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Andy Rogers / P-I

With the Seattle skyline behind them, riders head toward the finish of the Chilly Hilly bicycle ride on Bainbridge Island on Sunday.

## Bainbridge Island bike ride is rite of spring

### 3,500 show up for 'Chilly Hilly'

By [BRAD WONG](#)

P-I REPORTER

Some riders pedaled tandem bicycles. A few rode fixed-gear bikes. And others powered high-end, aerodynamic road models.

But all the participants in Sunday's annual Chilly Hilly ride put their hearts and legs to work and achieved a steady cadence in their loop of Bainbridge Island.

About 3,500 riders descended on the island for the 37th ride, which the Cascade Bicycle Club sponsors as a fundraising event on the last Sunday of February.

"It's a great way to start spring," said bicyclist Wendy Blake, of Seattle. "The bulbs are coming out, and I want to get out on my bike."

Sunday's ride covered 33 miles and included about 2,700 feet of riding up hills and slopes, Cascade Event Director Dave Douglas said.

Those who showed up included unicyclists, a man in a recumbent, people wearing jackets and ties, and a guy pulling a large frog figure on a one-wheeled trailer designed for children.

The Sunday morning rain and gray skies might have discouraged some from participating in this year's ride, which has attracted a record 4,400 bicyclists in the past, Douglas said.

It is considered the second-largest in the state; the Seattle-to-Portland bike trek in July is the largest with about 10,000 riders each year, he said.

As Issaquah resident Tim Eaves, 59, took the M/V Wenatchee ferry from Seattle to Bainbridge Island on Sunday, he sipped coffee and talked about the titanium road bike that he would pedal on his fourth Chilly Hilly.

"These organized rides are fun because of the number of bicyclists on the road," he said.

"I ride for recreation and health. If I do 3,000 miles or more in a year, it feels good. If I don't, it feels bad."

Nearby, Blake said she was happy to be back in physical shape to make the ride on her hybrid bicycle.

The 41-year-old's advice to nonbicyclists: "Give it a try. Once you start, it's hard to stop."

On the island, a sea of neon and other brightly colored jackets could be seen, as riders wearing helmets and sports glasses pedaled up a slope and started on the route.

Others zipped down an island street, near the finish line and ferry dock.

At the intersection of Madison Avenue and Winslow Way, Seattle rider Jim Hawk, 40, had just finished the ride and straddled his road bike.

"It's a good way to get ready for the summer," he said. "It gets you out of the house."

On the route, he talked with other riders and admired the views of the Puget Sound. "It's hard to beat the experience," he said.

The Rev. Dennis Tierney from St. Barnabas Episcopal Church stood by the road and blessed riders with water.

One passing bicyclist spotted him and said: "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned."

"You made it this far," Tierney replied. "Your sins are forgiven. Last hill coming up."

Donna Van Zandt, a 27-year-old from Seattle who just had completed her first Chilly Hilly, waited for a friend near the finish line.

"You feel like every part of your body was going to pass out. But you have to keep going," she said.

"It's only pain and the pain is temporary."

What mattered more, she said, was that she finished the ride.

With that milestone in mind, she acknowledged that a small celebration was in the works but only after she pedaled home.

"I'm going to celebrate by getting my favorite pizza, my favorite beer and crashing on my couch," she said.

## **CASCADE CLUB EVENTS**

- March 14-15: Bike Expo at Warren G. Magnuson Park, 7400 Sand Point Way N.E.
- June 13: Flying Wheels Summer Century, a 100-mile ride, on the Eastside.
- July 11-12: The 30th annual Seattle-to-Portland Bicycle Classic, a 200-mile ride.

More details about these events can be found at [cascade.org](http://cascade.org).

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