

6 Ways Cycling Keeps You Young

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Is injury or burnout keeping you from your first sporting love? The antidote lies in the saddle.

David Landers

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It could be argued that once an endurance athlete, always an endurance athlete. Passion for fitness, physical activity, and competition seldom disappears completely, even in the face of injury, temporary boredom, and aging.

Thankfully, whatever your first sporting love—rowing, tennis, triathlon or road cycling is an activity tailor-made for so-called "sporting retirees." Today's fitness enthusiasts have a stacked calendar of **global events** to choose from, with distances and courses suitable for beginners and elite-level amateurs alike. If you're finding yourself craving the rush of adrenaline, read on for six ways that road cycling could be the best prescription out there. You'll maintain fitness.

You'll maintain fitness

For many aging athletes, from triathletes to tennis players, cycling becomes the "go-to" activity once injuries or other unfortunate events prevent them from participating in the sport (or sports) they first fell in love with.

Cycling could no doubt be a fountain of youth, as a study being conducted on a **105-year-old French amateur cyclist** with better health than most 50-year-olds will reveal.

Currently transitioning from a triathlete to cyclist, Ross Young got hooked on IRONMAN after competing in 12 full IRONMAN races over four years. The 51-year-old from Austin and 2016 IRONMAN World Championship finisher explains that since a torn hip labrum made running painful and a pinched nerve

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has limited his swimming, cycling is his best fitness option. "Cycling was my first love and the area where I am strongest," he says. "Now I just want to remain healthy and ride in some epic places."



The VELOTHON series offers fantastic road cycling events in vibrant and scenic cities. [Click here for more information.](#)

Lisa Tibor, however, is an example of a cycling convert who wanted to sustain her already good health.

A skier, swimmer, runner, and former triathlete, Tibor, 39, started cycling when she had few swimming options while living in Mammoth Lakes, Calif. A fellow Nordic skier loaned Tibor a carbon fiber road bike, and Tibor has been cycling ever since.

"I like being active, but it's also about enjoying my life as much as possible," explains Tibor, an orthopedic surgeon specializing in sports medicine in the Bay Area.

Tibor complements her cycling with strength training, yoga, and Pilates. "When you are cycling, you spend time hunched over, so it's really important to cross-train," she says.

You'll satisfy your competitive drive

Though physical power and stamina may decrease as an athlete ages, the drive to improve—or even win—does not. Road races and other cycling events can help feed an aging athletes' inner competitiveness.

In 1997, David Holder competed in a sprint triathlon in Winnipeg, Canada, and the track and field athlete-plus-swimmer found the perfect combination of his abilities. Over the next 18 years, Holder competed in all triathlon distances, including four IRONMAN events, until arthritis in his shoulders and a slower run pace made racing less satisfying for someone used to being first in his age group.

"I started thinking more about cycling," he says. "I just wanted to ride."

Now 44 and living south of Vancouver, BC, Holder gets his competitive fix by participating in road races as part of the Steveston Athletic Association cycling team.

You'll belong to a community

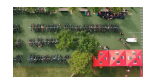
From June through September of 2016, 62-year-old Ruth Anne Cooper completed a century ride every weekend, totaling 1,700 miles.

Cooper, a former multi-sport athlete (she qualified for the 1989 IRONMAN World Championship), the Chicagoan explains her motivation for driving across the Midwest to find her weekly century:

"It's so much more social than running or swimming," she says. "It's so much fun to meet up with different

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people and feel alive in a group. That's what I like about the cycling: working together, getting a paceline going, helping each other out. And you can actually talk to people and get to meet them while you are riding."

Cycling offers another key attraction for cyclists like Cooper: belonging to a community at an age when camaraderie is as important as competition.



Athletes enjoying the camaraderie and riding in a peloton at a VELOTHON event. [Click here for more.](#)

Three years ago, Palo Alto resident Jeana Rose, 51, switched to cycling after being a runner, open water swimmer, and triathlete. "I became a marketing executive, wife, and mom and had knee surgery. Figuring that I couldn't do it all, I would have to narrow my focus."

Rose currently rides with a group called Alto Velo. "Not only do I love what I'm doing, I love that I'm doing it now. There are lots of interesting, mature, and much more accomplished women than I am out here."

Holder points to group rides as examples of a community spirit. "You always have the team around you. Even if you are having a bad day, the team will help you finish the ride. I love being out on the road with the team."

You'll develop new skills

New cyclists—especially former triathletes—learn new lingo and specific bike handling skills quickly when they participate in group rides and road races. What better way to stay engaged than learning how to properly draft, hold onto a wheel, or "pull" other riders. True rookies will quickly learn about pacing for a ride and planning adequate nutrition for the different distances of road races.

Developing new skills does not need to be all work. Tibor has taken several cycling tour vacations to improve weaknesses such as climbing hills.

You'll breathe fresh air!

Finally, road cycling—whether training ride or a race—combine two ingredients guaranteeing a healthy life: physical activity and the outdoors.

Holder believes his cycling workouts are much easier outside in the elements than on a trainer, and the variety of routes and landscapes all over the world are becoming more accessible—thanks to organized road races such as the **VELOTHON series** and tours.

"I know every mile of sunshine is one truly enjoyed, whether grimacing behind another wheel or gasping at the top of a faster-than-ever climb," agrees Rose.

You'll embrace another stage of life

While many (your sport here)-turned-cyclists have made the switch to cycling permanent, others choose to keep their fitness options open.

Cooper, in addition to another summer of weekly century rides, is eyeing an aqua bike race, and Holder promises "there's another triathlon in me, just not in the near future.

Perhaps he'll wave to the rest of us from the top of an epic climb at one of the **VELOTHON events**.

David Landers is a freelance writer with a passion for triathlon and travel. He lives in Vancouver, B.C.

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