

Try to enjoy riding in winter weather

By [Jackie Chow - Maple Ridge News](#)

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Many people who like to cycle in the summer prefer the comfort and warmth of their car in winter.

But if you're well prepared, it's still possible to enjoy cycling when it's cold and wet.

One of my favourite times of the year to bike to do my errands is actually around Christmas. It makes me feel quite jolly when I pass by the long line-ups of cars circling the parking lots multiple times before finally finding an empty spot, while I find the bike parking totally empty.

As many avid skiers know, you can happily recreate in sub-zero temperatures, but the key to doing so is wearing the right clothing. The bottom-line in off-summer cycling is layer-up for warmth: wear a bright-coloured, warm jacket, good gloves, toque under helmet, long-johns and tight-fitting pants.

With this basic ensemble, you can comfortably add another six or seven months to your riding year.

Riding in the rain in winter can be miserable, but with a little good timing and a good weather forecast, you can still select rainless winter days to get out for a little exercise, ride to town or to your work.

If you are considering commuting in rainy conditions, a good Gore-Tex-type waterproof jacket and rain pants help.

For those who ride shorter distances or are less worried about speed, a bicycle rain-cape is another solution. It has wrist and waist straps.

A reflective vest or strips on a jacket or cape will add visibility, which is important on short, dark and gloomy days.

A wool or synthetic wicking underliner and wool socks will help you to keep warm and dry, too. Cotton absorbs too much moisture and will make you feel cold.

If there's one thing that I really hate when biking in the rain on cold days, it's wet feet and hands. An ideal solution to keep those tootsies dry is rain booties, which cover your regular shoes and attach underneath and behind with Velcro straps. I was lucky enough to win some at a VACC event, and I love 'em.

You can also use water- and wind resistant full-fingered gloves.

Personally, I prefer mittens – my hands sometimes feel freezing even in the middle of the summer.

To be visible, get some bright LED lights. Experienced cyclists know how important lights are, especially in areas like Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows, where streets are often not, or not as well lit and cycling is not as common as in Vancouver, so that drivers are not looking out as much for cyclists.

Be aware that you'll need a good quality front light to be able to see on a busy road without streetlights, because the headlights of oncoming cars can be quite bothersome.

Another important thing to have on your bike when planning to ride in the rain is fenders.

The one thing to really look out for in colder weather is black ice. My advice would be to take transit or the car on those days, if you can.

Cycling in the cold may not be as tough as you think, as long as you're well prepared.

Why not give it a try for some of your shorter trips around town? You may just find that it's a better way to keep your New Year's resolutions than a boring car trip to the gym, or an even more boring work-out on the treadmill.

Jackie Chow is a member of the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows chapter of the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition.

Cycling infrastructure

Richard Drdul, an expert bike infrastructure designer with extensive experience in traffic calming, will do a presentation at Maple Ridge municipal hall on Thursday, Jan. 26, from 7-9 p.m. Anyone is welcome to attend.