

Beechwood Boulevard

- Less than 10 miles (longer routes possible)
- Mostly flat (hillier alternatives given)
- Light city traffic (Fifth Avenue is heavier, if you use it)

No cycling guide to the city would be complete without mentioning Beechwood Boulevard, a particularly nice road in the East End which has special bike lanes, and connects the two major woodland parks in the city.

Below is a short loop suitable for beginning bikers, or more advanced bikers who simply want to spend an easy afternoon in the city parks.

Starting from CMU, head south into Schenley Park, passing Flagstaff Hill and Phipps Conservatory, and over the Panther Hollow Bridge. When you pass underneath the Boulevard of the Allies, stay to the right to continue onto Overlook Drive, the road to the skating rink. You'll go up a hill here, but the slope is gentle, and you get some nice views of the city through the trees to your right. At the end of the road, turn right, and then right again to go over the Greenfield Bridge.

Once across the bridge, turn left onto Beechwood Boulevard. Pass alongside the highway and underneath the Murray Avenue Bridge. At the second light (a 5-way intersection) be sure to angle left to keep following Beechwood. The bike lane begins at this point.

(For those of you who like hills, I suggest some alternatives after crossing the Greenfield Bridge. One is to continue straight to merge with Greenfield Avenue, follow it until it T's into Hazelwood, turn left on Hazelwood, and at the 5-way intersection two blocks later, make a shallow right onto Beechwood and the bike lane. Or, for a VERY steep hill, make a right after the bridge, left onto Winterburn, and left onto Bigelow St. at the top of the steep hill. Bigelow merges onto Hazelwood, which leads you to the same 5-way intersection. Both of these routes involve steeper hills than the main route that simply turns left on Beechwood after the bridge. Winterburn can offer nice views, though.)

Beechwood does a couple of short half-loops after the bike lane begins, and gives you some views of the Mon Valley in the process. A little while later, you'll pass two parts of Frick Park; first the Parklet (which includes a playground and a fitness parcource), and then the nature center.

Shortly after the nature center, you'll come alongside Forbes Avenue, and go up another hill before you cross it. But the hill's not particularly long, so you'll get over it soon enough.

You can complete the loop by turning left on Wilkins Avenue, then following that to Beeler St. and then back to campus. Better yet, though, keep straight on Beechwood, and

by the time you reach the end of that road, you'll come to another smaller park on the left by the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts.

The end of Beechwood is a popular launching point for longer northerly bike routes, since you can follow Fifth east until it turns into Washington, and follow that to the Allegheny River and the Highland Park Bridge. But to stay on the short city loop, just follow Fifth west a short distance, and cut into Shadyside, along Walnut Street. Take residential roads west to Morewood, and then return to campus via that road.

I've found that this sort of ride, though short in distance, can take quite a while to complete. On a good weekend, it's quite likely that there will be a festival or some sort of special event in one of the parks you pass, or you may just want to get out and hike, lie on the grass, or window-shop. By all means, if you feel like stopping for any of these things, do so! Pedaling is only part of the fun of these bike trips.