



## Bicycling Out of Hibernation

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*Cherie Langlois*

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Climbing on, I experience a fleeting worry after our hiatus: maybe I've forgotten how; maybe I'll wobble and gravity will yank me to the ground.

But riding a bicycle is just like ... well ... riding a bicycle. I never forget. Give the pedals a few good hard turns and I feel like I did when Dad took the training wheels off my purple bike with the flowery banana seat and white basket: I'm unfettered, flying.

Bicycling is my favorite mode of transportation, particularly in the country, where I want to savor every bit of the journey.

It's faster than walking or running, but much slower than car travel, where you whiz past everything encased in steel and glass. It uses no fossil fuels, just muscle power, meaning I can eat more chocolate without feeling guilty.

It makes me feel much stronger and younger than I am.

It offers oh-so-relaxing interludes (chatting as we glide past peaceful farms) punctuated by heart-stuttering adrenalin rushes (steep downhills, bicycle-chasing dogs, close encounters with logging trucks).

It energizes me and puts a smile on my face (mouth closed, however; I don't like eating bugs).

One of the reasons we love this path is because we don't have to be constantly alert for cars, leaving us free to focus on our surroundings.

My winter-dimmed senses switch to high as we leave the city of Orting behind. Fragrances of cow dung, wet earth, rain on its way.

The Carbon River's clamor, rattle of a kingfisher, a tractor growling as it attacks blackberries. Cold air whooshes into my lungs, numbs my cheeks, nose, and toes.

So much to see: the silvery river, which has changed course since the flood, and clouds kissed with pale rose, peach, pierced with forget-me-not blue sky; cows still wearing shaggy winter coats of russet and black; a new baby donkey of softest gray and our old friends, three dinosaur-like emus prowling their pasture.

It's good to be so alive again.

If you haven't been astride a bicycle in years and can find a nice, car-free country bike trail, why not give it a try?

But please, wear a helmet.  
Take care!

- Cherie