help better promote the experience for cyclists.
- The rights of bicyclists and ways to protect bicycling trails. For example, the Oregon Scenic Bikeways program helps support the protection of scenic bikeways in state law.
- How to best use technology such as the internet and online resources to promote bicycle tourism. For example, the use of an online information portal to offer a seamless bike trip planning experience.
- The economic benefits and impact of spending related to cycle tourism.



## Market Research

- The size of Oregon's cycling travel market includes over 1.3 million individuals, which includes 1 million overnight trips and 0.3 million day trips.
- There is a great amount of potential for economic benefits of cycle tourism due to the millions of dollars of spending of overnight and day time bicyclists.
- Total overnight spending totalled \$198.9 million in 2008 and 2009 combined. Spending by overnight visitors who reported biking as an activity is broken down as follows: 37% on lodging, 9% recreation, 14% transportation, 17% retail and 23% on food and beverage.
- Total day spending for day visitors who reported biking as an activity is \$24.2 million in 2008 and 2009 combined. Spending by day visitors is broken down as: 18% on recreation, 21% transportation, 25% retail; 26% on food and beverage.



- Ad space was also purchased in National Geographic magazine and online at [www.bicycling.com](http://www.bicycling.com).
- Contests which focus on golf, outdoor adventure, and cycling were created to encourage word of mouth and positive feedback. One such contest saw over 18,000 entries submitted and 11,000 of those were for the cycling prize, making it the most popular of the three.

## Current Status

The Oregon Bicycle Tourism Partnership remains an informal group that has been meeting and working together for almost a decade. Quarterly meetings are still held and the partnership, promotions and development continues to be led by Travel Oregon.

There is continued work to support cycling events and marketing campaigns. The on-line information and portals/websites are kept up to date with latest event and route information.

In recent years, there has been a large focus on the creation of State designated scenic bikeways. These are carefully designed to represent the best of Oregon's scenic beauty and adhere to a comprehensive set of design guidelines. There are currently nine designated bikeways that are intended to be the "best of the best" road bicycle riding using existing roads and paved paths in Oregon. Routes show off Oregon's Mountains, farmlands and historic places.



The bikeway program is another example of a partnership between Cycle Oregon, Travel Oregon, Oregon Department of Transportation and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

[www.oregonscenicbikeways.org](http://www.oregonscenicbikeways.org)

## Summary

The Oregon Bicycle Tourism Partnership appears to be an effective informal group for Travel Oregon and other high level partners to gather input, increase public awareness and perhaps access volunteer assistance or reach out to additional funding partners.

The promotion of Oregon as a cycling destination is led by Travel Oregon who as a government agency has accessed funds for tourism marketing and used them to create effective marketing campaigns targeting cycle tourists. The advertising campaigns, associated images and logos are unique and very creative, helping differentiate Oregon's cycling product. The stand along web portal is not only attractive and well laid out, but has a wealth of information all of which is easy to access.

The leadership for the Oregon Bicycle Tourism Partnership is evidently very strong as there are over 120 organizations that participate, making the potential for conflict and need for good management essential.

Looking forward, partners who have expressed a need for a more formal strategic plan to further advance the bicycle tourism development and promotion may be on the right track. As the market place becomes more competitive with nearby states offering comparable cycle tourism experiences, a strong and creative marketing campaign may not be enough to continue to remain a top destination.

## References

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