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Take a free-wheeling spin on southern California's Strand

BY LORI RACKL May 19, 2011

If you go:

Stay on the Strand at the homey Beach House Hotel in Hermosa Beach, a fun little town on the southern end of the path. (Jay Leno often performs Sunday nights at Hermosa Beach's Comedy & Magic Club.) All of the Beach House Hotel's 96 suites have balconies with a full or partial view of the Pacific, as well as a fireplace, wet bar, microwave, mini-fridge, free Wi-Fi and continental breakfast. The hotel can arrange massages on the beach, Saturday morning yoga sessions by the surf and private volleyball lessons with Olympic gold medalist and Hermosa Beach resident Eric Fonoimoana. Overnight rates start at \$219 in the low season; (310) 374-3001, beach-house.com. Rent a bike — from single-speed cruisers to tandems and road bikes — at Hermosa Cyclery, less than a block from the Beach House. Bike rentals (and rollerblades) are available by the hour, day or week; (310) 374-7816, hermosacyclery.com.



The Strand is a 22-mile paved path that mostly tracks the coast of the Pacific Ocean. | Lori Rackl~Sun-Times

The top cyclists in the world take on the Tour of California, but even the rustiest of bike riders can take a scenic spin on the Strand.

This 22-mile paved trail on the outskirts of Los Angeles largely hugs the ocean coastline, passing through some of Southern California's cutest beach towns. Ample opportunities to stop and have a snack, or just a break, punctuate this gem of a path that stretches from Will Rogers State Beach down to Torrance Beach.

The Strand runs right under Santa Monica's famed pier, by the big boats in Marina del Rey and past the colorful characters and tattoo parlors populating Venice Beach.

As I pedaled along on a cruiser bike, my eyes were torn between looking at the Pacific and the people. Skateboarders, surfers, rollerbladers, beach volleyball players — even hang gliders — they're all part of the scenery.

I biked past a glamazon in a bikini posing for a photo shoot and a camera crew filming daredevils do their thing at a skateboard park. At Redondo Beach, actors were shooting scenes — right on the Strand — for a new TV series called "Chemistry."

This is L.A., after all.