

## Back Roads and Beaches Bike and Multisport Route



- **Lorain County Heritage/Visit Lorain County**
- **Type:**
  - Health & fitness
  - Nature
  - Culture & history
- The route was created to encourage more travel by bike and less by motorized vehicle by offering a premier recreational route combined with culture, arts and history in Lorain County
- **Year Started: 2007**

County: Lorain



**Lorain County**

In 2007, under the leadership of the Lorain County Visitors Bureau, Lorain County Heritage created the Back Roads and Beaches bike and multi-sport route of North Central Ohio to provide a low-traffic, scenic route that takes cyclists through 100+miles of Underground Railroad history, culture, arts, pristine nature, and Lake Erie shoreline. In addition, the route features permanent signage and leads riders to orchards, wineries, restaurants featuring healthy choices and locally grown foods. Along the way, participants can bike, hike, camp, kayak, fish, swim, run and bird-watch.

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## Back Roads and Beaches Bike and Multisport Route



- **Participants:** Cyclists from all over Ohio as well as those cycling cross country routes.
- **Printed map and Guide available in multiple places and on the route.**
- **Location:** Western Lorain County and along the Lake Erie shore
- **Program frequency:** ongoing at the desire of the rider

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Lorain County gets many traveling and cross country cyclists that visit each year for bike events, the Adventure Cycling Underground Railroad and Northern Tier routes, and other trips. Under the direction of the Lorain County Visitors Bureau, Lorain County Heritage works tirelessly to ensure these cyclists have a rich experience while here. This means, providing historical background information, maps, a personal welcome, lodging and local business information. LCH has even had staff ride out on bikes to welcome and guide groups to their destinations when there are bridges out or detours.

Signage exists along the route to guide cyclists on their way. The signage was donated by the Lorain County Engineer's office. Maps and Guides are produced and printed by Visit Lorain County. Financial contributors include the Lorain County Metro Parks, ODNR (Findley State Park), Performance Bicycle Inc., Lorain Wheelmen, and various lodging facilities. There is also a website with mapping and travel information important to cyclists such as details on where they can do laundry, get a good meal, wireless providers, lodging etc.

## Back Roads and Beaches Bike and Multisport Route



- Involves the community and local businesses to welcome participants
- Increases cycling traffic in communities that want to host these visitors
- BRaB is open to expansion to neighboring counties.

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Locally, the route has provided residents with the eye-opening revelation that Northern Ohio has beautiful and low traffic areas to ride. The route was developed for everyone so there are options for all levels of rider and all ages. Information on rentals, dining, parking and suggested itineraries make it easier for a new cyclist to plan a day and remove some of the initial intimidation of jumping into a new sporting experience. The route also has a educational component in that it features organics, history and the arts.

In addition to building and developing the route, LCH works hard toward cycling advocacy, traveling around North Central Ohio to deliver presentations to government officials, community leaders, business owners and residents about the importance of cycling on tourism and the local economy which has been hit hard by the loss of jobs. The message includes everything from the importance of bike racks and extensive directional signage to just being welcoming and helpful to cyclists.

The route links together several communities in North Central Ohio. These are communities that were previously thought to be industrial, however have very relevant and pristine natural areas, Underground Railroad history and environmental initiatives. Combining all these items and working together with government officials, state parks, local parks, historical organizations, bike shops, tourism officials and the community raises the impact and heightens the message.

Using non-motorized transportation increases exposure to local culture, businesses, restaurants and hotels. The experience is more interactive and engaging than that of the traveler motoring right through. The idea is for the participant to be more engaged and educated while the community benefits from the economic opportunities cyclists generate.

Before developing a bike route of Lorain County, the Visitors Bureau took a look at current studies and trends in eco-tourism and cycling tourism and found studies and statistics that bear out the significance and impact cyclist have on communities that build trails, routes and greenways.

## Back Roads and Beaches Bike and Multisport Route



- Back Roads and Beaches is active on Facebook and Twitter
- There have been many media stories covering the program
- Awards won:  
2008 Adventure Cycling Pacesetter Award, National Association of Sports Commissions “Outstanding Locally Created Program Award”, “Best Marketing Campaign” and “Best Communication”; Numerous Ohio Travel Association Ruby Awards for Social Media campaign and bike map.

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## Back Roads and Beaches Bike and Multisport Route



- Back Roads and Beaches works with local communities like Oberlin to provide spur routes for riders looking for best routes into and out of downtown areas and significant cultural sites.

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