

James Daley: Make mine a double, I'm catching a cab

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While there are many great things about cycling to work – and it'll take incapacitation for me to give it up – it can sometimes prove to be quite a headache logistically. If you're planning to go out for a few drinks in town after work, you have to make a decision to either leave your bike at the office, not cycle at all that day, or take your wheels with you and risk riding home tipsy.

Then there's the issue of clothes. If, like me, you prefer to turn your commute into your workout, then you'll need a spare change. And if you need to wear a suit, then you'll have to think about leaving one in the office, and try not to get your shirt too creased in your backpack. And what about taking a shower? What do you do if there's nowhere to wash in your office?

Sadly, I now find myself planning every week around my cycling schedule – turning down most offers to go out during the week, unless they happen to be on my doorstep, so that I can cycle home first. On the occasions that I do go out straight from work, I force myself on to the Tube in the morning, and skip the cycle altogether. (Ideally, no more than once a week.)

Help may be at hand, however. A new cab service, Climatecars, which launched in London a few weeks ago, offers to carry both you and your bike (on a bike rack) back home from anywhere in the city – and even offers free bottles of water and magazines to read on your journey.

The cars are also relatively eco-friendly, too. The entire fleet is made up of hybrid Toyota Priuses, which generate well under half the carbon emissions spat out by a black cab (and good luck trying to persuade a black cab driver to let you take your bike in the back!).

Although the patter on their website (www.climatecars.com) is all about catering for fair-weather cyclists who decide to chicken out of their commute home because of the rain, I'm sure they'll have a much wider appeal. Personally, if I've made it into work on my bike, I feel obliged to brave the journey home on two wheels, no matter how foul the weather is.

But there have been times when I've found myself stuck with my bike after having drunk too much – and wished I could just bung my wheels in the back of a cab to get home.

The prices are not too unreasonable, either. I was quoted £22.50 for a Climatecar from the West End down to my place in south-west London. I'm pretty sure I could find a slightly cheaper mini-cab, but I know I'd pay more in a black cab – and there wouldn't be any free water or magazines in the back either!

The service is not only for lazy and drunk cyclists. The firm is also looking to appeal to eco-conscious Londoners, who like the idea of getting a cab with low carbon emissions.

I really hope it takes off, but it's hard to know what will happen. The demand from cyclists will only be enough to keep the firm in business if the scheme is widely known about.

Similarly, while there are plenty of people who would love to be able to soothe their eco-consciences by taking cabs with low carbon emissions, the service needs to be well publicised and efficient, too, so that you don't have to spend hours waiting for a car to become free.

I remember a website called Urban Fetch that launched at the height of the dotcom boom, and which promised to deliver anything to your door, via motorbike courier, whenever you wanted it – pizzas, beers, shopping, gifts etc. Sounded like a great idea – but it never took off.

I'll give Climatecars a go next time I'm stranded with my bike, and tipsy. And if Britain's grim summer continues, then I imagine that a few fair-weather cyclists might find themselves making the call, too.