ICSC 2026 · KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

Why Knoxville?

Thirty-one reasons we chose the Scruffy City for the International Cycling Safety Conference.



Cover photo: Bohao Zhao (CC BY 3.0)

AN UNCONVENTIONAL CHOICE

A conference on cycling safety, in a city you might not expect.

We know Knoxville may not be the first choice that you think of for a cycling safety conference, but we think that our scruffy city has a lot to offer.

A vision turned an unfinished highway and a set of abandoned quarries into a 70-mile bike trail network. The city converted a historic bridge into a space for people on foot and on bikes. A nonprofit bike shop donates a bike for every one it sells. Second graders learn traffic safety in a miniature version of the city. These are just a few reasons why.

These pages collect the posts from our *Why Knoxville?* LinkedIn series.

125+

miles of greenways, separated from road traffic

70

miles of trails in the Urban Wilderness

31

reasons in this book, collected from our Why Knoxville? series

iCSC International Cycling Safety Conference

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PART 1 OF 4

Ride

Roads, greenways and group rides within minutes of downtown.

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RIDE

Road Riding

Thanks to Knoxville's diverse topography, shaped by the ancient Appalachian mountain chain, and downtown's close proximity to rural landscapes, the city boasts some of the best road riding in the United States.

Knoxville offers a vast network of stunning road routes that crisscross the weathered foothills of the Appalachians. These roads wind through the region's hollers, small, tight-knit communities nestled between rolling, time-worn hills, often tracing the path of a creek. Best of all, they're easily accessible by road bike from downtown: just cross the bike and pedestrian Gay Street Bridge and the city gives way to countryside in minutes.

From there, quiet back roads zigzag across East Tennessee, serving up everything from gentle rollers to punchy climbs: a diverse riding environment tailor-made for anyone who loves open rural roads and elevation gains worthy of boasting on Strava for.

RIDE

Group Rides

Knoxville has a vibrant local bike shop scene with weekly organized shop rides on trails and roads, giving people a way to experience Knoxville cycling and to build friendships and community, whatever their skillset. Tennessee Valley Bikes (TVB) is a downtown shop that has famed hour to two-hour rides starting Thursdays at 6:05 PM and crisscrossing the South Knoxville countryside. The A Group is fast, challenging, and hard; you must push to stay with the group. You may get dropped the first, second, or third time, but after you improve and get stronger, staying with them is a real accomplishment that sticks with you.

The B Group is more casual, no drops. A space to learn to ride fast, ride safe, and build community.

No matter what you are looking for, TVB road rides have room for you to grow and experience the incredible road riding Knoxville has to offer, all while learning how to ride safely with traffic with that friendly, Knoxville charm. Feel free to join TVB on the Thursday after the conference ends to experience it for yourself.





RIDE

Greenways

Crisscrossing Knoxville and fully separated from road traffic are over 125 miles of Greenway paths offering a safe space to ride bikes and enjoy Knoxville's nature without having to worry about cars.

While many were built by the parks department as recreation amenities, some of these Greenways serve an additional dual purpose: safe transportation connections for cyclists of all ages and abilities. The Third Creek Greenway, for example, links west Knoxville to downtown, a well-used route that wouldn't exist without this infrastructure.

Whether you're exploring urban areas, countryside, or anything in between, Knoxville's Greenways offer what few cities have: a parallel network that keeps you off the road.

RIDE

Cades Cove Vehicle-Free Days

Originally a vast settlement and farmland, Cades Cove is a picturesque valley in the Great Smoky Mountains, teeming with wildlife, calm babbling brooks, and a quiet solitude that can calm any soul. Only a short drive (or a doable bike ride, if you're an ambitious road cyclist) from downtown Knoxville, this little oasis in the mountains is waiting for you.

You'll be almost guaranteed to see black bears, wild turkeys, white-tailed deer, and historic homesteads, all along an 11-mile loop road that is completely closed to motor vehicles every Wednesday from May through September.

For over 40 years, the park offered vehicle-free mornings on Wednesdays and Saturdays before 10:00 a.m. In 2020, park managers launched a pilot project expanding to a full-day closure, and it was a huge success. The program became permanent in 2022 and runs each year from May through September.

It's a powerful example of the Knoxville area's love for recreational cycling and the spaces it can nurture: safer recreation and a deeper connection with the unique and special nature right in Knoxville's backyard.





Photo: National Park Service

RIDE

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Just outside Knoxville lies America's most visited national park, home to roughly two black bears per square mile (an estimated 1,500 to 1,900 bears total)! Great Smoky Mountains National Park spans more than half a million acres of forested mountains and streams, with historic cabins, churches, and other reminders of early Appalachian life.

Cyclists visiting the Smokies have several options, from road riding along the Foothills Parkway to gravel riding over Rich Mountain and the climb to Kuwohi (formerly Clingmans Dome). For a shorter, flatter ride, the Gatlinburg Trail follows the Little Pigeon River through the forest. We're looking forward to showcasing some of these routes during our November 2 pre-conference guided cycling excursions, with separate rides along the Foothills Parkway and over Rich Mountain Road from Cades Cove into Townsend. And luckily, our visit comes just in time to enjoy the fall colors!

RIDE

USA Cycling Pro Road National Championships and Quitter's Corner

From 2017 to 2023, Knoxville welcomed many of the country's top road cyclists for the USA Cycling Pro Road National Championships. The city's streets were transformed into a professional road course showcasing downtown and South Knoxville. True to East Tennessee, the course was not without hills, the most notorious being Quitter's Corner on Sherrod Road. This roughly half-mile climb featured grades reaching 14%, making it a popular gathering spot for spectators to watch the cyclists tackle the hill lap after lap.

Although Knoxville no longer hosts the USA Cycling Pro Road National Championships, the races left a lasting mark on the city. By bringing elite cycling directly to Knoxville's streets and neighborhoods, the event reached audiences beyond the traditional recreational cycling community and fostered broader, citywide enthusiasm for the sport.

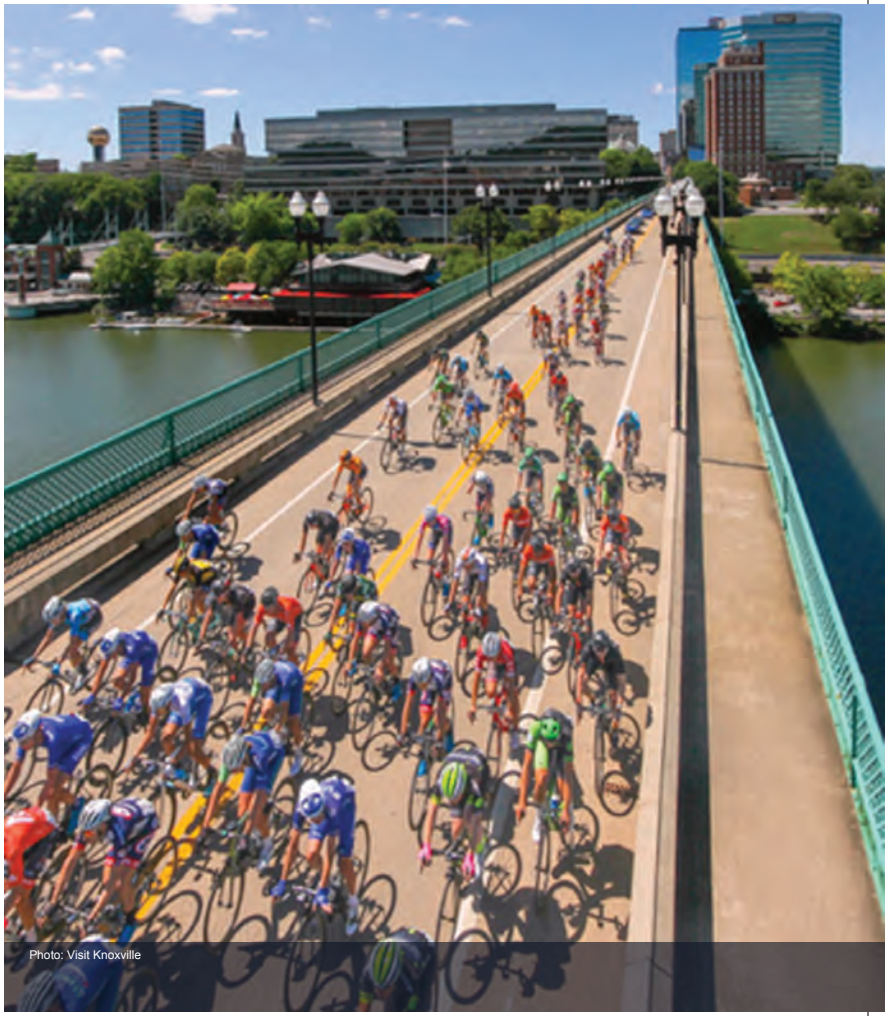


Photo: Visit Knoxville

PART 2 OF 4

Trails & Wild Places

An urban wilderness, a repurposed highway and a marble quarry, all close to downtown.

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TRAILS & WILD PLACES

The Urban Wilderness

A huge driver of the passion for recreational cycling in Knoxville can be attributed to the development of the Urban Wilderness. The Urban Wilderness is a byproduct of the hard work of the Appalachian Mountain Bike Club (AMBC). AMBC develops, builds, advocates for and maintains trails while providing programming to increase access to outdoor recreation. AMBC is also a driver of community, creating spaces for the city to not only get out on trail, but to make friends and to grow the community.

Spaces like the Urban Wilderness are accessible with only a short ride from downtown, offering a home-away-from-home for the bike and wilderness lovers of Knoxville. This hard work has led to international recognition from the International Mountain Bicycling Association, designating Knoxville as a 2026-2028 Trail Town.

TRAILS & WILD PLACES

James White Parkway

In the 1970s, TDOT began building the James White Parkway to connect downtown Knoxville to the Smokies. It was never finished, leaving a roughly 2-mile stretch of road that dead-ends in South Knoxville.

Instead of writing it off, Knoxville rethought it. Grassroots advocates and local leaders pushed back on extending the road, and in 2013 TDOT ended work on the extension. In 2017, the City and TDOT agreed to transfer the road's terminus to the City.

Today, that dead end is the gateway to Knoxville's Urban Wilderness: about 70 miles of trails across 1,000 acres of quarries, parks, and greenways, just minutes from downtown. The Gateway Park, which opened in 2021 and expanded this February, connects outdoor enthusiasts straight into that network, and the City's long-term vision would extend the link along the full 2.2-mile corridor toward downtown.

This project is the focus of our afternoon workshop on Tuesday, November 3, when we'll ride to the Urban Wilderness Gateway Park. During the plenary panel, we'll also hear from Wesley Soward, Knoxville's Urban Wilderness Coordinator, who will share an inside take on how it all came together.





Source: Visit Knoxville

TRAILS & WILD PLACES

Ijams Nature Center

Within just a few minutes, you can go from the streets of Downtown Knoxville to some of the best outdoor recreation in the region. Ijams Nature Center, located just three miles from Downtown, is a critical component of Knoxville's Urban Wilderness. It sits on more than 300 acres of preserved woodlands and marble quarries, providing miles of world-class mountain biking trails.

Ijams includes 11+ miles of dedicated multi-use trails that make recreational cycling accessible directly from the city center. In addition to cycling, Ijams provides opportunities for hiking, climbing, swimming, paddling, and even a treetop ropes course. Ijams has been a catalyst for local outdoor recreation for over 50 years and remains one of Knoxville's most beloved outdoor spaces.

TRAILS & WILD PLACES

Quarries

Given this summer's heat wave in Europe, we wanted to share our favorite way to cool off: biking over to the Knoxville quarries.

Knoxville was once known as "The Marble City" for its most famous export: Tennessee marble. The rock has a famous pink tone, and much of the marble excavated was used for government buildings in Washington D.C. and across the U.S. What's left now are quarries across the city that have been repurposed from legal liabilities to public parks. The two most famous, at Ijams Nature Center and Fort Dickerson Park, also feature extensive networks of mountain biking trails.

While ICSC 2026 will be in November and the quarries will be too cold to swim in, you can take a page out of the Oslo ICSC 2025 playbook and enjoy the sauna at Mead's Quarry before taking a dip in our version of the fjord ice bath.





Photo: @rushasams via Visit Knoxville

TRAILS & WILD PLACES

Legacy Parks Foundation

Several of our Why Knoxville features share a common thread: the Legacy Parks Foundation. Since 2005, Legacy Parks has partnered with landowners, public agencies, and community organizations to create connected, accessible green spaces, expand outdoor recreation opportunities, preserve our waterways and scenic ridgelines, and help our region exceed the national average for public parks.

Legacy Parks' impact on our community is far-reaching: $32 million invested in public parks, 800 acres of parkland added, 1,000 acres preserved, 65 miles of trails added, and seven public access points on our waterways. Its work also includes the region's first adaptive dock and trail.

Legacy Parks has helped shape places like Knoxville's Urban Wilderness, Baker Creek Preserve, and Ijams Quarries, with that work continuing through the SoKno Rail Trail. We're grateful for its contributions to our community and look forward to ICSC attendees experiencing this work firsthand during Tuesday afternoon's James White Parkway mobile workshop.

TRAILS & WILD PLACES

SoKno Rail Trail and Art Walk

Some recent developments in Knoxville may be of particular interest to the ICSC community: construction is underway on a new rail-to-trail project that will transform 3.8 miles of a former rail line into a trail for walking and biking. The rail trail will run directly through South Knoxville's business district, providing a direct connection to Ijams Nature Center. Led by Legacy Parks Foundation, the rail trail will feature 1.5 miles of art installations created by local artists and artists from across the country. The project is one of several recent investments along Knoxville's south waterfront aimed at creating a more connected, accessible, and vibrant area.

The project broke ground in February 2026 and is expected to be completed in fall 2026. Knoxville residents are eagerly awaiting the new trail, and we're hopeful it will be ready for ICSC attendees to experience in November!



Photo source: Legacy Parks Foundation



TRAILS & WILD PLACES

AMBC Fall Fest

Keep your week in Knoxville going by sticking around after the conference for the 17th annual Fall Fest, presented by the Appalachian Mountain Bike Club (AMBC). Beginning the day after ICSC concludes, Fall Fest will take over Baker Creek Preserve on November 6 and 7 with guided group rides, competitions, live music, food trucks, and more. Baker Creek Preserve serves as the gateway to Knoxville's Urban Wilderness and offers a multitude of trails for both casual riders and experienced mountain bikers.

Fall Fest is free to attend, but activities such as the silent auction and bike raffle help make it AMBC's largest fundraiser of the year. Proceeds directly support investments in local trails and programs that expand access to outdoor recreation throughout Knoxville. Consider it the perfect way to keep the wheels rolling after ICSC 2026!

TRAILS & WILD PLACES

Appalachian Youth Cycling

Appalachian Youth Cycling (AYC), a program of the Appalachian Mountain Bike Club, is a free volunteer-led program introducing young riders to mountain biking. Kids develop their riding skills and confidence through regular practices and group rides on local trails, with opportunities to compete in local, regional, and national races.

AYC puts Knoxville's network of mountain bike trails to use as a place for young riders to learn and practice. The trails that local volunteers build and maintain also provide the setting for introducing the next generation to the sport.

AYC won the 2026 State High School Championship. Since its inception it has trained riders who have gone on to win national championships and break world records.

In their own words, AYC's mission is to "get kids out in the woods on bikes!"



Photo: Nick Hurt via Facebook



TRAILS & WILD PLACES

Fall Color

Knoxville approaches peak fall color in October. The city typically sees its brightest colors during the third and fourth weeks of October, whereas higher-elevation areas of the nearby Great Smoky Mountains tend to show their autumn hues earlier in the month.

Fall color often lingers into early November, especially in the foothills and lower elevations of the Smokies. While you're here for ICSC 2026, take some time to explore Knoxville's parks and greenways or head toward the mountains to enjoy the remaining reds, oranges, and golds!

PART 3 OF 4

Streets, Neighborhoods & Safety

How the city moves people, and how it teaches them to move safely.

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STREETS, NEIGHBORHOODS & SAFETY

Urban Life

In 1876, a horse-drawn carriage trolley system transported the Knoxville population around the city. It was replaced by an electric streetcar system in 1890. 1947 marked the last year of the electric streetcar system, but its legacy is long lasting. Neighborhoods served by the streetcar, such as downtown, 4th and Gill, and Island Home, have left behind a legacy of denser, connected grids. While most of Knoxville is suburban and sprawling, these streetcar neighborhoods have left behind a city which is very livable, bikeable, and accessible. So much so that ICSC organizer Aaron Fellhoelter lives in Knoxville comfortably without a car, able to live a nice life biking between the various neighborhoods on his city bike to work at the University, running errands, seeing friends, and just living life.

The areas left behind also have thriving community, businesses, restaurants, and coffee shops that leave hearts and stomachs full. A vibrant urban life is available for those who wish for it. Be sure to explore this special urban life at ICSC this coming November for yourself. There is much to explore.





Photo: Aaron Fellhoelter

STREETS, NEIGHBORHOODS & SAFETY

Gay Street Bridge

The Gay Street Bridge is one of four bridges that connects Downtown Knoxville and South Knoxville over the Tennessee River, but it plays a particularly interesting role in Knoxville's transportation history. First opened to traffic in 1898, the bridge once carried vehicles and served Knoxville's now-retired streetcar line.

More than a century later, the role of the Gay Street Bridge has changed substantially. After a compromised structural element led to a failed inspection in June 2024, the bridge closed to all traffic. In December 2025, the City of Knoxville decided to repurpose this historic piece of infrastructure as a dedicated space for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The bridge has become a popular attraction, offering westward views of the University of Tennessee's Neyland Stadium and the neighboring Henley Street Bridge, and the Tennessee River below. Continuing south across the bridge provides a convenient connection to South Knoxville's outdoor destinations and mountain biking trails, while heading north first brings you directly into Downtown Knoxville. On any given day, the Gay Street Bridge is filled with people walking, jogging, biking, scooting, and taking in some of the best views of Knoxville, making it a must-see destination for our ICSC riding tours and for visitors of the conference wanting to see the city.

STREETS, NEIGHBORHOODS & SAFETY

Safety City

The City of Knoxville takes a creative and regionally unique approach to traffic safety education for local youth. Safety City is our smaller, child-sized model of Knoxville, designed to safely teach children how to move through streets, helping build a culture of safety from an early age. The miniature version of Knoxville includes roads, traffic signals, and various elements of pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure, allowing children to travel through the miniature city in small vehicles, on foot, by bike, or by scooter. Safety City routinely hosts second grade classes from across Knoxville, exposing students to transportation infrastructure through hands-on experiences at an early age. This is just one example of local efforts to introduce traffic safety early as a form of prevention, giving children a creative way to practice safe behaviors in a realistic setting.

For natives of Knoxville, which includes some members of the ICSC organizing committee, the field trip to Safety City is often a foundational memory that lasts a lifetime.

Safety City even includes a miniature version of the famous Sunsphere for the cherry on top.



Photo: City of Knoxville, Safety City



Photo: Center for Transportation Research

STREETS, NEIGHBORHOODS & SAFETY

Center for Transportation Research

Established in 1972, UT's Center for Transportation Research (CTR) brings together faculty, students, and transportation professionals to address the challenges of moving people and goods. Cycling is an important focus for CTR researchers, whose work examines bicycle safety, rider behavior, and the growing role of e-bikes in everyday travel. Studies have explored how infrastructure affects cyclist safety, whether e-bikes replace car trips, and how financial incentives encourage e-bike adoption.

Several CTR researchers will also present their work during the conference. We're grateful to CTR for supporting ICSC 2026 as a Carbon Sponsor and helping bring the international cycling safety community to Knoxville!

STREETS, NEIGHBORHOODS & SAFETY

Two Bikes

A core part of the Knoxville cycling scene is Two Bikes, a local bike shop in the Old City neighborhood. What may look like a normal bike shop to the untrained eye is actually a nonprofit whose mission is to foster opportunity, sustainability, and community through bicycles. And how? One big hint is in their name: for each bike that is upcycled and sold, another is donated to people facing housing instability, individuals in recovery, or households without the means to purchase a bike on their own. In 2024 alone, they donated 230 bikes and diverted 8,000 pounds of waste from the landfill.

The shop also hires local interns, typically high school students from the area, teaching them not only how to work on bikes, but how to gain valuable skills that will serve them later in life: marketing, answering phones, photography, and customer service.

Two Bikes is where donated bikes are given new life, where people in need gain transportation, and where the next generation builds skills and confidence. Be sure to check out the friendly faces of Two Bikes during the ICSC conference to meet some special people in a very special place.





Photo: AppalachianCentrist (CC BY-SA 4.0)

STREETS, NEIGHBORHOODS & SAFETY

The Tennessee RiverLine

Beginning in Knoxville, the Tennessee River spans 652 miles across four states. The Tennessee RiverLine sought to use this natural connection as an opportunity to bring people together by means of outdoor parks, trails, greenways, and direct access to the river for paddling, fishing, and more. The Tennessee RiverLine envisioned a continuous river park along the Tennessee River, and it was estimated that this could generate more than $104 million for communities along the river.

In Knoxville, the Tennessee RiverLine can be experienced through the city's connected greenways and parks, including Suttree Landing Park and Volunteer Landing. ICSC attendees will have several opportunities to experience Knoxville's embrace of the Tennessee River. These include a casual ride through Knoxville's greenways, many of which run along the riverfront (see the Urban Greenway excursion on November 6), and the post-conference dinner reception aboard the Star of Knoxville, an authentic paddlewheel riverboat that departs directly from downtown Knoxville's waterfront and cruises along the Tennessee River.

STREETS, NEIGHBORHOODS & SAFETY

Sequoyah Hills Park

Sequoyah Hills has roots that stretch back to the 1920s, when developer Robert Nash envisioned an upscale subdivision on Knoxville's western edge. The Great Depression cut his plans short after just one lot sold, but the neighborhood grew anyway, becoming one of the city's most prominent and architecturally varied residential areas, built on land that Native Americans inhabited over 1,000 years ago.

Getting there from downtown is easy: a short bike ride along the Third Creek Greenway drops you directly into the neighborhood. Once there, Cherokee Boulevard sets the peaceful tone with a wide, tree-lined arterial with a grassy median greenway that's worth slowing down for, especially in fall. Look closely along the route and you'll find a 1,000-year-old Native American burial mound tucked alongside it.

The park itself sits along the Tennessee River with sport fields, a playground, and water access for kayakers and boaters. The surrounding neighborhood has housed a notable list of residents over the years, including Tennessee governors, U.S. senators, actress Patricia Neal, and author Cormac McCarthy, whose novel Suttree is set in Knoxville.

With ICSC falling in early November, the fall color will be near its peak. It's worth the ride!



PART 4 OF 4

History, Culture & Character

Landmarks, teams, music and a few costume rides.

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Photo: Visit Knoxville

HISTORY, CULTURE & CHARACTER

The Sunsphere

In the heart of Downtown Knoxville stands the iconic Sunsphere, originally built for the 1982 World's Fair and now one of the city's most recognizable symbols. The Sunsphere was inspired by the theme of the fair, "Energy Turns the World," taking the form of the sun itself. The structure stands out in the Knoxville skyline at 26 stories tall, featuring a globe-like exterior made of 24-karat gold dust infused glass panes.

The observation deck offers a rare panoramic view of Knoxville, including the unique character of historic Downtown Knoxville and the Old City, the University of Tennessee campus, and the vast Great Smoky Mountains. This is sure to be a highlight for those attending ICSC this fall, perfectly timed to take in Knoxville's peak autumn colors from above.

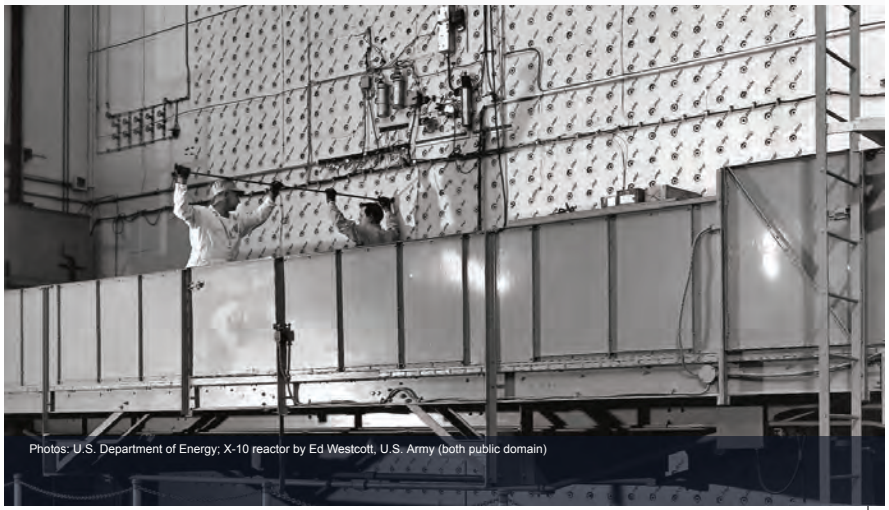
HISTORY, CULTURE & CHARACTER

Oak Ridge National Laboratory

Oak Ridge (the "Secret City") is located just outside of Knoxville and is home to Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), a site where some of the most consequential scientific work in U.S. history has taken place. ORNL is one of 17 National Laboratories operated by the Department of Energy in the United States and played a crucial role in the Manhattan Project. It is home to the now decommissioned X-10 Graphite Reactor, which went critical on November 4, 1943, making history as the world's first continuously operated nuclear reactor. ORNL is one of the three sites of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park.

Today, ORNL continues to develop cutting-edge technology, with systems like Frontier, the world's first exascale supercomputer, capable of performing more than a quintillion calculations per second (that's a billion billion)! ORNL conducts transportation research in energy, automation, materials, and safety (particularly heavy vehicles) among many other areas (not a lot of bicycle safety).





Photos: U.S. Department of Energy; X-10 reactor by Ed Westcott, U.S. Army (both public domain)



Photo: Phil Chin / CC BY-NC 2.0

HISTORY, CULTURE & CHARACTER

Greg LeMond and LeMond Bicycles

One of the greatest cyclists of all time calls Knoxville home. Three-time Tour de France champion Greg LeMond brought his bicycle and carbon fiber businesses to East Tennessee, connecting his experience in professional cycling with the region's expertise in materials research.

By licensing advanced technology developed at nearby Oak Ridge National Laboratory, LeMond Composites found a way to significantly reduce the cost and energy required to produce carbon fiber. Today, LeMond Bicycles offers premium carbon fiber electric bikes, built and finished right here in Tennessee using globally sourced parts.

It turns out the area is just as good for testing bikes as it is for building them. LeMond frequently praises Tennessee for having "some of the best bike riding in the country."

HISTORY, CULTURE & CHARACTER

Pat Summitt's Legacy and the Lady Vols

Knoxville's story would not be complete without Pat Summitt and the Lady Vols. The University of Tennessee women's basketball program is one of the most historic and recognizable in college athletics because of Pat Summitt's spirited leadership and lasting influence on the sport. Pat Summitt ran the program from 1974 to 2012, leading the Lady Vols to eight NCAA championships. With 1,098 victories, she held the record for the most career wins by any men's or women's college basketball coach until 2020.

Pat Summitt's impact has been described as "larger than life," and ICSC attendees will notice tributes to her throughout the city. These include the Pat Summitt statue outside Food City Center at Thompson-Boling Arena, a mural of Pat Summitt and Candace Parker in North Knoxville, and notes of "Lady Vols Blue." We are excited to incorporate a small piece of that legacy into ICSC 2026 by hosting the conference dinner at the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame.





HISTORY, CULTURE & CHARACTER

UT Football

"Good Ol' Rocky Top!" If you're joining us in Knoxville this fall, you'll want to get familiar with those words. On game days, Knoxville turns orange as fans gather to cheer on the University of Tennessee Volunteers. Inside Neyland Stadium, the Pride of the Southland Marching Band plays "Rocky Top" as more than 100,000 fans sing along.

The program's history has been nothing short of extraordinary, from its 1998 national championship to its 2022 upset over rival Alabama. After that victory, fans famously tore down the goalposts, paraded them through Knoxville, and eventually tossed them into the Tennessee River.

UT football is another reason to join us for ICSC this fall. By extending your stay through Saturday, November 7, you can watch the Volunteers take on the Kentucky Wildcats and experience game day at Knoxville's iconic Neyland Stadium.

HISTORY, CULTURE & CHARACTER

Dolly Parton

Dolly Parton's influence runs deep in Knoxville. As an East Tennessee native, Dolly enriched the region for generations through her music, philanthropy, and embrace of Appalachian culture. She gave back in countless ways, from founding the Imagination Library to making a transformational gift to Knoxville's children's hospital in 2026, after which it was renamed Dolly Parton Children's Hospital in her honor.

Knoxville returned some of that love with a downtown parade celebrating her remarkable life and generous spirit. The parade ended at her mural near Market Square, where a growing collection of bouquets and tributes shows just how much Dolly meant to Knoxville.







Photos: Big Ears

HISTORY, CULTURE & CHARACTER

Music Scene

Knoxville boasts a rich musical legacy where community spaces. provided the perfect incubator for jazz, blues, rock and roll, and country music. Walking through the Old City during ICSC, visitors will hear that legacy pouring out of bars and venues onto the street, keeping the history moving forward.

This culture makes Knoxville the perfect home for a global music festival like Big Ears, held each spring. It's a cozy, passionate, and joyful event that brings art to every corner of downtown. Rather than being housed in a big field far from the city center, the festival takes over the city's historic theaters, churches, and even an old Greyhound bus station.

And the best way to get around? The bicycle, of course. Bike racks, lamp posts, fences, and signs quickly become full; the bicycle is the silent workhorse of the festival, transporting excited fans efficiently all around the city.

Freedom Thighs

Knoxville looks like a normal city on the surface: banks, offices, cute cafes. Scratch beneath that and you'll find a place that genuinely charts its own course, true to its Scruffy City name.

Freedom Thighs is a perfect example. A long-held July 4th tradition, it's a giant themed costume ride through the city. Each year brings a new theme, and recent editions have included Dystopian Thighs and Critter Thighs. The ride delivers: bike trailers hauling speakers blasting techno, cargo bikes loaded with cold beers, and neighborhood residents lining the streets to hand out water and spray riders with hoses in the July heat.

ICSC organizer Aaron Fellhoelter is a regular; he showed up as a cockroach for Dystopian Thighs and a raccoon for Critter Thighs. For him, it captures everything he loves about Knoxville: weird, unpretentious, genuinely friendly, and completely centered on bikes. We hope ICSC participants get a taste of that spirit in November.



More photos: instagram.com/freedom.thighs



Photo: John Becker

HISTORY, CULTURE & CHARACTER

Tour de Lights

Every December, just before Christmas, the city pulls on wild costumes, wraps their bikes in Christmas lights, and rides through town for a night of family-friendly, bike-oriented fun. Expect unicorns, Santa Claus, reindeer, loaded-up cargo bikes, custom rigs, and plenty of laughter. It's part family party, part parade through downtown, and part bike advocacy ride, put on by Bike Walk Knoxville.

ICSC participants will miss the December fun, but it is one more taste of Knoxville's quirky, joyful bike culture.

iCSC International Cycling Safety Conference

SEE YOU IN KNOXVILLE

International Cycling Safety Conference 2026

Knoxville, Tennessee · November 2026

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