

College grad behind the wheel of beach bicycle rental business

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At Wheel Fun Rentals, business is spinning during the summer.

The company offers Ventura County beachgoers a selection of manpowered cycles to rent, from four-person surreys and tandem bikes to three-wheel "slingshots" and individual "chariots."

Wheel Fun Rentals Manager Chad Morgan saddles up 500 to 700 customers a week at the three rental locations he oversees: the Ventura Pier, San Buenaventura State Beach and Mandalay Beach in Oxnard.

"When the sun is out, we're usually busy," he said.

The 24-year-old recent college graduate talked to The Star about being a professional peddler of pedals this summer.

Q. What's the wildest thing you have seen on one of your bikes?

A. We get several weddings at our Embassy Suites location (at Mandalay Beach). We had one couple that wanted to rent a surrey for a couple hours. They decorated it up as their getaway car with streamers, and tied on cans, and had a friend drive them away like a getaway limo. It was pretty cool.

Q. Would you consider your bikes a good date activity?

A. Oh yeah. We get a lot of couples. They can take a tandem or a single surrey, so they can be on the same bike and share the experience. If you come late in the day to the Ventura Pier location, you can pedal to the end of Surfers Point and watch the sunset together. It's a smooth move.

Q. Any good bike tips or products you swear by?

A. Over time, we have tried to figure out a way to cut down on so many tubes being popped, so now we use thorn-proof tubes. They have a thicker rubber on the outside of the tire, and it's made a big difference.

Q. Has the success of Lance Armstrong and the recent attention to the Tour de France helped business?

A. No, it really hasn't come up. We have such a specialty product that we attract more families and young people looking for something different than hard-core cyclists.

Q. What riding hints do you usually tell first-timers on a tandem?

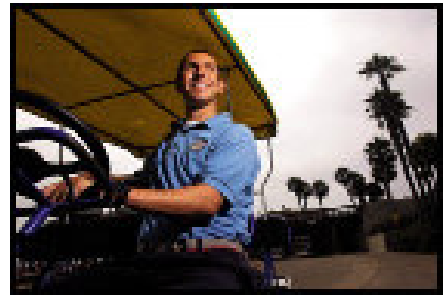
A. I tell them to ride it like a normal bike, but I would caution someone who has never ridden a tandem before to be careful on the turns because of the weight of the bike. They're pretty user-friendly. It doesn't take a lot of instruction.

Q. You've probably seen some nasty accidents. What's the worst?

A. Every now and again, some kids will get a little rowdy and have races and run into each other. The bikes usually take the greatest beating. People usually don't get hurt beyond a scratch, or their pant leg gets caught in the chain.

Q. What's the most fun part of your job?

A. Probably all the kids I manage. It's fun to hang out with them. It's also great to work outside. You get to see a lot of happy people come by.



Jason Redmond / Star staff

"When the sun is out, we're usually busy," Chad Morgan says. He's manager of Wheel Fun Rentals at the Ventura Pier, San Buenaventura State Beach and Mandalay Beach in Oxnard.

Chad Morgan

Age: 24.

Residence: Ventura.

Education: Bachelor's in business management, Colorado State University.

Occupation: Ventura area manager for Wheel Fun Rentals.

Interesting fact: Wheel Fun Rentals has more than 15 Southern California locations and 55 nationwide. The company's four-wheel cycles have been manufactured in Italy for more than 30 years.