

## Audio file

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## Transcript

### Speaker 1

It's time for the outspoken cyclists. Your weekly conversation about bicycles, cyclists, trails, travel, advocacy, the bike industry, and much, much more. You can subscribe to our weekly podcast at [outspokencyclist.com](https://outspokencyclist.com) or through your favorite podcasting app to listen anytime. Now here's your host. Diane Jenks.

### Speaker 2

Hello and welcome to the outspoken cyclist. I'm your host, Diane Jenks. Thanks for tuning in today. Happy New Year, everyone. I'm back for a new season of the show. And today we begin with conversations with two guests we've spoken with in the past. First up is John Sirico. John's work is all about sustainability, safety, cities and transportation in New York City. He melds it all up on his St. Beat blog on Sub Stack, and today we're going to look back at some of the things from 2023 as well as look forward to his work in 2024. Then we're going to review a new book from National Geographic, by photographer, journalist Roth Smith. Last time we spoke with Roth, it was during the pandemic and he created some of the most beautiful and thought provoking visions for us to gaze upon in a dark and difficult time. Now, in his new book 100 Bike rides of a lifetime, he offers up great options for every level of cyclist, from the novice to the pro. It's one of those coffee table books where you can flip to just about any page and say, yeah, I want to do that. So in his latest St. Blog newsletter on sub Stack, John Sirico tells us about Hoboken, NJ, where there have been zero, none. Nothing. Not a traffic fatalities for seven consecutive years. I think that's remarkable. But contrast that with 43 cycling deaths in New York City, just across the river. We also look at what the Mayor of New York is thinking with a bit of New York City can do that too. And about the expansion of the East Coast Greenway and all five New York City boroughs. Hello, John. Welcome back to the outspoken cyclist, Happy New Year. Let's get 2024 started. How are you?

### Speaker 4

I'm doing great. Thanks, Diane. Thanks for having me.

### Speaker 2

Always a pleasure. Always, always and. It seems like it's been a long time since we spoke, and in fact when I looked it up, I think it was like almost 8-9 months ago, which is unusual for us. I like to catch up with you.

### Speaker 4

Yeah, absolutely. Especially with so much going.

Speaker 2

There is a lot going on. Sometimes it seems like there isn't, like December was kind of one of those months with not a lot of stuff from you do. But now it seems like it's all piling on. So I subscribe to your sub stacked newsletter which I really like a lot. It's always comprehensive. It's got lots of pictures. It's fun and. And I enjoy it. And we will let people know. How to get it it's? Called St. beat and. There were some really interesting things this time, one that really stood out to me because another hit and run was reported here in Ohio recently, Hoboken, NJ.

Speaker

What's going on?

Speaker 2

In Hoboken that they've had zero traffic fatalities for, I think 7 consecutive years.

Speaker 4

Yes. Yeah, Hoboken. The kind of vision 0 success story in the US, which in the in a time where pedestrian deaths are back on the rise in the US, it really is this kind of. Flash in the pan and it's unbelievable and I think for New York City, it kind of serves this. Almost symbolic, existential kind of role because it's right across the river, right? So you have this city across the river, that's achieved Vision Zero. No one has died on their streets in a. In a traffic crash. Which is just kind of unbelievable for this long and also it's and also a sister city of the Jersey City is now in two years, which is just kind of like remarkable. You know, a couple of years ago their mayor really decided to really get behind this. He has a father felt unsafe bringing his child around. And really, you know, listen to advocates, listen to urban planners and designers, and really went forward with a lot of just really significant traffic calming measures. So when you go to Hoboken, the most notable thing is the day lighting. So every single corner is very visible to cross. And you can clearly see when a car is coming and you know, if you ask any St. Safety expert they say this is instrumental the intersections to to reducing traffic fatalities.

Speaker 2

Explain daylighting exactly what it is.

Speaker 4

Sure. So if you go down the street in many cities in the US, you'll notice that a lot of cities allow cars to park right up to the crosswalk sometimes. Not completely illegal, completely legally. Sometimes it's it is illegal to do that, and what you get is, you know, if you're a small child or an older person or someone who just can't see behind the the kind of Fender of our increasingly larger vehicles, especially with SUV's and pickup trucks, you really can't see what a car's coming down the street. So daylighting is this

idea of pushing the cars. Back a little bit. So they're beyond the kind of stop line and you can clearly see where they're coming now. Cities do this a bunch of different ways. They use bollards, Hoboken uses a lot of bike racks, they use things in the street to physically make that corner more visible. We see bike share in the intersections. Now we see Brocks, we see all sorts of different things. I've I've really seen the gambit of daylighting measures, and again, the idea is that when you cross, you come to an intersection. Can clearly see and. Also this is great for drivers too, right? Drivers don't like that, they can't see pedestrians, they can't see cyclists, they can't see, you know, all road users. So it's safe for everyone. It's safer for drivers, it's safer for cyclists, and it's safer for pedestrians.

Speaker 2

So it seems to me that that's a fairly inexpensive option. You can do anything, put garbage cans in the middle. Who cares, right?

Speaker 4

Yes, and it can be done quickly. It's not this whole capital construction process. You know it's not this mega project you need to do, it's really, you know and you can also you can also use enforcement, right, you could tell. Your traffic enforcement agents. Hey, you know, this is something that we're gonna, you know, crack down on more, you know. But I think at the end of the day, you know, every expert I spoke to is it said more about the design of the streets, not as much about enforcement that you need to design streets to be more visible. This way.

Speaker 2

Let me reintroduce you and and then I want to talk about what happened in New York City, which is somewhat the opposite. We're speaking with John Sirico. He is my go to guy from New York and and he has. He's got his fingers in every little urban sustainable pie. I love it. And we're going to talk to some of the other things he's doing. So New York City. Did not have a good year last year, I. Think it was. 40 fatalities. That's a really high number. I mean, I know it's a big city and there are. Millions of people, even. So and I know that. The mayor right now, it has his hands full with the other issues like busloads of immigrants. But what's happening in terms of some St. combing and some some bike lanes and some of the things they're doing in New York City because we always look to New York to see what's happening.

Speaker 4

Yeah, I would say we had a really bizarre. Year and there. Was something I was trying to wrap my. Head around. You know, on one hand. And this is something that the city really, really, repeatedly says it's it was a very it was incredibly safe. It was. A safe for. Year relative for pedestrians, they had one of the lowest counts of pedestrians who died on streets, which is incredible to see. Still high it was still near 100, which is a lot at 2:00. 100 too many. People. But at that same time we had one of the most dangerous

years for. Like lists in recorded history and that's, you know, 43 I think was the last. Count that you quoted. So it's not only so it's just a really bizarre landscape where pedestrians are no, you know, seemingly safer, but cyclists are. Dying at record. Rates and I was trying to wrap my head around this because it just doesn't make sense to me in a lot of ways cause a safer city for pedestrians should make a safer city for cyclists. But I think that you know what, I kind of came to the conclusion to reporting is that. With cyclists, there's just so many more people cycling we're seeing this bike boom from the pandemic really has not slowed and if you look out, you know, looking out the window right now, even with ice and snow on the streets, there's tons of people cycling and a lot of experts that I spoke with and advocates just, you know, truly believe that we're just not keeping up with the. Growth, you know, and now it's become kind of a numbers you know, just more people are cycling that's going to lead to more conflicts because we haven't created a safer city. I will say the things that you know are make me optimistic or we're good that is you know we're good coming from City Hall is that even though City Hall didn't didn't make it didn't meet its goal for protected bike lanes they installed they installed a record number of protected bike lanes last year just over 30 miles. And we're seeing these projects unfold, which are really exciting to see. At the same time, almost a couple days after I wrote about daylighting and Hoboken and the Vision 0 progress, then mayor announced that they're going to start daylighting 1000 intersections a year, which is really exciting. The problem is there's about 50,000. Intersections in New York. City. So you got that's going to take a long.

Speaker

You got a.

Speaker 2

Way to go.

Speaker 4

That long way to go, but it was it was much more than they had committed to in the in the past. The mayor clearly understands that this is an issue. I think having again Hoboken. Is politically, I think it, you know, maybe annoys the mayor a little bit. So you know, they're making the movement, they're starting to understand, OK, we gotta make better bike lane infrastructure. We have to to daylight intersections. We have to do these traffic coming measures. I would say most advocates I spoke to are just saying needs to be more and it needs to be. Faster because of this rate of growth that we're.

Speaker 2

All of the infrastructure money that was. Sort of slated for the kinds of things we're talking about. How is New York doing in terms of getting that money and putting it to work?

Speaker 4

That's a great question. I would say I've been impressed with how New York has done in terms of their applications. I was a bit worried but and that you know, part of me thinks that that infrastructure money should go to cities that don't have great active travel infrastructure, should go to small and mid sized cities cuz they they really need the help and the technical assistance and great to see that Secretary Pete. Hedge really prioritized to other cities, which? Is great because. New York, we have a lot of money here. We can do a lot. We have the expertise. But we got a number of different grants to just really redesign notoriously dangerous thoroughfares. Like really, really big thoroughfares, too, not just local streets like huge. Ones in Manhattan and in Queens. And then also using some of that money to help with ebike charging, which is very exciting, that money is now being doled out. So we're getting it in kind of different ways. But I would. Say it's no, it's most notably on St. redesign complete streets, which is something that the Buddha judge really cares about, you know. And then the last thing is. That we've we've done well on is more Greenway money, which I'm very excited about because I there's nothing that I love more than. Biking in the park, so lots of Greenway Greenway money, which is. Great to see.

Speaker 2

So is that part of the East Coast Greenway are are you hooking? Yeah. OK, cool. I'm still on the Advisory Board. So I keep. Coast. Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 4

Ohh nice. So it's really exciting. Yeah, it's money. It. It's the most kind of ambitious expansion of the Greenway system. But there there's plans to to start studying new greenways in all 5 boroughs, which is very exciting.

Speaker 2

That is exciting. That's really cool. I love to hear that and I know that my my friends at that, that.

Speaker 4

Bad good news.

Speaker 2

The East Coast Greenway. Gonna hear that. We were talking about it, right?

Speaker

So I wanna I wanna.

Speaker 2

Ask some questions about E bikes because they're becoming more and more controversial in some places you have the issues with batteries exploding. You had three deaths. Yes, I think it was. In Brooklyn, and which was? A horrible, horrible it. It

made the bike business look really bad. There's a lot of controversy about where E bikes should be, the different classes of E bikes, whether they're dangerous.

Speaker 3

Blah blah blah.

Speaker 2

Blah blah. What's New York thinking about E bikes?

Speaker 4

It's the. It's definitely the big story right now, so I'm glad you mentioned it. It's something that. The safety of them definitely is a big, big, a big kind of topic right now of of contention. I'm hoping that, you know, it's so sad to see people's lives lost, especially with these unregulated batteries. I'm hoping it is a catalyst for better batteries and A and a catalyst for better batteries. We're seeing some really interesting pilots start to go underway where. Nycha, the big public housing entity here is going to start doing an E bike charging pilot, which is very exciting and kind of have an area in public housing for them to go, which is, which is really cool. As I mentioned, there's federal dollars to create kind of little hubs for charging, especially for delivery workers. That's really what it's for. And you know, it's something that I think because it's gotten so much of this press, the mayor is just focusing on a lot more. And then the last thing I'll mention, I didn't mention this with the Vision Zero article, unfortunately a. Good chunk of. Those deaths were on ebikes and it's yeah and it's something that the the city Department of Transportation.

Speaker 3

They weren't.

Speaker 4

Really made a point about because it's just like they've never seen numbers. Like this before. Where they they think a big reason for the spike of deaths. Is because they're on. E bikes, I think that's probably because the speed, right? So any what would be just a normal crash that would maybe just some injury is now becoming because of the speed you know if they. Reality. So it's it's a really important conversation going into this year because it's leading to these, you know, safety issues. It's leading to these fatalities. But at the same time, the growth is just is just going up and up and up. So it's really a policy, it's really a big policy matter to talk through.

Speaker 2

So do E bikes need to be regulated better? Maybe.

Speaker 4

I would say so from a safety perspective, from the batteries, I've always been kind of thinking it's a good idea to expand bike lane so there's a lane for E bikes and a lane for maybe other users. If we can make.

Speaker 2

Oh, interesting, yeah.

Speaker 4

Lighter bike lane. That's another thing that the the city's been looking at, they've widened a couple bike lanes on some avenues, which is very exciting. So you have. Kind of passing lane riders really don't enjoy. I did a story last year talking to a lot.

Speaker

Right, right, right.

Speaker 4

Of riders about. E bikes on bridges, mopeds, all these things cause all the users are just using these bike lanes now and a lot of bikers are really uncomfortable with speeds of that of that nature right next to them. So it's a space issue. It's a safety issue, but I think there could be smarter regulation around safety around how we design our streets. I do think that E bikes are here to stay and they're only gonna grow in terms of their usage and we gotta figure out how do we kind of update our cities to this new invention.

Speaker 2

I like the idea that there will be. Places like ebike, barns, you know to store them so that you're not trying to figure out, uh, I'll put it in my garage and my house is gonna blow up or something like this. I I think people might be worried about that after reading, especially articles like the one of the of the whatever it was a deli or something. It was. Now I I just remember. Seeing the photograph. And Oh my goodness. Yeah, it it was terrifying. And and I have to admit we have an E bike. My husband has an E bike. He isn't riding it much, you know. Well, of course there's ice and snow right now. Of course he's not riding it. Much, but yeah, right, exactly.

Speaker 4

Me too.

Speaker 2

Yeah, you guys did get some weather as we.

Speaker 4

I actually just bought one myself. Like, yeah, I bought a rad power bike.

Speaker 2

Did you? And a boy.

Speaker 4

I got a great deal. It's a hybrid, so it can go both, you know.

Speaker 2

You ride a lot, though. You commute on your bikes.

Speaker 4

Well, so there was a couple of reasons for it. I use a lot of the city, but the bike share, the city bike, electric.

Speaker 2

That was my question. Go ahead.

Speaker 4

I love them. I use them for a lot of different things. The prices were up a bit, so I because they're funding a lot more E bikes in the system and they're really expanding a lot, so they need more money to do that. And I was kind of like, you know, I want my own bike to just kind of detach from always needing. That is my only way of getting around.

Speaker 2

Bike share includes E bikes, yeah. Uh-huh. When did that happen?

Speaker 4

Yeah. So it happened about I think 3. To four years ago.

Speaker 2

We didn't talk about that.

Speaker 4

Oh, it's. I think it was one of the main drivers of E bike growth because so many people were exposed to it. Oh, wow. Can go so much faster. And that led to, I think, a lot of people being interested in buying them. But now you'll see that like, I mean, every single doc has a. Couple of them. And they're they're on average so much more used than the regular bikes.

Speaker 2

Yeah. How are they keeping them charged?

Speaker 4



So that's that's a big issue for city bike they have to go around and take the batteries. They just take the battery. Off they don't have to take the whole bike off.

Speaker 2

Oh, and just replace it and. Then take the battery you.

Speaker 4

Yeah, they don't love doing that because that means they have to drive vans all around the city or just operate. And, you know, just keep pulling these things off. They just announced a new pilot, which was kind of their big expansion announcement that they're going to try charging them through the docks, which actually they do in Paris.

Speaker 2

Can charge it, I see.

Speaker 4

The docks charge the bikes. It just takes a lot of electrical work.

Speaker 2

Why not, right? More, more stuff, more stuff. So let me reintroduce you one more time. And I want to talk about what's happening in 2024 with you and with New York. We're speaking with John Sirico. He is the author of St. Beat. We are going to give you a way to subscribe to his newsletter. It's really interesting. I always find good things not only to read, but to take away. To help me with my work, which I really enjoy and and and and it's it's well written which I have. Everybody knows. I appreciate good writing and I really don't appreciate bad writing, writing. So what is going to happen in 2024? You're going to be teaching one class. You said a semester. What are you teaching now?

Speaker 4

I teach a cities focused journalism class which is a lot of fun. So I try to convince. The younger generations of journalists to care about cities and to care about urban planning and to care about the exact issues we're talking about. To to success, I find that they're very excited to talk about housing and transportation and sustainability, so I always love teaching this class in the spring and then otherwise writing stories. And I think most notably working on a book which I've never done. For I'm helping. Yeah, it's extremely hard. I'm already finding that hard. It's way different than anything I've written. I've never written anything of this format, but I'm helping the the Co founders of St. plans. A big firm here in New York and some other parts of the country to write a sequel to their book on Tactical Urbanism, which they wrote.

Speaker 2

It's hard.

Speaker 4

About 10 years ago. And this this is the movement that. Is you know, whether it's citizens or whether it's governments, you know, doing pilots and demonstrations to show people what's possible through streets, whether that's pop up, art, pop up public plazas, pop up bike lanes, activations and public space. Mike and Tony, the the two Co founders wrote this book in 2015 and they asked me to come along. Ten years later, to write a sequel to the book. Especially especially in the wake of the pandemic which really showed us tactical urbanism in terms of, you know, pop up, bike lanes, outdoor dining, outdoor seating, that just appeared kind of overnight.

Speaker 3

That's cool.

Speaker 2

And that was going to be the next place I was going right there from what you were saying. And that is about how much from the pandemic has stayed in place with things like outdoor seating. Outdoor planning and that.

Speaker 4

Yeah. I mean, we're going to dedicate it. Yeah, we're going to dedicate a whole lot of the book to the pandemic because it was the big. List event for cities in terms of this movement. For that we have ever seen you know, the original movement of tactical Organism was really in the wake of the Great Recession where cities just didn't have that much money and people really wanted to see change after this obviously seismic event. And it's really about quick build. It's about pilots. It's about demonstrations to kind of. You know, advocate for more long term change.

Speaker 2

Well, I'll be anxious to read it. When is it due to be published?

Speaker 4

Hopefully around this time next year.

Speaker 2

Awesome. Awesome. Oh, good, we'll. Have something January of 2025 about.

Speaker 4

Yeah, hopefully that's yeah. If all goes well, if all goes well.

Speaker 2

Oh, it will. It will. And well, you've got three people now, right?

Speaker 4

Yes, we got a we got a. Dream team so.

Speaker 2

But Dream team's always. Good. All right, well. You got any plans? Let's see. At one point you were in Italy, as I remember. So what are you planning for travel this year? Anything.

Speaker 4

This year, the major thing on the docket, well, first, I'm getting I'm having my wedding this year. So it's a lot going.

Speaker 2

Ohh well congratulations.

Speaker 4

So me and my wife, we've been married for for a year or two, but we we're going to have a proper wedding party and at the end of the year. So that's kind of taking up a lot of my. Mentioned, but otherwise I'm going to a friend's wedding in Ireland. Which I'm very excited.

Speaker 3

About yeah, that would.

Speaker 2

Be fun. That will be fun. Well, it's always great to catch up with you. And I would like you to tell my listeners how they can follow you and keep up with you too. And all your social media too.

Speaker 4

Yeah, sure. So you could follow my name John Carrico on Twitter, on on Instagram to follow St. beat. It's on sub stack. If you just type in stbeat.substack.com or just Google Street beat, it'll come up. It's also on all those social media profiles and. About an issue a newsletter once a month at the end of the month.

Speaker 2

Right. And I just read the last one which. Is excellent, which is what reminded. Me. I gotta talk to John. Thanks so much for talking with me. As always, I enjoy what you're doing and how you kind of put it out there. So we've been speaking with John Sirico, it's St. beat.subset.com. And we will put it all. Up on our website.

Speaker 4

Thanks so much, Diana, great, always great having. Being on the show.

Speaker 2

Thanks and you have a great. Day alright bye. My thanks as always to John Sirico for joining me on the show today. I really enjoy speaking with him and if I lived in New York City, I'd for sure sign up for his journalism class, even though I'm probably a little bit older than the average student. You can follow John on social media at John Sirico. And subscribe to his monthly newsletter@stbeat.substacks.com. Let's take a short break, and when we return, we'll speak with Roth Smith about his new book for National Geographic, 100 Bike rides of a lifetime. You're listening to the outspoken cyclist. We are back on the outspoken cyclist. I'm your host, Diane Jenks. I wanted to get this conversation to you before the holidays. And then it occurred to me that in the throes of winter, with thoughts of spring and planning for rides this year, Ralph Smith's new book 100 Bike rides of a lifetime. Might just be the sunshine you want to sweep you away. While he's ridden many of the routes he details in the book, he depended upon season riders to fill in the blanks on rides that he believes fit the description, but which he hasn't done himself. The book is definitely a great addition to your cycling library and might just be the ticket for your next adventure. I've also added a photo of his narrow boat on our website, [outspokencyclist.com](http://outspokencyclist.com), that will be his home for the next project. As you will hear in our conversation. Hi, Ralph. Welcome back to the outspoken cyclist. Thanks for joining me. How are you?

Speaker 3

Ohh I'm not too bad, I'm really glad to really glad to join you.

Speaker 2

Yeah, I'm glad you could join me too. The last. Time we spoke was mid pandemic and and you actually created a really cool photographic story of your solo trips with your bicycles. I can remember the one we used on the website of this kind of misty scene with the bicycle in the water. It was really, really nice. And now this is really cool. My husband's in love with it. National. You work a lot with National Geographic. You have a new book, 100 bike rides of a lifetime. And really, it's a beautiful hardbound book. So let's talk about it. Give us some background on this book. It's different from some of the other things you've done.

Speaker 3

Yeah, it is. I I was talking with the with the books people. And they put. Them together, a series of books about really great aspirational experiences. And you know, the 100 greatest dives, the 100 greatest ski runs and height. Listen and you had this idea of doing one on bike rides and I was all for that. And when I first got this time, it seemed like, well, I mean, this is easy. 100 bike rides. So how can you go wrong? And you know the problem is you. Know there there's a lot. More than 100 and you keep researching and finding things and new, you know and. It became a a a big exercise in in cutting

them down because he wanted them all over the world and he didn't want to have just just for Rd. cyclists or just for mountain bikers or or just for people who wanted expeditions. I wanted something for everybody. That everybody of every skill level of every interest in cycling can open that book and find something in there that they think ohh hey this this could be kind. Of nice in. Fact. Actually, I would like it if you know people who maybe aren't even into cycling. Can look and see. And read out some really, really lovely spots. Of the world. I gave him a copy of the book to a good friend of mine who's he's into motorcycles and he wants to go motorcycling. All of those passes in New York and. He was wrapped. With the book, you know he he has a bicycle too, but his his big thing is his motorbikes. But so I'm hoping there be something there for everybody and. Like there's a there's. There's day trips and there's some pretty serious expedition trips. Some of them are are just gorgeously easy rides, and there's a couple in there that are absolute monsters.

Speaker 2

There are. There are. Well, so you didn't actually take. All of these trips yourself.

Speaker 3

Not all. I've been in quite a few, actually. I'm not a I'm not a mountain biker, so those descriptions of the mountain bikes I I spoke if I didn't go on them. I found people who did. So I'm. But I'm not riding off of just guesswork. I took a lot of time and effort to find people who actually had written these rides and.

Speaker 2

OK.

Speaker 3

Some of the mountain bike ride. I can understand the the the sheer spectacular Ness of them, but there is no way I would get on a bike. And I mean, there's one there called the whole enchilada in Utah. And you know, 8000 feet of vertical drop down these, I mean, absolute hair raising. And, you know, I had people. Tell me to do it and. Incredible enthusiasm and you know, you know. Yeah, that's what. I'm not doing, never doing, not even thinking about doing, but it's one that that it wrote itself into the book. I mean, if you're going to have something for everybody, you've got to have something like that. I mean, it sounds like it's a fabulous ride of a life. Time then others I I found. Again, I wanted people who. Had written these slides and there's one around a a very remote, very high altitude lake in China. And it looked gorgeous. And and the, you know, the the the Chinese have developed this this route as I thought never gonna find anyone who's actually done it. But sure enough, I was in the the the Pyrenees with a former pro cycle. Yes. And I was saying, you know, just talking about right. He goes ohh. You should try this one in China. So on this lake, he's done it. Serendipity. Yeah. And you know The thing is, if you if you well, you would know yourself if you if you know a lot of cyclists

you'll find somebody who's been everywhere. You know there's no place. Out of reach. Of a of a person on a bicycle and.

Speaker

Right.

Speaker 3

So yeah, there there, there's a a good mix. In there.

Speaker 2

Let me reintroduce you real quick. We're speaking with Ralph Smith. He is a journalist. He does a lot of work with for National Geographic. His new book 100 Bike Rides of a Lifetime is just out the world's ultimate cycling experiences. It's a beautiful coffee table book. You're going to want it, and you're gonna want to do a lot of these rides. The book is interesting. It's divided into 3 parts, the Americas. Europe and then Africa, Asia and Oceania. Now you did not. Only the writing for each of the rides, the the actual copy, but you also give some interesting hints and ideas. You highlight, you know, some insights and advice along the way. Give us a little insight into each section and then tell us how you decided to break out some insights and and advice.

Speaker 3

Some of them just came naturally because I've done the rides and and I remembered things that that I hadn't expected or or, you know, just it's serendipitous fun. Others came from people. Again, I would talk to people about various rides, ones that I hadn't done and you know, and and ask them well, what what surprised you and and also again, I've traveled a lot in the in my line of work while they're on bicycles or not. So a lot of these places, even if I haven't been on the rides I've I've traveled. Quite extensively in those areas. So I had a a pretty good local knowledge for for all of these places. I like adding things like that because I think it just makes a bit of a difference when you go somewhere, you're not just, you know, looking at the ground in front of your front wheel. But you're there's there's possibilities to do interesting things.

Speaker 2

There are a couple of rides that we've been wanting to do, Pittsburgh to Cumberland, MD, for example. The Great Allegheny Passage, which has gotten only better over the years as they developed the trail. I know it has problems in the spring with mud and some other things, but what's really cool is it's basically traffic free. So you highlight that, but then you highlight things like the Katy Trail. You know there is. There are just so many. You have trails in Hawaii. How many of these are actually off road and mainly and and not so encumbered with traffic?

Speaker 3

Where possible I tried to get rides that were offroad or less intimidating. I dropped some really good ride. It's that just because they're because of traffic, I mean there there's one in Australia, it's a gorgeous ride from Melbourne over to one and ball along the great Coastal highway and it's one of the most beautiful drives in in, in Australia. But and I've I've cycled it, but you you really wouldn't. Want to do it? I mean. I I couldn't recommend anyone to do it, but just because of the traffic, it's just too Dang. So where possible I tried to get off road and the rails to trails is wonderful. You mentioned the Katy Trail. Yeah, you. You're not dealing with traffic. You're just you're just cycling along this little Galway bed. I spoke with somebody there who's who's done it five times. And I think by the time I'm talking to someone who's who's, like, get enough to do it five times. And I'm gonna going to assume that's that's a ride of a lifetime. Time. Otherwise you just can't help but be on the on the. Roads, I mean. The underground railway route from mobile up to Canada.

Speaker

A lot of.

Speaker 3

It is traffic free, but you know quite a bit of it isn't. It's 2000 miles, so you're not going to have traffic free all all the way. But then again, I found someone who who's done that entire ride. Liked it so much? They went back and did the 2000. Miles of all over again. So where possible, I've tried to. Get ones over off road or or traffic free.

Speaker 2

So this book doesn't have maps in it per se, but it has some magnificent photography. How much of that photography did were you able to do and where did you get photographs where you didn't?

Speaker 3

I started at the end of. The pandemic travel was not really an option, so thought of this was was researched sitting on my kitchen table and and going out for my my getting inspired for my own bike. In the course of doing this, I mean there were some rides opened that opened up in England here and I was one of the first people to do the canteen way over in Kent, which was that was when I was able to literally put my bike in the train, go over and do it. And again, that that was the. Stunning, right? That Candice caught the garden of England and this particular one. So I was, I actually did it while I was writing it. Writing the book. And it was one of those classic English rides that, you know, I I couldn't believe it as I was going along. You've got Canterbury Cathedral you got. The blue bells. If you go in the springs, you know Woods filled with blue bells, the white cliffs of Dover, you've got all these fabulous old seaside towns with their fish and chips and and. It's a deep, deep. Words in in, in. It's just absolutely gorgeous. So that was what I was just able to do while I was actually writing the book, because it was, you know, travel wasn't really a. Overly possible much of that time.

Speaker 2

Well, each of your rides offers a distance and a surface, and how long it should take to do it, and when the best time is to go, plus a difficulty. How many of these rides do you think the average person could do? As opposed to, you know, somebody who's really an avid.

Speaker 3

I mean there there's a few in there that you know, are completely out of bounds for anybody. But I mean, you got more. OK, in in Hawaii it's, you know, yeah, 14,000 feet of vertical climb and it's. Yeah. No, it's not for me either. But I would say most of the rides in there, I mean even some of the really.

Speaker 2

Not for me.

Speaker 3

Long expedition type rides. You can get, I mean the one the one across America. You can get fit on the road. You, you, you. You're just not gonna start off. Doing 100 mile. Days as simple as that, but anyone could do that. I mean, you have to have a just a basic level of fitness and and a good bicycle. But again, I was talking to people. In Oregon, and what I'm saying at the beginning part of that trail. It's really quite nice. Because there's there's little mechanic places built along the trail, you can stop and repair your bike so soon you can work your way into the whole thing and fix your bike and get to know it. So if you are doing something like that. So I mean, even a a big expedition like that is doable, but a lot of the ones in there and I I did specifically look. For ones that were. Gentle and easy for people who who want to get into this and will love the idea of going on a bicycle tour and for them that could be a lot of a lifetime cause they could actually turn into something that you know well that that went really well as you were just talking about. The Pittsburgh, Cumberland. And that's a perfect ride for someone who wants to to try out cycle touring.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 3

You do that one and then other things start. Becoming possible. You see? You see how easy it can be.

Speaker 2

When you've got. Multi day rides here listed people need to either stay somewhere or be self supported or you know bring food or find restaurants. How many of these rides would need to be self supported?



Speaker 3

Not that many. There's some, you know, some. Yeah, obviously. There's a couple of years you're going in the Silk Road. Yeah. You gotta have. Yeah. Yeah. But a lot of the ones and. Well, I I've tried to to include. You know, where you can get off the the, you know, some of our our remote fairly I mean the.

Speaker 2

OK. Better take some stuff with you, right?

Speaker 3

Blue Ridge Parkway. You you need to get off the thing and I've I've tried to mention where you know the camping possibilities, the the hotel possibilities mention, you know, try. To mention where. You know you can't do these things. I've tried to make everything as accessible to to people as possible.

Speaker 1

Right.

Speaker 3

I mean, again, you know some. Of the ones are are just purely expert stuff. But but not many. I tried to, you know, I mean. I wanted something. In there, there's some really tough ones, but I I wanted I wanted them to fit the the the vast majority of cyclists so that anybody and even you know, super fit cyclists and. I've done a lot of really hard cycle routes, but my all time my my favorite. Route is in that book.

Speaker 2

Ohh, I was gonna ask you about that. And it is.

Speaker 3

It's on the 200 mile stretch along the Danube from Pass Island, Germany, to view. It is the nearest thing to a old fashioned continental cycling ideal I have ever come across. I've done it a couple of times simply because it is just. It's beautiful. You start off in this, you know, medieval river trading port, pass out and then you follow the down, you downstream the down. You carved out it's it's valley. So you're you're not climbing big hills, you're coming on this river Downstreams. It's downhill.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 3

All the way. Off it's off the traffic free for vast. Majority of it. And you just go through these little villages, you know, link up with little villages, which is, you know, pretty onion

domed churches along the banks of this river, big stately river. It is just idyllic. There's very they're the trail runs on both sides of the of the river. And there's ferries that go across. So if you think, OK, I'd like to. Be on the on the woodsy. Side today. OK. You stay on that side, but oh, wait a second. I think I would like to go over and just get some shopping or go to one of the little pubs in the village. There's. Ferries, I mean quite regularly spaced ferries. And if you your legs get tired and think well actually I think I'll just finish my day on a on a boat that goes to go downstream as well and you see these families doing it the grandparents and you know 678 year old kids going along it and they're spending five days cycling this this 200 miles. And it goes through basically the whole through the. Heart of Austria. So you're covering the entire country 200 miles, but it's achievable adventure. Anybody can do it and you've and it's like riding into a a postcard, though. I mean, not a travel. Poster that my second favorite ride, which was kind of that kind of, is much tougher. It's in Wales, it goes from Chepstow up to Holyhead and you go over 3 Welsh mountain ranges. Including the Brecon Beacons, which is where the SAS don't do their training. So. The Welsh Hills aren't high, but they are. But it is absolutely beautiful. You're going up these these mountain passes, gospel passes and the view from the top of. That is just stunning. And you're literally going through the countryside, for which the word picturesque was coined in the 18th century. This is where those old landscape paint is JMW, Turner and all the this is where they came to to paint. And because there was so many painters going out there, it literally that was where. The word came from picture. This, this, this, this gorgeous hilly Welsh countryside. And yeah, that that's my second favorite. It's much tougher than the than the, the Danube, but it's it's amazing.

Speaker 2

You do a lot of work for National Geographic and their their products or their projects are always ex.

Speaker 3

Yes, yes there are.

Speaker 2

Yeah, that's the word that I that comes to mind for me. They're epic and this is really kind of an epic book. And I think people might look at it and say I want to do X number. Of rides out of it. How would you suggest people book a ride like this? It's or one of these rides, so forgetting the US for a minute because most of my listeners are in the US, although I have quite a few in Europe. If you were to say, well, I want to do this, why can't England can't he way?

Speaker 3

County way, yes.

Speaker 2

Handy way. How would you? Go about you know it cause most of these are by yourself. You just go and do it.

Speaker 3

Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah. OK, you you book it. You you book yourself. A A flight to London.

Speaker 2

Do you take your own bike?

Speaker 3

Well, you, you, you you cannot have in the past, but you can you there are plenty of places here where you can you can rent bikes for you know period in that particular one you just get yourself on the train down to Ashford and leave Charing Cross or Waterloo station and then Mashford to take a train to Y.

Speaker 2

And off you go.

Speaker 3

All, and it makes it. Makes a lovely. Through the through the countryside and you off again, you go in May, April and May and you have you see these these forests, the ancient Woodlands carpeted with these blue bells. I mean, it's just they're just electric and it looks fake at first, but it isn't, you know? And you know you you you go up in these little seaside towns, you know. Classic tacky. The seaside town. But you get your Jelly deals, your welks your fish and chips. And what's the blisters cost? They're there. And then you come home, you get the white cliffs of Dover. You're right. On top of. Them you look out, you can see France. And there's no monuments to Dane Berlin, the Canterbury Cathedral. Yeah, there there's. This there's so much and why it goes through the old the ancient port of rye. And then you you can stop and have a you could actually stop and spend the night at a pub there that was rebuilt in 1402. I think and and.

Speaker 2

Rebuilt in 1402.

Speaker 3

The Queen of this? Yeah. Rebuilt and Queen Elizabeth the. First day there and. They said the. Mermaid Inn in Rye and they. Back in the Everett, a description of a brilliant description of this place in the 18th century, where it was it was a hotbed of smugglers. I mean, the revenue man did not go into this pub. Yeah, it's very genteel now, but in those in this description of these guys with, you know, the cloud of tobacco smoke from these guys smoking their pipes. With pistols sitting right on the on the table while they're doing

it and you just didn't mess with these guys. But yes, you can. You can go. And there's a room upstairs as, as, as a secret door leads out of the place. Yeah, it's. There's some wonderful things. To see and experience in these in these rides.

Speaker 2

Well, I think. That we have given people your descriptions are so colorful, I think people are getting the idea. The book is beautiful. It is one you're gonna just kind of salivate over all these different places. You might want to go. And I think that if I were to. Want to go on a bike ride without taking? A A professional touring company that the that there are plenty of rides in this book 100 bike rides of a lifetime. The world's ultimate cycling experiences by Ralph Smith. I I think you would want to get a copy and find your next 10 years worth of rides.

Speaker 3

Well, I have to say I I found a fair few cause some of them opened while I was doing this book. There's a couple in New Zealand, there's one that goes. Along the edge of a gorge. And they, you know, they can't believe it this this bike path on literally on. The Cliff face.

Speaker 2

Yeah, that's not. Doesn't sound like something I would love, but I get. What you're. Saying it's like mountain bikers go on those little tiny downhill crazy things. Well, this is awesome rough. Where can listeners get a copy? Is it available in all the usual places?

Speaker 3

I'm sorry you didn't bother me. I think it should be available in all the usual places or through the national geographics and.

Speaker 2

Ohh, right. Right through national fee dropping price.

Speaker 3

And that into regular book shops as far as yeah.

Speaker 2

What are you working on now now? That this projects out, I've.

Speaker 3

Got a new adventure and it's.

Speaker 2

Of course you do.

Speaker 3

Yeah. Well, actually, it's even. It's even. Slower than cycling. I'm going to be living on. A narrow boat. A classic English know about in exploring our 2000 miles of canals, a canal network was built in the 18th century, early 19th century, and there's still still out. There's 2000 miles of them going through the countryside in England and Wales. And I've got a a. 58 foot no boat. And I'll be moving aboard in the new year.

Speaker 2

Are you the captain?

Speaker 3

I'm like, yes, absolutely. You. Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 2

This is just. That's cool. You are. You gonna do any broadcasting live? You should I.

Speaker 3

Want to I want to. I want to do that and and do a do an ongoing you know blog sub stack something like that to you know it's our our canal. That work is is stunning and is started being built in the 1760s. And what about 1840? It it it built the Industrial Revolution and people. Don't realize it's. It's a hidden gem over here. This this vast network. But you know, you go to Birmingham. And they've got more canals there than Dennis.

Speaker 2

Huh. Who knew? So, are you gonna put a bike on the boat?

Speaker 3

I'm going to try and there's. There's not much room in the operative. Word is narrow and the narrow door but OK.

Speaker 2

Right, because it has.

Speaker 3

It's 58.

Speaker 2

To go through the canals.

Speaker 3

Feet long, but it's it's 6 foot 10 inch. Slide at the outside the the 18th century canals here where where narrow gauge because this I mean they they there's tunnels going underneath the Moors and the one tunnel that's only four miles long.

Speaker 2

How is this boat powered?

Speaker 3

Add add diesel engine. OK, it's quite off grid. It's not a, you know, a diesel engine. I've got solar, solar electricity, a wood stove and gas gas hub.

Speaker 2

Send me a picture of your boat.

Speaker 3

Ohh I will. I will. Yeah. It's a it's a. It's lovely boat. It was built up in Yorkshire and that's where, that's where it's moved at the moment on this Stanford can. Keep the canal.

Speaker 2

When are you leaving?

Speaker 3

Early in the year. I've spent spot on the boat already.

Speaker 2

My husband's going to be very. Envious, this would be the the the trip of the lifetime for him. He loves the water and he loves boats. Ohh boats and bikes. What could be better right?

Speaker 3

Exactly. Well, I mean, you know, I always like this, you know, bicycle touring by bicycle is wonderful cause it's slow, it's intimate. And I found something that's even slower and more intimate. And unlike, and unlike on a bicycle where you, you carry all your stuff.

Speaker

Right.

Speaker 3

On the bike. I've got a galley, 1 stocked galley. I've gotta shovel. I don't. I don't have a TV. I won't. I won't have one on board. I don't want a TV.

Speaker 2

But you're going to have a computer.

Speaker 3

I do have a computer cause I gotta do my my work and but bookshelves. Decks of cards, you know, game all part. Cheesy game all. That kind of stuff.

Speaker 2

We've been speaking with Rob Smith. He is a journalist. He is an author, he's a photographer. He's done some really cool things. His. Newest project 100 bike rides of a lifetime from National Geographic is available now. We will watch for your new boat tour for next year and thank you so much for talking with me. I hope you. Have a happy New Year.

Speaker 3

You too. Thank you. Very much. And let's see you in. Touch. Alright, bye bye now.

Speaker 2

Bye bye. My thanks to Ralph Smith for joining me on the show today. You can get a copy of his new book 100 Bike rides of a lifetime from National Geographic or Wherever you get your books. I look forward to learning more about his adventures on the canals with his cool, narrow boat too. Thank you for tuning in today. You can find show notes, photos, links and a written transcript of the show at [outspokencyclist.com](http://outspokencyclist.com). Follow us on Instagram, Facebook and Ex AKA Twitter. When you subscribe to the show, please use the rating system to let the algorithms know what you think. And move us up the rankings. With this episode, we're off and running and have a lot of new topics and guests lining up for the 2024 cycling season. On our next episode, we'll speak with Dave Simmons, the executive director of Ryde Illinois, as well as Mark and Cal Norstad from Paragon Machine works, our domestic producer of precision cycling. Frame building components as Mark passes the torch and the keys to Cal. I hope you enjoyed the show. Stay safe, stay well and remember there is always time for a ride. Well, unless there's snow and ice on the ground, then just listen to more cycling podcasts or watch a cycling movie. Bye bye.

Speaker 1

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