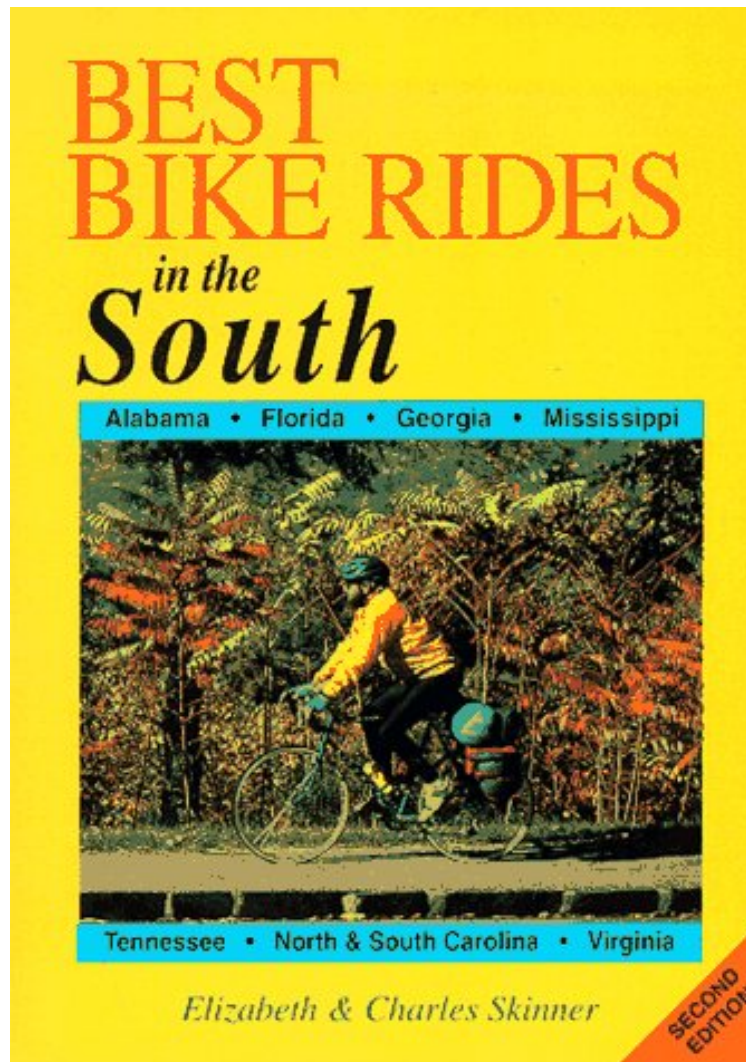


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Elizabeth Skinner

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Elizabeth Skinner : Best Bike Rides in the South, 2nd (Best Bike Rides Series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Best Bike Rides in the South, 2nd (Best Bike Rides Series):

49 of 53 people found the following review helpful. Bike Rides in the South, yes, but "Best"? Probably not...By CustomerI recently carried this book along for a driving trip (carrying bicycles) that my daughter and I took down the Southern Atlantic coast (NC, SC, GA), veering to north central Florida before turning around for home. The book was ok, but only for pointing us in a general direction and then mapping out our own rides from there. The maps are relatively easy to follow and they do a good job categorizing the type of rides from Rambles up to Challenges, but I

found myself wanting more 'challenge' on the Cruises and Rambles and less 'challenge' for the Classics and Challenges. Perhaps it's just a matter of personal preference. Our first stop was Jekyll Island, GA. We were not too pleased to learn that the Jekyll Island Ramble, noted as "an excellent bike ride for the entire family", was in reality a highly dangerous path (~3 ft. wide) shared with other cyclists and pedestrians coming and going from both directions. Was appalled to read the island maps and literature strongly suggesting that cyclists stay off the real roads and on these hazardous paths. My daughter and I ignored that suggestion for the most part, but still had to navigate around a few cyclists riding on the left side of the road so to stay with their riding partners who had opted to stay on the path. I understand why some people might prefer or be attracted to bicycle paths. However, I think that ALL bicycle riders would do well to understand that the basic rules of cycling are pretty much the same as the rules of the road for drivers. IMO, if people would ride with this awareness, there would be very little need to sequester cyclists (or cyclists to sequester themselves) onto choked and dangerous little paths with pedestrians as is the case on Jekyll Island. The marsh and harbor side of the island was very quiet and sparsely traveled as compared to the ocean/beach side. We did follow the bike path for a bit because it veered away from the road and was very scenic. Our next stop was St. Augustine, FL. Car traffic along A1A was far too heavy and the streets way too narrow to even attempt the St. Augustine Ramble - my 12 year old is a good road rider, but easily overwhelmed. To sandwich her between all those cars would have been cruel and unthinkable. We did walk down St. Georges Street, but I can't imagine attempting to cycle through all that pedestrian traffic as the book suggests. I was tempted to snatch a few of the children on scooters and scold them for weaving in and out so closely among the walkers - what the heck were their parents thinking, or were they thinking?? On to North Central Florida, location of the Suwannee River Classic ride. No way was my short-legged 12 year old going to ride 98 miles, but to our good fortune, most of the country roads in that area were lightly trafficked by motor vehicles so that we were able to tailor our riding distances accordingly. Falling Creek Falls was a very lovely and scenic stop and not one that would normally be found by most tourists. I wished that the book had highlighted more of the gorgeous fresh water springs in that area and/or mapped some rides to them. The one listed, Ichetucknee Springs, was a pretty place, but not particularly bicycle friendly. People might do well to pick up the Bicycle Facilities Map for North Central Florida at any of the tourism offices - I thought it listed a better and more extensive range of rides and intend to return one day to explore them more thoroughly. We wound up back on the NC coast to finish off our vacation. By then it was the weekend. I would NOT suggest doing the Cape Fear Challenge ride on a weekend day, even to my worst enemy. I'm not sure when would be the best time to do a ride like this. 421S on the front end of this trip is always car-packed. One must also watch out for hwy 133N on the backside. On Saturdays and Sundays, this is a 2 lane road with NO shoulders heavily trafficked by pickup trucks and SUVs towing big boats on trailers. An early morning weekday jaunt down 133N to Orton Plantation and the Brunswick Historic Site might be quite pleasant, however. Do remember your bug spray as the book suggests! The biting flies and 'no-see-umms' are already thick as of this posting - late April. We stayed in Southport and this area is close to 'home' territory to me. We didn't attempt the Cape Fear Challenge, tho I ran into two cyclists who had tried unsuccessfully to cycle out 133N and back. I rode Bald Head Island (all golf-carts, no cars) with my daughter on Saturday and then took a lone early Sunday morning jaunt from Southport to Oak Island - very pleasant! To sum it up, this is not the worst book of rides, but not the best either. I do appreciate that the book was helpful in providing a little direction for us to head towards, even though we tailored and altered most of the listed rides to suit our own riding style and abilities.

For the avid cyclist, this series offers a diverse array of moderate to serious tours through scenic terrain all over the United States. With challenging treks for the veteran and pleasant excursions for the Sunday cyclist, the Best Bike Rides series has something for everyone.

From the Back Cover Biking enthusiasts can enjoy four-season cycling on the forty-four stimulating tours ranging from 20 to 100 miles long, throughout the South. Outlined are a diverse array of great bike tours, with challenging treks for the lean, mean veteran and pleasant excursions for the Sunday cyclist. Included are scenic rides through Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi. There are relaxing rambles through coastal cities and towns, or exhilarating challenges through the Blue Ridge Mountains, as well as completely planned inn-to-inn excursions. Every ride profile includes a rating of difficulty, information of general interest, elevation profiles, places to eat-rest, detailed directions and mileage, as well as a useful map. An appendix of touring clubs and other cycling resources is also featured. Elizabeth and Charles Skinner are dedicated biking enthusiasts and are affiliated with the League of American Cyclists, and several regional biking organizations. (5 x 7, 256 pages)