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Couchsurfing friend from France

Yardsurfing is a term that I may or may not have coined, which means using the Couchsurfing network to camp in people's yards (a cheap place to stay while traveling.) Couchsurfing is great because you meet new people and experience new cultures. Recently, I yardsurfed here in St. Pete just for fun. The host was originally from France and some of his family from Venezuela was staying the night as well, so we shared dinner and stories.

Green or Sustainable? What do you think?

We were chatting about bicycling, boating, and cars when the host's nephew showed me a picture of a new pick-up truck he just bought, which was equipped to run on natural gas. He jokingly bragged that the fuel is "free;" provided by the government.

From his perspective, "free" natural gas is just the Venezuelan government's attempt to be "green." I could not stop grinning; our views are so similar. With such cheap fuel, "no one bicycles to get around in Caracas," he said. Instead, the people make additional time to ride for exercise. Let us remember that green is simply a color, an appearance. Sure, this "free fuel" is green, but not sustainable.



Photo: Felipe Dana, Associated Press / SF

Contrast that to a program in neighboring Brazil that allows prison inmates to reduce their sentences by powering the nearby city of Santa Rita do Sapucaí by pedaling a stationary bicycle. This is not green, this is sustainable.

A Shared Responsibility

The (Yardsurfing) host rides his bike 5 miles to work every night. His bike had no light, so in exchange for the great hospitality, I installed a blinky light set from the Center for Urban Transportation Research's BikeSmart class. Visibility on the road is absolutely essential to "arrive alive" so you can bike, surf, study, or Polka dance another day.



BikeSmart at USFSP

About the blogger



Zachary Westmark is a USFSP graduate who loves puns. His last name affords a convenient connotation: his blog captures his attempt to migrate to the West coast of the USA while exploring culture, frugality, geography, physical exertion and sustainability - via long distance bicycle trek (peppered with other random tidbits).