



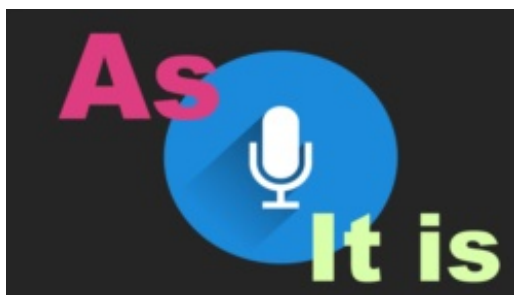
AS IT IS

Coronavirus Leads to Bicycle Boom, Shortage, Around World

June 16, 2020



In this June 9, 2020 photo, Harvey Curtis, left, discusses repair plans with customer Jack Matheson outside Sidecountry Sports, a bike shop in Rockland, Maine.



Coronavirus Leads to...
by VOA

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As the coronavirus **outbreak** continues, many Americans are fearful of using public transportation. They also are looking for ways to get exercise without having to go to a gym, as well as ways to enjoy the outdoors.

So, it may not be surprising that the **pandemic** has led to a major increase in bicycle sales.

In the United States, bicycles at big stores like Walmart have sold out. And small bicycle stores cannot keep up with demand for “family-style” bicycles: the low-cost, easy-to-ride models.

The bicycle industry is seeing its biggest sales increase since the oil crisis of the 1970s, said Jay Townley, an industry expert.

“People... have **panicked**,” Townley said. He compared the sale of bicycles to the **rush** to buy products like toilet paper at the start of the pandemic.

The rise in bicycle sales is not happening just in the United States.

Cities like Manila in the Philippines and Rome, Italy have created bicycle paths for the growing number of people who want to avoid public transportation. In London, city officials plan to bar cars from some central roads.

Bike shop owners in Manila say demand is even stronger than what they see at Christmas time. In Italy, the government’s economic support plan included a 500-euro payment to help with the cost of a bicycle.

Of course, you can only buy a bicycle if you can find a bicycle. In the U.S., the shortages now mean it may take many months to get one.

High demand is not the only reason for the shortage. The U.S. buys 90 percent of its bicycles from China. Bicycle factories there were shut down to stop the spread of COVID-19.

The increase in bicycle demand began in March as countries began to close down. In April, the sale of bicycles for adults increased 200 percent in the United States. All bicycle sales, including those for children, are up 100 percent from the year before, says NPD Group. The research company follows the sales of bicycles.

Before the pandemic, bicycle sales in the United States were a \$6 billion industry that was expecting lower sales in 2020. That expectation came in part because of a decision by the administration of President Donald Trump to place high **tariffs** on many Chinese imported goods.

In Bar Harbor, Maine, Brian Smith bought a new bicycle for one of his daughters. She is a competitive swimmer who could not get to the **pool** to practice. His family now goes for rides several times a day. Bicycling helps them all get exercise and enjoy the fresh air. But the biggest reason they go on rides?

“It’s fun. Maybe that’s the **bottom line**. It’s really fun to ride bikes,” Smith said.

Joe Minutolo is the co-owner of Bar Harbor Bicycle Shop in Maine. He said he hopes the increased sales mean a change in the way people think about transportation.

“People are having a chance to rethink things,” he said. “Maybe we’ll all learn something out of this, and something really good will happen,” he said.

I’m Susan Shand.

The Associated Press reported this story. Susan Shand adapted it for Learning English. Ashley Thompson was the editor.

Words in This Story

outbreak - *n.* the sudden appearance of a contagious disease

pandemic - *n.* a contagious disease that crosses borders into many countries

bicycle -*n.* a two-wheeled vehicle that is ridden by pedaling

panic-*v.* a state of fear and anxiety

pool - *n.* a large hole in the ground filled with water used to swim

bottom line - *n.* the final result

tariff - *n.* a tax put on goods going to or coming from another country

impose -*v.* to put in place

pedal - *n.* the part of the bicycle the feet push to make it run
