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RIDING HIGH

Dupree Zong, Shop Manager
Natooke Fixed Gear Bikes & Juggling

Born and raised in Beijing, 25-year-old Dupree Zong has been riding bikes since he was five. He learned about fixed-gear bicycles from a magazine, and his determination to buy one led him to the Natooke shop in Wudaoying Hutong near the Lama Temple. Once Zong bought a 'fixie', his passion for riding it led to a job as the shop manager. Here he shares his favorite places to ride his bicycle in the city.

I love bicycles, because it is me riding the machine. It's my own power and my own strength that keeps me moving at the speed I want. I really like this feeling. A fixed-gear bike makes the feeling even better, because I totally control the bike. On other bicycles I can coast, and when I coast the bike is moving itself, that's why it's called *ai zhi sing che* in Chinese, *zì jì huì zǒu de chē*. But on a fixed-gear you cannot coast, when you move the bike is moving, the pedals are moving. If you stop pedaling the bicycle wants to stop too, and you will skid. If you pedal backwards the bicycle will go backwards. You are fully in control of this bike. It's an even tighter combination between you and your bike. I can't lie, there are also some tricks you can do on a fixed-gear that makes me love it better.

If I just see my bicycle standing beside the wall, I think it's just so beautiful I really want to take a ride with it, it's a part of me now. In my free time I might ride my bicycle, or I play video games — I'm a big Nintendo fan — or I go pick up my girlfriend after she finishes her work and we go for a dinner date. She loves pizza, and for that we go to Gung Ho. The boss there has a bicycle that I built. It's a beautiful bike.

Natooke has many events on the weekends. We play bike polo every Saturday and Sunday at 2pm at the west gate of the Workers' Gymnasium. We will give you all the things you need like mallets and balls, you just need your own bicycle, and it can be any kind of bike. We welcome people who have never played. We have a coach and can teach you. It's a really great game.

Sometimes we will get together at the west gate of Ditan Park for trick practice, and we can teach you how to do some tricks. On Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8pm there's a group who meet at the Olympic Forest Park and we do laps. One lap is 6.5 kilometers and you can ride as fast as you can, you don't need to worry about cars. It's a really nice thing. I think if you ride alone it's not as much fun as when you ride with others.

I really like to ride along the canal that runs from Liangmaqiao and follows the Second Ring Road. I also like to ride beside the canal from Xizhimen to the Summer Palace. There's shadows, plants and few cars. It's very nice. Also Jingshan and Beihai Park after 7pm are beautiful, and that is really old Beijing. You ride there and you will feel that this is the place where the emperor used to stay. You can ride a bicycle there and enjoy the quiet. It is so quiet you can even hear the sound your tires make as they move across the ground. ☺

