

A cycling paradise: Provincetown named No. 1 small city for biking in the U.S.

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Provincetown has been recognized as the most bikeable small city in America for 2021, and the fifth most bikeable in the world, according to data-driven ratings released Thursday by the PeopleForBikes organization.

The group has cited the town at the top in the past, but this year expanded to evaluating more than 750 cities and towns around the globe to spotlight the best communities for bicycling. In the worldwide top 10 listed at cityratings.peopleforbikes.org, Provincetown had the fifth highest overall score, behind only four cities in the Netherlands. Alma, Michigan was the only other U.S. city in the top 10.

In this country, Provincetown was ranked first among small cities, while Berkeley, California, topped the list for medium cities and Brooklyn, New York, rated highest for large cities. All three cities had identical top rankings, the report said.

What the winners had in common, the PeopleForBikes statement said, were “systems of interconnected bike lanes, paths, trails and safe streets that make bicycling an enjoyable and effective means of transportation.” One reason for this fourth annual ranking, the advocacy organization said, was to provide leaders with actionable ideas to make biking better in their communities.

“It really is as simple as, ‘If you build it, they will come,’” Kyle Wagenschutz, vice president of local innovation at PeopleForBikes, said in the announcement. “Building better bike infrastructure is the key to increasing ridership, improving safety and working towards equitable mobility.”

Bicycles are allowed on all Provincetown town roads, and there are more than 7 miles of bike trails within the Cape Cod National Seashore boundaries, according to information from the Provincetown Bicycle Committee at bikeprovincetown.org.

“Bicycles have become an integral part of the town’s persona,” the website says.

The PeopleForBikes rankings were based on two factors, the organization said: the quality of the bicycle network in a region (Network Score) and community perceptions of bicycling (Community Score), which included online surveys submitted by local residents and bicycling advocates.

Statistics cited at bikeprovincetown.org show that Provincetown has the most bicycle commuters in Barnstable County, both by percentage and in total number. The town’s 12.8% bike commute figure based on 2015 statistics was significantly higher than other local Bicycle Friendly Communities, with Nantucket and Falmouth both at 2.7%, according to the organization.

“Commuting stats are based on the town’s very small year-round population, so they don’t even begin to take into account the number of people riding bicycles for errands and daily tasks or the huge number of riders in the summer season,” the website notes.

For the 2017 summer season, the town’s harbormaster reported that just over 5,700 bicycle tickets were purchased for ferry trips between Provincetown and Boston.

Some history noted by bikeprovincetown.org: Early proposals for bike paths to connect to the rest of Cape Cod date back to 1899. In 1967, the Province Lands Bike Trail debuted as the first bike trail in a national park. And in 1978, the state established its first designated bike route, MA-1, 125 miles from Boston to Provincetown.

Provincetown is also the traditional end-point for the annual Pan-Mass Challenge bicycle ride to raise money for cancer research.

This year’s PeopleForBikes ranking list included 30 cities in Europe, with Utrecht and Groningen in the Netherlands rated first; 42 in Canada, topped by Quebec cities Longueuil and Montreal; and 35 in Australia, where Canberra and Alice Springs beat out the competition.