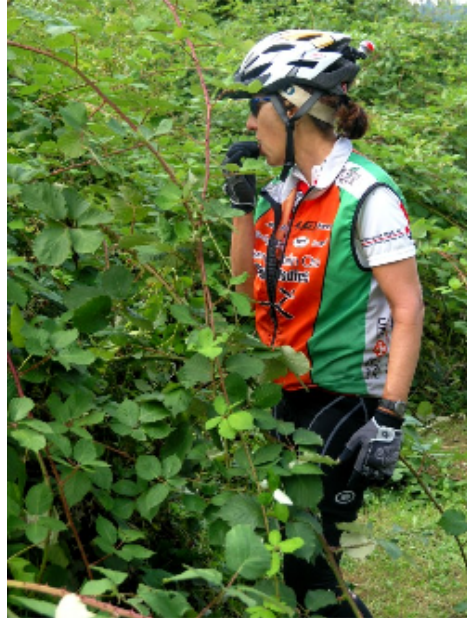


## Keep cycling in the fall

Without so much as a whimper, many people voluntarily relegate their bicycles to the garage or shed when fall arrives. The evidence would suggest a better plan – keep pedaling.

“You can virtually eat your way across Washington in the fall,” my wife, Sheree, said as she picked wild blackberries and tossed them into her mouth near Duvall, Wash., as we toured. We also came across countless farmers’ markets throughout the week as well as weekend. Fruits and vegetables are in their prime – in the fall.



One of the top reasons people give me for hanging up their metal steed in September is they don’t want to be caught out in the rain. But fall moisture, particularly in recent years, has been a myth in many parts of the country.

The area from Portland to the Canadian border is a prime example. One October Sheree and I spent 18 days bicycle touring in the San Juan Islands along with the mainland from Seattle to Bellingham. We had three rainstorms – one while we were at a bed and breakfast on San Juan, a second while having lunch on Whidbey Island and a third while having coffee in Anacortes.

In April, still considered part of the winter/early spring “moist” time, we enjoyed touring the Skagit Valley, Wash., area and photographed early tulips. We used our raincoats once.

In contrast, in “dry” August, we did the two-day, 170-mile Ride Around Puget Sound. On Day Two, we were soaked by record rainfall – 0.91 inches. Believing that was a fluke, we headed out the next week for a three-day, 130-mile loop from Seattle to Fall City to Snohomish. More than an inch of rain fell during the three days. A funnel cloud came through as well.

If one is a betting person, July would definitely be a “dry” month in the Northwest compared to fall or spring. That looked to be correct as Sheree and I joined 9,000 others for the two-day, 200-mile ride from Seattle to Portland. Both days were beautiful. We stayed an additional day in Portland before pedaling back to Seattle. Mother Nature apparently didn’t approve. We endured record rainfall in July in Oregon as well as Washington on the return trip.

In that temperatures are cooler in the fall than mid-summer, it is true that if rain does come, it can create more risk of hypothermia. But there's a flip side to cooler temperatures – one can pedal faster to cover more terrain without overheating to get to the next sheltered area – whether one is road riding or mountain biking.