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E-bikes in the time of coronavirus

The novel coronavirus pandemic that is sweeping the world has changed how we work, how we shop and how we commute for either of those things. Most of us have shuttered ourselves in our homes, hissing at the sun for a good part of the day. Some of us have taken this opportunity to get outside, slap our butts on our bikes and cycle our little thighs off. E-bike sales have skyrocketed around the world during the lockdown, for good reason.

We're driving less, the environment is healing itself without all the dirty humans pumping toxins into the air, creating the perfect opportunity to pick up an e-bike and get out into the world. Social distancing doesn't mean that we can't get a fair amount of exercise in and it doesn't mean that we can't social distance as far as possible from the crazy loons we're locked down with (our families). E-bikes offer a healthy escape.

Need for better transport

So why the boom during a pandemic? There are several reasons. Economically, cities like New York have lifted e-bike restrictions for delivery workers, enabling a massive, essential workforce the ability to be more efficient and sustain business and supply food and other goods to the hardest hit city in the world. This case can be made in cities around the world. E-bikes are not cars, do not clog up roads in tight city centres and make it easier for delivery people to deliver while not wearing them down with hard cycling to do so.

In London, Brompton bicycles is loaning bikes to members of the National Health Service (NHS) while in Scotland, Forth Environment Link is providing free loaners to NHS staff so they can avoid using public transportation. This detail is important in cities around the world, where not only health workers but citizens are looking to avoid public transportation, which are basically just free rides for viruses.

Those citizens are benefiting from lower e-bike prices. As demand rises and e-bike manufacturers are selling more e-bikes, they are able to offer discounts. Prices are dropping all over the place, enabling people who may have not been able to afford an e-bike before the ability to purchase one now. Especially if it saves them from cramming onto a bus with the coronavirus and its good friend COVID-19. Avoiding infection and disease is as good a reason as ever to get an e-bike.

Health benefits lead the way

Right now, as we're all waiting for an inevitable viral infection, boosting our immune systems through exercise is a great way to fight the coronavirus. Sunshine, cycling pair up well as an immune booster. That's just science. Cycling is also a great way to physically distance while exercising, especially compared to running. Just don't cycle in packs. That kind of defeats the purpose. Turn on that e-bike motor and leave everyone else in the dust.

If you live in a crowded city and don't own a car, an e-bike is a great way to get out of town without a train ticket. Most e-bikes can go at least 40km on one charge, many going up to 80km if you dial back the assisted power level and actually push pedals some of the way. You can carry a spare battery or pedal home (though 80km is a long way to pedal for even the most physically capable cyclists, so carry an extra battery). The more people you physically distance from, the better.

The coronavirus pandemic isn't going away anytime soon, but e-bike sharing might be. Many companies are cutting services because this isn't the time to be using shared equipment. So people are buying their own e-bikes and are finding their world suddenly much larger.

Anywhere in the world is good for riding an e-bike during a pandemic, not just in a large city. Between running simple errands and getting a healthy dose of exercise, e-biking is a great alternative to driving. On a personal level, using the e-bike has provided a much needed escape from working-at-home, something driving doesn't offer (because then I have to touch a gas pump). Roads or bike paths are available to e-bikers, and absorbing the peace of the great outdoors is its own benefit.

With less cars on the road, better weather, easier riding in cities and healthier commuting options for essential workers, e-bikes are one of the best options for surviving the coronavirus pandemic.

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