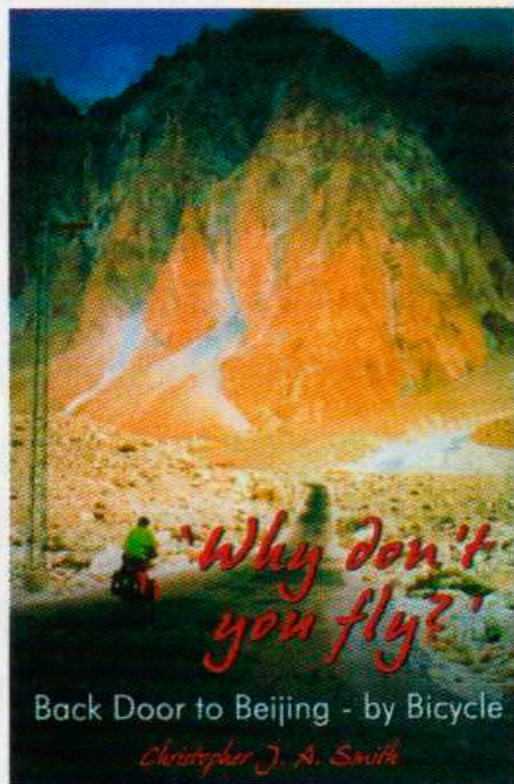


BOOKAHEAD

Why Don't You Fly?

By Christopher JA Smith, published by Penguin Press



First-time author Chris Smith hitchhiked Europe as a student and wound up driving lorries across the icy Eurasian landmass during the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Even given this passion for travel and adventure, his decision to cycle from his Worcestershire home

to Beijing seems a surprisingly extreme ambition. What's more surprising is his ability to turn an epic journey into an epic read. Smith's smart, honest prose is crafted superbly and peppered with wonderful moments of drama, dialogue and real humanity. It proves an inspiring reminder that the world is a big, wild place. And judging from the characters the author encounters *en route*, a pretty decent one too.