



The 23rd Annual Toronto International Bicycle Show

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It wasn't 313,000 square feet and there weren't 1,000 vendors. I didn't fly there and stay in a hotel (I drove and paid my own gas and parking). But I did get two free tickets from Maureen, which saved me \$26.

So the glass was half full. My 16-year-old son, Ryan, and I go to the Toronto Bike Show every year, and this year we got in for free. Although it is not as big as Interbike, it is still well worth the visit.

I am like a child in a candy shop as I walk through the main doors. I pause to take it all in. I once heard a rather crude but fitting term to describe it: "bike porn". I don't think Ryan quite feels the way I do, but that will come with time.

The floor is divided into areas. To the left are all of the vendors, mostly Toronto-area bike shops. Tradition dictates that we hit this area first. A quick reconnaissance mission is in order as we look for good deals. I usually come with a list and shop around to find the best deal I can. This sometimes involves dickering between vendors. Unfortunately, Ryan keeps growing and this year, the majority of my funds went towards replacing his outgrown gear.

After we have spent most of our budget, we slow down a bit and walk over to the manufacturers' showcase area, where various bicycle, component and bike-related businesses display their wares. Shimano shows off their latest lines of components. One can dream about the latest Dura-Ace Di2 electronic shifters for our road bikes or the new SLX mtb groupo for our work rigs (yeah, right!). The major bike and accessory manufacturers are represented, the likes of Trek, Specialized, Thule, Power Bar and some Canadian companies, Norco, Opus and the little known but awesome manufacturer, Argon 18. I admit I am a little biased as my son and I both ride Argon 18 road bikes. Speaking of Argon 18, legendary Canadian cyclist Steve Bauer had a booth as well. His professional cycling team, Planet Energy, is the only Canadian professional cycling team and one of its sponsors is the Montreal-based Argon 18.

Steve also operates a bicycle tour company. He used to run tours in Niagara's wine country and I worked for him as a guide. He now concentrates on international tours around events such as the Tour de France. A former pro himself, his accolades include yellow jersey winner in the Tour de France, silver medalist in the 1984 Olympics, and bronze medalist in the 1985 World Cycling Championships. He graciously posed for a photo with Ryan and me (at left).

There was some public safety cycling representation with members of the Toronto Police Service Bicycle Patrol unit in attendance.

The bike show is more than just a bunch of booths and dealers. Since I reside in the "great white north", my outdoor cycling season is a lot shorter than that of some of you southern state residents. After months of sitting on my trainer in front of the T.V., the bike show has an atmosphere that reminds me that the cycling season is just around the corner. There is a BMX competition area and also an indoor dirt track. The smell of the trucked-in soil reminds me of summer trails and rides with my son and friends. The Norco factory trials team, featuring Ryan Leech, also puts on a spectacular demo of bike balance and bunny hopping I would love to have in my slow speed skills workshop at the conference.



You can check out charity ride booths, learn about waterfront trails and wilderness adventure tours, and get the low down on the upcoming mountain bike racing events from the guys at Chico Racing.

In short, the show did what it does for us every year. It kick-started our enthusiasm for the cycling season ahead. Speaking of which, this article comes to you from Roanoke, Virginia, where Ryan and I are on our annual March break mountain biking trip. There is phenomenal off-road riding here. You should check it out sometime.

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