

## **From Bogotá to Seville – Viva la Ciclovida!**

### **Reclaiming the streets for the bicycle on Sundays!**

**Seville celebrates a series of car-free events leading up to the Velo-city Conference**

Seville, January 18, 2011 – Imagine each Sunday the main streets of your city are blocked off for car traffic. Imagine that pedestrians, families with their kids, runners, skaters and cyclists take over the streets. At the same time, stages are set up in city parks. Clowns, artists and musicians entertain people through various performances. Viva la Ciclovida!!

Imagine approximately 2 million people (30% of the citizens of Bogotá) celebrating their bike festival on the over 120 kilometres of carfree streets – almost every Sunday!!

Neither Seville nor any other city in Europe are ‘cyclisized’ up to that level YET, but CHANGE is coming on FAST.

Ciclovida, or Ciclovías as the Latin Americans say, is credited to Bogotá, the capital of Columbia. Former Mayor Enrique Peñalosa, deserves the final credit for turning the car clogged city into a safe cycling environment. His inspired vision created the foundation of a cycle path network across the city in the late 1990s. Many cities in South America and across the world have followed suit. Whether they call it Car Free Days or Critical Mass rides, the goal is always the same – reclaim the road for the bicycle!

The vivacious Ciclovida movement arrived in Seville just in time to lead up to the Velo-city Conference that takes place from the 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2011. From Seville the Ciclovida movement will hopefully conquer Europe’s city streets *muy rapido*, and give rise to a ‘network’ of new and exciting experiences.



Just last Sunday the Ronda Histórica, a very busy and much frequented street in Seville, was closed to all car traffic for five hours. Thousands of citizens and visitors of Seville were able to enjoy themselves cycling, roller-skating, running or going for a walk on a street that is otherwise reserved for motorized traffic. The main beneficiaries of this third edition of Ciclovida were the many children who had taken to the streets to play traditional games, ride their bikes or listen to storytellers. It is obvious that Ciclovida is starting to gather momentum in Seville, as the participation to the third edition of this event saw a significant increase.



For Antonio Rodrigo Torrijos, the first deputy mayor and delegate for Sustainable Infrastructure, the Ciclovida is a breakaway initiative, that is slowly consolidating: *"As the public debate is opened and the Sevillians feel the positive effects, this initiative will find more and more followers. Ciclovida means exercise, fun for all ages, meeting your fellow citizens and being able to enjoy public spaces. In short, a Ciclovida promotes peaceful co-existence, respect, social cohesion and environmental awareness, and last but not least, it also improves the air quality and reduces noise levels in cities."*

Enrique Peñalosa, president of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, (ITDP) and brother of Velo-city master of ceremonies, Gil Peñalosa, stated in a recent interview: *"For me bicycles represent freedom, health, equality, respect for human dignity, harmony, the possibility to move with little effort while truly enjoying a city. More simply and better: bicycles are just fun."*

*The 20th Century saw a bad detour in urban evolution: After 5,000 years of urban history in which all streets were exclusively used for pedestrians and horses carriages, cities were designed for cars, adjusted for them, given to them.*

*In the 1960s, the rapid influx of cars meant that many countries were transformed from a bicycle nation into a car nation. People went to the streets and protested fiercely against the worsening conditions for bicyclists. Confronted with the energy crisis in the 70s, there was a general realisation that a monofocus on cars was not sustainable. Today, many people realise that the bicycle is a smart tool to carry you from A to B. On top of this is the positive impact cycling has on the climate and on individual health."*

The Ciclovida programme has been organised within the framework of preparations for the Velo-city Conference. specifically, in relation to the focus on health which is also referred to in the congress slogan, "The Cycle of Life"; emphasizing how important cycling actually is as an everyday habit that adds to a healthy lifestyle.

Two other Ciclovida's will take place between now and the end of March. Ultimately, to be left as a legacy of the Velo-city 2011 Congress, showing the importance of new habits that were acquired in Seville thanks to the success of its urban cycling policy. A policy that will most definitely benefit the city and its inhabitants for generations to come.

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### **About Velo-city**

*The Velo-city conference series is the premier international cycling planning conference series in the world, organized by the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) and select host cities.*

*Velo-city conferences serve as a global communications and information platform and target to influence decision makers, and improve the planning and provision of infrastructure for the daily use of the bicycle in an urban environment.*

*The conferences traditionally involve experts, representatives of associations, institutions, policy-makers and social agents, universities and companies.*

*More information [www.ecf.com](http://www.ecf.com)*

### **Velo-city 2011 Seville – The Cycle of Life**

*The city of Seville, which was just awarded a UN-Habitat Best Practice Award, has been chosen to host the 2011 edition of Velo-city as a result of its successful establishment of a complete system of cycling infrastructures.*

*Velo-city 2011 expects to welcome more than 1,000 visitors from all over the world who, during the three-day conference, will highlight cycling as a means of urban sustainable transport. The conference will look into a breadth of subjects on Health, Education, Efficiency of public investment and Economic impact and employment.*

*Out of the more than 250 submissions that were received from 27 countries, 120 entries will be selected, to be presented and discussed in plenary and sub-plenary sessions, workshops and round tables. An exhibition related to urban cycling will supplement and compliment the conference.*

*The conference slogan, "The Cycle of Life", refers to the bicycle as a part of everyday life and a source of health for people of any age, contributing to more inhabitable cities and regions.*

Velo-city 2011 will take place in Seville from March 23–25.

The official languages during the conference will be Spanish and English.

For more information and registration: [www.velo-city2011.com](http://www.velo-city2011.com)

Media registration is open until March 4th.

For a selection of images and logos go to

[http://www.velo-city2011.com/eng/informacion\\_interes.php](http://www.velo-city2011.com/eng/informacion_interes.php) or

<http://sevillacyclechic.blogspot.com/>

Feel free to contact us for further information or images.

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