

Rack up your prizes as Cycle Aurora enters its final heat

Aurorans have been hitting the trails with a little bit of extra gusto this summer, and exploring local landmarks and businesses at the same time through Cycle Aurora, an initiative which launched for its third season on Canada Day.

Since July 1, participants in the Town-led initiative have been undertaking a series of weekly challenges, collecting points and prizes along the way. With just a few weeks to go before Cycle Aurora is put on the bike rack and locked up for another year, there are still plenty of opportunities to get involved and reap the rewards.

“Cycle Aurora has been really seamless and accommodating for families, vacations, schedules and the rollercoaster weather we've had,” says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. “Due to the flexibility of the GooseChase app, families can choose when to do certain missions, whether they in Aurora or away at the cottage. Some may choose to do some missions that aren't Aurora-specific when they are away and save the Aurora missions for when they are here.

“What's unique this year versus the previous two years is we have extended GooseChase over the nine weeks of the summer, with each of the weeks having a specific theme. However, when the week is over, the fun isn't because the missions stay intact. If the family chooses to take a week off and regroup back, the missions are there waiting for them to complete when it is good for them.”

One key effort with this year's missions has been to link many of them to cultural landmarks and experiences within Aurora, as well as with a splash of the Town's history.

“We're honing in on the more advanced riders with longer distance challenges, as well as for beginner riders, we have shorter challenges but trying to make it a fun spin, such as riding to the furthest school from your home versus the school you go to or, on the hottest day of summer, to check out one of the five splash pads in Town. It helps get people moving around Aurora.”

In the end, that's what it's all about.

Cycle Aurora was the brainchild of local resident Jen Turla, who got the first year of the event off the ground with an assist from Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland, who was then serving as a Councillor at large. Since then, it has become more of a municipal event, and Turla says she's more the “ideas person” who leaves it up to Ware and her team to bring to fruition.

“The beautiful thing about Cycle Aurora is you can take it at your pace,” Turla agrees. “There are dozens of missions that are live and you can choose any one of them that seems appealing to you and resonates with you, whether it is something where you're just learning about cycling safety or whether it's challenging yourself to try three different Aurora trails, or doing a different distance or maybe biking somewhere where you normally would have driven and make it more of an event. If you bike to go out and get ice cream, hey, you've worked off your ice cream before you even have it, so there are those benefits, too. It is a great way to get out, get some fresh air and see how beautiful Aurora is.

“I did the Three Trails mission and did a ride through Shepherd's Bush and up through the Arboretum, across the multi-use path on St. John's Sideroad and down through the David Tomlinson Nature Reserve and it was gorgeous. It was one of those moments that made me realize how beautiful this Town is and how lucky we are to have the trails we have. It will be great to get out and enjoy your own Town and I would definitely encourage anyone to give it a try.”

As the weeks continue, those who complete the missions are entered onto the leader board and two winners each week are randomly chosen to receive a gift card of their choice from a local business or eatery. It's what Ware describes as a “customized experience” for participants tailored to “what motivates them.”

“So far, this approach has been really well received because we have had adult couples choose dining gift cards, where we have had some kids choose toy store gift cards. We're keeping it very personalized and customized,” she says. “Some of the feedback we have

been receiving from the families participating is how accommodating this event has been for families, which have family members with exceptionalities or different requirements that an in-person day of experience might have been challenging. It has been really heart-warming hearing the true joy statements that are coming in organically, countless people have sent in emails just expressing how easy this has been and how it has really just added an extra hop to their summer. As well, participating has been free. There has been no cost to participate other than the ability to have a bicycle to use for them.?

By the end of July, 1,341 missions had been accomplished by participants.

To help increase this number and to gain your own rewards, visit aurora.ca/cycleaurora.

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