

Bicycling

on Martha's Vineyard



Laws Applicable to Bicyclists:

Bicyclists are subject to Massachusetts's traffic laws and regulations, specifically:

- Bicyclists shall ride WITH traffic. *DO NOT ride against traffic!*
- Bicyclists may ride two abreast, but should get into single file to assist faster-moving traffic to pass.
- Bicyclists shall signal when turning or stopping using either hand, unless safety requires both hands on the handlebars.
- Bicyclists 16 and under MUST wear a helmet (adults should do the same).
- Bicyclists and passengers must ride on a permanent seat or child seat.
- Bicyclists must not carry bundles, except in a basket or rack.
- Parked bicycles may not obstruct vehicle or pedestrian traffic. *This applies on the paths, too.*
- Bicycles ridden at night (½ hour after sunset to ½ hour before sunrise) must be equipped with a white front light and a red rear light or reflector and have reflectors on both pedals (or cyclist's ankles). Reflectors or reflective clothing visible from the sides is also required at night.

Another set of laws that apply on Martha's Vineyard: *The Laws of Physics*. Accidents can happen, even on vacation! If you fail to obey traffic laws and exercise caution, you risk serious injury. The Martha's Vineyard Hospital treats well over 100 injured cyclists a year. Don't be one of them!

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Other Things You Need to Know:

In addition to the laws, the following advice will help you on the Island's roads and paths:

- The Island features a network of shared use paths. Cyclists **share** the path with pedestrians, roller skaters, etc. All users should stay to the right on paths. Remember that pedestrians have the right of way on paths, and cyclists must give audible warning when passing (e.g., "Passing on your left").
- Be alert for vehicles crossing the shared use paths from intersecting roads and driveways.
- Cyclists ALWAYS have the right to ride in the road, even when there is an adjacent path.
- Narrow, rural roads are part of the Island's charm, but they often have little or no shoulder for cyclists – especially Up-Island. Make it easier for motorists to share-the-road by staying to the right and, if riding in a group, spacing yourselves to allow passing.
- Evaluate your experience and comfort with riding in traffic that includes large trucks and buses.
- Riding on sidewalks is permissible, except in downtown areas where posted.
- Beware of sand and debris on roads and paths, soft road shoulders, and storm drains.
- Always wear a helmet. Without a helmet, even minor falls can be life threatening!
- Don't impair your safety by using cell phones, headphones or ear buds while riding.
- Plan ahead: Carry plenty of water. Food, water, bike shops, and restrooms are generally only available at town centers. Also, bring a Vineyard Transit Authority (VTA) schedule and fare in case you become tired or stranded with a flat tire); VTA buses are equipped with racks for two or three bikes.

Be safe and enjoy your stay!

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A. West Chop Loop: For a quick, scenic four-mile ride in Vineyard Haven, take Main Street out past the West Chop Lighthouse and loop back on either Main Street or Franklin Street.

B. East Chop Drive: There is no continuous Shared Use Path along the water route between Vineyard Haven and Oak Bluffs three-mile trip, which is a heavily traveled roadway. Be cautious especially around the hospital, and consider detouring to East Chop Drive; while it's a little longer, it's scenic and much less congested.

C. Oak Bluffs to Edgartown: The six-mile Beach Road path from Oak Bluffs to Edgartown is the Island's most popular ride for a reason, offering scenic views of State Beach and Sengokontacket Pond. Note that the path is narrow and usually quite sandy.

D. Edgartown to Vineyard Haven: To get directly from Edgartown to Vineyard Haven, use the Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road path. Watch for vehicles crossing the path from side roads and driveways on this rolling, seven-mile trip.

E. Edgartown to South Beach: Biking from Edgartown to South Beach (three miles) avoids parking hassles, and there are paths with bike racks on both Katama and Herring Creek Roads. Roads in Katama, like Edgartown Bay Road and Slough Cove Road, offer generally flat and pleasant riding.

F. State Forest Loops: Four miles outside Edgartown, the path along Edgartown-West Tisbury Road takes you into the State Forest, where you can enjoy a beautiful loop of roughly ten miles around the forest. There is also a smaller loop of about three miles in the northeast corner of the forest. Both of these loops are easily accessible from Oak Bluffs (five miles away) and Vineyard Haven (about three miles). Exercise caution, as some portions of the path surface are heavily cracked, and be watchful at corners for other path users.

G. Up-Island Route: "Up-Island" towns of West Tisbury, Chilmark, and Aquinnah do not have Shared Use Paths. Most of the roads in these towns are narrow, winding, and hilly, and suitable mainly for experienced cyclists.

H. West Tisbury to Vineyard Haven: To get from West Tisbury to Vineyard Haven, consider a detour on rolling, twisty Lambert's Cove Road, and then take a left onto West Spring Street to avoid the heavy traffic on Upper State Road.

