

Gothenburg offers free bikes for six months to get local population cycling



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For all the efforts of bike to work schemes and cycle lanes, it still remains a significant challenge to encourage those who have never biked to ditch their cars. Identifying that much of the problem comes from a reluctance to break an established way of life, alongside a belief that bikes are impractical for certain tasks, the city of Gothenburg in Sweden has launched project [Testcyklisterna](#) — offering residents free bikes which they can own for half a year.

In order to take part in the scheme, residents had to vow to use the bike at least three times a week instead of their car. Three dozen “test cyclists” were then selected by the Energy Agency of West Sweden to take part in the project and set an example to their neighbors, family and friends. The group included a range from daily commuters to students, to parents of young children, in order to show how bicycles could be compatible with every lifestyle.

Of course, the project does acknowledge that some tasks will potentially be more challenging by bike — tasks such as shopping or collecting children from school — but it also believes that with the range of bikes and add-ons now available, cycling is a far more capable form of transport than most realise, and it is the purpose of the scheme to help spread awareness of this and break old mentalities and habits. Within the scheme, cargo bikes are already being used on shopping trips and to pick up kids from school, while folding electric bikes have been employed for daily commutes.

Upon completing the project, each participant will have the chance to buy the bike at a discount, and

so far, all of the cyclists have enjoyed their switch to two wheels. If the scheme should prove a success, it begs the question whether it could be made economical in the long term to roll it out on a larger scale — leading to a fitter population and a greener environment.

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