

(Free pdf) Off the Map: Bicycling Across Siberia

Off the Map: Bicycling Across Siberia

Mark Jenkins

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#1767640 in Books William Morrow n Co 1992-02Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.75 x 6.50 x .75l,
#File Name: 0688095461254 pagesRed and black hardcover with jacket showing bicycle wheel against a red
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Mark Jenkins : Off the Map: Bicycling Across Siberia before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Off the Map: Bicycling Across Siberia:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. hard touringBy Adam PollockGet past the stardust memories of his childhood, and the offputting ode to an adolescent girl's breeze-brushed nipples, and "Off the Map" becomes the finest, most insightful tour report this side of Thomas Stevens' classic Around the World on a Bicycle. Jenkins' prose is overwrought at first, obscured by foilshiny darkglittering adjectives. He needs an adventure to wear him down enough to write past his brilliance into truth. He gets there.A couple months ago, I read Ian "Sandy" Frazer's Travels in Siberia, a fine and lovely book. The telling difference is in the thousand-mile roadless tract between Kamchatka and Lake Baikal. It is made of mud, "balota." Frazier crosses it in a sealed train car, feeling slightly ill. Jenkins and his party ride their bikes through it. He meets people, he talks, he drinks, he rides like the wheel's own bastard child. You can guess whose journey is the more enthralling.Mark Jenkins does more than ride through the muck, begging for milk. He passes through Siberian lives in the Soviet era like a bee through poisoned pollen, carrying with him the beauty and the rage, the cruelty and the generosity, the unbelievable filth and privation. He hears songs that sustain lives, and hums them back. He partakes and communes, and brings it home.This is a moving and beautiful book. No one who cares about the depth of experience to be found on a bicycle should pass it by.The tallish paperback is nice, by the way, and it's on Kindle, too. In either format, it's a good gift, when you've already given Fournel's Need for the

Bike.1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fruity languageBy Earnest SludgeThis was often engaging and occasionally gripping. The big problem with this is the fruity poetical-type language. This was often hard to follow and was generally distracting and off-putting. There was one chapter towards the end where a multi-generational story about a Russian family's fortunes crossing the country and emigrating to South America is bizarrely inter-leaved with the main narrative. This side story ends up connecting to the main narrative at the end of the chapter but it was, for me, an irritating misfire. There's a lot of this kind of cute/fruitiness to this book. Apparently the author is the editor of a couple of "outdoors" magazines. So I guess this style of writing is one of the acceptable ones for these kinds of magazines. I've tried to read these magazines but it doesn't take long to realize they only care about selling a lot of expensive Yuppie outdoor-gear. There isn't a lot of variety in the day-to-day traveling to write about in the trip, especially after the team passes Lake Baikal, so Jenkins fills it out with "touching" human interest stories of people he met along the way, mostly big, fat peasant grand-mothers. I come from a largely peasant background myself so the good character of these people is no surprise to me. But with Jenkins it often feels like the big city boy out slumming with the commoners. I see that Jenkins has written a couple other outdoor adventure books. I'd be interested in reading them except for the style. The style's a real killer. But it's really just a part of the overall strategy of padding this book out with filler. There are 3 chapters about Jenkins experiences with bikes when he was a kid growing up in Wyoming that were inessential. There was a long chapter about trying to get served in a Russian restaurant that could have been distilled down to a couple paragraphs. There was all the material about the Liverpool accented guy's family history. But the pace did pick up toward the end. Another thing that irked me was his bashing on the Soviet system that was, at that time, in the process of relaxing tensions with the West at that time. I guess he just didn't 'get' the big picture about the mission of the Communist program, to industrialize and modernize Russia. Sure, the Soviet escorts were intrusive but they meant well. I guess Jenkins idea of freedom and normalcy is the US state of Maine, as if Siberia should be one big Yuppie vacation land, i.e., Maine, only a hundred times bigger. The bit at the end where Jenkins gave his fancy touring bike (cloyingly called, "Free", in Russian) to a wronged and oppressed Lithuanian was rubbish as well. After all, what's the Lithuanian guy gonna do when the bike needs replacement parts? Maybe he can start a cargo cult in his community and they can worship the West's miraculous industrial might because we in the West are free and other people are dumb slaves. The chapters about trying to bike across the huge swamp area in far eastern Russia were the best part, which is why the book is called "Off the Map". He should have just devoted a whole book to exploring that area and not gone for the supposedly glorious goal of traversing from the Pacific to the Baltic.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Travel LiteratureBy Michael P. McCulloughI truly enjoyed this book. When I'm not reading fiction I like to read travel books. Obviously the subject matter was fascinating (to me, anyway) - a road bike trip across Siberia - much of which was essentially roadless; but this one was unique in a couple of ways. First of all it was an unusual shape - the book. Tall narrow pages. Different. But more importantly it was well edited. This book could have been seven hundred pages but it was joyfully succinct. The author didn't feel the need to tell us everything that happened along his four or five month bike ride across Siberia; instead he focuses on certain interesting aspects of the trip and skips the rest. He follows Elmore Leonard's advice: "Leave out the parts people skip." But the best part was the unique writing style. The author sticks to standard narrative style for the most part, but switches, at times, to interior monologue and even stream of consciousness - but just enough to remain interesting. A fascinating work of travel literature - highly recommended.

A member of the seven-person team that bicycled from Vladivostok to Leningrad shares his recollections of the journey, describing the kindness, food, and faith of the Siberian peasants, the mud villages, and more. 35,000 first printing. \$40,000 ad/promo.

From Library JournalWhat's it like bicycling in a police state? In 1989, Jenkins found out by joining a team of three Americans and four Russians in the first expedition to cross Siberia by bicycle, via Vladivostok to Leningrad. Jenkins, the Rocky Mountain editor for Backpacker magazine and the field editor for Summit magazine, re-creates his excitement and trepidation over the sheer vastness of the task. The team slogs through an 800-mile swamp and climbs passes over the Ural mountains, enduring dirt roads, mud, and icy rain. While the Siberian journey is adventure reading par excellence, flashbacks celebrating the autonomy afforded kids on bikes are powerful stuff. Recommended for public libraries.- Elizabeth Skinner, Forsyth Cty. P.L., Winston-Salem, N.C. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sFeisty, sometimes brilliant first book about a journey across Siberia by bicycle. Jenkins, an editor for Backpacker and Summit, writes a leaping, impulsive prose that, for all its originality, should be whipped for its barbarisms: "He lived with his faraway eyes crumpled in a stickwood wheelchair holding him and his medals very still in his backyard with his rosebushes growing tall as trees." In 1989, he tells us, he was invited to join three Americans (one a woman) and four Russians (two women) on "the last great ride" (Africa, South America, China, Europe, India, and Australia had already been done), 7,500 miles from Vladivostok to Leningrad--a journey to be filmed by Carl Jones, an American documentary filmmaker. Most of the team members were like Jenkins, born bikers obsessed with biking, often knocking off 90 miles a day through heavy weather. After the Americans met their

Russian counterparts in Moscow, the team flew to Nakhoda, from where they would cross land twice the breadth of the US and go through seven time zones. At first the team was accompanied by a police car that tried to keep the Americans from observing the deprived lives of nearby Soviet citizens, but the bicyclists soon found themselves feted time and again by villagers following their progress on state-run TV. That Soviets live a hard life, with memories of Stalin hanging heavy, became clear to Jenkins; in fact, the Americans met Russians who had been jailed for five years for "capitalism" or for going into business on their own. Three of the fellow Russian bikers were not friendly and, tensions mounting, the team finally broke up on the last leg of its big ride. Mud, cabbages, sub-zero fridity--altogether a super adventure that landed the team in the Guinness Book of World Records. (Eight pages of color photos; maps--not seen.) -- Copyright 1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. "Mark Jenkins smuggled a well-crafted literary epic into his account of a Guinness record-setting bicycle adventure."USA Today