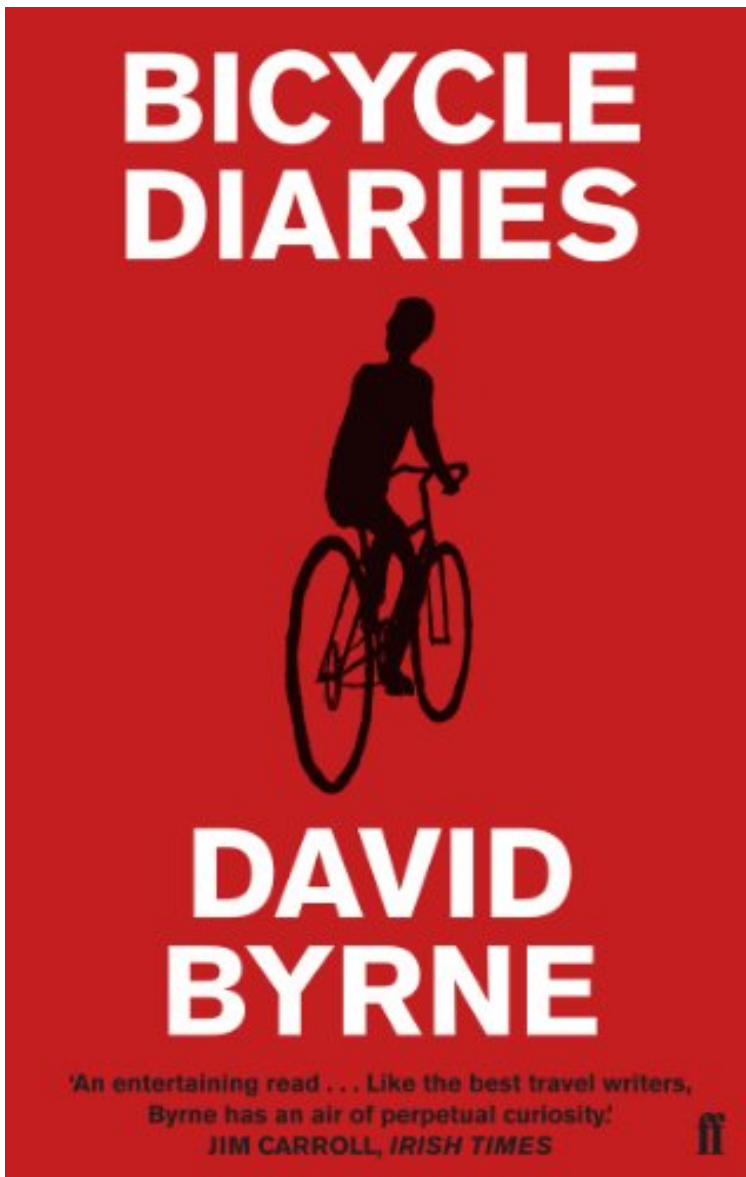


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# Bicycle Diaries (English Edition)



*Par David Byrne*  
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(Read free) Bicycle Diaries (English Edition)

**Par David Byrne : Bicycle Diaries (English Edition)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bicycle Diaries (English Edition):

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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurSince the early 1980s, David Byrne has been riding a bicycle as his principal means of transportation in New York City. A few years later he discovered folding bikes, and starting taking them with him on music tour overseas, and experienced a sense of liberation as he pedalled around many of the world's principal cities. The view from his bike seat has given Byrne a panoramic window on urban life over the last thirty years as he has cycled round cities such as London, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Istanbul, Manila, New York, Detroit and San Francisco. From music and the visual arts, to globalisation, politics, the nature of creative work, fashion and art, this book gives the reader an incredible insight into what Byrne is seeing and thinking as he pedals around these cities.Filled with intimate photographs, incredible musical stories and a

powerful ecological message, this is an enchanting celebration of bike riding and of the rewards of seeing the world at bike level. David Byrne is a co-founding member of the musical group Talking Heads. He has produced many solo albums and collaborated with such noted artists as Twyla Tharp, Robert Wilson and Brian Eno. He has received Grammy, Oscar and Golden Globe awards and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2002.

I've been riding a bicycle as my principal means of transportation in New York since the early 1980s. I tentatively first gave it a try, and it felt good even here in New York. I felt energized and liberated. I had an old three-speed leftover from my childhood in the Baltimore suburbs, and for New York City that's pretty much all you need. My life at that time was more or less restricted to downtown Manhattan, the East Village and SoHo, and it soon became apparent to me that biking was an easy way to run errands in the daytime or efficiently hit a few clubs, art openings, or nightspots in the evening without searching for a cab or the nearest subway. I know, one doesn't usually think of nightclubbing and bike riding as being soul mates, but there is so much to see and hear in New York, and I discovered that zipping from one place to another by bike was amazingly fast and efficient. So I stuck with it, despite the aura of uncoolness and the danger, as there weren't many people riding in the city back then. Car drivers at that time weren't expecting to share the road with cyclists, so they would cut you off or squeeze you into parked cars even more than they do now. As I got a little older I also may have felt that cycling was a convenient way of getting some exercise, but at first I wasn't thinking of that. It just felt good to cruise down the dirty potholed streets. It was exhilarating.

By the late 80s I discovered folding bikes, and as my work and curiosity took me to various parts of the world, I usually took one along. That same sense of liberation I experienced in New York recurred as I pedaled around many of the world's principal cities. I felt more connected to the life on the streets than I would have inside a car or in some form of public transport: I could stop whenever I wanted to; it was often (very often) faster than a car or taxi for getting from point A to point B; and I didn't have to follow any set route. The same exhilaration, as the air and street life whizzed by, happened again in each town. It was, for me, addictive.

This point of view, faster than a walk, slower than a train, often slightly higher than a person, became my panoramic window on much of the world over the last thirty years, and it still is. It's a big window and it looks out on a mainly urban landscape. (I'm not a racer or sports cyclist.) Through this window I catch glimpses of the mind of my fellow man, as expressed in the cities he lives in. Cities, it occurred to me, are physical manifestations of our deepest beliefs and our often unconscious thoughts, not so much as individuals, but as the social animals we are. A cognitive scientist need only look at what we have made, the hives we have created, to know what we think and what we believe to be important, as well as how we structure those thoughts and beliefs. It's all there, in plain view, right out in the open; you don't need CAT scans and cultural anthropologists to show you what's going on inside the human mind; its inner workings are manifested in three dimensions, all around us. Our values and hopes are sometimes awfully embarrassingly easy to read. They're right there in the storefronts, museums, temples, shops, and office buildings and in how these structures interrelate, or sometimes don't. They say, in their unique visual language, This is what we think matters, this is how we live and how we play. Riding a bike through all this is like navigating the collective neural pathways of some vast global mind. It really is a trip inside the collective psyche of a compacted group of people. A Fantastic Voyage, but without the cheesy special effects. One can sense the collective brain, happy, cruel, deceitful, and generous, at work and at play. Endless variations on familiar themes repeat and recur: triumphant or melancholic, hopeful or resigned, the permutations keep unfolding and multiplying. Yes, in most of these cities I was usually just passing through. And one might say that what I could see would therefore by definition be shallow, limited, and particular. That's true, and many of the things I've written about cities might be viewed as a kind of self-examination, with the city functioning as a mirror. But I also believe that a visitor staying briefly can read the details, the specifics made visible, and then the larger picture and the city's hidden agendas emerge almost by themselves. Economics is revealed in shop fronts and history in door frames. Oddly, as the microscope moves in for a closer look, the perspective widens at the same time.

Each chapter in this book focuses on a particular city, though there are many more I could have included. Not surprisingly, different cities have their own unique faces and ways of expressing what they feel is important. Sometimes one's questions and trains of thought almost seem predetermined by each urban landscape. So, for example, some chapters ended up focusing more on history in the urban landscape while others look at music or art, each depending on the particular city. Naturally, some cities are more accommodating to a cyclist than others. Not just geographically or because of the climate, though that makes a difference, but because of the kinds of behavior that are encouraged and the way some cities are organized, or not organized. Surprisingly, the least

accommodating are sometimes the most interesting. Rome, for example, is amazing on a bike. The car traffic in central Italian cities is notoriously snarled, so one can make good time on a bike, and, if the famous hills in that town are avoided, one can glide from one amazing vista to the next. It's not a bike-friendly city by any means—the every-man-for-himself vibe hasn't encouraged the creation of secure bike lanes in these big towns—but if one accepts that reality, at least temporarily, and is careful, the experience is something to be recommended. These diaries go back at least a dozen years. Many were written during work-related visits to various towns for a performance or an exhibit, in my case. Lots of folks have jobs that take them all over the world. I found that biking around for just a few hours a day or even just to and from work helps keep me sane. People can lose their bearings when they travel, unmoored from their familiar physical surroundings, and that somehow loosens some psychic connections as well. Sometimes that's a good thing—it can open the mind, offer new insights—but frequently it's also traumatic in a not-so-good way. Some people retreat into themselves or their hotel rooms if a place is unfamiliar, or lash out in an attempt to gain some control. I myself find that the physical sensation of self-powered transport coupled with the feeling of self-control endemic to this two-wheeled situation is nicely empowering and reassuring, even if temporary, and it is enough to center me for the rest of the day. It sounds like some form of meditation, and in a way it is. Performing a familiar task, like driving a car or riding a bicycle, puts one into a zone that is not too deep or involving. The activity is repetitive, mechanical, and it distracts and occupies the conscious mind, or at least part of it, in a way that is just engaging enough but not too much—it doesn't cause you to be caught off guard. It facilitates a state of mind that allows some but not too much of the unconscious to bubble up. As someone who believes that much of the source of his work and creativity is to be gleaned from those bubbles, it's a reliable place to find that connection. In the same way that perplexing problems sometimes get resolved in one's sleep, when the conscious mind is distracted the unconscious works things out. During the time these diaries were written I have seen some cities, like New York, become more bike-friendly in radical new ways, while in others the changes have been slow and incremental—they have yet to reach a tipping point as far as accepting cycling as a practical and valid means of transportation. Some cities have managed to find a way to make themselves more livable, and have even reaped some financial rewards as a result, while others have sunk deeper into the pits they started digging for themselves decades ago. I discuss these developments, urban planning, and policy in the New York City chapter, as well as describe my limited involvement in local politics (and entertainment) as it pertains to making my city more bike-friendly, and, I think, a more human place to live. *Revue de presse* "Entertaining . . . newcomers will enjoy these off-the-cuff sketches from an unpretentious cultural polymath; acolytes will cherish a closer look at Byrne's weird, wonderful brain chemistry." --*Time Out New York* "Whether you are a cyclist or not, Byrne's insights into everything from outside art to aboriginal folklore are wry, witty, and more often than not, wise as well." --*The Philadelphia Inquirer* "Reading *Bicycle Diaries* makes cosmic indifference a lot easier to deal with." --*The Seattle Times*