

The Villages®

Community Development Districts

Recreation

A Bicycle Friendly Community

The Villages is among the fastest growing places in the United States and - at 115,000+ population and more than 40 square miles - the largest retirement community in the world. The Villages has been developed with a system of roads, multi-modal paths, golf cart/bike lanes and amenities that make an outstanding environment for bicycling. The Villages is located primarily in Sumter County, Florida, with portions in Lake and Marion counties, approximately 45 miles northwest of Orlando and 20 miles south of Ocala.

The Villages is renowned for its amenities that encourage active lifestyles. In addition to its road and path network that is ideal for cycling, it has 50 golf courses with 600+ holes, more than 80 recreation centers and swimming pools, plus parks, dog parks and fitness trails, three softball complexes with 10 fields, a polo stadium, archery ranges, air gun ranges and a woodworking shop.

The community has approximately 2500 clubs and organizations covering virtually every imaginable interest as well as geographic area clubs, support groups, alumni groups and other organizations. Club notices are published each week in the 60+ page Recreation News which is distributed in the Daily Sun (newspaper) and at each of the recreation centers.

Bands, singers and musical ensembles appear from 5PM to 9PM every night of the year (except Christmas) at three town squares.

The town squares also have multi-screen movie theater complexes, restaurants and shops. Supermarkets and other shops, restaurants, offices and so forth are located throughout the community. All of these features are easily accessible by bicycle as well as by golf cart or automobile.

In 2014, the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) recognized The Villages as a Silver Bicycle Friendly community, Out of 490 cities and communities that have received Bicycle Friendly Community awards, only 107 are Silver or above. The Villages is the only retirement community ever to have received this designation.



Three bicycle clubs in The Villages currently offer organized rides throughout the year. Check the websites below for up-to-date information on ride start times and other planned events.

The Village Bicycle Club

<http://www.thevillagebicycleclub.com/>

Scheduled rides: Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, El Santiago Recreation Center parking lot

Founded in 2002, The Village Bicycle Club is the oldest bicycle club in The Villages. It currently has 153 members. The club has four groups of riders that go out on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and less formal rides on the other four days of the week. Club members are very active in supporting the local community, and have a yearly drive to collect unwanted bicycles from Villagers and the surrounding area. Club members evaluate, clean and repair more than 300 bikes each year and give them to the Sumter County Sheriff's Department for distribution to those who could not otherwise afford a bike.

Sumter Landing Bike Club

<https://slbike.club>

Scheduled rides: Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, parking lot at Barnes & Noble; Tuesday and Friday, Bradenton Recreation Center

Founded in 2005 to serve the southward expansion of The Villages, the Sumter Landing Bicycle Club has more than 670 members. In addition to the five weekly scheduled rides, the club supports local and long-distance away rides. There is active participation in all levels of riding, from social groups of 10 to 12 miles per hour to "A" level riding of more than 20 mph. Up to 150 riders may congregate for the ride start. The club also sponsors highway cleanups, educational programs, bike collections and charity rides. The Sumter Landing Bicycle Club has been selected named 2016 Club of the Year by the Florida Bicycle Association!

PANTHERS Tandem Club

<http://floridatandemclub.org/>

Scheduled rides: Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, leaving from the parking lot next to The Waterfront Inn

There are more than 30 active tandem bicycle couples living and enjoying riding in The Villages. In addition to three rides each week, the PTC holds a Tandem Rally in October of each year at the Waterfront Inn in The Villages and a rally at the Sebring International Raceway in Sebring, Florida in March. PTC also organizes summer weekend rides in locations such as Vero Beach, Veniice and Lake Wales.



FACILITIES FOR BICYCLISTS

At virtually all of the recreation centers, swimming pools, country clubs, golf starter shacks and other community facilities within The Village, cyclists will find rest rooms, water fountains, bike racks and shelters that are accessible to all residents and their guests.

Two bike shops are located within The Villages and there are several others nearby. The shops offer workshops and other educational opportunities, particularly for new riders and experienced riders who are new to the area. The bike clubs work with shop owners to keep them supplied with safety brochures, club information and notices of upcoming events.

The Villages map of multi-modal paths and roads with bike/cart lanes is available free at the sales and information centers. This schematic map also shows tunnels, traffic circles, golf courses, regional recreation centers, town centers and nearby external roads

The Villages App is a free wayfinding and information app for mobile devices. It provides routes for either motorists or golf carts (via the multi-modal paths) to any destination within The Villages, with excellent maps. For new cyclists or anyone who wants to explore an unfamiliar area, The Villages App makes route planning easy. It is also helpful if a cyclist gets lost or disoriented and needs to find the best way “home”, since it always knows where one is. The app can be downloaded from app stores.



PROMOTING SAFETY ON OUR ROADS AND MULTI-MODAL PATHS

Bicycle club leaders and members work to disseminate and reinforce knowledge of laws that govern all users of the roads and multi-modal paths in The Villages. They provide safety guidance at each ride start and at monthly club meetings, contribute articles and letters to the editor for the local media, distribute “safety tips” handouts, conduct presentations at new residents’ meetings and club meetings, and participate in expos and activities sponsored by the Recreation Department.

All education efforts stress that bicyclists must obey the laws. Many motorists believe that bicycles do not belong on the roads, counter to Florida law that gives bicycles all the rights and privileges of a motor vehicle except on major highways. In efforts to teach and clarify the 3-Foot Law, the bike clubs have distributed magnetic signs, golf cart license plates and t-shirts with the 3-foot law graphic.



The law enforcement agencies that cover portions of The Villages are the Florida Highway Patrol, Sumter County Sheriff's Office, Lake County Sheriff's Office, Marion County Sheriff's Office, Town of Lady Lake Police Department, City of Wildwood Police Department and City of Fruitland Park Police Department. Additionally, the Florida Highway Patrol enforces motor vehicle and commercial

vehicle laws and is charged with investigating motor vehicle crashes on roadways within unincorporated areas.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR CYCLISTS IN THE VILLAGES

Bike Club Education Programs – Educational programs are conducted at the bicycle clubs' monthly meetings and safety briefings are given before each scheduled group ride.

League Cycling Instructors (LCIs) – The Villages has eight LCIs who have gone through rigorous training conducted by the League of American Bicyclists. The LCIs make presentations and conduct workshops for clubs, neighborhood groups and other venues.

Orientation for New Residents – LCIs speak at monthly New Residents' Meetings (with attendance in excess of 150 for most months), to help make motorists, new cyclists and potential cyclists aware of biking in The Villages.



Bike EXPO – The Villages Bike EXPO has been held annually since 2012 and draws more than 600 attendees. Sponsored by The Villages Community Development Districts' Recreation Department, Bike EXPO focuses solely on cycling in and around The Villages, with displays by local cycling clubs, public safety officials, cycling related tour vendors and health focused organizations. The Bike EXPO is scheduled to precede the Hearts for Our Hospital Bicycle Challenge to make a Big Bike Weekend of attention and activities for cyclists and potential cyclists as well as opportunities to educate the general public.

Outdoor EXPO – Each spring the bicycle clubs participate in the Outdoor EXPO organized by the Recreation Department, a two-day event featuring clubs and businesses that cater to residents' outdoor interests.





CHARITY RIDES AND PUBLIC SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Hearts for Our Hospital Bicycle Challenge/ Big Bike Weekend – In 2015, the H4H ride involved 200 riders and raised \$30,000, while the 2016 ride had 313 riders and \$40,000 raised. The commitment for 2017 is an additional \$250,000, for a total commitment of \$325,000 for The Villages Regional Hospital Auxiliary Foundation over the next few years.

We Bike For Kids – This popular charity ride is held each spring to raise money for organizations that benefit children:

The Boys and Girls Club and Sumter County Youth Center.

Adopt-A-Highway Program – Bike club members have adopted Rainey Trail/CR 472 and provide regular clean-up crews for this busy, high visibility road leading into The Villages.

Sheriff's Bicycle Drive – Each year the bicycle clubs collect unwanted bicycles from Villagers and the surrounding area. Members of the bike clubs and other volunteers evaluate, clean and repair more than 300 donated bicycles and give them to the Sumter County Sheriff's Department for distribution to needy recipients.



Sumter County Sheriff's Bikes for Kids 12/5/2014

TIPS FOR SHARING THE ROAD

TIPS FOR MOTORISTS

Drive cautiously. Reduce speed when encountering cyclists. Don't tailgate, especially in bad weather. Recognize hazards cyclists may face and give them space.

Yield to cyclists. Bicycles are considered vehicles. Cyclists should be given the appropriate right of way. Allow extra time for cyclists to traverse intersections.

Be considerate. Scan for cyclists in traffic and at intersections. Do not blast your horn in close proximity to cyclists. Look for cyclists when opening doors.

Pass with care. When passing, leave three feet between you and a cyclist. Wait for safe road and traffic conditions when you pass. Check over your shoulder before returning to lane, so not to cut the bicyclist off.

Watch for children. Children on bicycles are often unpredictable. Expect the unexpected and slow down. Children can be harder to see.

TIPS FOR CYCLIST

The same laws that apply to motorists apply to cyclists. Obey all traffic control devices, including stopping at gates, and use hand signals to indicate stops and turns.

Always wear a properly fitting helmet.
Wear a helmet, no matter how short the trip.

Ride on the right. Always ride in the same direction as traffic. Use the furthest right lane that heads to your destination. Slower moving cyclists and motorists stay to the right.

Ride predictably. Ride in a straight line and don't swerve in the road or between parked cars. Check for traffic before entering street or intersection. Anticipate hazards and adjust your position accordingly.

Be visible. Ride with brightly colored clothing that provides contrast. Use blinking lights or reflectors during the day and lights at night. Announce yourself by making eye contact with motorists.

Be Street Smart... Get Educated

The League of American Bicyclists has designated The Villages, Florida a bicycle-friendly community at the Silver Level in recognition of outstanding efforts to encourage bicycling in The Villages. The award is current for four years 2014-2018.



League of American Bicyclists
www.Bikeleague.org



Safety Office
Florida Department of Transportation
www.dot.state.fl.us/safety
800-238-5328