

The background of the image is a yellow topographic map with white contour lines. The lines are irregular and wavy, representing elevation changes. Some lines are solid, while others are dashed, indicating different types of terrain or boundaries.

Urban cycling for beginners.

presented by www.lesrookies.com

Introduction

Because we, the Rookies, also commute by bike, we thought that in this exceptional context, we would build a little guide for all the Rookies out there who would like to **avoid crowded and infected public transports** and try cycling to work.

This guide is made for any person who has none or little experience cycling, in or outside of town. And for the people who always considered that bike-commuting wasn't for them : either because they lack of confidence, or they lack of knowledge, or they lack of motivation.

Our goal is to show you that **city-cycling isn't dangerous or complicated** if you're prepared correctly.

This document doesn't claim to be a complete encyclopedia of urban cycling. But a short **'first-steps' guide** to introduce you to bike-commuting and help you in your first researches and reflections before eventually hoping on your bike. We are more than happy to listen to your feedbacks, so we can improve the guide along the way !

We believe that bicycles are the urban vehicles of the future. And this is why we try to get as much people as possible to get on bikes. Juste like some major international cities like London, New-York, Paris, Berlin, San Francisco, etc.

It's not meant to be an ecological doctrine or anything like that. **But only pragmatism.**

The benefits of cycling for the economy, social and public health issues are just countless, and we still don't understand why this simple and cheap solution is still so underrated.

No matter if you're seven or seventy-seven years old, if you have two or twenty kilometers to ride, if you have children or dogs to carry, we are absolutely sure that **you'll find the right match for your needs.**

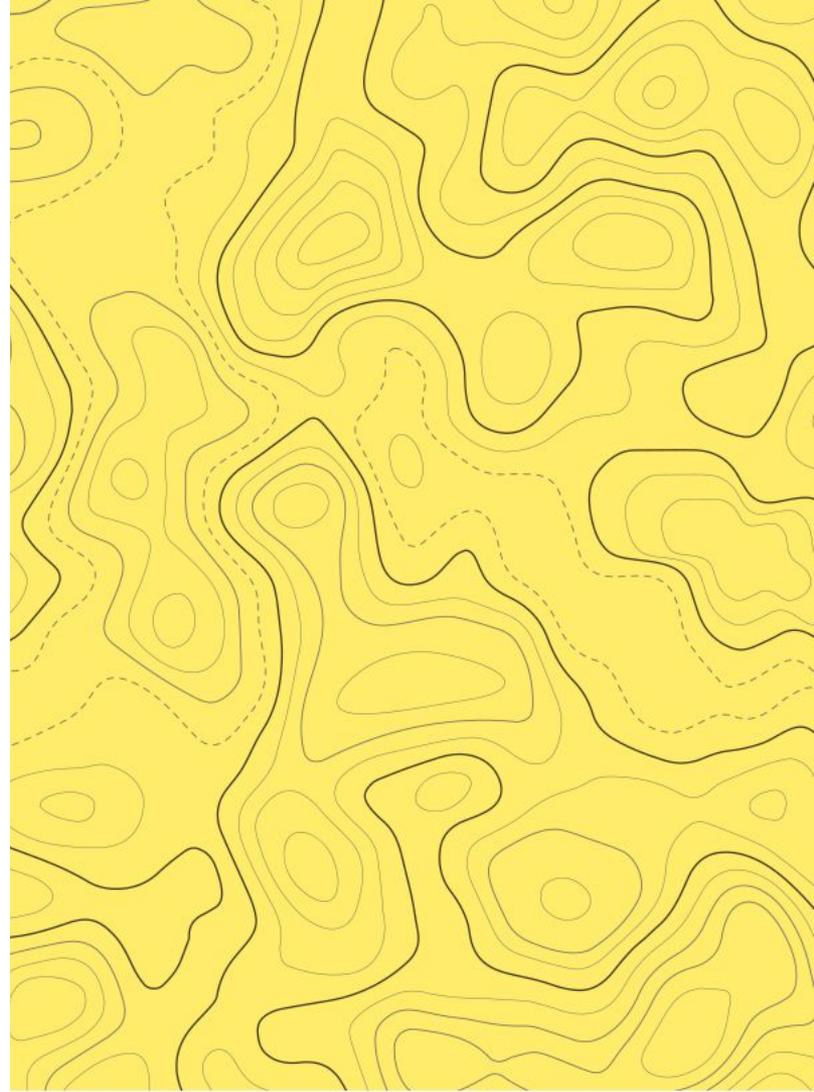
So we wish you a happy reading, and safe rides to come !

www.lesrookies.com



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01

Why we cycle.



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**Roo
kies**

Avoid **crowded and infected**
public transports

Save **(a lot)** of money

(Re)discover your city

Lose weight
and build muscles

Strengthen your
immune system

Improve your **mental well-being**
and reduce stress

Free & fast
parking

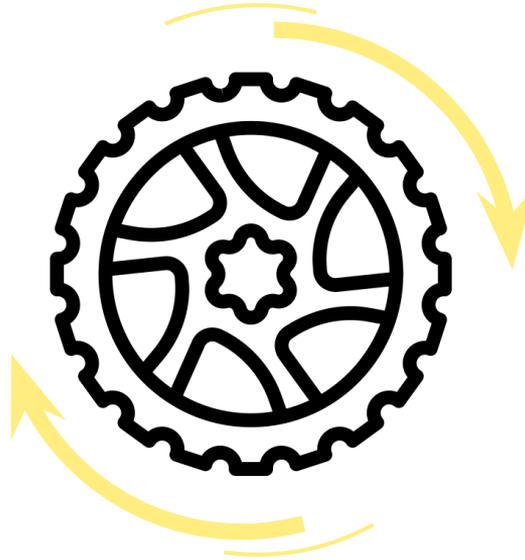
Improve your **lung health**

Cut heart disease
and **cancer risks**

Save time
and always be punctual

Improve your city :
noise, safety, pollution, taxes, beauty...

Save the **planet**



Choosing the right bicyclette.

Option 01

Buy your own bike.



Photo : Collin Hardy / Unsplash



City bikes

The most common bicycle, offering a straight, comfortable position. They can also be foldable. Don't expect to break speed records on this one, though.



'single-speed' bikes

For the minimalist, these bikes are very popular for city commuters who look for a light, stylish bicycle that is easy to maintain. Some ride with a fixed gear, also called fixies.



Road & Gravel bikes

Designed for performance, but that doesn't mean a lack of comfort. It just has to be chosen with care, to suit your physicality perfectly. Gravel bikes are probably more city-proof than classic road bikes.



Cargos bikes

With two or three wheels, these bikes offer a huge storage space on the front to carry heavy loads or kids. Easier to drive, long-tail bikes are a sort of limousine allowing you to carry kids or heavy loads behind you.



Electric bikes

Any of the bikes mentioned can be either muscle-powered, or electric-powered.

If you live uphill or if you just can't be bothered, this is probably the best solution for you.

Good to know

Ile-de-France, and the city of Paris subsidise the purchase of electric bikes.

Paris

If you live in Paris, you can be refunded up to :
400€ for an electric bicycle.
600€ for an electric cargo-bike

Ile-de-France

If you live in the suburbs, you can expect :
500€ for an electric bicycle.
600€ for an electric cargo-bike.

Option 02

Rent a bike

NB : As we live in Paris area, this section is necessarily 'Paris-centered'. But get in touch with your local city-hall. There are probably similar services near you !



Photo: Veligo Location

Véligo

Rent an e-bike for 6 month for just 40€/month.

This price includes the e-bike with standard equipment, but also maintenance & repair services. It's the perfect opportunity to test-drive and find out what riding an e-bike is all about.

Positive aspect :

- Quality-built bike
- Cheaper than buying your own e-bike
- You own your own bike (not free-floating)
- Easy to carry and charge batteries
- Low chances of theft
- 70km autonomy

Needs improvement:

- Only six months max
- The bike is quite heavy





Photo: Velib-metropole

Vélib'

Velibs are self-service bikes you can use in Paris and some cities around. The fleet is composed of mechanical and electric bikes

You take your bike from a Velib station, and have to dock it back in another station.

It will cost you around 40€/year.

Positive aspect:

- Really, really, really, cheap
- Not super comfortable, but ok for short trips

Needs improvement:

- Shared bikes
- The service isn't 100% trustworthy
- You need to find a spot to dock it back

Jump

Jump is the free-floating e-bike service you can book straight from your Uber app.

The bikes are comfortable and reliable, but the service is the most expensive option : 1€ as soon as you unlock the bike + 0,15€ per minute.

So a 15 minutes ride will cost your around 3,25€. To compare, in ten rides you've already paid more than an annual subscription to Velib.

Positive aspect:

- Comfortable and effortless e-bikes
- You can find them everywhere
- You can leave them everywhere

Needs improvement:

- Really expensive
- When booking your bike you never really know if it's broken or not.



Photo : Jump

Option 03

You already have a bike.





Photo : Florencia Vladana / Unsplash

Good News.

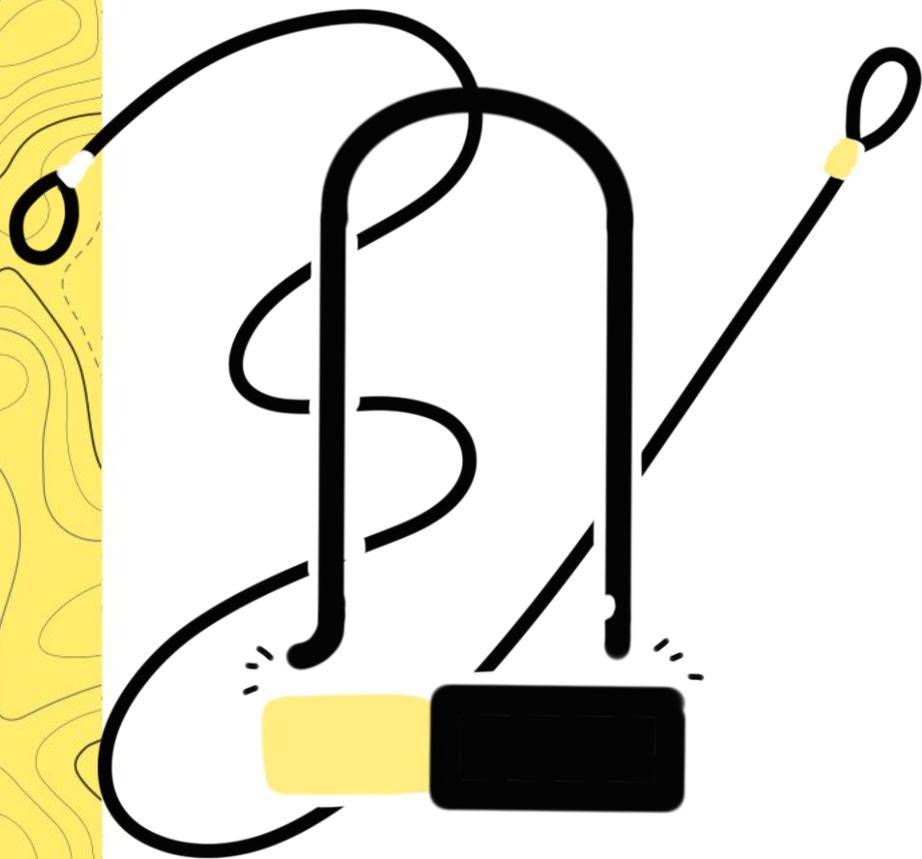
To encourage people getting on bikes, the french government announced this week a special **50€ support** if you need to repair your bike : change the chain, wheels, brakes, etc.

More information here (in french) : coupdepoucevelo.fr

Gear.

If you decide to purchase your own bike, make sure to save some of your money for a few additional mandatory expenses.





Locks.

Don't buy cheap cable locks.
Unless you really DGAF if your bike gets stolen.

Buy a strong U-lock.
Especially if your bike stays outside at night.

An unbreakable lock doesn't exist.
But some will discourage thieves. Some will not.

Locks

The industry standard is the Kryptonite lock : strong, exists in various sizes depending on your needs, is sold with a mount to fix it on your bike when you're riding, and it comes with a cable to lock your wheels with it.

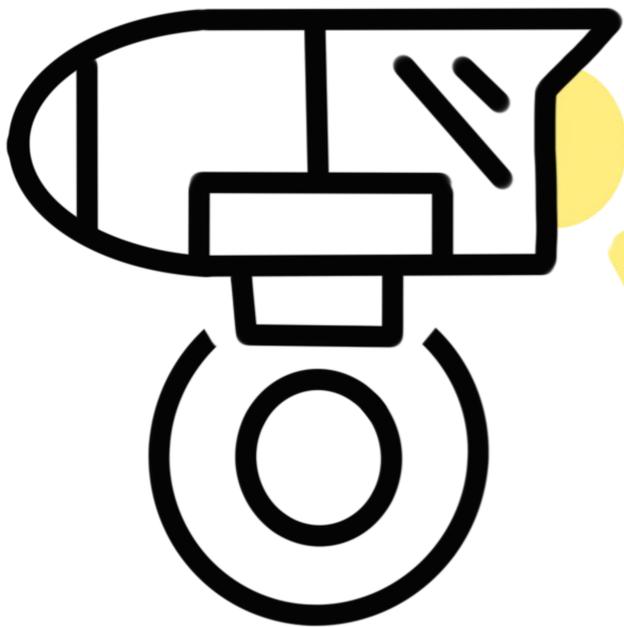
Don't buy a lock under 40/50€.

Other brands worth considering: Abus or Decathlon.

- How much do you care about your bike ?
- Is it a fancy bike that catches the eye ?
- Will it sleep outside ?

Photos : Kryptonite



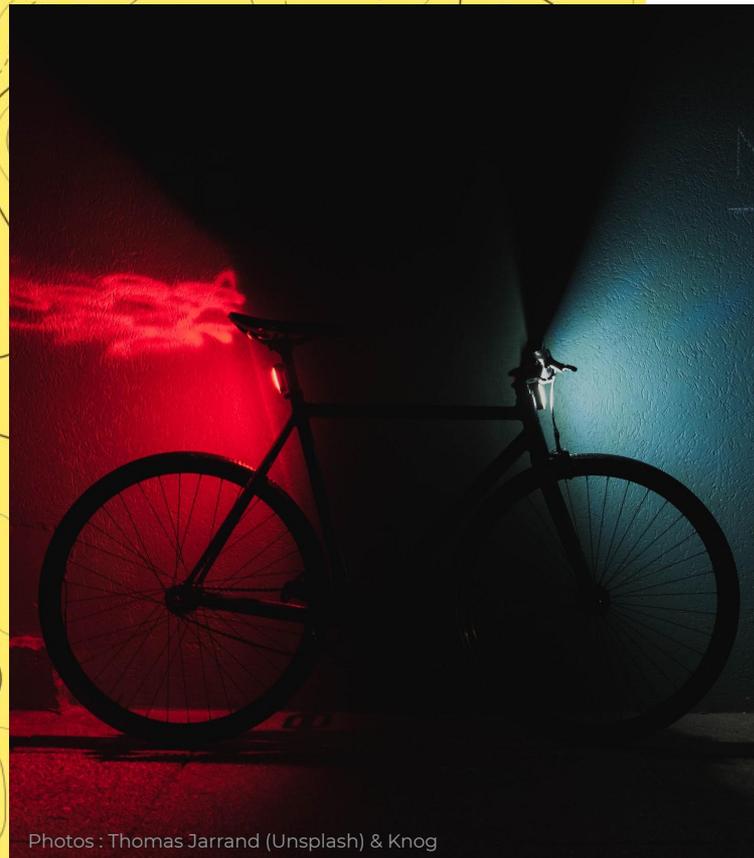


Lights.

The french law requires you to ride with one white front light, and one red rear light.

You can be fined 38€ if you don't have that.

But really, it's just common-sense.
Don't ride in Paris at night without lights.
Unless you have suicidal tendencies.



Photos : Thomas Jarrand (Unsplash) & Knog

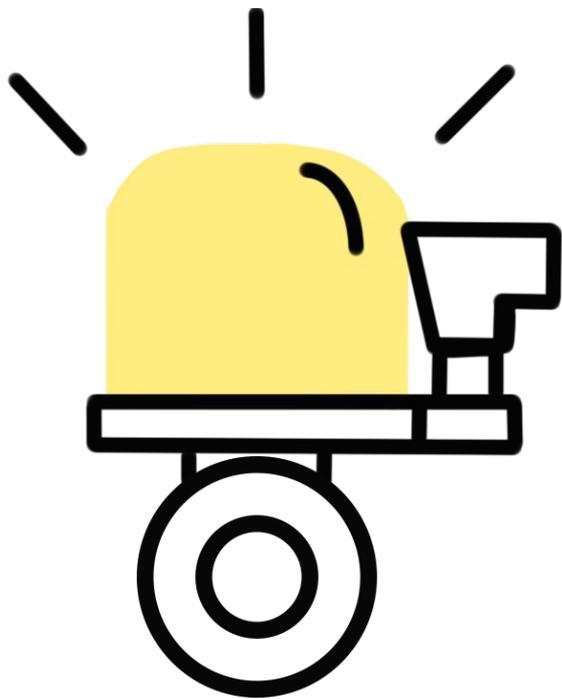
Lights.

The power of your lights are measured in Lumens. You can find lights going from 5 to 500 lumens.

We recommend minimum twenty-five lumens for the front light. And five lumens minimum for the back.

Brands worth considering :
Knog, Decathlon, Sigma, Reeler,
Sunspeed, Busch & Muller, etc.

- Power (expressed in lumen)
- Recharging system (USB recommended)
- Run time and battery life
- Mounting options



Bells.

Last mandatory piece on your bike : the bell.
You can be fined 38€ if you don't have one.
But again, it's just common sense.

You'll get bored pretty quickly of yelling
at pedestrians who cross the streets without
looking.

Ringing a bell is much less jarring and much
more friendly. Less vulgar, too.

Bells.

Again, various models and various prices, depending on the design, the sound, etc.

The best solution is to go to your local bike store or to Decathlon and test the sound in real life.

I do not recommend buying your bell online, as you may be disappointed by the sound.

Brands worth considering :
Crane Bells, Basil, Electra, Lion, Spurcycle, etc.

- *What is the diameter of my handlebars ?*
- *How much place do I have on them ?*
- *What kind of design do I want :
Vintage ? Modern ? Minimalist ? Who cares ?*
- *How loud do I want it to be ?*



Photo : Spurcycle



Helmets.

There is an eternal debate on the need for helmets. Some will tell you you're crazy to ride without one. Some studies will show you that you take more risks when you wear one, or that cars will pass closer to you because they assume you're a pro.

Then you'll discover that there is statistically more head injuries amongst car-drivers than cyclists. So you'll wonder why the motorist don't have to wear helmets.

In short, you'll be lost. And you'll have to face as much different opinions as there are *Friends* episodes.

Anyway, there is only one thing to remember: helmets are only mandatory in France if you're less than 12 years old.



Helmet.

So wearing a helmet is your personal choice, depending on how comfortable you are riding the streets.

We personally think it's reassuring to wear one. But it's only our opinion.

One thing is sure: the more safe cycling lanes there will be, the less we will need helmets.

In any case, if someone forces you to wear a helmet, show him [this short video](#) produced by The Guardian.

Brands to consider :
Thousand, Uvex, Bell, Kask, Poc, Mavic, Ekoi, Decathlon, MET, etc.

- How big is my head ?
- What size will I need ?
- What style do I want ? Urban ? Sporty ?

What to wear.





**There is no bad
weather, only
bad clothes.**

— *Dutch
saying*

Good news.

As urban cycling gets more and more popular, a lot of brands are designing better urban-clothing for cyclists that commute.

Because there's nothing worse than looking like a Sunday cyclist lycra-dad. We all know the one.

You can wear proper cycling lycra clothes and change once you arrive at the office, if you're really into it.

Depending on the length of your commute, the weather and your meetings of the day, here are some common tips to optimize your comfort from the saddle of your bike, to the seat at your desk.

- You can use your daily clothes for cycle commuting without a problem
- Three layers is optimum
- Opt for breathable fabrics. Because otherwise... you know.



Photo : Sabina Fratila / Unsplash

When it's raining.

First of all, if you can, put some rear and front mud-guards on your bike. It will keep your bum and legs dry when the road is wet after the rain.

Any rain jacket you have at home will do the job. The longer it is, the better.

Just note that rain jackets are general not breathable. So avoid wearing a big sweater underneath it. Cos you'll turn into that. A big sweater.

If you can afford it, consider Gore-Tex clothes which are a world standard for breathable, yet rainproof clothes.

Otherwise, Decathlon offers a wide range of affordable waterproof cycling clothes.

Or you can go with the 'Boncho', a light and compact rain-poncho designed for cyclists.



When it rains a lot.

For heavy rain days, if you still feel like cycling, I recommend using rain pants.

You'll look like shit in the world's fashion capital and your street-credibility will reach new and unsettling lows, but you'll spend the day at your desk in dry clothes. And this is priceless.

Decathlon has designed very practical and affordable [rain pants](#). What I love about it is that it covers your shoes too.



When it's **cold**.

Layering is not just a fashionable way to update your autumn wardrobe. They are also a practical consideration for when you are cycling:

- **the base layer**, worn next to the skin
- **the mid-layer**, worn as insulation
- **and the outer layer**, which will be windproof and often waterproof as well.

These don't need to be cycling-specific clothes, so don't be misled by technical talk about fabric types.

I would avoid wearing big heavy winter jackets when cycling. If you choose the right layers, a thin windproof jacket will keep your body warm!



05

Carrying stuff.



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**Roo
kies**



The front-rack

In our opinion, the most esthetic, common, and practical solution. You can opt for the hipster [pizza-rack](#), or for the classic pannier.



The backpack

The most obvious solution, and most simple to put in place as you probably already have one at home. But also the most risky if you like riding fast and might sweat.



The rear-rack

The solution that will offer you the more space, as you can carry up to three 10 liter bags on it. Very practical too, as most brands will offer you bags that can be easily removed from the rack and carried around as a shoulder bag.



Bikepacking

This solution is most commonly used for people traveling by bike, but it can be hijacked for [a daily urban use](#). Not ideal to carry a laptop or similar big objects. But useful to carry smaller objects like books, wallets, rain coats or pants, etc.

Rights, rules & safety-tips.





As Paris and the Région are making more and more ambitious efforts to offer safe and dedicated cycling infrastructures, you might not have the chance to benefit of a safe itinerary on your way to work yet.

Cycling in a big city like Paris and sharing the road with cars, motorbikes, trucks, scooters and pedestrians can quickly be overwhelming and stressful.

Here are some tips and rules to get around safely and feel totally comfortable riding the city.

Just like our friend Moreche on this photo.

General tips & rules



Cars are supposed to pass you with 1 meter distance in town, 1,5 meter outside of town.



You are supposed to ride on the right hand side of your lane.



Parking on a bike lane is forbidden for any vehicle.



Always assume that cars do not see you, and that they won't alter their path for you.

General tips & rules



This square sign means that a cycling lane exists and is recommended.



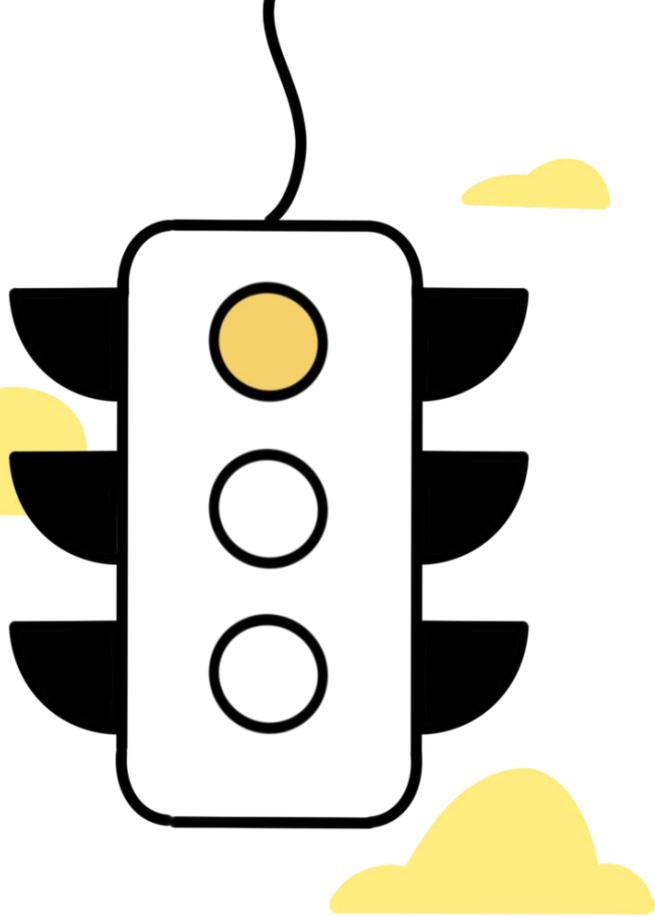
This circle sign means that the cycling lane is obligatory.



Beware of assholes.



Don't be an asshole.



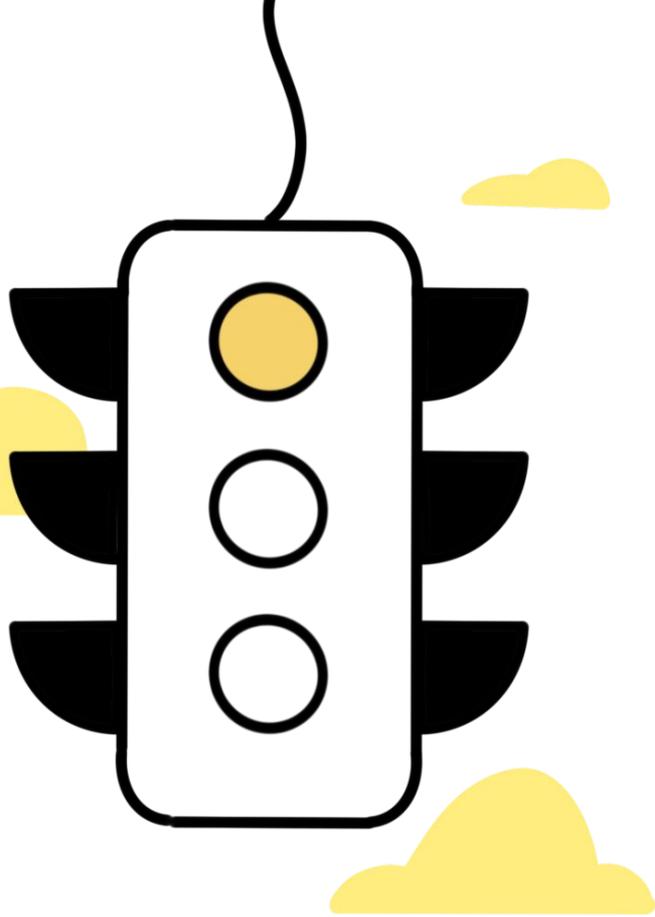
Traffic Lights.

You may have spotted some triangular signs attached to traffic lights that look like that.

They allow you to cross the red line in the direction indicated by the arrow(s).

Caution: you're only allowed to cross if the road is clear and safe. If there are pedestrians or cars crossing, they have the priority.





Otherwise :

Do.
Not.
Cross.
Red.
Lights.

NEVER.

Beside of being obviously dangerous and suicidal, it also gives a terrible image of cyclists.

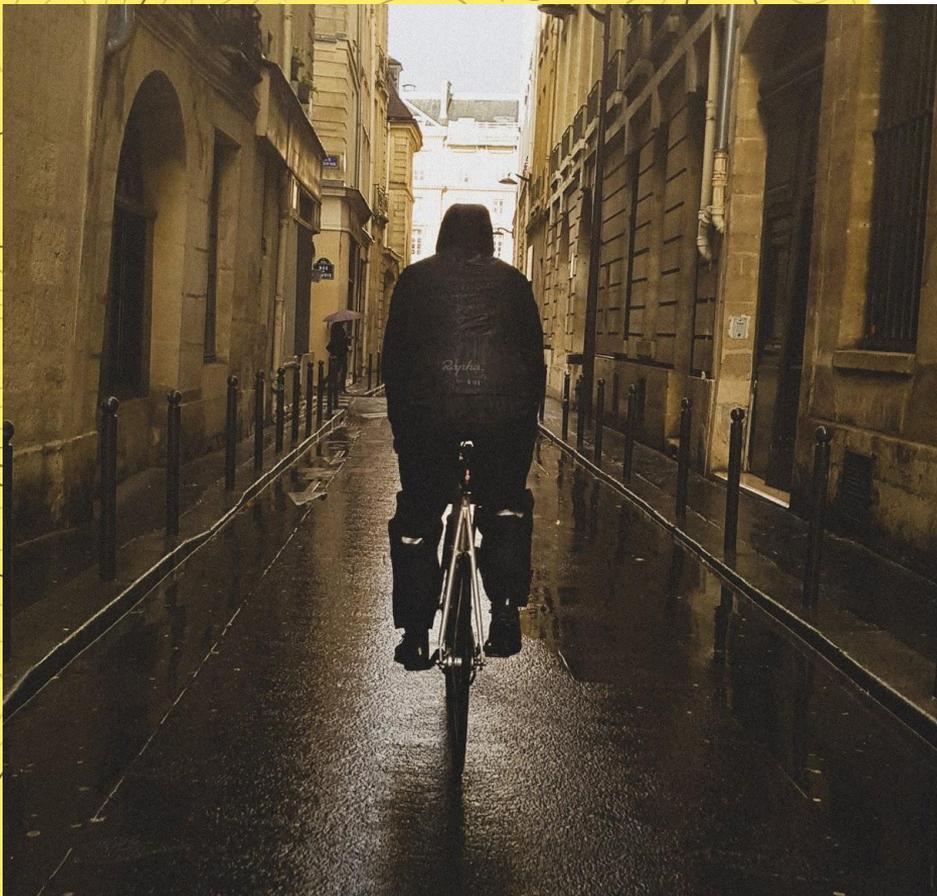
If you ever get into an argument with a car driver who put you in danger, you'll be surprised how quickly he'll 'defend' himself by saying "*fuck off, cyclists never stop at red lights anyway.*"

If you want to be respected, be respectable.
As simple as that.

How to position yourself on the road.

Acknowledging some of the most common dangers will help you to better anticipate them.





In narrow streets.

In narrow streets, even when there is not enough space to pass you properly some cars will pass you very, very, very closely, which is obviously very dangerous **(and illegal)**.

In those situations, you have the right to ride in the middle of your lane to discourage any dangerous behaviour.

Please note that the impatient driver will then be frustrated of not being able to show you that he is the king of the road, and he might honk you or try to pressure you.

But who cares, you'd probably catch him up at the next red light if you'd let him pass anyway.



To avoid car doors.

This is one of my biggest fears : having a parked car open its door just in front of me.

Fortunately, French law protects the cyclists, and there is a little-known law that allows you to ride a bit off the right-side of your lane to avoid being hit by a door.

The law says that you can: “Move away from the vehicles parked on your right hand side, of a necessary distance, to ensure your safety.”

Article R412-9 du Code de la Route :

Sur les voies où la vitesse maximale autorisée n'excède pas 50 km/h, un conducteur d'engin de déplacement personnel motorisé ou de cycle peut s'écarter des véhicules en stationnement sur le bord droit de la chaussée, d'une distance nécessaire à sa sécurité.

To avoid car doors.

Little tip when you're **on your bike** :

When you see any evidence of a driver seated in a parked-car, (lights on, turn signals on, open windows, or you just saw the car enter the parking spot), ring your bell just before passing the car. You never know, it can save you from an accident.

Little tip when you're in your car :

Do the ["dutch-reach"](#).

When you open your door to exit the driver's seat, always make sure to open the door with your right hand. This will naturally turn your shoulders and body and make you visually check if a cyclist is coming, and prevent a tragic dooring accident.





When turning left.

When turning left, if you're on the right side of the road, make sure to indicate your intention to change directions with your left arm, after having checked if there is no one coming behind you.

Since 1998, most French traffic lights have a 'sas vélo' : dedicated spaces for cyclists where you can safely pass from the right to the left side of the street, when the lights are red.

Unfortunately, most of these 'sas' will look like the one above : full of asshole motorists.

Just politely make your way amongst them to defend your territory and find a safe spot to turn.

Common Dangers.

Being aware of the most frequently encountered dangers will allow you to better anticipate them.



Intersections.

When your cycling lane crosses another street, chances are that cars will cut your lane from left to right.

Most of the time, you should have the priority, and the cars should wait until you pass.

Always be careful in those situations, as not all drivers will pay attention to you.

If you can't see their mirrors, they can't see you.
As simple as that.

If you don't think the car saw you, just stop and let it cut your line. It's better to lose some time than to lose your leg.

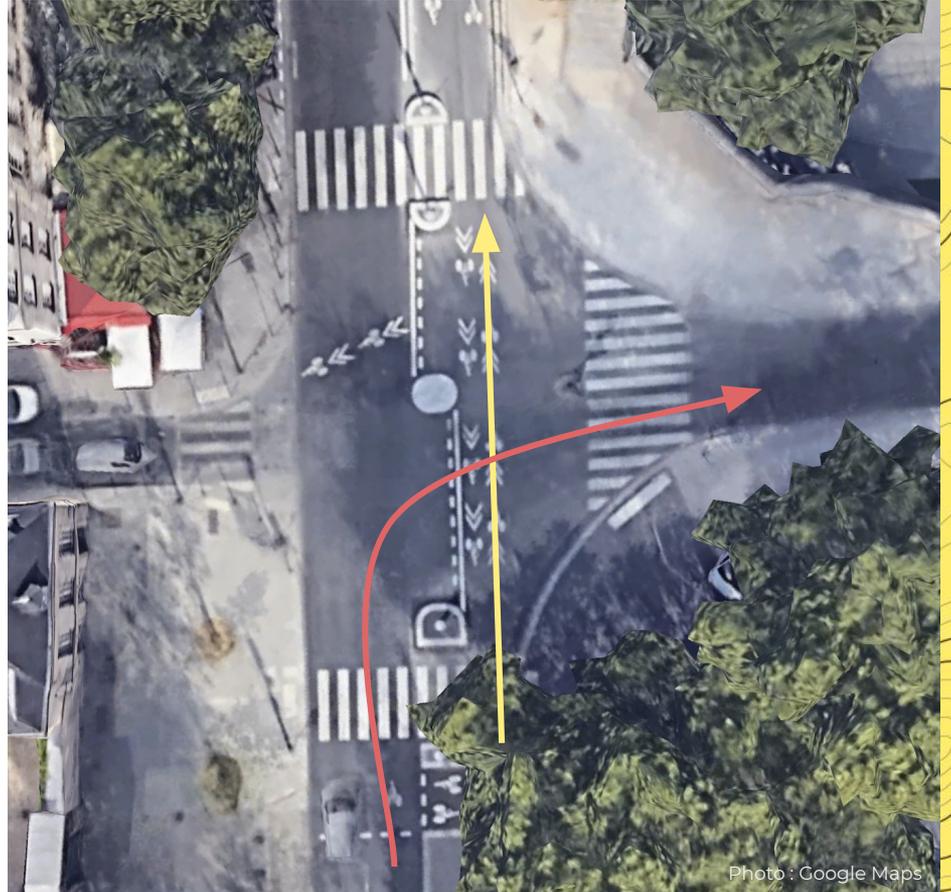


Photo : Google Maps

Large vehicles.

Never, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever pass a bus or a truck by the right.

Those huge vehicles offer a terrible visibility to their drivers. The closer you get, the more likely you are in a blind spot. And when you'll realize it, it will probably be too late.

To understand how poor is the visibility from a truck-driver point of view, just watch [this 53 seconds video](#). It will make you question why we still allow those trucks in our city-centers.



One-way streets.

As you've maybe noticed, some of the one-way streets in France are actually two-way streets for cyclists. This means that you'll cross cars in the 'wrong' direction.

Always be careful in those streets, as some car-drivers don't like that and absolutely want to show you how big their balls are.

Also, always pay attention to pedestrians, who may not be aware that cyclists can come both ways, and will only check one side of the street before crossing.



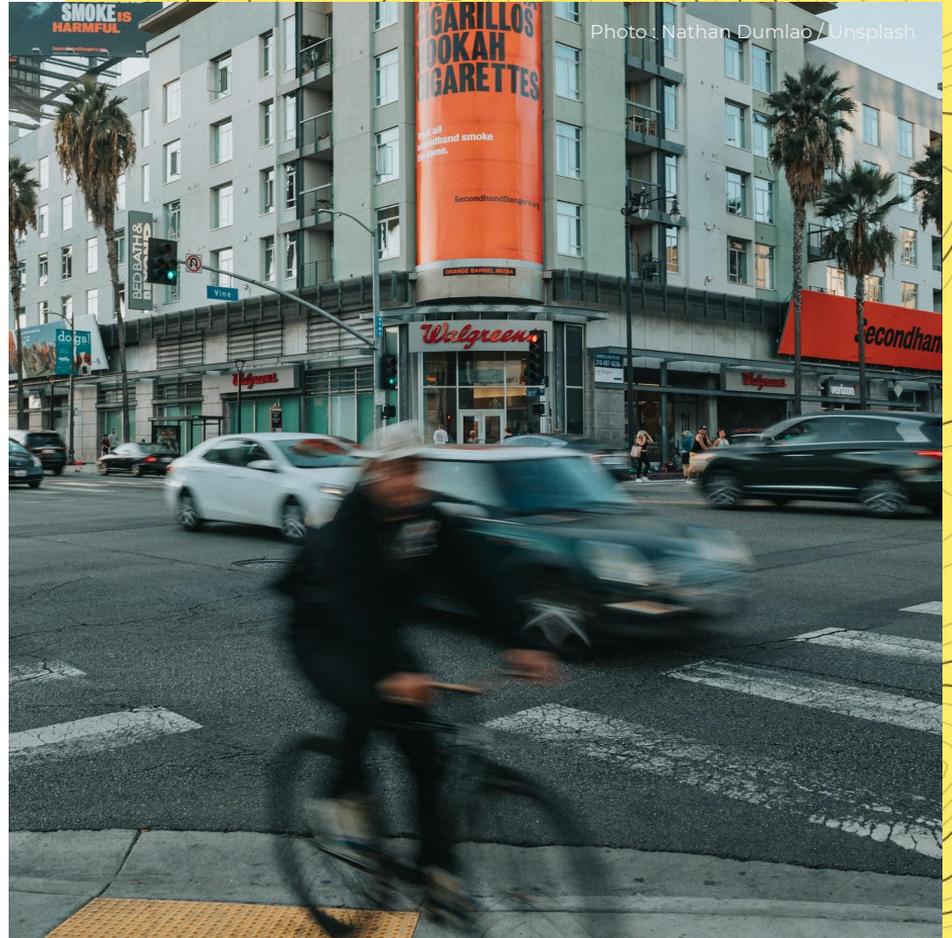
Pedestrians.

Talking about pedestrians, I just wanted to make one thing very clear. When there are no traffic lights and only pedestrian crossings :

Pedestrians. Always. Have. The. Priority.
ALWAYS.

Don't be a dick. Just stop, make them a sign or eye-contact, and let them cross safely.

Also : never ride on sidewalks.
Sidewalks are for pedestrians.
Everybody will hate you. Forever.



Cycling lanes.

Some bike commuters treat the bike lane like an island of safety. Unfortunately, that's not always the case. Be vigilant !

It's not uncommon for cars to merge into the bike lane, turn in front of you at an intersection and open their doors into the bike lane.



Useful apps, products & services.





Géovélo

Géovélo is an app built to help you find the safest itinerary by bicycle. When looking for a route, you can either chose the fastest one, or the safest one (i.e. the one using the more cycling lanes).



Cyclofix

You have a flat-tire and you're not sure how to repair it without taking the risk to make the situation even worse ?

Just download their app, and a mechanician will come to you and fix your bike-related problems : tires, brakes, gears, or any basic technical adjustments.



Google Maps

Google Maps

You all know Google Maps. Most of the time their cycling itineraries are trustworthy. But not always. So make sure to double check before getting on your bike.



Le Poupoupidou

The summer is back and you want to go for a ride in your favorite dress or skirt ? But then you remember cycling and dresses are maybe not the best combo ? No worries, just purchase a [Poupoupidou](#), which will prevent you from flashing everyone you cross.

Otherwise, ask for tips on Twitter by taking a look at [#Velojupe](#).

10

Frequently asked questions.



www.lesrookies.com

**Roo
kies**



Photo : David Marcu / Unsplash

“I'm afraid on my first few trips.”

It's perfectly normal : being on the road in the middle of motor vehicles can be impressive and stressful.

We therefore recommend that you consider the "covélotaff". This excellent initiative of the association 'MDB' (Mieux se Déplacer à Bicyclette), lists volunteer urban cyclists to accompany you on your journeys in order to guide you and help you gain confidence and experience!

Discover the map of the routes on [their website](#).

Finally, you may have spotted a neighbour or colleague who commutes by bicycle. Don't hesitate to ask him for advice ! He will certainly be able to show you the most pleasant routes.



“I’m afraid of sweating.”

It’s up to you if you want people to continue sitting next to you. Or if you want to keep your friends and colleagues.

When cycling, you can manage your efforts to get to know your limits, to avoid any overheating and sweating.

Maybe carry a spare t-shirt with you on your first rides. But with time and experience, you’ll know your body better and better.

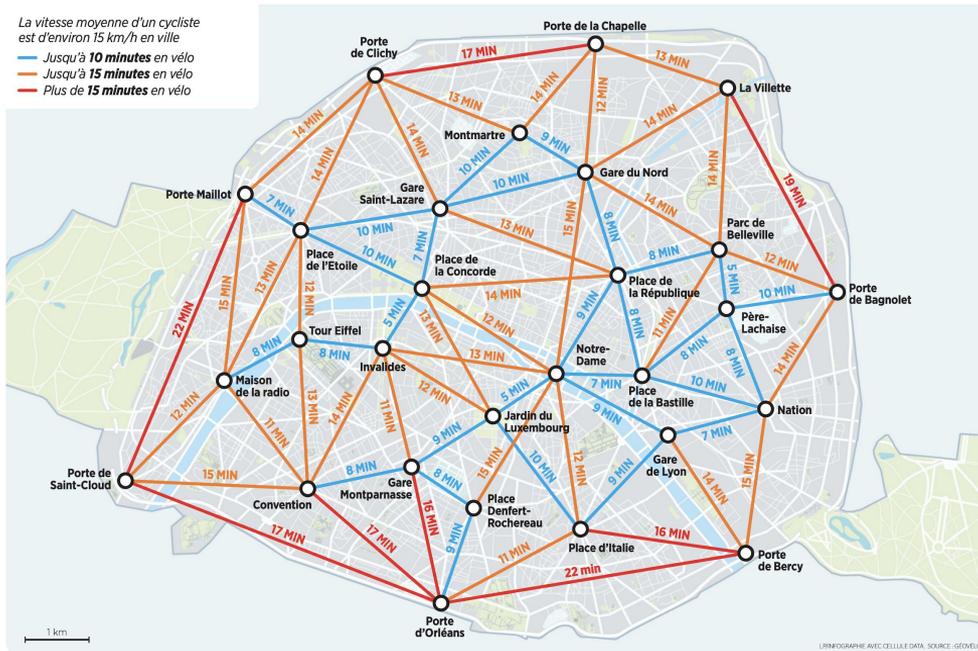
Checking the weather and dressing accordingly is also key to an optimal body temperature. As well as avoiding backpacks.

Also, some companies offer showers or deodorant to their employees, to encourage them cycling.

Le Parisien LA CARTE DES TEMPS DE PARCOURS À VÉLO DANS PARIS 

La vitesse moyenne d'un cycliste est d'environ 15 km/h en ville

- Jusqu'à **10 minutes** en vélo
- Jusqu'à **15 minutes** en vélo
- Plus de **15 minutes** en vélo



L'INFORMAPHIE AVEC CELLULE DATA. SOURCE: GÉOVIA

“But won't cycling make me slow ?”

We are ready to bet that you overestimate the length of cycling travel times.

Sneaking everywhere, having more direct itineraries, not caring about the amount of traffic, etc, bicycles are the most efficient vehicles in urban areas.

And if you live outside of a big city or far from your workplace, inquire on intermodality solutions like taking your bike in the train for example !



Photo: Pietro De Grandi / Unsplash

“What's IKV?”

The IKV is the Bike Mileage Allowance.

It's a rather barbaric name for an aid that your company can grant you as compensation for your cycling trips since 2016.

Fixed at 0.25€ per kilometre and limited to 200€ per year, this little financial help can help you to better equip yourself or to pay for the few expenses of your bike: new padlock, better rain gear, new chain, etc.

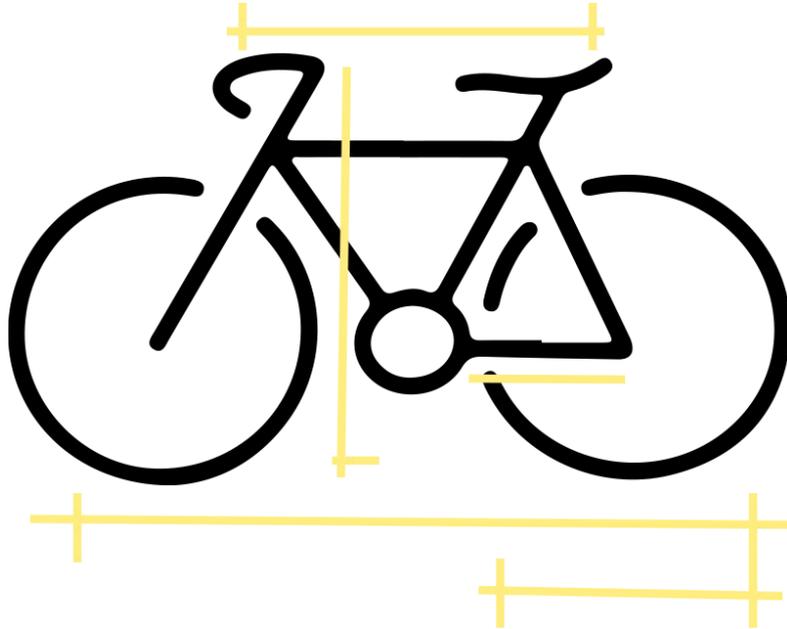


“How much will it cost ?”

What we love about bicycles, is that no matter your age, no matter your situation, no matter your budget, you'll find a bike that matches your needs.

You can have a decent new mechanical city bike from 200€, but you can easily find correct second-hand bicyclettes on Leboncoin for 50 or 100€ if you search well.

New e-bikes start around 1500€, but don't forget to ask for your 400€ refund from Mairie de Paris.



“How to pick the right size of my bicyclette ?”

Picking the right size is extremely important as it will guarantee your comfort and limit your efforts.

Calculating the size of your bike depends obviously of your personal size, but also of the type of bike you're purchasing.

The best thing to do is to discuss it with your local bike-shop who will be happy to help you.

“How do I take my kids do school ?”

Plenty solution exists for every situation and needs. Do you have one or more kids ? How old are they ? Those question will help you selecting the right solution for your needs :

- A simple seat behind you ?
- A cargo-bike ?
- A long-tail bike ?
- A “follow-me” system ?
- A trailer ?

Whatever you chose, chances are your kids will love the bike-commute more than the subway or car commute.

Discover options on [Cyclable](https://www.cyclable.com).





“Where can I find more information?”

Here is a non-exhaustive list of some of the french players in the world of cycling, whose work we applaud, where you will find a lot of additional information:

- [Mieux se déplacer à bicyclette](#)
- [Fédération des Usagers de la Bicyclette](#)
- [Paris en Selle](#)
- [Citycyle](#)
- [Weelz](#)

And if you really like cycling, we invite you to visit the section 'Le Bottin' on our website: www.lesrookies.com

Rookies

The Rookies thank you!
We hope you enjoyed this little guide and will encourage you to get on a bike!

We'd love to read your feedbacks or cycling stories, so don't hesitate to write to us and support us on the social networks ❤️

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 [Les Rookies](https://www.facebook.com/LesRookies)



Merci.
& ride safe!