

# Gay & Lesbian

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## Bitches on wheels

We burn rubber with a badass group of gay scooter riders.

By Jason A. Heidemann

Few words can describe the feeling of taking on the day on a shiny Vespa: the wind in your face, the city at your feet, and all your cares and worries left behind you in a trail of fairy dust. Such was the case on an extraordinarily warm Sunday afternoon when I joined Hell's Fairies, a group of GLBT scooter riders, for a leisurely afternoon ride.

I don't own a scooter and neither (I'm guessing) do you. But they're available for rent at Windy City Vespa (2151 W Division St, 773-276-5200) for a day rate of \$65 (insurance optional). The company provides a brief tutorial, sunglasses and a helmet and encourages a practice spin around the block. It's a good idea: I was pretty wobbly for the first few minutes until I realized a Vespa is simply a friendlier version of a motorcycle, or maybe a bicycle with a motor.

I met the motley crew of Fairies at the Dominick's parking lot at Foster Avenue and Sheridan Road.

There were five of us that day: Tye, a big teddy bear who dispensed avuncular advice as we rode along; enthusiastic John, who works at Scooterworks, a company that sells them; Dawson, a Web designer and the Fairies' cofounder; and fearless leader Alex, a florist (apparently it was his father who gave the group its name). Although all are welcome, on this Sunday afternoon it was a boys' club.

After idling for a while, we fired up our hogs (a scooterist would never say this) and ventured out. We began our journey by taking Foster to Damen Avenue and proceeded south through Ravenswood. It was a fine afternoon. At the fire station at Damen and Grace Street, a cadre of big, beefy firemen couldn't seem to get enough of us (likewise, I'm sure). When we crossed the bridge with the red arches just south of Diversey, the skyline looked irresistible. You definitely see and feel more on a bike than in a car.

We then motored through a bustling Bucktown where every dog adopted into yuppiedom was out helping its owner get laid. Speaking of which, at one point Tye yelled to me over the purr of our motors, "Gay men love their Vespas, they're like our dogs!" At Division Street we headed east through Goose Island (watch it on those rickety bridges!) before heading south on Clark Street to Chinatown.

We parked our bikes in front of the Chinese Cultural Center and posed for pictures. Afterward, we had dim sum at Phoenix (2131 S Archer Ave), one of those places that's palatable enough to North Siders, but still authentic enough to earn a seal of approval from Chinatown locals. It was yummy and it gave me the opportunity to bond with my fellow riders over hot tea and *cha siu baau* (steamed pork buns). Then, we rolled our gluttonous bodies back onto the streets, where we climbed onto our bikes once again.

For the second leg of our journey, we took State Street through the Loop. I waved at all my favorite icons—weekend shoppers, the Chicago Theatre, *Time Out Chicago* HQ and Marina City—before motoring north to Lincoln Park. We weren't the only bikers on the road that day, and it was here that I thought we might run into trouble. A couple of burly riders on giant bikes circled us, one wearing a Harley jacket and the other sporting a T-shirt featuring a naked woman and the words bada-bing! I assumed all bike rides included some sort of showdown with a rival gang and I was prepared to do something dramatic like throw dirt in their eyes and then run away as fast as I could. But it was a false alarm.

The finale to our afternoon was a triumphant ride up Halsted Street through the heart of Boystown and back to Andersonville, where we came full circle—a true fruit loop. My only regret by day's end was that I had to return my scooter and climb back into my car. Hey, anyone want to start a group with me called the Gaytona 500s?

*Hell's Fairies ride again Saturday 26.*



HELL HATH NEW FAIRIES A new GLBT scooter group is ready to ride.  
Photo: Alex Rumsey



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