

The New Biker Bar - The Pubcrawler



If you've been out and about lately in downtown Austin on the weekends, you may have come across this peculiar slow-and-sometimes-steady contraption called the Pubcrawler. On first glance, an onlooker may wonder, "What is that"?, "How does that work"?, or "Why are people pedaling"? In fact, on my recent ride serving as a send-off for my cousin Ernest and his girlfriend Cheryl, who are moving from Austin (I don't know why anyone would leave either!), we were the subjects of at least 4 photos taken by people on street corners watching us chug along (pun intended?) at the max speed of 5 miles per hour or less. My seat neighbor made a good point, "What would anyone do with that photo?". This was a good question, and I justified it as both the by-product of a tourist's instinct, and human nature's curiosity of unordinary things.

So, what IS the Pubcrawler and how DOES it work? And, more importantly, can you believe groups of 10-15 people actually agree to sit on an open moving vehicle and pedal their way around, even when drinking is involved?

Actually called Het Fietscafe, or The Bike Cafe, this motor-less, people-powered mobile bar originated in Amsterdam, and the Austin version doesn't appear to have much variance in looks other than the branding (phone number, English title, etc.). The crawler can hold up to 16 people at least 5' (trust me, you'll be in pain the next day if you try to bike and you're shorter than 5'2" since the bike seats aren't adjustable in height), and max. 300 lbs. You bring your own snacks and drinks, and be prepared to remove your drinks from the bar and refrain from sipping alcoholic bevs East of Lamar as there is an approved radius where drinking is allowed (although the crawler can venture East, only no drinking is allowed there). The driver, or really steer-er (as the main man/woman doesn't drink or pedal, but they can brake and steer) will give you a heads up before entering the no-drink zones.



If you're wondering how open container laws don't prevent the Pubcrawler from operating, we discovered that it's because there's no engine. Yes, we all suggested a motor for the thing since we were moving along at a couple miles an hour. Too bad, if you're on the crawler and you want to go anywhere, you better pony up and be prepared to pedal! My cousin was wise and invited a variety of people on our trip- men and women of different heights and weights, including 2 hard-core regular bikers. It would be smart to take this approach when putting together your group to make sure the weight of the group isn't resting on only a couple of friends' shoulders!

We didn't pedal for three-full hours, but had a three-hour experience since we stopped at a few bars for food and drinks along the way. What I loved about this was that the Pubcrawler is helping other local businesses by bringing by a group of over 10 people to visit their establishment for a refresher along the way. It's amazing how businesses in this city work together to support community, even without noticing!

The Pubcrawler costs between \$160-\$190/hour during week days, weekends, and holidays and \$225/hour for tailgating! When you split it by 15 people, the cost is pretty reasonable for an entertaining interactive experience! And, they just started offering a Humpday Pubcrawl on Wednesday evenings for \$35/person for 3 hours.

Planning a bachelor party, birthday party, going-away send-off, tailgate party, or company outing? The pubcrawler is a great way to break-the-ice and the group is sure to have a good laugh when traveling at such a crawling pace! Try to reserve early, though, as there are only 2 mobiles now, so they book up quickly! You can learn more about booking a tour and FAQs here. Get crawlin', Austin!

*Special thanks to Ernest and Cheryl for a fun ride!