

An aerial photograph of a steep, rugged mountain slope. A light-colored, winding road or path snakes across the green and brown terrain, featuring several sharp, hairpin turns. The mountain's surface is uneven, with patches of vegetation and exposed rock. In the upper right, a small, distant peak is visible under a clear sky. The overall scene conveys a sense of adventure and challenging terrain.

*Jussi  
Saarikoski*

*Europe,  
bike and  
jussi*

# **EUROPE, BIKE AND JUSSI**



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Jussi Saarikoski

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In Vantaa, February 2021

Jussi Saarikoski

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## Introduction

My biking hobby started by accident in the year 1986, when my sister studied in Turku, and her bike had disappeared there. Because I had a little city bike in the cellar, which I hardly used, I promised to give it to her. I, however, wanted first to test its condition and rode a test ride by it from Helsinki to Turku.

During the journey to Turku riding a bike started to fascinate me and I made also an additional tour by the same little bike to Ahvenanmaa, which a work mate had recommended to me for a biking goal. At that time I didn't even have a tent to stay the night, but I slept outdoors at campings and on the rocks in the forests. The weather was sunny all the time, so sleeping outdoors was not a problem.

When I had returned from Ahvenanmaa, I gave my city bike to my sister and bought a so-called training race bike in Turku, by which I rode with satisfaction back to Helsinki.

I made my first long biking trip outside Finland on the following summer in the year 1987 via Sweden, Denmark, Holland and Belgium to England. During that trip I didn't realize that I should write down every evening the happenings of the day, a habit which I already had in the following summer on my journey to Italy and Monaco. As a result of this, I have now a pile of about a meter of hand-written journey diaries.

During many years, my acquaintances and the people that I had met on my biking trips encouraged me to write a book, when I told them, what had again happened on the journey. I thought that riding a bike would be much nicer than writing. Later, when I didn't have working obstacles anymore, I started in the spring of the year 2017 to remove my stories from the raw material to the computer, and I noticed that writing was almost as fun as



riding a bike, because when I was writing I lived through the events again, when I connected to the stories at the same time the photos that I had taken.

Because I had not a digital camera on my first journeys, I have scanned the photos of the first years of my journeys to the computer from slides and papers, and this is why the quality of them is not as good as in the later digital pictures. I have completed the pictures of the first years by the pictures that I have taken from the Internet, which have been available from the areas, through which I have ridden. Most of the pictures that I have taken from the Internet originate in the high quality pictures of the Pixabay, for which I want to express my gratitude to the makers of the system.

Every spring a longing arose in me to make another biking trip again, and so this gradually changed into a regular hobby, without a single exception, as it seems.

In the years 1988-2018 I have written 31 traveling stories, journey kilometers have been 919 – 5581 from the shortest to the longest, all together about 105 000 kilometers, measured by time the journeys have lasted for 17 – 68 days from the shortest to the longest.

Since the summer of the year 1988 the turning points of my biking trips have been:

1988 Italy and Monaco

1989 Budapest

1990 Santander and Pamplona in Spain

1991 Prague in Czechoslovakia via Sweden and Norway

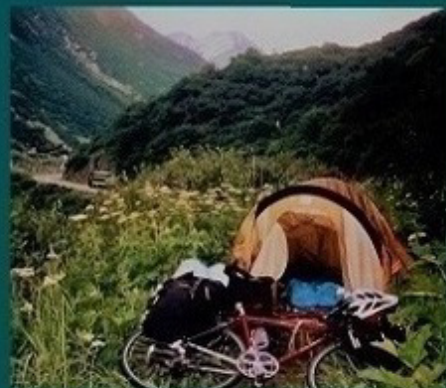
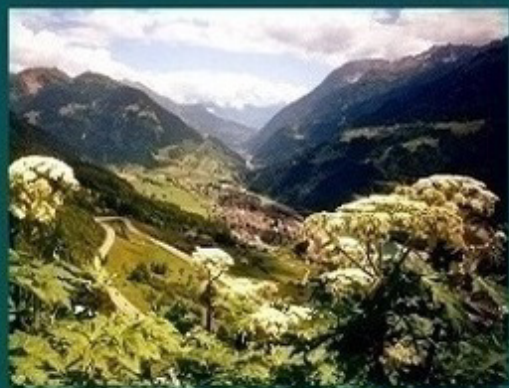
1992 Bretagne in France

1993 England, Scotland and Ireland

1994 Croatia

1995 Italy

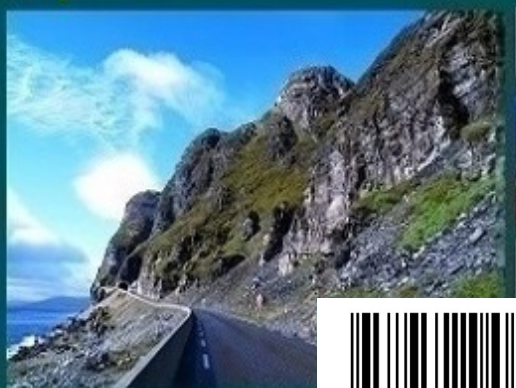
1996 Mo-i-Rana in Norway



By the year 2021 the author has made 38 long bicycle trips from Finland to various parts of Europe. The southernmost turningpoints have been Pamplona and Santander in Spain and northernmost Nordkapp in Norway.

The terms describing the themes in the book are adventure, excitement, encounter with people, personal experiences, unexpected events, risk taking, the desire to experiment, Finnish *sisu*, courage, camping, attractions, humor, events related photos, a 40 years time perspective. Although the trips have been made by bike, the book is not a biking book, rather about meeting people. The readers have stated in their feedback that they would have not guessed that happenings on long biking rides are so exciting, engaging and captivating.

The book has focused above all on the coincidences and situations that have taken place during the trips. The pictures in the book complete the descriptions of situations and are allowed to tell about sightseeings, which are not so much told verbally. But meeting people has made the trips especially interesting, exciting and unique.



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