

Two Wheels Good, Four Bad for 'Cycle to Work Day' on May 21 in Moscow

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Moscow's second "Cycle to Work Day" will take place Thursday as the city aims to encourage people to cycle more and challenge the stereotype that Moscow is not a city for cyclists.

An estimated 5,000 people will cycle to work — 3,500 have registered so far — in a project set up by "Let's bike it!," an organization that promotes the improvement of cycling infrastructure in Russia and Moscow's transport department.

"Our aim is to show the residents of Moscow that despite the existing stereotypes that you cannot get around on a bike, it can nonetheless be an effective and intelligent alternative to cars," said Alina Bisembayeva, deputy head of city's transport department in the Metro newspaper.

To get people on two wheels, the city's bikeshare scheme will lower prices for the day for those who register for Cycle to Work Day. Day rental will be 120 rubles rather than 150 and a pass for the whole season, which runs till Oct 31, will cost 1,000 rubles instead of 1,200

rubles.

Ten hot spots have also been set up around the city — among others, near the Prague restaurant by Arbatskaya metro station and by Trubnaya metro station on Tsvetnoi Bulvar — so that cyclists can get refreshments (free coconut water and fruit) between 7 a.m. and 11 a.m. Cafes and shops are also offering discounts and free drinks on the day. Anyone who turns up on a bike to the refreshment spot will get a sticker with the words "One Car Less" written on it.

Cycling has noticeably grown in the last five years and the sight of a person on two wheels on Moscow streets is no longer a reason to call a doctor to take that person off to the asylum for their obvious idiocy.

The growth in cyclists has also been marked by the city's genuine attempts to reduce traffic. But still, Moscow's traffic is a fearsome beast even if cycle lanes have started to appear, although admittedly some may run over speed bumps and open drains.

Vladimir Kumov, head of "Let's bike it!", is nevertheless optimistic, saying that "people use bikes more and more everyday" and that because "more people are cycling, so drivers are more aware."

For more information, check out bike2work.ru.

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