

Brazilian Ambassadors to China Ride a 17-Seat Bike

Contributed by Marina Sarruf
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Twenty five Brazilians, most from the southern state of Santa Catarina are going to take a city tour of Beijing, China, in a different way: pedaling on a Chinapede. The invention, created by businessman Nerino Furlan, from Santa Catarina, is a super-bicycle made of iron with 17 seats, 19 tires, a loudspeaker and a logo stamped on the front, with the image of a Chinese dragon.

Soon after, the group is going to take a tour of Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, riding the same tricycle, however it will bear another logo, of a camel wearing a turban. It is the Dubaiped. "The aim is to take joy to the Arabs," stated Furlan, who has already invented over 10 different types of tricycles and vehicles.

According to Furlan, the idea of touring the two countries on the China/Dubaiped came up as a way of representing not only the state of Santa Catarina, but all of Brazil. In Dubai, the creation will even gain space at the Emirates Mall, one of the country's largest shopping centers.

The Brazilian delegation is comprised of businessmen, doctors, friends of Furlan and even the vice governor of Santa Catarina, Leonel Pavan. The group, which will remain in Dubai for three days, intends to parade around the streets of the emirate wearing turbans and singing Brazilian and Arab tunes.

"We want to take a bit of Brazil there. Who knows, maybe a sheikh will come and pedal along with us," said Furlan.

This will not be the first time that Furlan's inventions, which are part of the Planetpede, the name of the businessman's collection of exotic machines, become a highlight in foreign countries. Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Monaco are some of the countries that have already been visited by a creation in the Planetpede family. There have been over 200 parades in Brazil and abroad.

In order to obtain support from the government of Dubai to parade around the emirate, Furlan traveled to the Brazilian capital Brasília to invite the ambassador of the Arab country to Brasília, Yousuf Ali Al-Usaimi, to get to know the Dubaiped, which started being manufactured on April 1st and was concluded last week. Now, next Saturday, July 19, the ambassador will be in the city of Blumenau, where Furlan lives, to become acquainted with the super bicycle.

Centipede

The art of playing with imagination emerged in 1987, when Furlan crafted a four-seat bicycle to play with his three children. At the time of the parades at Oktoberfest, a traditional festival in Blumenau, Furlan went to the party on his bike

with three other friends. The toy was a huge success. From then on, every year the Centipede, which is the name given to the bicycle, would gain another seat and feature in the parades.

In 1999, the Locopede was born, reminiscent of the 1899 locomotives, with capacity for transporting 10 people. One year later, it was time for the Trampede, with capacity for 22 people. With each year, Furlan's creativity would reach new heights, as he invented the Beetlecopterpede, a combination of the Beetle automobile and a helicopter, and then the Sled-o-pede, the Alphapede, the Vikingpede, among others.

All of the creations are built by Furlan, whose friends help him manufacture the parts. He also counts on sponsorship from companies based in Santa Catarina. The price is not at all cheap for a toy: the Locopede, for instance, cost 110,000 reais (approximately US\$ 68,100).

According to Furlan, the machines have never been sold. "The day I do that, the enchantment will be over," he said. For him, the machines are true toys. "Those who ride them become children again," he claimed.

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