

bicycling on Amelia Island

BY KAREN MILLER
PHOTO BY WILLIAM RASER

I love to ride my bike around Amelia Island, and, in the last two years, it has become a lot easier to do so. With miles of new bike trails, better sidewalks, and safer bike lanes, my friends and I are pedaling now more than ever. Did you know that the number one question asked by tourists when they visit is, “Are there safe places to ride a bike around the island?”

Cycling is one of the most versatile sports that anyone can participate in, and it’s also great fun. I thought it would be enjoyable to try out some of the new trails that will now take you safely from the north end of Amelia Island to the very southern tip, and even beyond. Some people are under the misconception that there is one long, paved trail to take you through the island, but that is not true. The Amelia Island Bike Trail is a series of trails that connect together so that you can ride everywhere around the island safely. The thing I like about the island trails is they are diverse and distinctive everywhere you go, making your cycling experience fun and rewarding no matter where you cycle on the island.

I began my trip at Fort Clinch State Park, the most northern tip of Amelia Island. You can take the back trails if you have an off-road bike, and they are pretty challenging. I chose to take the easier route on the main road, which brought me from the Amelia River through the state park’s maritime hammock and estuarine tidal marsh. When I got to the entrance of the park, I crossed Atlantic Avenue and continued out behind the Atlantic Rec Center, where I entered Egan’s Creek Greenway.

The Greenway is one of my favorite parts of the trail. It is all off road, but easy to bike, and I always see a multitude of birds, turtles, and, occasionally, a raccoon or otter. It was a beautiful, sunny day as I traveled the trail across Jasmine Street, and onto the southern part of the Greenway, which now goes all the way to Sadler Road, behind the Residence Inn. I highly recommend picking up a map of the Greenway, as there are other side trails and you can get turned around a little if you’re not paying attention. But I managed to come out unscathed, and then turned left toward the beach, riding on the sidewalk for a short distance until I came to First Avenue, where I took a right.



First Avenue runs parallel to South Fletcher, a quiet neighborhood street with very little traffic and friendly people who greeted me good morning as I cycled through. When I reached Bill Melton Drive and the Fernandina Beach Golf Club, I rode up Bill Melton and through that neighborhood until I reached Buccaneer Trail. The sidewalk along Buccaneer Trail is very safe to ride on, set well back from the street, and a treat awaits cyclists along that part of the trail: the Ten Acres Kraft Athletic Club. A private organization, Ten Acres has a large sign at its gate that welcomes bicyclists to come into the club to rest by the river.

Ten Acres is a nice place to take a break, have a snack, drink some water, and enjoy the view of the river. If you ride down there at sunset, the view is especially picturesque. After my rest, I rode south until I came to A1A, which took me all the way to Amelia River State Park at the south end of the island. This part of the trail is where I noticed so much improvement – the bike lanes are wide and safe, and cyclists are easily seen by motorists. What a pleasurable experience!

There is still some construction ongoing as I write this, but the trails will be completed by March 2013. If I were to continue over the Nassau Sound, I would have discovered even more trails through Big and Little Talbot Islands, and, if I was feeling really adventurous, I could ride to Mayport, taking the St. John’s River ferry, and continue all the way to Jacksonville, and even St. Augustine. Whew! I think I’ll save that for another day.

For a map of Amelia’s bike trails and more information, visit www.ameliainlandtrail.org and www.ameliainland.com/biketrails.