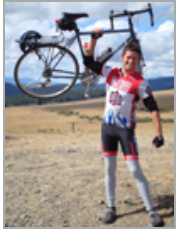


# JOKES ACROSS AMERICA

©Copyright 2008, Blue Ridge Outdoors | [Advertise](#) | [Contact](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Home](#)  
[CheapGeek](#)

Design & Development by [Category 4](#) and

January 2008, News of the Wood • [Print Article](#)



## Jokes Across America

Dan Ettinger and Simon Goldberg rode their bikes 3,824 miles from the coast of Washington to the coast of South Carolina. Along the way, they asked everyone they met to tell them a joke. Why? Because there's no better way to reconnect with the pulse of America than by trading good "knock knock" jokes. BRO talked with these two lifelong friends about making people laugh, hand gestures, and how full body lycra scares certain people.

BRO: Were you avid cyclists before this trip?

Simon: No. We're into it now, but neither of us were ever super cyclists before this trip.

Dan: I tried mountain biking once, but I hurt myself.

BRO: So why take a bike trip across the country?

Simon: The trip wasn't necessarily about biking. We just wanted to meet as many people as we could at the most fundamental level by camping in their yards or sharing a meal or sitting in a barber shop in South Carolina watching a football game. We found that riding a

bike was a really easy way to connect with a lot of different people. The bike, loaded with gear, was a great ice breaker.

Dan: Plus, it was so absurd what we were doing—riding our bikes and collecting jokes. It got us out of a lot of uncomfortable situations. Once, we were camping illegally in a city park and a cop started questioning us. He ended up calling back to the station for "joke backup."

BRO: Why collect jokes across America? Why not pottery?

Dan: Not enough people can talk about pottery. Jokes were a means to an end, which was simply to seek out a connection with strangers. I'd go so far as to say jokes are our last remaining piece of folklore. No one knows who came up with these jokes, and we pass them along, and change them, and make them our own. It's an amazing exchange.

BRO: Which state tells the best jokes?

Simon: Kentucky had some of the best jokes. They were really loose with them. It was interesting to find regional differences between the jokes. The more insular a community is, the more unique their jokes are going to be. You find pockets of these communities all over the country, like Scandinavian communities in Minnesota, or Native Americans on reservations, or ranchers in Montana. At the same time, the more insular a community is, the harder it is to crack them. We were two skinny white guys wearing lycra. Not everyone is comfortable with that.;

BRO: Two lycra-wearing guys asking strangers to tell them a joke—did people think you were crazy?

Simon: A lot of people in South Carolina were unwilling to tell us jokes. But for the most part, we got amazing reactions. When you approach someone on the street, they start off being very reserved and suspicious. But then you ask them if they know any jokes, and their face lights up.

BRO: Southern drivers have a reputation for being unfriendly to cyclists. Did you find our roads to be hostile territory?

Simon: It varied from town to town. People would drive by and honk, and we'd try to determine if it was a positive honk or a negative honk. If they stuck their hand out the window with a thumbs up, it was a positive honk.

Dan: If they stuck a different finger out the window, it was a negative honk.

BRO: You undertook this trip seeking a connection with Americans. Did you find it?

Dan: The trip gave me a renewed faith in America. It sounds cheesy, but with the media, and what's happening overseas...I'm a left-leaning liberal, and it's easy to give up on this country. But we found ourselves in the middle of America, in the middle of nowhere, and perfect strangers were helping us out. They'd invite us into their homes. They'd cook us eggs. It's amazing how trusting and generous this country really is.

Simon: Occasionally, we had to knock on a complete stranger's door. They'd look at us with a strange, suspicious expression, and the next thing you know, we're in their house and they're cooking us a meal. A lot of times, these people didn't share the same political views as us. We accidentally veered into political discussions at times, and we quickly moved the subject back to jokes. We could always lean on jokes as a form of connection. It was our crutch.

Dan: Hopefully, as a result of our trip, people will be inspired to get outside of their comfort zone and seek these same kind of fundamental connections.

—Graham Averill

### Dan and Simon's Favorite (Clean) Jokes

How do you kill a circus?

Go straight for the juggler.

+++++

Knock knock.

Who's there?

I eat mop.

I eat mop who.

+++++

Knock knock.

Who's there?

Interrupting cow.

Interrupting—MOO!

+++++

How many women with PMS does it take to screw in a light bulb?&

Four.

Why four?

JUST BECAUSE, OK!