



**"Why don't you fly?" Back door to Beijing — by Bicycle £9.99**

**PRESUMABLY**, the inquisitive title was advice from a non-cyclist who, typically, couldn't grasp the cycling ethic, that getting there under your own steam is the whole big idea, for any number of reasons.

In Christopher Smith's case, a failed relationship and redundancy acted as the spur for his 16,500-mile epic from Worcestershire to Beijing. A journey, in other words, to rediscover himself, and meet the rest of the world on the way.

As a long-distance truck driver in Europe, Smith had already got the taste for overland adventure.

He talks a good bicycle, does Smith. You can smell the

evening air after the rain has stopped, hear his tyres on the wet road between home and work.

Then one day he doesn't ride to the office, keeps going, direction the coast.

In his prologue, Smith comes dangerously close to making those of us embedded in the daily grind throw caution to the wind, and jump on his back wheel.

He was away for 13 months, riding through France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey, a complete loop around the Indian subcontinent and finally via Afghanistan to China.

Blizzards, intense heat of the desert, hurricanes, stone-throwing locals, it's the traveller's lot.

And it combines to make an epic tale. KB

**Published by Pen Press,  
39-41 North Road, Islington,  
London N7 9DP.**