

Client: Segway

Publication: USA Today

Date: September 2, 2005

Circulation: 2,220,863



Travel

See the sights on a Segway 'glided tour'

Los Angeles joins the crowd of tour groups

By Justin Dickerson
USA TODAY

LOS ANGELES — For years, people have ventured to the City of Angels for a glimpse of a celebrity and a splash in the Pacific Ocean. Increasingly, they can do it all in unique style on a Segway Human Transporter — the self-balancing electric-powered transportation device introduced in 2001 as the invention that would transform everyday life.

Los Angeles is the latest city to climb aboard the fast-growing phenomenon of Segway touring, with two tour companies. Segway Los Angeles began its "California Dreamin'" guided tours along the Santa Monica and Venice Beach shoreline this summer. The company plans to offer a downtown L.A. route soon. Competitor SegWow has taken riders on excursions to stars' homes, the Hollywood sign, Marina del Rey harbor and Santa Monica beach since 2003.

City Segway Tours claims to have introduced the original "glided tour" in Paris in 2003. Since then, sightseeing al fresco via the funny-looking contraptions has taken off in more than two dozen U.S. cities, from the hills of San Francisco to the monuments of Washington, D.C. Tours range from \$10 to \$89.

Even across the Atlantic, Segway tours have changed the way people experience Europe in such places as Prague and Vienna.

"You see things you don't see from a car," says Segway Los Angeles president and tour guide Jason Stemmler, 29, explaining the appeal for both first-time visitors and longtime locals.

"It's combining sightseeing with (new) technology."

For the exercise-challenged, these tours offer a brief respite from hoofing it; they're essentially non-walking walking tours.

In good climates, they offer visitors the added benefit of being outdoors, which on nice days beats a cramped tour bus by a long shot.



California rollin': Screenwriters Jason Graham, left, and Billy Eddy look over the beach during a trip between Santa Monica and Venice.

(Though a Segway tour in the rain or snow is no day at the beach.)

Segway Los Angeles arranges private tours, limiting each to 10 people to ensure personal interaction with the guide, who points out locales seen on the silver screen, such as the basketball court where *White Men Can't Jump* was filmed or the carousel at the Santa Monica Pier that Paul Newman operated in *The Sting*.

All gliders must first watch a brief but jarring safety video, which details the ways a careless rider could take a tumble: curbs, slippery surfaces and steep slopes.

"I'm a little scared now that I see this," Billy Eddy says. But he recants before he steps aboard.

Eddy and Jason Graham, both 30 and screenwriters in Los Angeles, decided to take a Segway tour after seeing Will Arnett's Southern California adventures on a Segway in the television series *Arrested Development*.

Segway tour operators say Seg-



The Segway: Graham balances on the battery-powered vehicle.

ways are safe, and most outfits include instructional briefings and training before the tours begin.

Almost all Segway accidents are minor. Eddy, for instance, rolls away unscratched after unintentionally driving off the bike path onto the sand, causing his wheels to lose traction and his Segway to tip.

In fact, Eddy joins a large club of those who have fallen unharmed from the machines, including George W. Bush (who reportedly did not receive pre-ride training).

Though some tour operators impose restrictions based on age or height, most go by weight: Riders must weigh more than 100 pounds and less than 260.

"We haven't had to turn anyone away so far," Stemmler says. Still, some are hesitant to jump on at first.

"People think they cannot ride a Segway," says Washington-based Segs in the City owner Bill Main. "After five minutes, they're whizzing by you."

Many senior citizens in particular have taken to the easy-to-use transportation devices.

"We've had a 92-year-old guy go out with us who had two surgically replaced knees, and he was dynamite. He had an absolute blast," says Carl Natensteb, owner of SegCity, which conducts tours in Austin and San Antonio.

Wherever you ride, and whatever your age, you're sure to be noticed. On this day, a stream of Segways heading down the California coast turns more heads than the bikini-clad sunbathers. People smile, point and giggle at the sight. Some take photographs or video.

"It's so funny. It's so unusual," says Dee Villacrez, 47, an equities trader from Santa Monica, on the beach to decompress. "I love it."

So does Skip Allen, who splits his time as an occupational therapy assistant and as co-head of Segway Solution in North Wildwood, N.J. "This is what I do for fun."

Hop aboard in these cities

Austin
City Segway Tours (877-734-8687; citysegwaytours.com/austin), \$65.

► Gliding Revolution (glidingrevolution.com), \$55.
► SegCity Austin (512-402-9259; segcity.com), \$65.

Baltimore
Segs in the City (800-734-7393; segsinthecity.net), \$50-\$70.

Chicago
► City Segway Tours (877-734-8687; citysegwaytours.com/chicago), \$65.
► Segway Experience (866-734-4863; segwayexperience.com), \$70.

Los Angeles
► SEGWow (310-358-5900; segwow.com), \$59-\$89.
► Segway L.A. (310-395-1395; segwayla.com), \$75.

Louisville
Louisville Glided Tours (502-741-5395; louisvilleglidedtours.com), \$45.

Minneapolis
Mobile Entertainment (952-888-9200; humanonastick.com), \$70.

Nashville
Segway of Nashville (615-244-0555; segwayofnashville.com), \$65.

Philadelphia
iGlide Tours (877-4543-381; iglidetours.com), \$69.

Salt Lake City
MagicScooter (801-278-6600; magic scooter.com), \$39.

San Antonio
SegCity San Antonio (210-224-0773; segcity.com), \$65.

San Francisco
San Francisco Electric Tour Company (877-474-3130; sfelectric.tour.com), \$70.

St. Louis
St. Louis Science Center (314-289-4424; slsc.org/default.asp?V_DOC_ID=668), \$10-\$80.

St. Petersburg, Fla.
Gyrogliders (727-896-3640; gyrogliders.com), \$50.

Washington, D.C.
► City Segway Tours (877-734-8687; citysegwaytours.com/washington), \$65.

► Segs in the City (800-734-7393; segsinthecity.net), \$50-\$70.