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Audio – Italian Bikes - Transcript

(Crisis-hit Italians swap cars for bikes

Bikes are outselling cars in cash-strapped Italy but while cyclists in Milan say their city is ready for a two-wheel lifestyle, there are daily nuisances for riders on Rome's trafficked streets. Duration: 01:35

It's said all roads lead to Rome and now a growing number of people are cycling on them. In 2011 2,000 more bicycles were sold in Italy than cars.

Given the 'economic crisis' people are beginning to realise that cycling is a way of moving around for no money and you gain health-wise and you have fun because you're outdoors.

But cyclists in Rome struggle against busy roads and poor quality cycle paths.

I don't think it's very organised at the moment. There are more cyclists but there are also difficulties. It doesn't seem like a city that's equipped for cycling.

The story is much more positive further north in Milan, the "Bikemi" bike-sharing scheme has been well implemented and embraced by locals.

There are only positive sides to bike-sharing, in terms of usability and in terms of the price, which is very reasonable. It is also a way of respecting the environment, it's a way of getting around which doesn't pollute or create more traffic, so there are only positive reasons.

For those who want their own set of two wheels, Milan's Bianchi factory, the world's oldest bicycle-making company, is proving popular with the sale of commuter bikes jumping 35 percent on last year.

They are moving from cars to bicycles but when they get on a bicycle they still want a quality product and we're seeing a much higher level of sale than in the past.

While Italians in the north are quick to embrace life on a bike, their southern neighbours in Rome are taking bit more convincing before they switch from four wheels for two.