

Cities Paving the Way for Car Free Sundays



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CAR FREE SUNDAYS / CICLOVIAS

From Guadalajara to New York, the Car Free Sunday movement is rapidly gaining pace. But what exactly is a Car Free Sunday?

Car Free Sundays are programs where the streets are **opened to people** and **closed to cars**. People traffic replaces car traffic, and the streets become “paved parks” where people of all ages, abilities, and social, economic, or ethnic background can come out and improve their mental, physical, and emotional health.

Car Free Sundays allow people to walk, bike, dance, skate, and do just about any physical activity on public spaces that are always there but are normally reserved solely for the use of automobiles. An added benefit of Car Free Sundays is that they allow people to discover how easy and convenient it is to reach places by walking and cycling when safe facilities are provided.

There is something so magical and exciting about Car Free Sundays, perhaps because it involves the exploration into a “forbidden” place. It provides a totally different perspective to view and enjoy the city and meet fellow citizens as equals.

More than just fun and games

Car Free Sundays are more than just a time for exercise. They are an entire community building and social engagement exercise in itself. They provide free recreational opportunities and public space for people to meet, interact, and make social connections.

Bogota’s *Ciclovía*, the original Car Free Sunday which began in the late 1970s, has evolved to become an important part of the city’s culture. As a true testament to the influence of the program many people have even met and fell in love at the *Ciclovía*.

Who’s doing it?

Today, cities around the world are looking to Bogota and following in their footsteps. Fortunately now there are many great examples to learn from, including many recently implemented programs, in large and small cities, in rich and poor countries.

We have listed several cities that we believe are the leaders in implementing Car Free Sundays. These cities have taken the initiative and are quickly becoming an inspiration for the next set of cities looking to start their own Car Free Sundays. We have provided brief summaries, useful links and unique features of these Car Free Sundays with the hope they inspire other cities to run their own events.

CITIES LEADING THE WAY

At 8 – 80 Cities we believe that Car Free Sundays are an important part of reclaiming the streets and giving them back to the people. We have decided to highlight these cities as leaders in this movement. Each city is completely different, and each city approaches Car Free Sundays in its own method. Cities such as Bogota have been doing their Car Free Sundays, the *Ciclovía*, for over 30 years and have made it a weekly success. Cities such as Winnipeg or San Francisco on the other hand, are just recently starting their Car Free Sundays. It is because of the differences between all the cities on this planet that Walk and Bike has created this portal of information when it comes to Car Free Sundays. We hope that everyone that visits this site can take the lessons these cities provide and create their own successful Car Free Days.

For more information and links to related resources for each city's program, please refer to the "Great Streets, Healthy Cities: Car Free Sundays Best Practices" CD or visit 8 – 80 Cities Car Free Sundays Ciclovía webpage at [http://www.8-80cities.org/Car Free Sundays.html](http://www.8-80cities.org/Car_Free_Sundays.html)

Ottawa, Canada



Name – Sunday Bikedays

When it started – August, 2008

Kilometres of road open – 65 kilometres

Participants – 80 000

Organizers – City of Ottawa, Alcatel-Lucent

Unique features – About 65 kilometres of routes through parks and streets free of car traffic open every Sunday morning in the summer between 6am and 1pm for over 30 years.



Ottawa's *Sunday Bikedays*, one of the oldest Car Free Sunday programs, has over time evolved to create 65 kilometres of pathways and streets that are open to the public and dedicated to cyclists, skaters, pedestrians and anyone else interested in coming out and taking advantage of the open streets. Every Sunday from May to September thousands of people come out to participate in recreational non-motorized activities along the beautiful Rideau Canal and Ottawa River.



Sunday Bikedays is run by Canada's National Capital Commission- a federal corporation with the mission to build the Canadian Capital City and Region into a source of pride and unity. The *Sunday Bikedays* program is tremendously popular among residents and tourists alike and has done much to provide opportunities for recreation in the city.

Winnipeg, Canada



Name – Ciclovía

When it started – September 13, 2009

Kilometres of road open – 7.5 kilometres

Participants – 10 000

Organizers – Downtown Winnipeg BIZ

Unique features – One of the first Canadian cities to hold a Ciclovía type event, the event used a popular downtown street and had it open longer than most Car Free Sundays (8am to 6pm)

The Winnipeg Ciclovía debuted on September 13, 2009 and was a tremendous success. The event was held as a pilot project, but the amount of people that turned out will likely lead to its return in the coming years. The event featured lots of activities such as a kids' zone with balloon bouncer, face painting, bike rodeo, straw maze and children's entertainers, fitness demonstrations including salsa babies, stroller fitness, zumba, yoga and stretching as well as three live bands. There was also a bike zone which included bike polo, bike repairs, and information from various cycling groups. A surprise hit was a sand box zone that consisted of five large sandboxes filled with toys and shovels for the kids. The event was finished off with a large outdoor concert that featured a prominent local band.





In addition to the Ciclovía during the summer, Winnipeg is also taking full advantage of its cold winters. Laying claim to a Guinness World Record for the 'Longest River Trail in the World', 9.34 km, Winnipeg hosts a type of 'Ciclovía on Ice' along the Assiniboine River. Once the river freezes over the Assiniboine Credit Union River Trail opens for people to skate, walk, or sled along the longest naturally frozen skating trail in the world. The

trail offers several access points, along with heated shelters and cabins to rest and relax in. The trail also offers many other activities such as curling, hockey, cycling and broomball. The 9.34 km trail links Assiniboine Park and The Forks and has been managed by the Festival du Voyageur inc. for close to twenty years. We hope this continues as a tradition in Winnipeg and inspires many other winter cities to hold their own 'Ciclovías on Ice'.

New York City, United States of America



Name – Summer Streets

When it started – August, 2008

Kilometres of road open – 11 kilometres

Participants – 150 000 over 3 days (300 000 in 2009)

Organizers – NYC DOT

Unique features – Guest appearances from Lance Armstrong, Jay Z, and David Byrne. Major downtown streets are used as the route for Summer Streets with free bike rentals and bike maintenance stations.

Starting in the summer of 2008 Mayor Bloomberg and the NYC Department of Transportation were able to boldly transform 87 blocks that were once full of cars, congestion, and pollution, into 87 blocks full of life, happiness, and entertainment through their *Summer Streets* program.

Modeled on Bogota's *Ciclovía* and Paris' *Paris Plage*, New York City's *Summer Streets* event opens up seven miles of Park Avenue in the heart of Manhattan on three consecutive Saturdays in August.





The launch of the program even brought out celebrities such as world renowned cyclist Lance Armstrong, music artist David Byrne, and hip hop artist Jay-Z, who all enthusiastically endorsed New York City's vision to redefine how we use our streets. Over 150,000 people of all ages, and cultures came out to enjoy the excitement of the streets without cars and participate in various recreational activities such as Yoga, dance, and fitness classes.

Portland, United States of America



Name – Sunday Parkways

When it started – June 22nd, 2008

Kilometres of road open – 12 kilometres

Participants – 15 000

Organizers – City of Portland Bureau of Transportation

Unique features – The route passes through residential streets, has 3-4 major activity areas along the route. Tons of entertainment and activities including tango, hula hooping, horseshoes, bike corrals, superhero bike ride, vision checks, yoga, children's circus, stilt-walking, and many more.

Portland's *Sunday Parkways* was inspired by the Bogota *Ciclovía* and successfully initiated by the City of Portland's Bureau of Transportation in June 2008. The project was so popular and well received that they subsequently hosted 3 events in the summer of 2009 and are planning at least 5 events in 2010.



The City describes the opened streets during these events as “temporary parks” that connect various neighbourhoods in the city. The program has leveraged huge support and donations from community volunteers, local businesses and agencies.



The approximately 6 miles of streets open to people and closed to cars feature various activities for people of all ages (hula hoop, tango, and live music) clustered in four parks along the route. Thousands of city residents participate in the events and enjoy the opportunity to do something different, meet new people, and be physically active.

Chicago, United States of America



Name - Open Streets

When it started – August, 2008

Kilometres of road open – 12 kilometres

Participants – 10 000

Organizers – Active Transportation Alliance, Chicago Community Trust and LISC/Chicago.

Unique features – Event was situated on boulevards in predominantly residential neighbourhoods and included activities and attractions such as Tae Kwon Do, Yoga, volleyball, basketball, street art, DJs, aerobics, chess, checkers, and many others.

Organized by the Active Transportation Alliance, and with tremendous community support, Chicago's first Car Free Sundays or *Sunday Parkways*, was held on two days in October 2008 and drew in over 10,000 participants. The route went through 5 different neighbourhoods and was such a success that organizers launched an even bigger event, re-named *Open Streets*, the following year on August 1st.





Eight miles of streets were opened for people with all kinds of activities planned by each of the five participating neighbourhoods, including giant games of checkers, chess and dominoes, as well as Twister and hula hoops. *Open Streets* not only brought out tens of thousands of Chicago residents to do some recreational activities, but it also helped strengthen community ties. Many residents experienced their city anew by exploring neighbourhoods they had never been before. *Open Streets* allowed residents to get active, play in

the streets, and just have fun.

Photos taken from www.activetrans.org/openstreets

San Francisco, United States of America



Name – Sunday Streets

When it started – August, 2008

Kilometres of road open – 65 kilometres

Participants – 15 000 to 20 000 (Depending on route, 5-6 times a year)

Organizers – San Francisco Sunday Streets, Liveable City, San Francisco Bike Coalition, San Francisco YMCA

Unique features – Alternating routes that explore many parts of the city, Godfather of Skate David Miles, and dance lessons with Cheryl Burke.



Since 2008, San Francisco's *Sunday Streets* has been encouraging residents to "come out and play." The program has garnered so much public support that while it started with two events in 2008 it grew to 6 events in 2009 and is now looking to expand the program to once a month in 2010. Approximately 15, 000- 20 000 people come out to bring San Francisco's streets to life for each event.



Sunday Streets is unique in that it alternates and changes its routes across various communities and neighbourhoods for each event.



The program is co-presented by the Municipal Transportation Agency and Liveable City, a local non-profit organization. What is amazing about this program is how the organizers have been able to leverage tremendous community support, through volunteerism, sponsorships, donations and participation from local agencies and businesses. In fact, over 60 community organizations actively participate in *Sunday Streets* by providing fun activities

for people of all ages including free bike rentals, bike repair, bike safety and skills workshops, yoga, guided walks, activities for seniors, games for kids, and programming for people with pets.

Kentucky, United States of America



Name - 2nd Sunday (2SKY)

When it started – 2nd Sunday in October, 2008

Kilometres of road open – Various distances across 70 counties

Number of participants – 12 000

Organizer – University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension

Unique features – A State wide event with over 70 counties participating endorsed by Kentucky's Governor and the General Assembly



Kentucky's *Second Sunday* event began in 2008 and drew in 12 000 participants across the state. *Second Sunday* is a state-wide campaign that encourages residents to bike, walk, run, play and participate in many healthy activities. Kentucky is consistently ranked among the top 10 states for obesity and many citizens face obesity related diseases. The *Second Sunday* program is an excellent way for thousands to get the weekly recommended dosage of physical activity.

One of the highlights of *Second Sunday* is that it is a state wide event with many cities and townships holding their own *Second Sunday* event. *Second Sunday* is not just one afternoon of physical activity, but a vehicle to raise awareness of the need for local infrastructure that promotes a healthy lifestyle. Experiencing a fun-filled day of activities in existing roadways can be the catalyst for local communities to actively pursue convenient and safe places for physical activity the other 364 days of the year. *Second Sunday* can serve as the first step in improving the physical, environmental and economic health of all Kentuckians.



Photos taken from www.2ndsundayky.com

Paris, France



Name – Paris Plages/Paris Respire

When it started – July, 2002

Kilometres of road open – Over 3 kilometres

Participants – From 2002 to 2007 it has attracted over 4 million people

Organizers – Mairie de Paris

Unique features – The city brings in 1350 tonnes of recycled sand, hundreds of chairs, umbrellas, chaise lounges, and hammocks for public use. It also provides water based activities such as floating swimming pools, canoe-kayaks, rowing boats and pedal boats.



Paris Plages (Paris Beaches) was launched in July 2002 by Mayor Bertrand Delanoë. It is an annual event, in the month of July, where Parisians can experience a beach vacation without having to leave the city. The city brings in sand, palm trees, umbrellas, lounge chairs, and hammocks and transforms the street along the bank of the Seine River into a beach paradise, open to people and closed to cars.



No matter your age, gender, ability, social, economic or ethnic background *Paris Plages* has something for everyone. People can lie on the 'beach', rock climb, take art classes, kayak, and even take a book out on loan.



While *Paris Plages* runs for 1 month in the summer, for the other 11 months, Parisians can also enjoy a new program called *Paris Respire*, or *Paris Breathes*. *Paris Respire* is a year long program that targets several streets and avenues and opens them to the public and closes them to traffic every Sunday and public holiday of the year. *Paris Respire*, in addition to the 314 kilometres of bike paths currently available make Sundays in Paris an excellent day for residents to come out and enjoy the streets and get more healthy and active.

Bogota, Colombia



Name – Ciclovía

When it started – 1976

Kilometres of road open – 121 kilometres

Participants – 1.0 – 1.3 million each Sunday

Organizers – City of Bogota

Unique features – The model and inspiration for Car Free Sundays around the world. Draws millions of people weekly and has been a tremendous success since its revival in the 90s.



Bogota's *Ciclovía* is the pioneer in Car Free Sunday programs. It started in 1976, with a modest route and little programming and management. In 1995, there was a huge resurgence of the program, led by Parks and Recreation Commissioner Gil Penalosa, and a new management structure and vision for the program was put in place. The *Ciclovía* was reborn as not just a place for cyclists to come and ride their bikes but as an exercise in social integration, bringing out all kinds of people, whether young, old, rich, or poor, to participate in recreational activities.

Today, the route encompasses an expansive 120 km (70 miles) and has become a model for many of the world's cities. In a city of 7 million people it draws over 1.5 million people out every Sunday! The *Ciclovía* is now cemented as part of the city's culture and a means for the entire population to have access to public space where they can be physically active.



Guadalajara, Mexico



Name – Via Recreativa

When it started – 2004

Kilometres of road open – 64 kilometres

Participants – 245 000

Organizers – Guadalajara 2020 and Municipal government

Unique features – Via RecreActiva Free bicycle rentals, extreme sports, soccer and volleyball matches and many other activities



Via Recreativa (Recreational Street), Guadalajara's Car Free Sunday program, began in 2004 with the closure of 11.4 kilometres on one of the city's main avenues, starting not as a pilot project but for every Sunday of the year, bringing out thousands of people to walk, bike, or skate every week! Prior to the *Via Recreativa* the biggest recreational activity in the region was a half marathon with 3,000 participants, just one Sunday per year.

Over the years the *Via Recreativa* route has increased in size with neighbouring municipalities joining in and linking to the route. Today an incredible 64 km of streets are open to people and closed to cars connecting four main municipalities of the Greater Guadalajara Region. What's more is that every Sunday over 245,000 people go out to be physically active and enjoy the streets car free.

The *Via Recreativa* program was created and driven by leadership of a local non profit organization Guadalajara 2020 who was able to bring the idea to their city and garner support from the Municipal government, which administers the program. *Via Recreativa* is also supported by the State government and local Universities. The program is extremely well managed with a multitude of activities including a free bicycle lending program, extreme sports, soccer and volleyball matches, kids educational games, dominoes and chess.

