



Highland Cycle Tour

discover the remote Highlands



with the Highlands' bike hire experts



The North West Highlands

A six day cycle tour of the North West Highlands, starting and ending in Inverness.

The area is great for cycling too. Settlements are close enough together to make trip distances short, but far enough apart to make every day feel like a real adventure. There are plenty of Bed and Breakfasts, hotels and campsites to make finding accommodation easy, and enough secret beaches to reward every explorer with the joy of walking along the shoreline with nobody else in sight.

What do you think of when you think of the Scottish Highlands? Dramatic mountains, dark fetid forests, white painted cottages with smoking chimneys in the middle of nowhere, sparkling waterfalls, fishing boats and coastal villages. The North West Highlands has all that and more. The most remote, unspoiled part of mainland UK, has less people per square mile than any other part of Britain and most parts of Europe, and more charm, beauty and peace than most of them.

We can provide you high quality bike hire and transport, in this case taking you from Inverness to Ullapool, the start of your Highland adventure, and collecting you from Thurso on the north coast, at the end of your trip, to take you back to Inverness.



The following is our suggested itinerary for a six day tour of the north west Highlands, but of course there are lots of alternative routes and accommodation options.

We can store your luggage while you're gone and provide an emergency back service for spares and repairs should it be required.



Itinerary

Day One - The start of the adventure

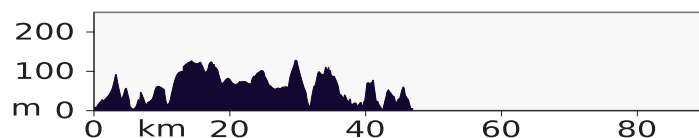
Make your way to our bike hire centre in Bellfield Park Inverness or we can collect you from Inverness airport or train or bus stations. We will sort out your hire bikes, if you are hiring, and any other equipment you need. Our minibus and bike trailer will take you and your bikes over to Ullapool, on the west coast, for the start of your Highland cycling adventure. The trip takes about an hour and half, so you will have time to explore Ullapool and the surrounding area before settling into your accommodation and popping out for a beer or two at the FBI (the Ferry Boat Inn of course).



Day Two - Cycle north from Ullapool

Climb steadily out of Ullapool to the left turn at Drumrunie, signposted to Achiltibuie. Head west for Achiltibuie stopping at the car park for a climb up to the ridge of Stac Pollaidh,

amazing views all round (n.b. stick to the path, it's much easier anyway. The round trip to the ridge and back will take a couple of hours. The walk is easy but a little steep. The scramble from the ridge to the main summit is much more tricky and not for the inexperienced hill walker, the views from the ridge are just as good anyway.) Continue down towards the coast and turn right to Lochinver and Inverkirkaig. This is one of the most fun roads to cycle in the Highlands. Twisting and turning, you never know round the next corner. Follow the road to Achins book shop and cafe where it's time for a rest. If Stac Pollaidh left you wanting more walking, there's a lovely two hour walk up and back to the Inverkirkaig waterfalls. Carrying on north, it's only a few miles to Lochinver and your stop for the night. Built up an appetite? Try a world famous Lochinver pie while you're here, delicious. Total miles only 30, but I bet it feels a lot more. [30 miles / 47km]

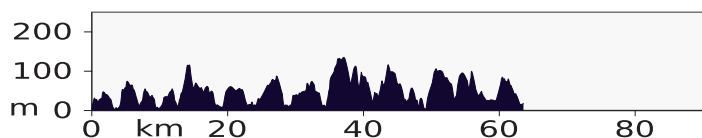


Day Three - Lochinver to Scourie

It's time for a 'dook'. Cycle north from Lochinver turning left and left again for Achmelvich, the finest beach in the Highlands. After an explore and maybe a swim, it's back on the bike to retrace your footsteps to the B869 and head north to Clachtoll for another fine beach. Through the lovely villages of Stoer and Clashnessie. Continue on the roller coaster wee road to

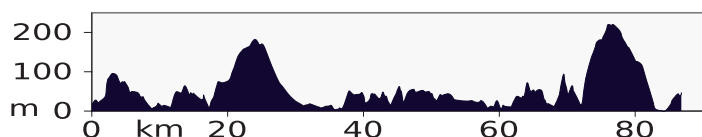


Drumbeg and then on past the towering Quinag. The hills are steep here. Back at the main road, turn left for Kylesku and Scourie. The Kylesku Hotel does great seafood if you fancy a late lunch. Head over the dramatic sweeping bridge, gasping at the views, and continue north to stop in Scourie for the night. There is the hotel, B&Bs and a campsite with wonderful views. Total 40 fairly hilly miles. [40 miles / 64km]



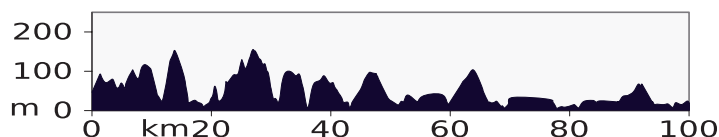
Day Four - Puffins and caves

From Scourie, head north to Laxford Bridge and on to Rhiconich and it's surprisingly large hotel. From Rhiconich head north east to the truly stunning Kyle of Durness, beach as far as the eye can see. Continue on up to Durness for a well earned rest. If you have energy, a walk along the beach at Faraid is great, you might see puffins if its the spring/early summer. Or explore the giant cave at Smoo, just round the corner from Durness village, how many caves have a waterfall and a boat trip? Heading east now, its on to Loch Eriboll, there is no alternative to travelling around the whole loch, scenic but you may wish there was a ferry. Then on to the Kyle of Tongue and your stop for the night. There are two hotels here and B&Bs. [56 miles / 90km]



Day Five - Along the top to John O'Groats

From Tongue head east for Bettyhill. If its a fine day, or your feeling energetic, there's a lovely detour off the main road through the crofting settlements of Skerray and Torrisdale. From Bettyhill continue east to Melvich. Dounreay may be a familiar name to you. The nuclear power station at Dounreay is no longer operational, maybe it will be turned into a windmill site. Thurso for a lunch, then on to John O' Groats, the end point for many long distance cyclists. Reaching John O'Groats you have finished your tour. The coastal walk to Duncansby Head and the sea stacks is a must. [62 miles / 100km]



Day Six - Transfer back to Inverness

We will pick you up at your accommodation in Thurso and transport you and your bikes back in Inverness to catch your train or plane home.

If you bring your own bikes we can arrange for them to be packed and couriered home for you.



Practical Info

The price and what it includes

The cost of this self-guided cycle tour of the Highlands is £215 per person (minimum two) . This includes the hire of one of our high-quality Trek hybrid bikes, panniers to carry your luggage on the bike, a tool kit and spares, a helmet, a map of the route, transfers (Inverness to Ullapool and from John O'Groats to Inverness) and the knowledge that we are only a phone call away should anything go seriously wrong.

What's not included

The cost does not include accommodation, which we recommend you book early direct with the accommodation providers themselves (details below).

Accommodation

Please see the accommodation section below.

Meals

Your accommodation is likely to provide you with breakfast. For evening meals it is best to speak to your accommodation provider. Some B&Bs will provide evening meals, others will recommend the best local pub or restaurant. For lunches we'd recommend carrying enough to last you all day.

Suggested kit list

Good quality cycling clothing is the key here. Bring enough warm and waterproof clothes to protect you from the elements. Certainly a waterproof, breathable jacket. Gloves and good mountain biking shoes are a must. But we will provide you with a helmet.

Fitness and equipment

This tour requires a reasonable level of fitness, experience of riding a bike on steep descents and ascents and a good quality, well-maintained hybrid or road bike. We can supply the latter, but you'll need to bring the fitness and bike skills yourself.

Insurance

We strongly recommend you buy travel insurance that covers you for sports like cycling.

Arrival and departure details

This trip starts at the Ticket To Ride Bike Hire Centre in Bellfield Park in Inverness. We are open May to October, 7 days a week, 9am to 6pm. The trip finishes in John O'Groats where we'll collect you for your return transfer to Inverness.



Travelling to Inverness

Inverness is really easy to get to by air, rail, bus and car, not to mention bike.

Inverness by air

Inverness airport, a short taxi ride from the city, is well served by major and budget airlines from all over the UK, Ireland and direct from Amsterdam. For up-to-date timetables and booking visit:

www.hial.co.uk/inverness-airport/destinations/

Inverness by rail

Trains from Glasgow and Edinburgh to Inverness take approximately three and a half hours, and there is also a sleeper service from London Euston, which arrives in Inverness at 08.30 each morning. For current timetables and to book tickets visit:

www.seat61.com

www.scotrail.co.uk

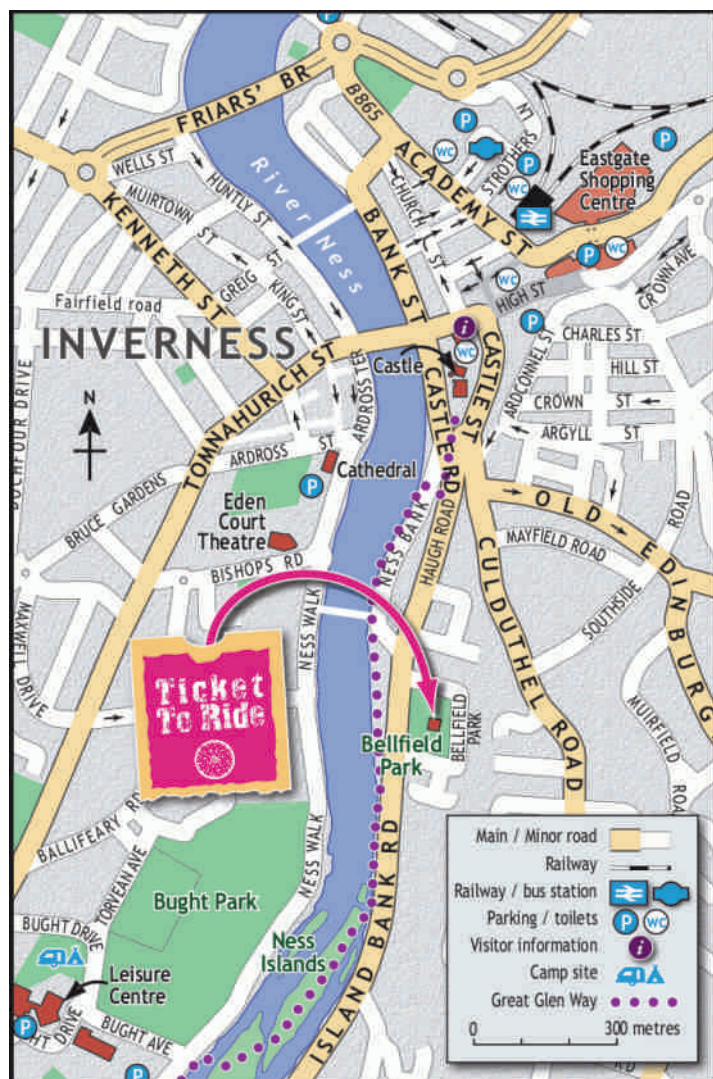
Inverness by bus

Inverness is linked to all major cities by bus and is the hub for many services to outlying areas. Most buses will not carry bikes unless boxed. For more info see:

www.travelinescotland.com

Driving to Inverness

It takes about 3 hours to drive from Edinburgh or Glasgow to Inverness. The easiest route takes you to Perth and up the A9. Don't rush, there's lots to see on the way.



FAQ



Q What kind of cycling tour is this?

A This is a self-guided tour, ideal for reasonably fit riders with some cycle touring experience. It is all on-road but in areas where traffic volumes are low.

Q How far will we be riding each day?

A The distances covered each day are between 30 and 62 miles (56km - 100km). The terrain is hilly and steep in places.

Q How easy is it to follow the route?

A There are few roads in this area so there are reduced opportunities to take a wrong turn. Signposting is good and we provide a map. You can also download GPX files compatible with most GPS devices and smartphones.

Q What should I take with me?

A If you are staying in accommodation along the way, you'll just need your cycling clothes (including good waterproofs), clothes to change into in the evening and food and drink for each day on the trail. There are plenty of shops in Ullapool where you can stock up. If you are camping, you'll clearly need your camping gear too. We can hire you panniers to carry all your gear.

Q What will the weather be like?

A The weather in this part of the country is famously unpredictable. Between April and

September it is unlikely to be frosty and in July and August the mean daily maximum temperature is 19°C. Around Inverness between June and August there are normally fewer than 30 days with rainfall of more than 1mm but it is wetter in the west. For all the facts see:

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/ns/>

Q Do I need to book in advance?

A Yes, we recommend you book your bike hire and all accommodation in advance.

Q Is this tour suitable for children?

A Fit children aged 12 and over with experience of cycle touring should enjoy this trip. Customers have completed this trip with younger children in trailers but you might consider spreading the trip over more days if you're towing!

Q Will my mobile phone work?

A There is a good signal in most villages but in the more remote parts of the route you may lose signal for some time. You should not rely solely on phone mapping for navigation.

Q Can I camp?

A Yes. There are lots of camp sites along the route and we've listed some in the accommodation section. For information about wild camping see:
www.outdooraccess-scotland.com

Accommodation

Inverness	Website	What's it like?
Aros B&B	www.aros-inverness.co.uk	Lovely guest house
Craignay Guesthouse	www.craignay-house.co.uk	Near the river Ness
Craigside Lodge	www.craigsideguesthouse.co.uk	Really friendly, great location
Inverness Campsite	www.invernesscaravanpark.com	Well featured site
Ullapool	Website	What's it like?
Creagan Guest House	www.creaganguesthouse.com	Home from home style B&B
The Arch Inn	www.thearchinn.co.uk	Hotel and restaurant
Broomfield Holiday Park	www.broomfieldhdp.com	Beautiful location on the shore
Lochinver	Website	What's it like?
Tigh Na Sith	www.tighnasith.com	Four star bed & breakfast
Clachtoll Beach Campsite	www.clachtollbeachcampsite.co.uk	5 miles north of Lochinver
Scourie	Website	What's it like?
Greenhill B&B	www.greenhillscourie.co.uk	Booking essential
Scourie Campsite	www.scourie.co.uk	Great site overlooking the bay
Tongue	Website	What's it like?
Rhian Cottage	www.rhiancottage.co.uk	Mountain view
Bayview Campsite	www.melness.org.uk	Very close to the beach
John O'Groats	Website	What's it like?
Seaview Hotel	www.seaviewjohnogroats.co.uk	Modern rooms, great beer
John O'Groats Guest House	joggh.getfreehosting.co.uk	Authentic John O'Groats welcome
John O'Groats Campsite	www.johnogroatscampsite.co.uk	Panoramic sea views

Ticket To Ride
The Pavilion
Bellfield Park
Inverness
IV2 4SZ

+44 (0) 1463 419160

info@TicketToRideHighlands.co.uk



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