

<http://ottawacitizen.com>

<http://ottawacitizen.com/category/news>

<http://ottawacitizen.com/category/news/local-news>

[HOME](#)

[NEWS](#)

[LOCAL NEWS](#)

[POLITICS + PS](#) (<http://ottawacitizen.com/category/news/politics>) • [DEFENCE WATCH](#) (<http://ottawacitizen.com/category/news/national/defence-watch>) •

[NATIONAL](#) (<http://ottawacitizen.com/category/news/national>) • [WORLD](#) (<http://ottawacitizen.com/category/news/world>)

Mountain biking festival coming to Mont Ste. Marie



HATTIE KLOTZ

[More from Hattie Klotz](http://ottawacitizen.com/author/hattie-klotz) (<http://ottawacitizen.com/author/hattie-klotz>)

Published on: July 10, 2014 | Last Updated: July 22, 2014 10:03 AM EDT



SECTIONS

Organizers of a mountain bike competition in Mont Ste. Marie July 18-20 hope that 25 kilometres of new trails will help the region become a destination for riders.

Peter Verheyden / Ottawa Citizen

Organizers of a three-day mountain biking festival to be held at Mont Ste. Marie ski resort July 18 to 20 say that the sport is set to explode in the region.

“We’ve been seeing a growth in traffic and the number of riders,” said Paul Cook, chair of the Velo group at

Mont Ste. Marie, “and we’ve seen a huge response from the community at large.”

Historically, mountain biking has been limited in the Ottawa area. Gatineau Park has 90 kilometres of trails but they are mixed-use and shared with hikers, and there is a lack of trails elsewhere in the region. That began to change when a group of enthusiasts at Mont Ste. Marie, about one hour’s drive north of Ottawa, started to build trails several years ago. It was recently singled out by Canadian Cycling magazine as one of the top up-and-coming places to ride.

This July 18 to 20 they’re organizing the inaugural Mountain Fest to celebrate their achievements, to introduce new riders to the terrain and to raise money to build further trails. They’ve already received more than 300 registrations.

Three years ago a dedicated group of home-owners at Mont Ste. Marie applied for a series of grants and received enough money to build more than 25 kilometres of trails up, down and around the steeply wooded terrain. For the past two summers they’ve employed a crew of up to five people to build sustainable mountain biking trails.

The trails at Mont Ste. Marie now complement others at South March Highlands, which have been serving west-end riders for several years, and those at Camp Fortune, where a series of summer night races draws enthusiastic riders weekly. A new project is underway at Leslie Park, near Otter Lake, where there are about 15 kilometres of trails, and there’s also a network of trails close to Pembroke.

David Nesbitt, who is deeply involved with the mountain biking community in the region, estimates that there are about 3,000 hardcore mountain bike enthusiasts in the area. There are seven shops in Ottawa that sell mountain bikes, “and the latest craze is fat bikes for winter,” he explains. “They have four-inch wide tires which are great for riding on snow and packed ski trails, so now winter riding is gradually creeping into people’s consciousness.”



Mountain bike fans organized the building of new trails at Mont Ste. Marie.

As the number of trails grows, so will the riders, says Peter Verheyden, the architect and chief trail designer at many of the venues close to Ottawa. “The sport is definitely growing in the region,” he said, “and the more trails we build, the more people will come. We’re building for the advanced rider, but making accessible trails too.”

The festival line up will include a concert by blues musician JW Jones on Friday night, followed by two full days of activities. Riders are invited to a ribbon-cutting ceremony and the inaugural ride on a new 3.6-kilometre trail; an hour-long race up, down and around the mountain; a poker ride which involves collecting cards at checkpoints and then playing a hand; skills clinics for women and children; and a kids’ race and an obstacle course for children.

“There is camping on site and lots of rental chalets on the mountain and nearby,” says Cook. “We have people coming from Toronto, Montreal, Belleville and Brighton as well as plenty from Ottawa and Gatineau.”

Festival passes cost \$95 for adults, \$85 for under-18 and under-12 are free. Information and passes available at: <http://www.velomsm.com/mountain-fest/> (<http://www.velomsm.com/mountain-fest/>)

