

SUMMER

URBAN SURVIVAL GUIDE

Welcome to summer

Spring fever is sooooo a couple of weeks ago. Beginning today, RedEye brings you our Urban Survival Guide to summer, a weekly look at making this summer sizzle—where to eat, where to play, what to wear and how to wear it. Check back every Thursday this month for more.

Hubert Banasiuk of Chicago rides his bike along the lakefront at North Avenue.

[ALEX GARCIA/TRIBUNE PHOTO]

BREAK OUT YOUR BIKE

By Jerry Soverlinsky
FOR REDEYE

With temperatures consistently in the 60s, joggers out in force along the lakefront and boats showing up in the harbors, it's time to get out your bicycle. But please, guys: Can we make 2006 the year of the gym short? Forget the lycra and spandex, OK?

It's been several months since your bike's seen sunlight, and it'll take a bit of maneuvering and work to get it into riding shape. It's not nearly as difficult as you might imagine, though. RedEye's four-phase plan will have you and your bike weaving your way around baby strollers and pedal carts in no time.

Sure, you could just grab your bike, pump air into the tires and hope for the best. But Rob Sadowsky, executive director of the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation, advises a more deliberate tack, with safety the utmost concern.

"You want to make sure all things are

tightened—bolts and quick releases—ensuring a safe ride," he explained. "You want to check your chain too. If it breaks, it can be dangerous. You need to know it's in good condition.

"Also, cables stretch over time. What was tuned up six months ago might now be out of tune. A proper tune-up makes for a more enjoyable ride."

So, ready for a tune-up? Here's the plan:

Step 1: Recovery

This one is quite possibly the most difficult phase of summer bike preparation: You'll need to get your bike out of the storage unit.

» Remove your 1986 pea coat from the handlebars and toss it onto the nearby beanbag chair.

» Move aside boxes for your TV, DVD player, computer, stereo and tennis shoes.

» Gash your leg on a rusty nail.

» Curse at your girlfriend/boyfriend/partner/spouse, who is standing nearby

and laughing.

» Yank on your bike until it's free. Voila!

Step 2: Transportation

The next step is getting your bike to the local shop. Sure, you could spend half a day trying to cram it into the back seat of your Honda Civic. But I prefer the CTA. Its buses and trains accommodate bicycles.

When loading my bike onto a CTA bus, I like to play the following game: I arrive during rush hour on the 151 bus (you know, the route where BlackBerry's out-number shoes) and feign a struggle with the bike rack. After about 30 seconds, I hop onto the bus and, in a loud, authoritative voice, ask: "Sorry for the delay, but does anybody have a 32-millimeter spanner wrench?"

I try to make eye contact with the thin guy reading The Wall Street Journal. He almost always offers the most memorable comments. »

City rides

» Chicago's Lakefront Trail covers about 18 miles from the north end of Lake Shore Drive at Hollywood Avenue to the South Shore Cultural Center.

» Chicago Critical Mass rides are planned for the last Friday of each month. Meet at Daley Plaza on Dearborn and Washington Streets at 5:30 p.m. (chicagocriticalmass.org)

» Bobby Chicago's Bike Hike plans various tours throughout the summer including "City in a Garden," "City of Neighborhoods" and "Sunglasses at Night" tours. There are day and night tours. For more information go to bobbysbikehike.com.

» Bike the Drive is an annual event that kicks cars off Lake Shore Drive for cyclists. This year it's May 28. The route stretches between Hollywood Avenue and the University of Chicago campus, 30 miles of lake and city views in all. Pre-registration is required, so visit bikebethehike.org.

» The 18th annual L.A.T.E. Ride is a 25-mile nighttime trip through Greek Town and the North Side on July 16. (lateride.org)

» The Chicagoland Bicycle Federation plans several events. Check them out at bikechicago2006.org.

» The Chicago Cycling Club sponsors rides every Saturday and Sunday from April through October, as well as evening and weekday rides. (chicagocyclingclub.org)

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SPEND AND SPIN

By Jerry Soverinsky

FOR REDEYE

You've just dropped a grand on a new bike—what's another hundred or so? Make sure your look's complete. After all, it's all about the accessories ... or something like that. Grab one of these cool gadgets at your local bike shop or off the Web sites provided.



Can you hear me now?

Tired of getting cut off by drivers distracted by cell-phone conversations and the radio? Make yourself heard with this 115 decibel (trust me, that's LOUD) Delta AirZound Horn. Put all cars, trucks, taxis and buses on notice. (\$29.99 at deltacycle.com)

Where in the world am I?

When your techie background craves more than what the typical distance-pedaled bike computer provides, reach for the Garmin Edge 205 GPS bike computer. Monitoring 24 "critical" functions, including—of course—sun-set and elevation grade, it'll provide you NASA-like feedback of your last 1,000 rides. (\$249.99 at garmin.com)



Junk in the trunk

Heading for a weekend (or longer) on two wheels? The BOB IbeX suspension trailer makes toting your gear a breeze, both on-road and off. It'll keep your stuff dry, even in foul weather. (\$399 at bobtrailers.com)

Set it ... and forget it

There's an alternative to having to take off your seat and front wheel every time you lock your bike. The On Guard Locking Skewer Set requires a special key for removal, providing you with peace of mind whenever your bike is unattended. (\$29.50 at onguardlock.com)

Use protection

Flying to Vancouver for your grandma's birthday and want to bring your bike along? More importantly, want it to arrive intact? Thule's hard-shell bike case is made of rugged polyethylene and will protect your bike from the most careless of airline baggage handlers. (Thule 99 Round Trip Bike Travel Case—\$329 at thuleracks.com)

[JERRY SOVERINSKY IS A REDEYE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR.]



>> Step 3: Delegation

Paul Kozy, owner of Kozy's Cyclery, says shoppers should get comfortable with the people at their bicycle shops.

"Especially in summer, many shops encounter repair backlogs," he said. "Before dropping off your bicycle, ask your shop's representative when it will be ready for pick-up. You don't want to drop it off for a simple repair only to have to wait a week."

Also, because the bike industry does not maintain a certification course for mechanics, Kozy said customers should inquire about a shop's willingness to stand behind their repairs.

Step 4: Enjoyment

A day or two later, your bike expertly tuned, you'll pay your mechanic and walk out onto the city streets. As you survey your surroundings, the congestion and bustle make you hesitate.

Don't let your nerves get the better of

Holding up your end

Paul Kozy, owner of Kozy's Cyclery, recommends following these steps after every ride to maximize your bike's performance:

- >> Check tire tread for wear and debris.
- >> Check quick release mechanisms.
- >> Check suspension (if applicable) to ensure smooth performance.
- >> Lubricate chain if necessary.
- >> Check wheels for wobbles.
- >> Squeeze brakes, ensuring they contact the rims.
- >> Check tire pressure.

you. It's a beautiful spring day, and the warm Chicago air invites you to explore nearby neighborhoods. Don't be afraid. The benefits of riding—emotional and physical—will be immediate.

[JERRY SOVERINSKY IS A REDEYE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR.]

GOING FOR SPOKES

By Jerry Soverinsky

FOR REDEYE

Looking for a cool ride for 2006? Check out these wheels. Remember: Bike manufacturers distribute their lines within territorial boundaries, so check the Web sites for a dealer near you.



Down and dirty

You can find a high-quality, full-suspension ride for under \$2,000. Cannondale's Prophet models provide stable, fast rides in lightweight, stiff frames. Here's the Cannondale Pro 600. (\$1,600 at cannondale.com)



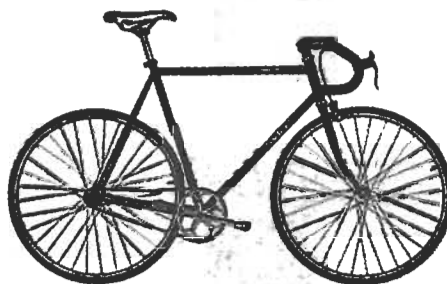
Commuting nirvana

If you're willing to spend a bit extra up a city bike that'll have you run errands in style. The Fuji Kyoto 2.0 has an aluminum frame and is loaded with extras, including a suspension fork, seatpost, fenders, rear rack, gear and drivetrain guard. (\$675 at fujibikes.com)



Women's ride

Ladies, are you tired of generic bike geometries that leave you straining to reach the handlebars? The Jamis Women's is designed with you in mind. It's a mid-level, commuter-friendly frame, ideal for short jaunts or more ambitious weekend rides. (\$440 at jamisbikes.com)



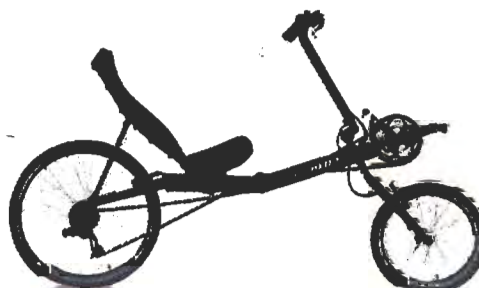
Be shiftless

Fixed-gear bikes are the newest trend and they're especially appropriate for Chicago's flat terrain. Your local shop can customize Surly Steamroller frames with the gearing of your choice, making for a truly personalized ride. (\$410, frame only, at surlybikes.com)



Fold it up

Cycle-happy road warriors need not resign themselves to their hotel workout rooms. The Trek F400, with its sturdy aluminum frame, fits into airline-approved luggage and affords a decent ride along mixed terrain. It's your office closet too. (\$659.99 at trekbikes.com)



Low riders

Can't get comfortable on a two-wheeler but still jonesin' to ride? Try a recumbent bike. They're easy on the rear and aerodynamic, to boot. This Bacchetta Cafe bike is \$995 at bacchettabikes.com.

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