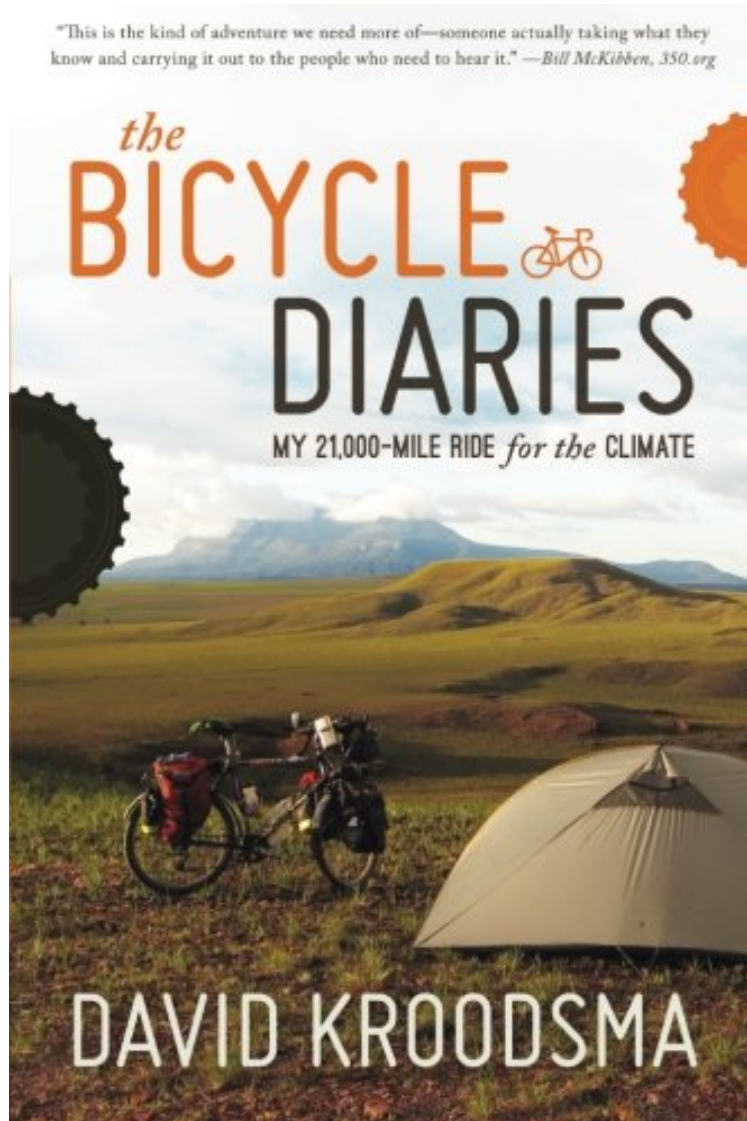


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## The Bicycle Diaries

David Kroodsma

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**David Kroodsma : The Bicycle Diaries** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Bicycle Diaries:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Quite a rideBy Mike RobbinsIts late 2005 and a young Californian climate researcher, David Kroodsma, gets on his bike, as he usually does. But this time, instead of turning right to go to work, he turns left to ride to Tierra del Fuego. He has a double motive. Hes going to have one hell of a ride. And hes going to spread awareness of climate change as he goes along.I had several reasons for wanting to read this book. I

love Latin America, I like bikes, and have also been a climate-change researcher. (I'd just got back from fieldwork in Brazil when Kroodsma set out.) But most of all, I love good travel writing, especially about long journeys I read Ted Simons' *Jupiter's Travels* many years ago and was hooked. But I found it hard to get into this book at first. It seemed to take Kroodsma a long time to get going; there was too much about his motivations. The book should have started when he crossed the border. The backstory could have been dealt with in a paragraph or two, or worked into the story later. For God's sake, Dave, get on your bike already. I was also irritated (unreasonably, perhaps) at the amount of hi-tech kit he acquired for the journey. I also had a small suite of electronics: a laptop (which I would mail to a friend once I reached Mexico), a PalmPilot with tiny folding keyboard (to replace the laptop south of the border), an iPod for music and to back up photos, extra memory cards, a host of chargers and cables, and a small tripod for my camera. I also brought a small electric razor powered by rechargeable AA batteries... Forget it, Dave. It'll all get nicked. But then Kroodsma crosses the border into Mexico, and the story takes off. As he works his way down Baja California, the landscape unfolds, and he meets the people. As the journey gets interesting, so does Kroodsma. He's a tough traveler, and a good guest. By the time he gets to Mexico City, *The Bicycle Diaries* has become an engaging read. The point at which I decided this was not just a good book, but a very good one, came when Kroodsma passed through a town called Caucaasia in Colombia. There's nothing remarkable about the place; somehow he just brings it very much alive. This feeling of riding with Kroodsma gets stronger as he pedals over the northern Andes and into Venezuela, and southward into Brazil. Along the way there are fishermen, oil people, teachers, drunks and more. Then he makes a remarkable voyage with his bike up to Peru, and has an even more extraordinary trip across the high cordillera to the Pacific coast. The man is a true adventurer. Woven into the narrative are Kroodsma's thoughts on the climate. This could indeed have been earnest and preachy, but Kroodsma has a light touch, and ties his remarks to the ecosystem he is passing through: coastal wetlands, agriculture, the high glaciers that provide water for Peru's cities. It isn't heavy; it's very interesting, and is also well-referenced. Kroodsma doesn't quite have the magic touch of someone like Ted Simon or Eric Newby. But he is a good solid writer, and there is a lot to enjoy. There are also some great photos, all presented at the point in the narrative when they were taken (he stays with a family; their pictures on the same page). Moreover I felt a growing sympathy for Kroodsma himself. Besides being culturally sensitive, he's also very thoughtful. The climate evangelism ebbs away as he feels more and more that the people he is meeting are threatened by pollution that his country, not theirs, is causing. Meeting a Brazilian researcher in Manaus, he is told: It's like, when you are in an elevator with a bunch of people, and one person just keeps on farting. That person needs to change what he eats. I laughed, at first not sure how to respond. You guys are farting too, I said. Yeah, but not nearly as much! Kroodsma admits that since the USA pollutes more than all Latin America put together, he should perhaps continue his project there. He has since done just that (one can read more about this on his site at [climateride.com](http://climateride.com)). I liked this book. It's a good travelogue, but also a vivid description of what may happen to a lot of places, and people, as the climate warms. Combining the two in this way might not have worked, but it does. It took a few pages to get into this book but I am very glad I stuck with it.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A travelogue with purpose  
By Evelyn Nieves  
This book presents a great blending of adventure and information. It is so full of information about how climate affects local environments. I never imagined climate policy (if policy is the right word) is easy, but Mr Kroodsma's explanations make it clear solutions will not be simple. At the same time, with concentrated effort, commitment, and humanity, solution is possible. In that there is hope. Mr Kroodsma's descriptions highlight how much we take for granted about the people with whom we share this great planet. Lives of people who live within relative proximity of one another are different often only because a national border, with the differing governments in either side, passes between them. We can make those national distinctions on land, but we necessarily share the same air as it follows its course around the planet. What we put into the air here affects people we will never see. The same is true to a lesser degree in the seas. I have been fortunate to travel to many of the countries which Mr Kroodsma pedaled through, but by more conventional means. It was great to revisit them through his travels. I found the people in those places to be as warm and welcoming as he describes them. I encourage everyone to pick a section of his route and visit there. You'll find the world truly is a wonderful place; a place well worth preserving.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great book. Well written and a good story of ...  
By M. Farrell  
Great book. Well written and a good story of adventure, but more importantly, I think this is actually the best book on climate change that I have ever read (and I've read more than a few). Yes, it doesn't delve into the science quite as heavily as some other popular press books like "The Weathermakers", etc. But what it does do, however is make that science relatable and interesting, which I think is much more important. Among the science community, and climate scientists in particular, there is and has been a very significant emphasis on communicating science to the general public. Scientists usually think that what needs to be done is to make the science simple and easy enough to understand, which is a great start, but actually not enough (as evidenced by the fact that there still is a "climate change debate" at all). Books like "The Weathermakers" do a good job of this. What really needs to happen, however is not just to make it simple enough for non-sciencey people to understand, but rather to make them have a reason to want to understand, a reason to read and pay attention. Humans are compelled by story, not by facts and statistics (regardless of how simple and easy to understand they are). What Kroodsma has done with this book is to write a compelling, interesting story, and put just enough science into it, while

not overwhelming the reader. Books like *The Weathermakers* lay out all the ingredients in a nice clean presentation on the counter, but Kroodsma actually takes those ingredients and makes soup on the stove. And given the choice, who wouldn't want to actually taste the soup instead of looking at a pile of well-organized raw ingredients?

Climate researcher David Kroodsma dreamed of bicycling down his driveway in Palo Alto, California, and pedaling for months until he reached the tip of South America. When he finally planned his trip, he wanted more than just adventure; he also wanted to raise awareness about the impacts of climate change on the countries he would explore. So he set out on a well-packed bicycle with a business card, a laptop, and an eagerness to share his knowledge. His project, *Ride for Climate*, caught on; he gave over 100 school and assembly presentations, garnered dozens of newspaper accounts of his journey, and appeared on international television. During nearly two years of travel, Kroodsma witnessed the world from a seat of a bicycle. He traversed unique ecosystems, coastline settlements, and glaciated mountains. "While biking," he writes, "no windshield protects you from the rain, heat, or wind, and no wall divides you from the people along the road." Countless people, from subsistence farmers to petroleum engineers, sheltered him and shared their stories. These experiences transformed and personalized his understanding of climate change, and in *The Bicycle Diaries*, Kroodsma shares these unexpected insights through a gripping travel narrative.

"This is the kind of adventure we need more of--someone actually taking what they know and carrying it out to the people who need to hear it. Pedaling a bike, and peddling the truth about the most important issue of our time." --Bill McKibben, [350.org](http://350.org) "When scientist David Kroodsma talks about global warming, people listen--because he's on a bike." --*Bicycling Magazine*

About the Author David Kroodsma holds degrees in physics and environmental science from Stanford University and works as an environmental consultant and data journalist. He lives with his wife, Lindsey, in San Francisco, California. Follow his continuing journeys at [www.rideforclimate.org](http://www.rideforclimate.org).