

Taking On the Mountain With Only Two Tires: The New Sport Of Mountain Biking

It seems like now more than ever before in The United States, new sports are popping up all of the time. From the explosion of skateboarding, both street and ramp style, to the transformation of surfing from something only weirdos did to a normal pastime, sports are perpetually growing, changing, and challenging themselves to get more difficult. Whether it's big-wave surfing or kiteboarding, there's always someone upping the ante on what it means to be a true athlete.

A growing number of alternative sports for independent-minded people of all ages have been succeeding lately in The States, but nothing is doing quite as well as mountain biking, which has managed to carve out a niche previously only seen for skateboarders, who transformed from weirdos to mainstream. With a variety of different styles and methods, mountain biking is quickly sweeping the nation.

Rather than regular bike riding, which involves pavement and less attention paid to the surroundings, mountain biking is something where going off-road is par for the course. The terrain encountered while mountain biking is uneven, difficult, and tough sometimes to even walk on.

Yes, during the course of mountain biking, there have been many developments in different styles and techniques. Whether it's learning to do a backflip while flying through the air or just going out and riding a designated trail for a couple of hours, there are many different approaches to the sport of mountain biking, all of them correct, fun, and healthy.

The best way to get to know mountain biking is by getting to know the different categories of riding. There's trails, where bicyclists can be either in a more urban area or off-road, but the main goal of hopping over different objects without placing feet on the ground. It looks a little bit like those courses with jumps and hills, but is a little more extreme.

Probably the most famous variation of mountain biking is the kind seen everywhere from ESPN's X-Games to "bike parks" around the country. The style, dirt jumping, or big dirt riding, involves bicyclists with a significant amount of padding and smaller, durable mountain bikes taking on a large dirt jump. Riders are judged by the tricks they perform in the air, usually variations of twisting, flipping, and maneuvering the bike but still having a safe landing. While fun to watch, this is definitely not the spot for aspiring mountain bicyclists to begin.

A good transition from the type of mountain biking that most people picture into the more trick oriented riding is urban or street mountain biking, which many people would rather just categorize as an "extreme sport" but in an urban manner. The trick of this riding is to head to either deserted urban areas, or into more natural settings, and try to perform tricks and maneuver locations that are as they are when arriving. Often, the bicycles are a great deal lighter than those used for all-around mountain biking.

The best jumping off point for most riders is simple cross-country, which can encompass any number of different environments, terrains, and conditions. A cross-country mountain bike ride can be a simple affair, with lots of break time to enjoy the weather, or it can be more strenuous and involve a great deal of attempting to ride uphill, to navigate slippery or muddy areas, or having to jump around obstacles.

There are also newer, more intense takes on previously existing forms of mountain biking seen as more professional and challenging. One, known as short cross or speed cross, pits riders against a very short, very challenging trail. Usually, there are a great deal more obstacles, and the trail is a lot thinner. This is not a good starting point, and is recommended for experts only.

Since mountain biking is such a new and exciting sport, surely many other different variations and styles are bound to pop up in the next few years. But far from being just an outsider's sport, it's beginning to get the kind of acclaim that could eventually mean Olympic trials. Regardless of how mainstream or not it is, mountain biking is an incredible opportunity to participate in a sport that actually involves heading out into nature. Even if the closest thing to nature that's around is a park in New York City, those who are participating in mountain biking are outside in a way that other sports just haven't done, and the result will hopefully be more people of all ages who are healthy and not glued to screens all day long.

About the Author

Damian Papworth adores the excitement of mountain biking, but always makes sure he fills his [bike water bottles](#) before he goes. A [cycling water bottle](#) is so important to maintaining hydration in this grueling sport.

Source: <http://www.outdoorsarticles.com>