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Bike Snob Abroad: Strange Customs, Incredible Fiets, And The Quest For Cycling Paradise



Synopsis

In his new book, BikeSnobNYC reaches the final frontier of cycling: riding with the family. As his choice to take to the road with his toddler son in tow is met with bewilderment and disapproval from onlookers and the occasional motorist, he ponders why it's such a taboo. And what does it really mean to be a bike-friendly country? Seeking answers, he heads from the U.S. to London, Amsterdam, Gothenburg, and San Vito dei Normanni in search of an alternative. With humorous anecdotes and his trademark biting wit and wisdom, BikeSnobNYC takes us on his most personal narrative journey yet, and ultimately shines a light on the growing pains that exist in any culture that asks smartphone-obsessed text-happy pedestrians, the two-wheeled, and the four-wheeled to share the road.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you bought this book hoping to find the same rapid-fire wit and humor as the Bikesnob NYC blog you may find yourself disappointed. Bike Snob is at his most clever and funny when he's systematically destroying the pretentious attitudes and values held by so many cyclists, but here he's trying to analyze cultures (notably, the Dutch) that treat bicycles merely as everyday transportation. As a result, Bikesnob is more thoughtful in this book than he is satirical. Some people may enjoy that, but others could find it a bit of a letdown.

BikeSnobNYC is a talented and entertaining author, and while this latest effort is certainly worth

reading, it smacks a little of the "We have an established fan base now so we can toss together something fairly mediocre and still sell enough copies to make it worthwhile" syndrome, to which many successful authors and franchises seem to fall victim.

Great book! I am not a huge fan of the Bike Snob blog or his first book, both of which are a disconnected series of rants. But I was interested to see his take on cycling in other cities and, while still filled with the kind of acid observations Bike Snob is known for, this turned out to be a much more thoughtful, thematic book. And I agree wholeheartedly with his theme: why can't we just have a normal relationship with bicycles in this country? Riding a bicycle here so often identifies you as part of a specific subculture: the spandex-clad weekend warriors on \$5,000 carbon-frame bikes; the hipsters on their fixies; the bicycle-as-fashion statement or bicycle-as-environmental-statement crowds. Why can't we just see bicycles as a sensible form of getting from A to B in a densely-packed but relatively small and flat urban environment? Even in bike-friendly Portland we can't seem to get it right. What I love about places like the Netherlands and Copenhagen is that riding a bike isn't something you do; it's just second nature. Nobody thinks about it and no one is doing it to make a statement about anything. You'll see families, blue-collar workers, girls in dresses and 5-inch heels, and professionals with briefcases, all on bicycles just because it's a reasonable way to get around town. It could happen here and I hope it will happen here. We're not trying to turn New York into Amsterdam by saying it would be nice if bicycles and pedestrians could make safe use of the streets, too. But the recent addition of bike lanes, pedestrian plazas, and the coming bike share system have all been hot political issues because many people still believe that every transportation decision should put cars first, and that every square inch of roadbed should be dedicated solely to the use and parking of cars. This is indeed a fragile, watershed moment and I hope we don't fall back to where we came from.

The Bike Snob's approach to riding bicycles comports very well with my own: bikes are practical and could be put to use to advantage in our lives, in order to expedite almost activities which require transportation, and also as an excellent form of recreation, promising both higher levels of physical and mental fitness. The prose is crisp and witty, as the snob fully explores his precarious position as someone who has issues with his own biking subculture and who lives in a society that is in many ways not conducive to (mentally healthy forms of) cycling. *Bike Snob Abroad* also serves as compelling cultural criticism for his American readers, as he makes the case for America as a country which despises weakness (cyclists, kids, the poor, etc.). The Dutch, on the

other hand, come off quite good, by comparison. The prose is fluent, and the belly laughs are frequent. Reading this book is so much fun that you regret it when it's over, and you look for ways to extend the experience—such as writing book reviews like this.

Weiss continues his ride through life, this time bringing his family along. His observations and comparisons of London, Amsterdam, Brindisi and New York bring hope to those who ride that the future of transportation will include bicycles.

I'm a huge fan of the Bike Snob NYC blog, so I eagerly awaited this book. The tone and style, while still distinctive Bike Snob, is noticeably different than the blog, and maybe that makes sense, as the audience is probably a little different. The book is less crude, less irreverent, and more politically correct. And therefore less funny. Not to say I didn't enjoy it, but on some level I kept waiting for the book to get to the funny parts. This is a more serious book about the state of cycling in America. It's still extremely opinionated and represents his unique take on cycling, especially on how things have changed for him now that he has a kid. Also, I could have used more locations for a book called Bike Snob Abroad. He goes to Portland, London, Amsterdam, Sweden and Italy. He mentions trips to India, but only in passing. I guess, my three star review is mostly because I had such high expectations for the book based on how much I liked his blog. But, on the flip side, as a gentle introduction to the Bike Snob this is perfect for someone for whom his normal humor is too crude. And, being a new father myself, I look forward to riding my bike with my daughter when she gets old enough as he mentions repeatedly how enjoyable riding with his son is.

This book series is great. You can't go wrong with this purchase. Content is great, and very humorous. Books are beautifully bound and illustrated. A pleasure to own the whole collection and have it on my bookshelf.

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