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Marion 2 Selma Bike Ride blends history, tourism and fun

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (Jan. 15, 2025) – The inaugural Historical Marion 2 Selma Bicycle Ride will commemorate the 60th anniversary of one of the most important and notorious moments in Civil Rights history.

The cycling event, set for Feb. 20, begins in Marion and rolls 31 miles through Perry and Dallas counties in the heart of the Alabama Black Belt. A kickoff event in Marion is scheduled for Feb. 19, and the event also includes tours, dinners and special events available to participants.

“They’re coming to ride a bike, but people can come and learn about other historical aspects in the area,” said Clay Carmichael, an organizer of the Marion 2 Selma Bike Ride who serves on the Selma City Council. “While they’re here, they can take tours, they can stay the night, they can visit our incredible restaurants and shops and art galleries, and they can really immerse themselves into the history of the Black Belt region and learn about its importance to American history.”

On Feb. 18, 1965, a peaceful civil rights march in Marion turned violent when state troopers attacked the marchers and shot local activist [Jimmie Lee Jackson, who was protecting his mother and grandmother at the time of the shooting](#). He died eight days later.

The violence in Marion served as a precursor to [Bloody Sunday](#) and [the Selma-to-Montgomery March](#) in March 1965, seminal Civil Rights events that galvanized nationwide support for voting rights and paved the way for Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

National television coverage of Bloody Sunday seared the Selma violence into the American consciousness, thanks largely to [black-and-white video of the carnage](#), while Jackson’s death and the violence in Marion was often lost in the fog of history.

“It’s important to remember that what happened in Marion led to the events in Selma in March 1965,” Carmichael said. “Marion sometimes gets left out of the story, and we hope the inaugural Marion 2 Selma Bicycle Ride will help spotlight the courage shown in Marion 60 years ago.”

Added Marion Mayor Dexter Hinton, “I think we too easily forget history and the people who made the ultimate sacrifice. This bicycle ride allows current and past acknowledgments with some fresh air and self-reflection. History is our starting point.”

The Marion 2 Selma Bicycle Ride – co-sponsored by the Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association, [Blackbelt Benefit Group](#), the Conservation Fund, Main Street Marion, RC&D Association of Alabama, and [Montgomery Bicycle Club](#) – takes place just two days before [the Selma to Montgomery Bike Ride on Saturday, Feb. 22](#).

The Selma to Montgomery cycling event follows the [Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail](#), which re-traces the steps and stops taken by Martin Luther King Jr. and other marchers from Selma’s Edmund Pettus Bridge, the site of Bloody Sunday, to the Alabama Capitol in downtown Montgomery. This event is designed to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery March.

The Marion 2 Selma Bike Ride costs \$25 and Carmichael emphasized that organizers are also providing transportation for out-of-town cyclists who arrive at the Montgomery airport. Online registration is available at <https://www.bikereg.com/2025m2s>.

A separate registration fee is necessary for riders wishing to participate in the Selma to Montgomery cycling event. Registration in the Selma to Montgomery ride is not required to participate in the Marion 2 Selma events.

All proceeds from the Marion 2 Selma Bike Ride will help fund bicycle infrastructure in Marion and Selma.

“We are honored to be part of the first Marion 2 Selma Bicycle Ride,” [Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association](#) director Pam Swanner said. “Not only do proceeds from this event benefit an extremely worthy cause for enhancing tourism’s impact in the Black Belt, but it’s wonderful to play a part in acknowledging and highlighting the amazing contributions made to the Civil Rights Movement in Marion. Our organization is delighted

Carmichael noted some cyclists may choose to participate in both rides, allowing them to re-trace the steps the Civil Rights movement took from Marion to Selma and on to Montgomery in February and March 1965.

to shine a light on how Marion residents helped shape American history for the better.”

The Black Belt includes the following 23 counties: Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Crenshaw, Dallas, Greene, Hale, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Monroe, Montgomery, Perry, Pickens, Pike, Russell, Sumter, Tuscaloosa and Wilcox.

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The Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association is committed to promoting and enhancing outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities in the Black Belt in a manner that provides economic and ecological benefits to the region and its citizens. For information, go to www.alabamablackbeltadventures.org.