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Road Biking Michigan

Cari Noga
Globe Pequot Press (October 2004)
Unknown $14.95 (288pp)
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Road bicycling has quietly been picking up steam as one of the most popular forms of outdoor recreation. The equipment cost can be minimal, its nonpolluting, its a great way to see the countryside with loved ones, and it is good exercise.

That popularity has not been lost on Globe Pequot Press, which has been publicizing and expanding *Road Biking*, its state-by-state series of bicycle-touring books. Other volumes tour New Mexico, North Carolina, Northern California, Virginia, Western Pennsylvania, and Oregon; books on several other states, including Wisconsin and Arizona, are forthcoming. Each is penned by an author and bicyclist who is familiar with that region.

This book, the latest in the series, is geared towards readers who want to explore the Great Lakes State on two wheels. The author, an award-winning newspaper reporter, Michigan resident, and veteran cyclist, has also led tour group rides for Michigan Bicycle Touring. She draws from these experiences to present a readable book that will encourage the hesitant to strap on a helmet.

Following the basic format of the *Road Biking* series, Noga plots out forty suggested routes throughout the state. Each route varies in length, type of terrain, and type of potential obstacles, such as narrow roads and traffic, and is categorized as a Ramble (short and easy), Cruise (intermediate), Challenge (for experienced riders), or Classic (hardest and longest). Each route gets its own chapter, containing practically everything one would need to plan and execute the trip: a map, a set of directions with mileage indicators, restaurants and accommodations one will encounter on the route, and must-see tourist points and local events. The format presents an excellent way for a cyclist to assess, prior to a ride, which one is the best match.

The chapter on the Crystal Lake Ramble, for example, explains that the ride is a 26.4-mile loop on a few rolling hills but with lightly traveled roads. For the unsure, Noga writes, “If you are looking for a great family ride, one within almost everyones ability level, yet with enough highlights and scenery to satisfy more experienced riders, this is it.”

The real motivator is the text. The author knows her roads intimately, and is able to get a bicyclist excited about the ride with tidbits of history and unique attractions. The 40.3-mile Big Rapids Cruise travels through the little village of Paris, which, the reader learns, was mistakenly named after founder John Parish. But the name stuck. Today a rider can see a twenty-foot-high steel reproduction of the Eiffel Tower, erected by high school students in 1980.

Many recreational bicyclists, reluctant to take road trips in unfamiliar territory, will be encouraged to get out on the road and explore the world, thanks to this excellent road-biking series.
KARL KUNKEL (August 18, 2009)

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