

# THE BUDDHA AND THE BEE

## Journey Notes

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A companion guide for readers, libraries, book clubs, cyclists, wanderers, and anyone drawn to stories about movement, reinvention, uncertainty, and the long roads between who we are and who we might become.

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# About the Journey

*The Buddha and the Bee* follows Cory Mortensen on a bicycle journey across America from Minneapolis to California. The ride moves through plains, mountains, deserts, roadside motels, forgotten towns, diners, loneliness, exhaustion, humor, and moments of unexpected kindness. More than a cycling memoir, the book explores reinvention, uncertainty, solitude, and the desire to briefly step outside the routines and expectations of ordinary life. The journey becomes less about reaching California and more about paying attention to the people, landscapes, and thoughts encountered along the way.

## Core Themes

- Reinvention and uncertainty
- Solitude and reflection
- Slow travel and observation
- Endurance and resilience
- The search for freedom
- Human connection and kindness
- Escaping routine
- Learning to exist in the present moment

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## Author Reflection

I never intended this book to be about cycling alone. The bicycle simply became the mechanism that slowed life down enough for me to start paying attention again. To landscapes. To strangers. To silence. To uncertainty. Somewhere between Minnesota and California, the ride stopped feeling athletic and started feeling philosophical. The farther I traveled, the less interested I became in destinations and the more fascinated I became by the strange beauty hidden inside ordinary moments. These Journey Notes are intended to continue those conversations.

# Route Notes

The journey crossed multiple American regions and landscapes, each carrying its own emotional tone and atmosphere:

**Midwest:** openness, repetition, farmland, long horizons, quiet reflection.

**The Plains:** heat, endurance, isolation, simplicity, patience.

**The Mountains:** physical struggle, humility, elevation, weather, perspective.

**The Desert:** stillness, exposure, vastness, clarity.

**California:** arrival, transition, uncertainty about what comes next.

*“The road became less about escape and more about attention.”*

## Discussion Questions

1. What do you think ultimately motivated Cory to leave routine life behind and cross the country by bicycle?
2. How does solitude shape the narrator throughout the journey?
3. Did the book change the way you think about travel or movement?
4. The memoir often focuses on ordinary places and encounters. Why do you think those moments matter?
5. How does physical endurance affect the narrator emotionally and philosophically?
6. What role does uncertainty play throughout the memoir?
7. Did the narrator seem to be searching for something specific, or simply searching?
8. How does the book critique modern ideas of success, stability, and productivity?
9. Which scene or location stayed with you most and why?
10. How important is discomfort to growth and self-discovery?
11. The memoir frequently balances humor and loneliness. How do those two elements interact?
12. What do you think the title *The Buddha and the Bee* represents?
13. Do you think movement helps people better understand themselves?
14. How does the American landscape shape the emotional tone of the memoir?
15. At the end of the journey, do you think the narrator finds answers — or simply becomes more comfortable with uncertainty?

# Behind the Book

## What inspired the journey?

A growing restlessness with ordinary routines and a desire to reconnect with movement, simplicity, and curiosity.

## Was the route fully planned?

Not entirely. Like many meaningful journeys, the route evolved along the way.

## What surprised the author most?

The kindness of strangers and how quickly modern life disappears once your world is reduced to riding, eating, sleeping, and continuing forward.

## What is the book ultimately about?

Less about cycling and more about learning to pay attention.

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## Recommended Pairings

### Books:

- *Blue Highways* by William Least Heat-Moon
- *Travels with Charley* by John Steinbeck
- *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert Pirsig
- *Wild* by Cheryl Strayed

### Perfect Discussion Settings:

- Coffee shops
- Breweries
- Cycling clubs
- Libraries
- Campfires
- Long road trips

### Suggested Conversation Topics:

- Reinvention later in life
- Minimalism and simplicity
- Solitude versus loneliness

- Why people feel drawn to long journeys

## Continue the Journey

Thank you for reading *The Buddha and the Bee* and for continuing the conversation through these Journey Notes. If your reading group, library, bookstore, cycling club, or community organization would like to host a conversation or event with Cory Mortensen, speaking inquiries and event requests can be submitted through:

**[www.corymortensen.com](http://www.corymortensen.com)**

Wherever your road leads next, travel slowly enough to notice it.