

Group cycling tours:

A “business” approach to the promotion of cycling

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The history of cycling trips is as old as the bicycle itself. However, group cycling tours are a much more recent phenomenon. Since 1994, the Tour de l'Île de Montréal (a branch of Vélo Québec, which is an associate member of the ECF) has been marketing cycling packages. To date, 18,000 people have taken part in these trips, exploring various regions of Quebec, as well as France, Italy and Cuba. “Les Voyages du Tour de l'Île” first offered these trips only to Canadian travellers, but since 1999 the agency's products have also been available to other customers. These international marketing initiatives now focus on France and the United States but will gradually be extended to more and more countries. The involvement of the Tour de l'Île de Montréal in cycling tourism is a logical extension of the Tour de l'Île itself, an annual event launched 15 years ago that brings 40,000 cyclists onto the streets of Montreal for one day each spring. The fundamental objective of the creators of the Tour de l'Île was to convince a car-oriented population to cycle more. And over time, an increasing number of the participants in the Tour de l'Île have requested opportunities to cycle on more than just one Sunday a year. For this reason, the organizers of the event have also begun to arrange cycling trips. The speaker will discuss the activities of her travel agency, the economic profile of its clientele and the needs of people who travel by bike. She will explain that to make these group trips possible, the travel industry (transporters, providers of accommodations, government tourist bureaus) must make services available to cyclists, not just to drivers. She will also explain how taking part in these package trips and travelling on roads by bike for extended periods can cause people to modify their everyday transportation habits.