

# All Women, All Mountain

**Whatcom Mountain Biking Coalition's Joyriders club is a hub for women who love riding on the mountain.**

By Yvonne Worden

More men are mountain bikers in the United States than women, but this gender imbalance is becoming a thing of the past in Whatcom County. The Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition's Joyriders club is a free, all-women's mountain biking club for people who want to try out the sport, improve their skills and just have fun.

The club caters to beginner, intermediate and expert riders. Led by IMBA ICP-certified guides, rides are offered twice a month on Thursdays at 6pm through September. In typical Bellingham fashion, meetings wrap-up at local breweries for post-ride libations.

Mountain biking, in its cross-country, enduro, downhill and freeriding forms, has been growing in popularity since the 1980s. Mountain bikers number about 40 million in the United States. While men and women both participate in mountain bike competitions and have Olympic teams, women often have a hard time breaking into the sport.

"I think the major barrier for women is being scared of two things, getting hurt and not feeling adequate, and neither of those things will happen with us," said Tanya Storm, co-founder of the WMBC Joyriders.

A total of 80 riders from Seattle, Olympia, North Bend and Bellingham attended

the Joyriders launch in April 2016. The turnout was much higher than expected.

"There's no doubt we are filling a need in Bellingham," Storm said.

The WMBC Joyriders club was created by two busy Bellingham moms who love to mountain bike. Co-founders Tanya Storm and Zoae Spackman have been riding together in Whatcom County for about six years. They have casually guided rides with women over the past four years, but didn't become an official club until joining forces with the Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition.

Both Storm and Spackman were introduced to mountain biking by their boyfriends (who later became their husbands).



But they say that riding with a partner isn't the best way to learn. Also, good riders don't necessarily make the best teachers.

Storm is from North Carolina. After learning some mountain biking basics from her boyfriend, she joined a women's mountain biking group there called the "Dirt Divas," which, she said, was an inspiration for the Joyriders club.

"It was really important in my development as a rider," Storm said.

Storm and Spackman said men and women typically approach mountain biking differently from each other, which is why having a women's mountain biking club is helpful for new riders.

"[Women] are very detailed – we take a more measured, intelligent approach to doing dangerous things," Storm said.

Rides are no drop, meaning no one is left behind. Each group has a guide in the

front and in the back so everyone can stick together. "I love the slow people because they give me reasons to hide in the back," Storm said, laughing.

On rides, each section of the trail is workshopped. Whether it's riding over a log ramp or landing a jump, each rider has the chance to try it. Groups will repeat features when people want to master them. Watching other riders execute features successfully is part of the learning process. But no one is forced to try a feature if they don't want to.

"Plenty of people we've helped and who have started out with us are much better than us today," Storm said. "It's a great compliment."

Spackman and Storm say that guiding mountain biking rides is most rewarding when they see women master their skills and just have a really good day on the mountain.

"It's just pure, unbridled joy and empowerment," Storm said.

To learn more about the WMBC Joyriders club and their upcoming rides, visit [wmbcmtb.org/joyriders](http://wmbcmtb.org/joyriders) or follow them on Facebook and Instagram. *SL*

*Yvonne Worden is the social media and digital marketing assistant at Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism. Check out [Bellingham.org](http://Bellingham.org) for more fun things to do in Bellingham.*



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