

## Ridin' High In Burlington Vermont

Contributed by John from Ridin' High  
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[The Moab of Longboarding, Free Demo Boards, Stoked out riders and Free shuttle rides? We got to spend some wheel time with the owner of Ridin' High, and told the man; "we want to know more!" John was nice enough to not only share a bit of his story, but also the story of Ridin' High, The premiere Longboarding shop in Burlington Vermont]

I first arrived on the scene in 1995 after wandering the country for the previous seventeen years. My pilgrimage began in Ocean Beach, San Diego in 1977. Nomadic life carried me to Glenwood Springs Colorado then traipsing around the Baja of Mexico searching out hot springs before moving to three different parts of the Lone Star State. From there, lived on the Jersey shore, dairy farm in Massachusetts, High Peaks in the Adirondack mountains of New York, Hillsborough, New Hampshire until finally landing in Burlington, Vermont after a year on a farm in Orwell.

I rolled the University of Vermont campus on my Vision Gator and was glad to have large wheels on an old school setup, I met one kid who had a Lake Tahoe Longboard and we would shred it up before and after English class. With a background in surfing, skating and snowboarding, longboarding came very natural and I began to see the town in a different light.

Burlington is a beautiful city on a hill with the University and hospital situated at the top. The downtown is about halfway down the hill and at the bottom is Lake Champlain, over a hundred miles long and up to fifteen miles wide. I was a student at UVM in the School of Natural Resources with a focus on ski area management and a minor in snowboard bum 101. Fortunately my stint with higher learning only cost me two years and it was in this time I realized the need for a new mountain and Mt Burlington was opened. There is a free shuttle bringing riders from the waterfront to the summit drop at the hospital operating as our year round lift. A couple other options exist such as the UVM off campus shuttle and Champlain College shuttle. There is also public transit, at the cost of a dollar a ride, it is out of the budget and way for most riders who prefer the free shuttles or a nice uphill stroll.

After two years of big business education I decided the only way I would learn was to open a small business that would not interfere with my snowboarding schedule. The dream and design had aligned and after making some longboards in my garage I opened up Ridin' High longboard skate shop in the spring of 2000. Since then we moved locations a few times renting space from a couple head shops and a tattoo parlor before finding our current location at the bottom of Pearl St. Overlooking Lake Champlain and the Adirondack Mountains, residing in a small building on a busy corner we began covering the place in murals and graffiti which changes with the seasons. Located across the street is Battery Park and is the location where all visitors and customers are encourage to try out a longboard from our 20 board plus demo fleet. Smooth paths wind around a playground and overlook the lakefront skatepark, with a snack stand and flat terrain it is the perfect place to begin longboarding or compare different boards. The longboard selection is second to none carrying many brands in our ever expanding inventory where every board we sell is custom built by hand to the customers specifications. The diverse staff has experience in almost every discipline of skating and are more than happy to identify with our clients. We believe that customer service is our paramount priority and every customer is our most important, you will not be ignored when you walk through the door of Ridin' High.

Since we've opened the scene has grown every year with snowboarders cross training to die hard year round rippers. We have a rider Kyle on staff who has all but given up snowboarding finding himself skating year round, when it snows you can find him in the parking garages. With five colleges in the Burlington area, a booming student population, endless runs on and off campus town has become a hotbed of longboarder congregation and outlaw races.

Approximately five hundred feet of vertical drop Mt Burlington isn't the most hesh longboard spot you can find but there are streets that can tame even the hardcore. If its big hill ridin' you're after than the numerous ski area access roads can keep you searching terrain for years to come. This past summers addition of a fourteen passenger shortbus has grown the stoke and allows us to straight up take over any hill we want with numbers and the yellow lights flashing. A bumping system on board we can turn any spot into a skatejam and a lighting rig is planned to light up the night. Once we have the bus running on a Waste Vegetable Oil I don't think we'll ever shut down the COOL BUS. The pigs, well that's another story. Fortunately the police presence has not been that

bad and mostly encourage safe skating with better visibility and respect to traffic devices. You can pick up a free copy of the MT Burlington trail map at the shop or at our cart on Church St (summers weather permitting) and most streets have been given a difficulty rating from beginner to expert. These are helpful for visiting skaters or for locals planning their days mission, we encourage skaters to submit trail maps with new spots highlighted and changing road conditions. Depending of the time of year the shuttles running are also listed on the trail map.

Spring and fall seem to be peak season while school is in session with the College Street Shuttle running from 7am to 9pm every fifteen minutes and the UVM OC shuttle cruising you up twice an hour till 2 am (Thurs- Sat), there are few hours in the day a shuttle is not running. There is not much better than getting off the shuttle about 2:20 am, cruising across campus and rolling up to the top of Main St just as all the lights start flashing yellow. It is actually the time I most recommend for skating Main as speeds have been clocked over 40 MPH! Summer ridership has been growing with many choosing a longboard for their preferred means of transportation with lack of downtown parking, many professionals are commuting on board.

Burlington is a hip town with a ton of solid riders, home of Burton Snowboards and former Rossignol/Dynastar outpost, and easy access to Vermont's Ski Areas many come and few leave. Sound too good to be true, unfortunately there is no legitimate cement parks but the new bowl at Burton gives us some skate options. The downtown park is a few years old and showing signs of wear but a nice place for the street skater. Nearby town parks may be in better or worse shape but lack flow and bowls so I have a site in mind where we have begun planning a renegade cement creation looking to grow with local input. Hoping to plant the seed and watch what grows there, a few curbs to kick around on but a bowl is slated for the near future. Anyone with any cement experience is invited to lend a hand and help shape our own future. The way I see it our skatepark will be unsafe to skate in the next five to ten years and we will have a viable option started in where to develop the future skatepark. We can then bring in a good company to continue where we leave off.

If you think my opinion is biased being the owner of Ridin' High you're right, but as I travel the country it is easy to recognize that there is truly something special happening in Burlington Vermont, the East Coast Capital of Longboarding. Here's what visiting skater Marion Karr of the DownHill Billies had to say after one day skating with the Ridin' High Long Board Crew (LBC).

" First I want to thank the whole Burlington Crew that turned out last night for an epic session in their awesome town. Kyle, Will, John and the rest of the crew showed this southern boy some serious hospitality and even more seriously fun skating. I have been driving my wife and daughter crazy still talking about it all day today. From the big long runs of Mt. Burlington, to the amazing parking deck, and the secret underground location, to the S turns. The whole place is filled to the brim with super stoked filled runs." " The vibe is amazing and it reminds me of the DHB (DownHillBillies) crew in their love and passion for bombing, slashing, carving, and killing every run they can find. Guys this is a DESTINATION that all longboarders on the East Coast of the US and Canada have to hit. Seriously, this place rocks. As we were hitting the turns and bombing the hills in town, people were in the street, hanging out, partying, and just having a great time."

"PREDICTION: Burlington, VT will become THE hottest longboarding scene on the East Coast in the next two years. To a mountain biker, Moab, Utah is one of those places you have to ride sometime in your mountain biking life. After last night, I feel the same way about Burlington. It's a MUST RIDE if you are a longboarder."

Not a bad unsolicited review posted on the fish the day after rollin' with the Ridin' High LBC. Anyone planning a visit is invited to stop into Ridin' High and come ride with us. You can contact us threw our website [rdnhgh.com](http://rdnhgh.com) or [myspace.com/ridinhigh](http://myspace.com/ridinhigh) and check out the many events we have planned. Have fun and keep it irie...