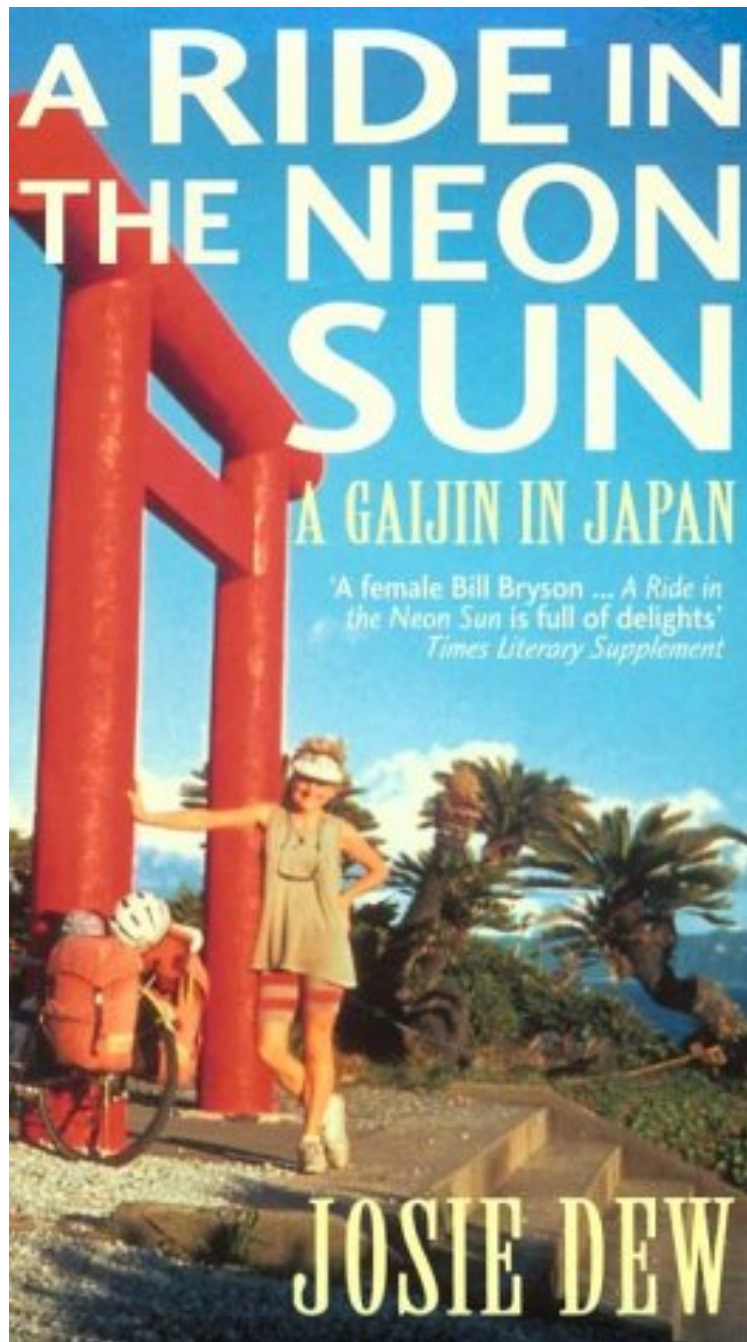


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A Ride in the Neon Sun

Josie Dew

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Josie Dew : A Ride in the Neon Sun before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Ride in the Neon Sun:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. 2,900 Miles in Japan by BikeBy Delta Sigma
Oppressive heat and humidity, choking truck fumes, voracious mosquitoes, howling typhoons, uninspired concrete architecture, venomous snakes....why, I kept asking myself as I read this book, would anybody choose to do a bike tour of Japan? Actually, the ever-optimistic Ms. Dew hadn't planned to either, but managed to take a wrong turn on the way to New Zealand and wound up spending 4 months exploring the many Japanese islands. In the rainy season. This is Josie's 3rd book on cycling in various places around the world. Those familiar with her previous works (both very highly recommended also) may find this book a little more on the serious side. It is also much longer and more detailed. Despite having a near-useless phrase book ("Well, by gosh, I am from Missouri"), she manages to get along quite well with the language and quickly becomes very knowledgeable about the local customs. Some of her descriptions of the language interchanges are hilarious. Josie can't seem to cycle more than a few kilometers without somebody foisting food and/or drink upon her, and always without any ulterior motives. The Japanese are fascinated at seeing a petite, young, attractive, blonde woman cycling alone and always manage to assume she is American. (She's English.) She is constantly being taken in and mothered by families which gives her a special exposure to the culture most of us will never have the chance to experience. The book does an excellent job of shattering many of the western stereotype views of Japan and the Japanese. As usual, Josie manages to skewer most of the Americans she meets, mostly because of their lack of desire to explore the complexities of the Japanese culture. The book includes clever maps of her routes, many excellent color photos, a humorous (and convenient) glossary of Japanese words, and an amusing index. She also includes a complete list of what to take along should you be inclined to attempt a long term bike trip. (My only question is how did she ever fit all that gear on her bike?) While the book made me realize that doing a bike trip in Japan was not my cup of tea, it was entertaining to read of her adventures without experiencing the heat and humidity, not to mention the mosquitoes and snakes. It certainly would be an excellent read for anyone planning a trip to Japan by any mode of transportation. And if you have half the success she did in obtaining free food and lodging, it would be a cheap trip indeed.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Mostly Delightful
By Serena
I almost quit reading this book during the first 90 pages. There were over-long sentences containing far more nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives than were necessary. She also "explains" the Japanese private and public face and the importance of group harmony. I have read the same thing over and over again and really dislike it when anyone who is not a native of a country seems to think they understand the people and the culture after visiting that country. After the first 90 pages it's as though someone else wrote it. It's absolutely delightful. She was a brave and determined young woman with a terrific sense of humor. I don't think there are many people who could have done what she did. I did keep in mind that Ms. Dew made her trip through Japan 16 years ago--in 1994. I've been to Japan many times over the past ten years and think the Japanese people, even in remote areas--are quite used to westerners now. The Jet program has placed as many as 5,000 young native English speakers per year in rural and not so rural schools in Japan. I liked the length of the book. I was sorry that she had to leave Japan unexpectedly before she traveled north. I don't understand why she wouldn't give a reason for her abrupt departure from Japan. If she hadn't made such a mystery of it I would have thought she planned to leave when she did. One of the other reviewers said she had to leave for her brother's wedding. I wonder why that was a secret. I've spent more time criticizing the book than praising it which isn't nice because I felt it was a very informative and entertaining read. Yes, you need some patience and an open mind, but I found it worth every minute--after the first 90 pages.

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Pedalling light reading
By Nico Taudarian
It's interesting to note that it's people with "yellow fever" (the love of all things Asian) who have leaped to the defense of Japan just because Miss Dew doesn't have a full cultural awareness of the countries she cycles through. Lighten up people, she is just "passing through" and if you expect to pick up deep cultural insight from what essentially is a light-hearted travelogue then you have very strange expectations. As it is, Josie paints a very fond picture of Japan and its peoples and it's clear she utterly loves the place. Travelogues are as much autobiographical as they concern the country travelled in and I would say the author's failure to understand some aspects of Japanese culture and therefore draw incorrect conclusions is more of a reflection of Josie than of Japan. Miss Dew does a good job of portraying modern Japan and many of its little idiosyncracies and yes, she does notice and comment on some of its not so-good points much to the irritation of reviewers below who clearly have a lover's blind infatuation with the country. Every country has a bad side but the overwhelming picture from this book is that Japan is a wonderful place to visit and its bad side is minimal. The Japanese tourist industry should be well-pleased at the glowing praise the author lavishes on the country as she describes her extensive bicycle tour about the islands. The book is satisfyingly long and written in an informal chatty style that is quite engaging. I am deducting stars however for the common problems that afflict modern travel-writing by the young - that is the ending is always rushed and the later destinations are really not well-depicted because of this and also, the tendency of writers to look down on fellow travellers and "dis" them at every opportunity - a problem most acute in backpacker writings. Other than that I highly recommend it.

The third in her series of cycling books sees the author riding east across Australia, China, Korea, Borneo, Indonesia and Malaysia. The journey encompasses the Orient - the old, the modern, and the futuristic, beginning with a tour of Japan.

'Josie Dew's efforts pay off, enabling you to freewheel effortlessly through this riveting country' TIME OUT 'It is her well-developed sense of the ridiculous which makes her adventures so entertaining.' TODAY 'Her writing is witty, sharp and sparkles with vitality.' THE GOOD BOOK GUIDE 'A female Bill Bryson... A RIDE IN THE NEON SUN is full of delights' TLS 'Entertaining... Josie Dew has an eye for the absurd, and she found it aplenty in the fascinatingly diverse culture of Japan' IRISH NEWS 'Josie is an acute observer of foreign lands. A highly engaging travel companion' MANCHESTER EVENING NEWS '...detailed, insightful and often downright hilarious' SUNDAY TRIBUNE (IRELAND) 'Dew paints a vivid portrait of contemporary Japan, both urban and rural, and emerges as a survivor.' EVENING HERALD (Ireland) About the Author Josie, still only thirty-three, has covered more miles and visited more countries on her bike than most people will ever travel by plane in their entire lives.