

# Stellenbosch, the best cycling town in South Africa?

**The road traffic situation in South Africa today is considered to be one of the worst in the world. Most road casualties are cyclists and pedestrians which are especially jeopardised due to poor infrastructure. However, Stellenbosch is a town in South Africa that in the future wants safe and attractive cycling. To investigate the current situation for cyclists the two Swedish students Elina and Helena experienced what it is like to be a cyclist during two months in Stellenbosch.**

Cycling is a mode of transport with many advantages - a bicycle is rather inexpensive, health improving and easy to use. It is also said that improvements of the situation for cyclists could result in major decrease of the poverty levels and unemployment rate, since it makes it possible to travel longer distances and thereby place job opportunities within reach. The amazing advantages of cycling and the exciting country South Africa caught Elina and Helena's interest when they were going to write their master thesis in civil engineering at Lund University in Sweden. They therefore chose to study the current situation for cyclists in Stellenbosch, mostly by on-site observations made possible through a SIDA-financed minor field study.

Stellenbosch is considered one of the leading cities in South Africa when it comes to cycling infrastructure and planning for future cycling improvements. However, the result of this study showed that the city still faces great challenges. Cyclists are often surrounded by motorised vehicles

travelling at high speeds, the cycle infrastructure is not widespread and there are often obstacles in the way. Furthermore, it is often said that many people choose not to cycle due to safety reasons and the risk of bicycle thefts.

It may seem like the situation for cyclists in Stellenbosch is terrible but Elina and Helena did also experience promising conditions. Distances within Stellenbosch are short, the climate is cycle-friendly and it is often faster to cycle because of the heavy congestions. Moreover, it is also very enjoyable to cycle along the lively, oak-lined, small streets in Stellenbosch.



Cycling in Stellenbosch

In conclusion, Stellenbosch is regardless all challenges considered to be a town very suitable for cycling. Thanks to the flat terrain, compact city centre, high university influence, the need for affordable transportation options and the fact that motorists show courtesy for cyclists the town is ideal for becoming the premier cycling town in South Africa.

*Hederberg, E. and Homle, H. (2016) The situation for cyclists in Stellenbosch. Master thesis, 293, Civil Engineering, LTH, Lund University.*