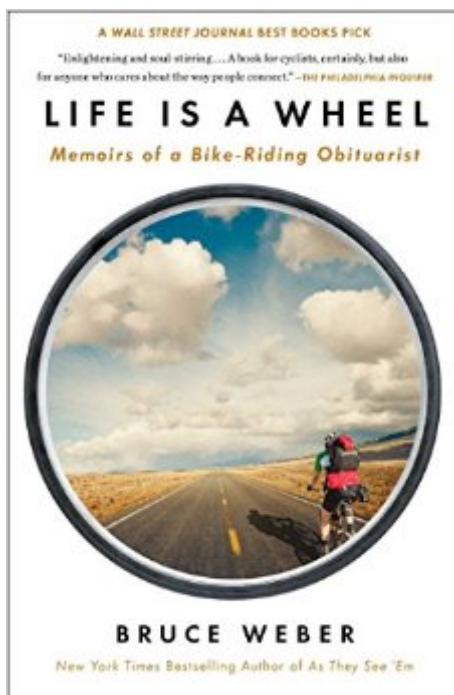


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Life Is A Wheel: Memoirs Of A Bike-Riding Obituarist



Synopsis

Life Is a Wheel chronicles the cross-country bicycle trip Bruce Weber made at the age of fifty-seven, an entertaining travel story filled with insightful thoughts about life, family, and aging • (The Associated Press). During the summer and fall of 2011, Bruce Weber, an obituary writer for The New York Times, bicycled across the country, alone, and wrote about it as it unfolded. Life Is a Wheel is the witty, inspiring, and reflective diary of his journey, in which the challenges and rewards of self-reliance and strenuous physical effort yield wry and incisive observations about cycling and America, not to mention the pleasures of a three-thousand-calorie breakfast. The story begins on the Oregon coast, with Weber wondering what he's gotten himself into, and ends in triumph on New York City's George Washington Bridge. From Going-to-the-Sun Road in the northern Rockies to the headwaters of the Mississippi and through the cityscapes of Chicago and Pittsburgh, his encounters with people and places provide us with an intimate, two-wheeled perspective of America. And with thousands of miles to travel, Weber considers his past, his family, and the echo that a well-lived life leaves behind. Part travelogue, part memoir, part romance, part paean to the bicycle—and part bemused and panicky account of a middle-aged man's attempt to stave off, well, you know—Life Is a Wheel is a book for cyclists, and for anyone who has ever dreamed of such transcontinental travels. But it also should prove enlightening, soul-stirring, even, to those who don't care a whit about bikes but who care about the way people connect • (The Philadelphia Inquirer).

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Customer Reviews

"What is distance, after all, but experience?" "Life Is A Wheel" by Bruce Weber is a fairly simple book about a man as he rides his (very expensive) bike across the United States. The book chronicles the trip from Oregon to New York with intermittent advice about distance cycling, personal anecdotes, logistical notes and observations of middle America. The book is quick and easy to read, in fact at some points it was hard to put down, however I also found it to be devoid of any deep, compelling sense of adventure or drama. (An exception to this was his recollection of a solo ride in Vietnam.) Reading about Bruce, his life and his motivations, it's easy to root for the the author and I wish him well. To me this book seems more like a series of travel blog posts than a compelling adventure story. In that sense, some portions felt like filler. I think "Life Is A Wheel" would most appeal to people in similar situations to Weber. People who are ready to take stock in their own life accomplishments, people unsure about aging and what the future holds for them. I do appreciate the honest and open writing style of the book, and at some points it seemed like Weber uses the writing process (and bike riding) as therapy. "Even when you're far from home, exhausted, coughing, missing your girlfriend, and grinding uphill in the rain, where you are is where you belong. Never wish away time" My biggest take away from this book is that it inspires me to ride my bike and to write, which is a good thing.

Bruce Weber is an accomplished, pushing 60, professional writer/editor for many nationally syndicated publications. In 2011, at the age of 57, the author set out on the solo adventure of bicycling from Oregon's west coast across the entire northern United States, all the way to NYC's Brooklyn Bridge. This book is his chronicle of that journey. I have no doubt this story will have great appeal to a wide range of readers, most of whom will find the subjects he covers in his writing of interest. Personally, I would have liked to have seen a bit more original philosophy and perspective on the "wheel of life" in his presentation (as the book's title implies) than was actually present. For those interested in the endurance requirements, events and practical aspects encountered along his voyage of discovery, this book will not disappoint.

I just love these long trip books, I got hooked with "Travels with Charlie" then "A Walk in the Woods" and "WILD: From Lost to Found..." and others. So, this one was right up my alley. A guy about my age decides to bicycle across America! I can really identify and yes, the writing is both fun and a tad rambling (both like the trip and like "Travels with Charlie" then "A Walk in the Woods"). There are no great adventures here (other than the trip itself), nothing too hair-raising or exciting, but we meet a good slice of America, not to mention really get to know the author. We travel with Bruce from

Oregon to NYC, and it's a fun trip all the way for us readers (even if not always for the author!) There's a number of metaphors included free, at no charge, ("the present is where you want to be. Never wish away distance. Never wish away time.") but the real deal is in his easy to read writing style and interesting trip. Try it!

If you are a cyclist, you absolutely enjoyed this book. If you are not, well, get started. Weber captures the wonder of the solitude only cycling can deliver. More than finding your destination you will find yourself. Ride on!

The personal background stories were intimate, more than I would want to share. The description of the people the author met on the road and the description of the journey were just enough to maintain interest and also keep the story moving. The author's self-examination was probably one of the most interesting aspects of the book to me. I appreciated the truly honest self-assessments. I was also interested in his recognition of changing priorities as he ages. It hit home to me. I would recommend this book to all people, not just cyclists. I think many others would enjoy it as well. From a non-cyclist point of view, the human interest perspective was compelling. I will be looking for other works by this author.

To say that "Life is a Wheel", by Bruce Weber, is just a story about a bicycle ride would be like saying that "Moby-Dick" is just a story about a whale. Both books provide not only an interesting story, but also insight into the authors' lives, values, and contemplation of life itself. Bruce details not only his journey across America and other bicycle rides, but provides insight to how he handled 911 living in New York, the passing on of family members, and how to measure success in life with the strengths of friendships close and far. We're all riding the same wheel of life from birth to death; how we handle the years in-between is guided by our own moral compass, upbringing, and opportunities presented to us. Sure, it's a great bike story about the trial and tribulations of bad weather, breakdowns, stolen bicycles, hunger, dehydration, loneliness, isolation and tiredness, but most importantly how his mental game repeatedly triumphed over the physical challenges of the ride. There is a piece of Bruce in all of us; he just spoke up loud enough to remind us of our own wheel of life we are riding, so don't "bonk" it (screw it up).

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