

# that's

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FEATURE

# FIXED FOR TRICKS

that's Beijing talks to Ines Brunn,  
the acrobatic mama of fixed-gear in Beijing

Interview by Michaela Kahle Photos by Satchi Lin





**B**oth fashion and political statement, the fixed-gear bike is more a must-have accessory in many cities around the world. Everyone from hipsters and eco-warriors, to lawyers and doctors share a passion for what is considered to be the simplest, sleekest, most "beautiful" two-wheeled transportation around. Fixed-gear is stepping into the mainstream in major cities in the US and Japan, but here in China, the scene is still in what can only be described as its final stage.

There is one woman, however, who is doing her best to induce its Beijing birth: Ines Brunn. that's Beijing caught up with Brunn, a former member of the Indoor Artistic Bicycling German National Team, to find out exactly what fixed-gear bikes are, and what you can get up to on them —

**that's Beijing:** So what's so special about fixed-gear bikes?

**Ines Brunn:** They were originally designed for velodrome racing but now more and more people are using them in urban environments.

On fixed-gear bikes, the pedals keep on turning whenever the back wheel is turning. Furthermore, a fixed-gear bike only has one gear, so it's a single-speed bike. That might sound weird, but it means you don't need handlebars, as you just need to pedal backwards (skid) to slowdown or even stop — if you can.

**that's Why:** Is something that sounds so difficult getting people so excited?

**IB:** I think the beauty of fixed-gear is in the reduction to the minimal. A fixed-gear bike

consists only of a frame, wheels, pedals and a chain, handlebars and a seat. No need to worry about changing gears while riding, or getting the chain caught between gears, or maintaining the hand brakes —

The pedals are attached to the back wheel in a fixed manner so you can do all kinds of trick stunts, which means that the bike doesn't move and you can either stand or sit on it in any position. And with fixed-gear you can do something you can never do on a regular bike: ride backwards! But that might not be too useful in Beijing's traffic.

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**that's What's the biggest challenge?**

**IB:** The biggest challenge of riding fixed-gear is to learn how to brake with your legs. It's called skidding and is quite difficult to master in the beginning. But once you get it, you can start all kinds of creative stunts.

**that's You do some pretty impressive tricks on a bike. How did you first get involved?**

**IB:** I do tricks on a fixed-gear bike, but it's a special one made for doing tricks. Such bikes are called artistic bicycles and they're specifically made for the sport of artistic cycling, an indoor sport most popular in Germany. I started that when I stopped competitive gymnastics at the age of 13. By pure chance I found out about indoor artistic bicycling and have done it competitively since then. I was on the German National Team till I moved

to Beijing.

**that's What sort of tricks do you do?**

**IB:** The tricks start when the bike is rolling. They can be stands — like on the saddle or the handlebar — strength moves, or wheelies. One strength move is actually named after me as I invented it — the "Ines-Sinckle." It's a strength move that requires a lot of flexibility, which makes it difficult for both women (who often lack the arm strength) and men (who often lack the flexibility).

The other group of tricks are wheelies, which means riding on the back wheel only. This can be done in various positions and often backwards or forwards or even doing pinnoles.

**that's Where would you suggest people go to buy a suitable bike?**

**IB:** A typical starter urban fixed-gear bike is a Bianchi Pista. They're cheap, reliable and have the classical-style geometry. The people at Windspeed [a high-end bike shop near Tian, see p38 for details] know about track bikes for riding in the velodrome and can order from Bianchi in Italy. Or, if you're planning a trip to the USA or Japan, they both have a huge urban fixed-gear bike scene — you can buy a nice bike there.

**that's You mentioned that you're interested in starting a network for fixed-gear enthusiasts?**

**IB:** Going on rides with other fixed-gear people is so much fun. I'd like to find other people interested or already addicted to fixed-gear — to cruise around Beijing or learn tricks together. People can contact me via my website, [www.ick-bike.com](http://www.ick-bike.com).