



## Joyride: Pedaling Toward a Healthier Planet

*Mia Birk*

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- \* New edition includes "50 Keys to Transforming Your Community," a detailed checklist for communities trying to adapt bike-friendly and more sustainable policies
- \* Successful in the first self-published edition, this new edition will now be available to book and outdoor retailers for the first time

*Joyride* tells the inspiring story of Mia Birk's twenty-year crusade to integrate bicycling into daily life. With only table scraps of funding, Birk led a revolution that helped grow Portland, Oregon, into the country's premier cycling city. She then hit the road, teaching communities how to incorporate cycling into their civic DNA to make their towns healthier, safer, and more livable. Through a panoply of hilarious and poignant stories, Birk takes readers on a rollercoaster journey of global and local discovery, while bringing into sharp focus some of the planet's most pressing and hotly debated energy and transportation issues, policies, shortcomings, and solutions. Her funny, touching, and instructive *Joyride* offers hope and experienced how-to advice to anyone interested in changing our world for the better—one pedal stroke at a time.

## **Joyride: Pedaling Toward a Healthier Planet Details**

Date : Published October 2nd 2010 by Cadence Press (first published 2010)

ISBN : 9780615384115

Author : Mia Birk

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## **From Reader Review Joyride: Pedaling Toward a Healthier Planet for online ebook**

### **Linda says**

If you want to know how Portland Oregon got to be so bike-friendly a town, you need to read this book. Chock full of story after story of how Mia shaped the city's bureaucracy to accommodate the bicyclist. Check out this review by BikePortland.org for the details.  
<http://portfo.li/o/58026-from-bikes-t...>  
As Mia says, "Enjoy the ride!"

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### **Rita says**

I started this in the early evening and finished near midnight. But then I use the phrase 'multimodal'.

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### **Michael says**

Like Animal, Vegetable, Miracle, the writing was not quite my style. Yet, I got an incredible amount out of each of them.

Birk was the bike planner in Portland during the 1990s, when the city's bike infrastructure took off. Her influence is everywhere in the city. I particularly liked the section on her work with Dallas, Texas. I expect I will face many of the same challenges as she did when I return to the South. Underlying theme: you have to fight like hell to bring change to this world.

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### **Howrad says**

I really loved Joyride. It adds an iterative history and grittiness to Portland's bike-friendly evolution, which makes bike-friendly infrastructure an easier sell here in TX (when I explain that Portland wasn't always a two-wheeled mecca).

Technically speaking, the writing/editing isn't perfect, but the concept of the book is exactly what a lot of people need, right now. I learned a great deal, and I feel less alone in the world of bike/ped advocacy, and those are the two best things I got from reading Joyride.

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### **Josh says**

It was a fun book which gave a solid memoir of what Mia Birk has gone through(among others)to improve non-motorized transportation in Portland Oregon. I only read the book because it was given to me free of charge at the Bicycle and Pedestrian Conference I attended, however was pleasantly surprised at how much I

enjoyed it. I read it in less than a week (which is great for me).

Mia's flare and real life take on challenging issues was fun. I especially like how she brings real characters to life through her involved descriptions of how they look. I would love it if America was more bicycle and pedestrian friendly. Portland reminded me of my sweet time in Germany. Good times. Good memories...

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### **Vanessa Wolf says**

Very enjoyable read. Birk recalls her struggles in culture and climate as she battles for better streets for Portland. This is another mis-named, but still good read, as technically, yes, it did make the planet healthier to get better biking conditions, but Birk battles more for a better city than a better planet. Though through her success she is able to do national work, but the emphasis here is not biking to make the planet healthier, but because, frankly, it's fun. Birk recalls vividly the joy and feeling of freedom one has on a cycle, and the terror bad cycling conditions can induce. Until I read this I had no desire to ever go to Portland again, but I may give the city another shot.

Birk gives great advice for the average cyclist to get involved, as well as methods for those in elected positions, to make their own streets safe and cycle-able. Birk's story is in and of itself enjoyable and her narration charming. Recommend it for not just cycling enthusiasts, but those casual bikers and cycling commuters.

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### **Katie says**

The title of this book is misleading as to what it's actually about: a memoir by the woman who held the job of Bicycle Coordinator for the City of Portland during its decades of rebirth as America's #1 cycling city. For two decades, Mia Birk had a hand in every piece of bike-related change in Portland, from lane striping and bike boxes on roadways to creating events like Sunday Parkways, the Bridge Pedal, and Bike to Work Day. It's a fascinating read for Stumptown locals and cyclists, or those of us who are both.

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### **Jodi says**

This book is both inspiring and disheartening. Birk's Joyride is a real world example of how incremental change can be. I say disheartening because it is sad that bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is still so lacking after people like Birk have been fighting for it for years. At the same time, it is an inspiration because those small efforts do make a difference. I wish more city planners, highway department employees, etc. would read this book.

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### **Ann says**

Joyride: Pedaling Toward a Healthier Planet is about Mia Birk's time as the Bicycle Program Manager for the city of Portland, Oregon, during most of the 1990's, until that position was eliminated. Her mission was to increase bicycle ridership by making it safer to ride on the city streets. She did this by adding 160 miles worth of bicycle lanes, making some of them more noticeable by having them colored blue (later, green)

along with other innovations.

What I found the most interesting wasn't that she had some public opposition – I laughed at one part of the book where she still seems astonished that a particular neighborhood didn't want to lose half of their parking in order to have bike lanes and speed bumps installed – it was the opposition from city officials (Police, Fire Department, engineers, and city managers anxious to defend their turf) that I found the most enlightening. She does manage, through persistence, and a few sympathizers, to muddle through and help Portland become a friendlier city towards bicyclists.

What I got out of this book is that while Portland has come a long way, there's a lot we could do to improve the roadways for bicyclists, and make it easier for both pedestrians and cyclists to get around by decreasing the emphasis on automobiles. In other words: Bring about parity. The other lesson I learned was that if you want to accomplish anything and be innovative – avoid the feds.

I give this book 4 out of 5 stars. I found it interesting, but not compelling enough to sit and read for an extended time.

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### **Kendra says**

For anyone working in the bicycle planning field, whether as a staff of government, non-profit, or as a volunteer, this book is a great read. If you're knowledgeable about planning and organizing already, the book offers camaraderie, and a pick-me-up message that all the work and small victories matter. If you're new to the field, the tips and strategies will be a great starting point for your work. This edition also features resources to pull from so that you don't reinvent the wheel. Certainly a fun and informative read!

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### **Darcy says**

Joyride has new context for me.... I met Mia Birk when she came to Bellingham for talks about urban cycling and city planning with bicycles and peds in mind about a year after My husband's bike accident. Advocacy was strongly on my mind then, but I wasn't confident or comfortable enough to ride myself. Two years later, M is on track to ride every work-day this year, and I am in love with my new bicycle and my own personal cycling goals. Reading her book both reinforced and gave me new insight into my own community and the organizations that I have begun to spend time with: like EverybodyBike! I found her stories filled with laughter, charm... I agonized with her over loss & frustration & anger. But I also celebrated her victories and successes! Mia is one of those truly amazing people, and the PNW and this whole country is lucky to have her working continuously & tirelessly to advance the safety and fun of the shift away from motor vehicles to a higher percentage of bicycle rides. I applaud a woman working in a testosterone-driven environment showing them all how it's done, and remembering that bicycles and women's suffrage went hand-in-hand 120 years ago, and that if we spend a little extra time & effort on making women's particular needs part of the plan & process, we will have infinitely magnified success for the whole. A recommended read, for sure!

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### **Doug Canfield says**

MOUNTAINEERS BOOKS' STAFF PICK (I work for Mountaineers Books): This book was initially self published but is now offered by Mountaineers Books. "Joyride" is the story of Mia Birk's experience as the

bicycle program coordinator for Portland, Ore., from the early '90s forward when that city decided to become bicycle friendly. As a bicycle commuter myself, struggling daily through the streets of Seattle, Wash., I found her story both interesting and fun to read.

Change is never easy, and all the harder in a community setting where many of the constituents haven't yet conceived of the benefits that such changes can provide. But for those converts who have discovered the transformative benefits of cycling, Birk's vision of "if we build it, they will ride" is inspirational. In her story, Birk plunges into her new post with the zeal of a traveling evangelist and the naivety of a lamb headed for the alter. As she works to create bike lanes she encounters innumerable unexpected obstacles. These, however, become challenges for which she is determined to find solutions, usually with the help of co-workers, community partners, political sympathizers, personal gusto, and patience.

For decades, the solution to urban traffic congestion has been to build more roads. The result has been new streets that are full as soon as they're built and congestion is never resolved. Bicycle commuting reduces the number of cars on the road, provides a solution to the ills of sedentary lifestyles, reduces stress, and connects people more closely with their communities. Essentially, bicycle infrastructure (which is a fraction as expensive to build and maintain as new car lanes) is a plus for the communities that provide it. People who didn't think they wanted it quickly become converts if they try cycling and find that it is a safe, fun transportation option. But safety is the key, and that takes someone or some group with the vision to make their community bicycle friendly. Mia Birk is the model for how to turn such a vision into a reality. "Joyride" provides both the inspiration and the insights for others to follow where she has ridden.

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### **Ethan says**

If you have any concern about finding a path out of the car-centric reality we've created in this country, Mia's account of the (hopefully) early stages of Portland's bicycle renaissance is a must read. As a resident who has watched some of the ups and downs of that journey from the the relative outside, her glimpse inside the bureaucracy, personalities and history of our city's transformation are fascinating.

Hopefully Portlanders who read this book will see reason for resolve to see the work furthered, and those from more challenged locales will be inspired and realize how small steps can lead to big change (and there is good reason for optimism).

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### **Cyrus Molavi says**

The topic of this is really niche, but right up my alley. It's for anyone interested in a bit of storytelling from the bicycle coordinator who helped support Portland bicycling with city infrastructure. For how far and wide the success of Portland bike lanes has spread, it's pretty cool to have a first hand account from someone at the centre of it all.

The writing is very folksy, and at times childish, but it's understandable and tolerable, given that it's a self-produced book by a non-writer. I appreciated how Birk doesn't rearrange situations with retrospective coherence. She admits where situations proved frustrating, and where she felt like giving up. She gives credit to those who helped, and tried to point out where successes weren't necessarily thanks to her. She believably

talked about how hard the job was, and how she navigated it.

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### **Carye Bye says**

I really got a lot out of this book. (I have the 2010 edition, but glad to hear this is getting another go with a new printing). This book will be part of the Hidden Portland Library.

Thanks Mia! I'm a Portlander and really got into the bike scene in 2004. I moved to Portland in 2001 and got a bike at the Community Cycling Center for just short trips but never became a commuter/daily bicyclist and constant advocate until 2005.

Here's the thing I've always credited Shift to Bikes/Bike Fun/Pedalpalooza as how I got to be an everyday cyclist. But this history of Mia as the Bike Coordinator shows me that it had a lot to do with Mia and her "go until you can't" motivation to make biking in Portland preferred and safe. She was bike coordinator for about 6 years in the 1990s. And the amount of infrastructure and events that got going under Mia's watch was exciting to read about and put a bunch of unknowns together in my knowledge of the bike scene and revolution in Portland. By the time I showed up in 2001, events like Bridge Pedal and Worse Year of the Ride were well known. Many bridges crossing the Willamette had become safer for bikes with bike lanes and other improvements and just in the year I moved here, the east bank esplanade and lower steel crossing were created! It was interesting to also learn the bike commute challenge was passed on the BTA - Bicycle Transportation Alliance and then became a month long event and how the Community Cycling Center began -- failed yellow bike program turned into Holiday giveaway.

I can't say this book is for everyone but for me with my connection and interest to the community into the power of Biking as a way to get around a city. huzzah! Go by Bike!

Ps. It was also fun to see my Bunny on a Bike ride that was a staple for 10 years in Portland get a mention.

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