

What's it like being a skater in LA? We talk to two teenage skateboarding fans.

Monica and Carl are teenagers from Los Angeles in the United States. They both love skateboarding and spend a lot of their free time on their boards. Read this interview with them and find out more about their passion for skateboarding.

Who invented skateboarding?

Monica: Nobody knows who the first skateboarder was or who made the first boards, but we know that skateboarding started in California in the 1950s. There were lots of surfers who wanted something to do when it wasn't windy and the ocean was calm, so they invented the skateboard and it was called 'land surfing' in the beginning.

Carl: The first skateboards were pieces of wood with rollerskate wheels that people made at home. When skateboarding became popular, they started making skateboards in factories.

Where can you go skateboarding?

Carl: You can go skateboarding in public places like parks, pavements and city squares. Some skateboarders like 'freestyle' skateboarding, which is going fast along pavements or bicycle lanes. Other skateboarders like doing jumps and tricks on benches, stairs or railings. It's great fun, but you have to watch out for other people too.

Monica: There are also lots of skate parks where you can skate on ramps. Lots of cities have skate parks now. The good thing about them is that you can practise jumps without disturbing anyone and, of course, you meet other skaters at a skate park too.

When did you start skateboarding?

Monica: I started skateboarding when I was thirteen. When I was younger, I used to go rollerskating a lot with my friends. Then one of my friends got a skateboard and she let me try it. I fell off several times but I loved it from day one. A couple of weeks later, I got my first skateboard. I haven't given up rollerskating, I still go sometimes.

Carl: I live in the city and there's a skate park near my house. I used to go to the park and watch the skateboarders, then my dad gave me a skateboard for my eleventh birthday in July and I spent the summer skateboarding. I loved the sense of freedom and speed. I used to ride my bike a lot, but I never go on it now.

Monica, is skateboarding an unusual sport for girls?

Monica: It's more popular with boys than girls, but there are lots of girl skateboarders too. It's a sport for everyone. There are lots of people in their thirties and forties who started skateboarding as teenagers and are still doing it today.

Is skateboarding dangerous?

Carl: We all fall off our boards a lot and sometimes you can hurt yourself, but most injuries are small things like cuts and bruises. Obviously, it's a good idea to wear protective clothing like a helmet and it's important

to protect your hands and wrists too. Wrists are the part of the body that you're most likely to injure when skateboarding as you put out your hands to protect yourself when you fall. I always wear wristguards when I skate.

Are there skateboarding competitions?

Monica: Yes, there are. They usually take place in skate parks and judges give skaters points for their jumps and tricks. In the United States and Europe, some skaters are professional and make a living taking part in skating competitions.

Carl: There was a campaign to get skateboarding included in the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro but unfortunately it wasn't successful. But who knows? Skateboarding might be in the 2020 Games!

Tell me about 'Go Skateboarding Day'.

Monica: 'Go Skateboarding Day' started in 2004 when skateboarders in the United States decided it would be good to have a day that celebrates skateboarding. It takes place on the 21st of June every year. You can check it out online. It's a day when there are events for skateboarders like competitions, parties, barbecues or people just go out and skate with their friends.

What about fashion? Is there a skater look?

Carl: Fashions change, but at the moment the fashion is for skaters to wear tight jeans or black trousers and a hooded top, T-shirt or check shirt. Baseball caps and woollen hats called beanies are popular too.

Monica: A lot of skateboarders, both boys and girls, have long hair too. But really skaters can wear what they want. For me, love of the sport is more important than someone's clothes.

What's a long board?

Monica: A long board is another type of skateboard, but it's longer and it's got bigger wheels. Standard skateboards are usually about 70 to 80 centimetres long, but long boards are 90 to 120 centimetres long. Long boards aren't so good for jumps and tricks, but they are good for going fast along pavements.

Carl: Here's an interesting fact about long boards. In 2006, a skateboarder went across Australia from Perth to Brisbane on a long board. That's 5,850 kilometres!

Robin Newton