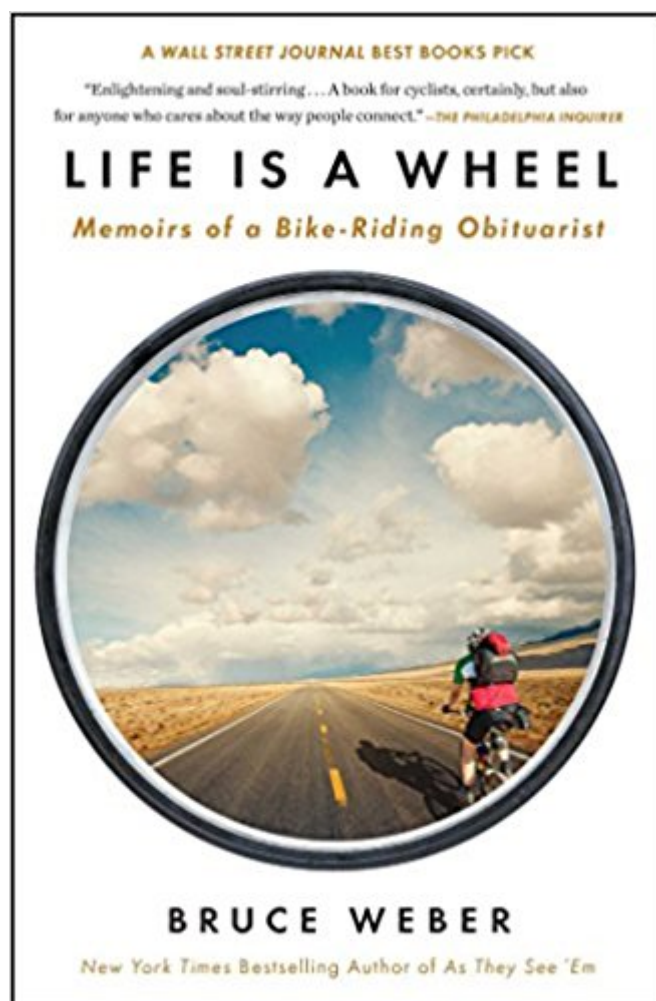


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# Life Is A Wheel: Memoirs Of A Bike-Riding Obituarist



## 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).

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In 1993, at the age of 39, Weber rode from coast to coast on a bicycle. Eighteen years later he decided to repeat the task, and his account of the journey from the Oregon coast to Manhattan is a delightful, insightful saga that combines the genres of travelogue and journal of self-discovery while paying tribute to the joy and value of cycling. Weber readily acknowledges that, at 57, he lacked both the physical and mental stamina he possessed on his first crossing. As he indicates, cycling is hardly the serene activity of romantic lore; it requires intense concentration and an ability to constantly draw upon physical reserves. Yet Weber clearly retained his sharp powers of observation as he describes the changes he saw in the nation, from the ubiquitous use of cell phones to changes in the political climate. What hasn't changed, thankfully, is Weber's ability to be awestruck and inspired by the power and beauty of the landscapes he traverses. This is a thoughtful and thoroughly enjoyable "road" story that will appeal to both cyclists and the more sedentary. HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: The popularity of Weber's New York Times series chronicling his bike trip will translate into great interest in the book version. --Jay Freeman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Enlightening, soul-stirring, even, to those who don't care a whit about bikes but who care about the way people connect - strangers, friends, parents and children, lovers." (Philadelphia Inquirer) "[Weber] manages to be both expressive and enigmatic, inclusive and solitary • a rider in the world, coasting through the landscape, sometimes participating, always observing." (New York Times) "Delightful... any reader looking for a well-written and entertaining travel story filled with insightful thoughts about life, family and aging will not be disappointed." (The Associated Press) "Riding a bike across the country is hard work... focusing on the beauty of the country he passed through the kindness of the people he met, and his own musings on life, love, and death... Readers will enjoy going there with him." (The Boston Globe) "This title is a cross-country trip every reader can enjoy. VERDICT: Weber's journey is sure to inspire readers to roll their old bikes out of the shed and plan an epic trek of their own." (Library Journal) "Weber's trip and his thoughts are distilled into a read that is both entertaining and thoughtful." (Christian Science Monitor, 10 Best Books of March) "Weber's memoir has an air to it that reminds me of Richard Ford's novel 'The Sportswriter'." "Looking back, looking forward, making sense of what we face now. Or as he says as he pedals a stationary bike back in his gym after his trip, 'the present is where you want to be. Never wish away distance. Never wish away time.'" (The Minneapolis Star-Tribune) "Weber never fails to

entertain, and his compulsion to always move forward despite the weight of the past is as inspiring as his astounding cycling achievement." (Publisher's Weekly) "Weber's pedologue is a one-word case study of highs and lows: Gulp. Damn. Yikes! So... Whew! Ommmmmm. Arrrrgh. Ha! Sigh. Cool! Yikes! Arrgh. Whoa!" (The Charlotte Observer) "Cover to cover this book is a great ride. Bruce Weber is an entertaining and absorbing travel companion and in *Life is a Wheel* he pulls off a master storyteller's trick. He gives us a very personal journey that resonates on every page as part of the universal journey we're all on. It's great writing and reading." (Michael Connelly) "Kerouac claimed that the romance of the American road died with the completion of the interstate system, but Bruce Weber proves him wrong, and on only two wheels. *Life is a Wheel* is an engaging blend of adventure and autobiography, a courageous journey over the breadth of the country and the distant terrains of the past." (Billy Collins) "It's about the bike as much to a point. Taking us along on a challenging and deeply personal journey, Weber shares memories, hopes, and emotions as rich and complex as the American landscape he conquers." (David V. Herlihy, author of *Bicycle: The History and Lost Cyclist*)

I won't waste your time with a long, worn out, bloated explanation of why I gave *Life Is A Wheel...* a total of 5 stars. I would have given it a 4 7/8 because near the beginning I was exasperated at his tell "off the bike trip stories of his life". Then I realized how important they were to his trip and the memories his cycling dredged up. The title does include "Love, Death, Etc." and it encompasses a wider aspect of Weber's life than just a daily account of a bike trip. Written with skill and touches of brilliance, the memories and actual account of his ride are a rich tapestry of a man's life, loves, heartbreaks and woven with such insight that I was constantly saying, "Yes, that's the way it is with me too". This is a book that has kept me up nights reading slowly so that I didn't miss a thing. Superb writing and excellent presentation. This is far more than a travelogue of a bicycle trip; this is a glimpse into a man's heart and mind. An intellectual gift to those who are lucky to buy, read and feel along with the author. Do yourself a favor and do not skip by this work of art. Remember to fill your time with experiences that are actually worth having and at the end of your life and at the finish of this book you will have no regrets.

Bruce Weber keeps the narrative spinning with his insights and events on his cross country bike ride. I was engrossed all the way -- and found especially interesting the comparison between this ride and his previous bike odyssey two decades before - the differences in the country and his own

perspective. If this is a mid-life crisis, it is such a positive one -- as the author falls in love and has epiphanies along the way. Especially poignant is his farewell to a good friend whose death propels him to store the bike for a day to attend the funeral and give a moving eulogy. I found the rides through the barren and industrial sections just as engrossing as his tour of scenic wonders. I am in awe as the author catches up and overtakes the challenges of approaching 60. Recommended reading - and riding. His journey made me want to dust off my bike, brave all difficulties to face my own possibilities for adventure and reflection.

What a great read. I felt I was riding along with Weber, especially in the first half of the book. (Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana are so familiar to me that I knew every road and town on his route until he entered North Dakota). I applaud his motives, his effort and his writing. I loved his view of the terrain, the changing weather and the people he encountered, his passing thoughts on life, death, friendship and love. He has a journalist's eye, coupled with a memoirist's introspective point of view--at times self-deprecating (or at least very honest and modest), and always a bit humorous-engaging. This is a travel story, an interior meditation, a reminiscence, an adventure of a very personal sort that will take you along for the ride.

When the book arrived in the mail I had forgotten why I had ordered it. I am not a cyclist or even a sports enthusiast. Maybe it was because the author was an obituary writer. In any event, I thoroughly enjoyed the book and in particular his discussions about what motivated him at age 57 to take another cross-country bike trip. I am terribly curious about why anybody takes on such challenges, and especially where, as in the case of Mr. Weber, the actor has nothing to prove -- he had already done it once in addition to numerous other long-distance rides. Well written and easy to read. It has made me think about my own life's narrative as well as inspiring me to consider tackling some of my own challenges I have tended to deny.

I really, really enjoyed this book and I always looked forward to reading the next chapter. Weber is a terrific writer, and brings a lot of American characters he met to life (the forlorn McDonald's manager who gave him a free apple pie when he learned Weber was cycling across the country). He also does a great job of describing the country he sees (two weeks to bike across Montana!). He also contrasts his political positions and life experiences with people he meets along the way. A really fine book.

Before I could buy this book it was given to me as a gift by a non-bicyclist 75 year old. He had read it and was very impressed, told me it was well written and thought that I'd enjoy it. I am a long distance bicyclist about the same age as the author. I usually don't like to read bicycle trip books because they are a collection of daily journals that drone on and quickly become monotonous. That's not the case here. The author is a much better writer than the average cyclist (I guess the day job helps) and makes the book an interesting read by weaving in his own personal life, perspective, and reflections, etc. The only part I didn't care for was the Vietnam trip. You don't have to be a cyclist to enjoy this book.

What a wonderful tale. Webber is a great story teller, and his second bicycle trip across the U.S. provides a perfect platform. A mix of looking back at life, while at the same time looking forward, from a bicycle seat, to what may unfold next; both on the road, and in his personal life. This is a great book. It's hard to put down, and even harder not to think of after reading.

The book was a pleasant surprise. I feared it would be a stroke by stroke diary of a cyclist's pain and struggle. It was much more. I really loved it's movie style flash backs of his life. He isn't super human...in fact he's very human. Very much the every day person with self doubt and insecurities. His strength in sharing himself...totally, was enjoyable to read. I was surprised and disappointed to find out where the title came from in the middle of the book only to realize in the end that it made perfect sense. Fortunately, the focus on data, mileage, etc. was limited (I skipped the few pages of mileage records). I found the final pages quite moving. I look forward to your next trip. Thank you for sharing your life's blessings!

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