

Santa Cruz celebrates the cycling scene: Museum exhibit documents city's contribution to cycling, just in time for Tour de California

by Genevieve Bookwalter

SANTA CRUZ -- Greg LeMond's winning Tour de France bicycle. A two-wheeler equipped with a Ghanaian bamboo frame. One of the first carbon-frame bikes ever made.

All of the above -- and more -- trace their roots to Santa Cruz, and all are part of "25 Years of Santa Cruz Bicycle Design + Innovation," an exhibit opening Friday at the Museum of Art and History at the McPherson Center.

The exhibit will showcase the county's place as a global hub for bicycle creativity that has spawned such brands as Specialized, Giro and Calfee Design, organizers say. The exhibit opens just in time for the Amgen Tour of California's stage two finish in Santa Cruz on Feb. 16. In fact, racers will cross the finish line just a block away.

"Santa Cruz is literally a mecca for bicycle design -- and bicycle riding, too," said Matt Guerrieri, executive director of The Santa Cruz Design + Innovation Center, which is sponsoring the exhibit.

He and others with the center hope riders and spectators will wander to the museum after the finish to see the evolution of Giro helmets; handle a two-pound, boron-and-carbon-fiber bicycle frame; and tap their fingernails on a hemp-and-bamboo fiber lug, among other activities and displays.

The exhibit is one of a number of events planned as Santa Cruz's passionate cycling community ramps up for the Amgen Tour of California, a Tour-de-France style road race that is the biggest of its kind on the continent. The event begins Feb. 14 in Sacramento and ends Feb. 22 in Escondido.

Along with the museum display, a forum Saturday evening will feature industry designers from Santa Cruz County like Robert Egger, head designer for Specialized bicycles, and Joe Graney, lead engineer for Santa Cruz Bicycles.

"That's a great connection between the art of bicycle and design and Amgen," said Maggie Ivy, CEO of the Santa Cruz County Conference and Visitors Council. The council is promoting a number of other race-related events as well before Feb. 16, like a tandem-bike ride on Valentine's Day and a family ride on Sunday.

SANTA CRUZ CREATIVITY

Two upcoming events will showcase Santa Cruz County bicycle industry designers. They include:

- '25 Years of Santa Cruz Bicycle Design + Innovation,' Feb. 6-22, Museum of Art and History, McPherson Center, 705 Front St., Santa Cruz. Admission is free.
- 'Innovations in Bicycle Design: Past, Present and Future,' a forum featuring Craig Calfee, founder of Calfee Design; Robert Egger, head designer for Specialized Bicycles; Jim Gentes, founder of Giro Helmets; Joe Graney, head engineer of Santa Cruz Bicycles; and Roxy Lo, designer for Ibis Bicycles. 6-9 p.m. Feb. 13, E.C. Rittenhouse Building, 1387 Pacific Ave., Santa Cruz. Admission is \$25, and 500 seats are available. For tickets and information, visit www.designsc.org.

For information on all Santa Cruz County events leading up to the Amgen Tour of California, or to buy Santa Cruz stage finish shirts, hats and posters, visit www.tourofcalifornia-santacruz.com.

But for The Design + Innovation Center crew, the race is an opportunity to seize on their mission of promoting Santa Cruz as a design hub for professionals who might want to open up shop on the Central Coast.

"Santa Cruz is a world center for bicycle design and manufacturing," said Chris Younge, the center's operations manager. "Use the opportunity to showcase local design and innovation."

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