

THE PEAK

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dezvous. The nondescript Cycleworx, which is off Upper Thomson Road, is their focal point.

Their topic of discussion: bicycles.

This is where they get their bikes tuned, check out the latest shipment and exchange notes on biking routes around the island.

These pedal machines are not what one hops on for a supermarket run. They are pedigrees, which can cost as much as \$25,000 each. A pair of wheels can set one back \$6,000 – not that price is a factor for this group of cyclists.

“When I started selling these high-end bikes in 1998, people said I was crazy, because mountain bikes were the in thing then. It was also when the Asian financial crisis hit us,” recalls Cycleworx co-owner Kenneth Tan. “I struggled to sell 100 bikes a year but, today, I am the one laughing because I am selling 400 to 500.”



Kenneth Tan, co-owner of Cycleworx, saw the future in high-end bicycles long before they became a trend.

The phenomenal growth of cycling in Singapore has propelled Cycleworx from a \$450,000-a-year business to \$1.5 million. Two years ago, revenue peaked at \$2.5 million.

Tan, who won a clutch of silver medals at the SEA Games between 1987 and 1995, said cycling first became a hit with corporate bigwigs here about eight years ago.

THE NEW GOLF

While there is no exact statistic for this specific group of cyclists, Tan notices a trend among high net-worth individuals who are increasingly favouring cycling over golf, which is the traditional sport of the businessman. Tan's shop has seen its fair share of deals struck by its high-end clientele who meet and socialise there.

"A banker once lamented about spending the whole day at a golf course, when he could burn more calories in half the time cycling which he enjoys," says the 48-year-old, who owns a \$17,000 Pinarello road racer. "It's the new golf and is popular among top executives between 30 and 40 years old, although there are quite a number over 50 years old."

Cycling has gone beyond fitness and taken on a social dimension, with enthusiasts travelling overseas together on specialised biking tours. For some like Khing Go, CEO of private banking company Schroder & Co (Asia), cycling has become an avenue to gather like-minded friends to raise funds for charity, just as golf has traditionally. Others, like Francis Koh of mainboard-listed construction and property development group Koh Brothers, have benefited from the sport on both personal and business fronts (see side stories).

While Tan's shop is all about the nuts and bolts of bikes, a different sort of biking activity is taking root on the east of the island. Tucked in the corner along a row of two-storey shophouses in Siglap Drive is cafe-cum-bicycle shop Coast and Company. It's tempting to lump the trendy space with other third-wave cafes, but what sets it apart from other cafe-bike combo shops is its proprietary Coast Cycles bicycles.

The unique collection of eight designs is displayed on the second floor showroom and come in attractive colours. Most have fat wheels and cost between \$1,500 and \$8,000. Jansen Tan, designer and founder of [Coast Cycles \(http://coastcycles.com/\)](http://coastcycles.com/), recently debuted a new range called Quinn Cargo bikes, which he says was created for business executives.

PEDALLING POWER

So why would one part with a small fortune for a primitive mode of transport?

"Because they can," says Jansen, who was a former national trials cyclist. "It's like those who collect expensive watches but don't wear them. I have customers who have costly bikes at home and leave those they buy from us in our showroom."



RIDE OF WAY When he couldn't find his ideal bicycle, Jansen Tan decided to design his own and founded Coast Cycles.

Like Cycleworx's clientele, Jansen's customers have high disposable incomes and cycle in groups. More than just a means of getting from point A to B, bicycles are the new status symbol, which is also what sparked the idea for Coast Cycles three years ago. The 34-year-old, who is an industrial designer by training, says: "I wanted a stylish bike to cycle to cafes with my friends. Riding a mountain or racing bike to these places is just not cool, because it is not appropriate. It is just like buying clothes – one needs the right attire to suit the occasion."

Coast Cycles has a growing cult following and has attracted buyers from as far away as Australia and Atlanta in the US, although Jansen is not ready to export his bicycles on a large scale. What is attractive about the sport is its non-threatening nature, he says. "At the golf course, there is a certain ambition to score better than one's peer. There is no such competition among those who cycle, because it is a relaxing activity."

This sport doesn't look like it is riding into the sunset any time soon. According to 2011 figures from the Land Transport Authority, commuter cycling amounted for at least 50,000 trips, a figure that is set to increase with the National Cycling Plan which aims to build an islandwide cycling path network of 700km by 2030 – up from the current 230km of cycling paths and park connectors.

Kenneth says: "Although sales of bikes have slowed a little because of the dampened market, I expect it to pick up again when the market stabilises. The growth of cycling is not unique to Singapore – it has become a global movement because cycling is a healthy activity and takes people places."



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Find out why Jansen Tan's made-in-Singapore bicycles have gained traction among local business executives, in the [digital download of The Peak via Magzter](#) (<http://www.magzter.com/SG/SPH-Magazines-Pte-Ltd/The-PEAK-Singapore/Lifestyle/>). (For the month of August, get a [FREE promo code](#) (<http://thepeakmagazine.com.sg/subscribe/>).)

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