

Anglo-Scottish Borderlands

Tour Organiser: Tony Gore

Sunday 02nd to Friday 07th August 2026

This fixed-centre short break allows exploration of the often overlooked stretch of the Anglo-Scottish Borderlands to the north and east of Carlisle. This is an attractive, unspoilt corner of Britain, with landscapes ranging from rounded heather-clad hills through rich rolling farmland to coastal lowlands around the broad Solway Firth. A choice of two daily rides will make use of the area's excellent network of lightly used roads, which makes the area a paradise for cyclists. The daily rides will lead to varied destinations, from market towns like Annan, Brampton and Langholm to the Tyne valley, Eskdale and Hadrian's Wall. Our base is a well-appointed country house hotel offering superb food using locally sourced fare.

Itinerary

Sunday 02nd August 2026 Travel to the base and hotel check in

Travel from home for late afternoon arrival at hotel. Meet in bar for introductions and short briefing before dinner in the restaurant.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Country House Hotel
- Meals: (D)

Monday 03rd August 2026 Loop rides to the west

A ride through the rolling hills to the west, with possible visits to Thomas Carlyle's birthplace, the Lochmaben Stone and the Blacksmith's Forge at Gretna Green.

- Route distance: 66.0km
- Route altitude gain: 550m
- Accommodation: Country House Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Monday 03rd August 2026 Loop rides to the west Longer Route

A ride through the rolling hills to the west, with possible visits to Lockerbie Air Disaster Memorial, the Lochmaben Stone and the Blacksmith's Forge at Gretna Green.

- Route distance: 89.0km
- Route altitude gain: 830m
- Accommodation: Country House Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Tuesday 04th August 2026 Loop rides to the north

Medium ride to the north, out along the Esk and Ewes Water valleys, over the hill to Hermitage Castle, and back along Liddesdale through Newcastleton.

- Route distance: 75.0km
- Route altitude gain: 910m
- Accommodation: Country house hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Tuesday 04th August 2026 Loop rides to the north Longer Route

Longer ride to the north, out along Eskdale with a possible visit to the Samye Ling Tibetan Monastery, then back through Castle O'er Forest and the Debatable Lands.

- Route distance: 88.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1090m
- Accommodation: Country house hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Wednesday 05th August 2026 Loop rides to the south-east

A meander through the sparsely populated rolling hills around the Lyne valley to the ruined priory at Lanercost. Return through the small market town of Brampton, Warwick Bridge on the River Eden and skirting around Carlisle Airport.

- Route distance: 75.0km
- Route altitude gain: 680m
- Accommodation: Country house hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Wednesday 05th August 2026 Loop rides to the south-east Longer Route

Initially along the direct route to the ruined priory at Lanercost, then along the line of Hadrian's Wall for a while before dropping into Haltwistle. Back via Warwick Bridge on the River Eden and skirting around Carlisle Airport.

- Route distance: 104.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1030m
- Accommodation: Country house hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Thursday 06th August 2026 Loop rides to the south

Across rolling pastureland on the outward leg to the River Eden, which we cross on a path that is part of an impressive railway viaduct. After skirting Carlisle we return along the coastal plain, partly following NCN Route 7.

- Route distance: 70.0km
- Route altitude gain: 660m
- Accommodation: Country house hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Thursday 06th August 2026 Loop rides to the south Longer Route

Across rolling pastureland on the outward leg to the steep-sided lower Eden valley, finally crossing the river at Armathwaite. After skirting Carlisle we return along the coastal plain, partly following NCN Route 7.

- Route distance: 93.0km
- Route altitude gain: 960m
- Accommodation: Country house hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Friday 07th August 2026 End of Holiday and Departure

Payment of bar bills and tips to hotel staff.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: None
- Meals: (B)

Dates and Prices

Cost

- Land only price: £695

Payment Schedule

Up to 31st May - deposit of £100

1st June and after - balance of £595 or full amount

Price includes:

- 5 nights half board in country house hotel
- Tour information pack (including GPS routes)
- Bikexplore costs

Price does not include:

- Travel to and from the hotel
- Lunch or other refreshments during the day
- Drinks with evening meals
- Single room occupancy (£200 supplement payable, limited availability)
- Entry fees at any attractions visited
- Any other personal expenses
- Travel Insurance

Cancellations

Written Notice Received	Cancellation Charge
by 31st May	£100 (deposit)
1st June to departure	£695 (full amount)

The price of £695 (land only) is based on a minimum number of 8 people taking part in the holiday. If there are insufficient bookings by Sunday 31st May 2026, we will contact you and return all monies paid.

Holiday Information

Area Covered by the Holiday

The western parts of the Anglo-Scottish Borderlands comprise a varied set of landscapes, underlining the transitional nature of the area we will be exploring. To the north are the heather-clad rounded hills and the broad tranquil valleys of the Southern Uplands. To the west lie the rolling farmlands of eastern Dumfriesshire and the coastal plain fringing the Solway Firth. To the south stretch the Caldew, Petteril and Eden valleys, flanked to the east by the brooding heights of the North Pennines. And to the east, the pastures of the Lyne valley soon give way to the Spadeadam moorlands and the Wark and Kielder Forests. Each of these elements is knitted together by an excellent network of quiet minor roads (though many of the main roads tend to be lightly used too). Sparsely populated and often overlooked, it's a place where history affords it something of a haunting quality. In the words of former local MP Rory Stewart, nowhere else is quite 'so elusive, so quietly impressive, or so improbably beautiful'.

Accommodation & Meals

This centre-based holiday uses the March Bank Country House Hotel as a base, on a half board basis in shared rooms. The hotel is situated north of Carlisle, right by the border itself and adjacent to the unclaimed area known as the 'debatable lands' (OS Grid Reference NY 386 732). It stands in its own grounds on a hillside overlooking the lower Esk valley. It has an established reputation for excellent food, most of it sourced locally, and with a particular

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focus on fish and game. Breakfast is a combination of items from the buffet and hot dishes cooked to order; the two-course evening meal includes a starter and a main, or a main and a dessert, with choices changing frequently. You are welcome to have a third course, but will have to pay extra for this. If you have particular dietary requirements or preferences, these can be met as long as you discuss them with the proprietor and chef Richard in advance.

The building dates from 1850, originating as a shooting lodge for the local estate. Today it has been refurbished to provide a set of distinctive and very comfortable rooms. It is family owned and run, by hosts who offer a warm welcome and do their best to meet any needs their guests might have. Please note that single occupancy may be possible, but is subject to limited availability and payment of a supplement.

Travel

The hotel is located just off the A7, the main road through the Scottish Borders from Edinburgh to Carlisle, right by the Anglo-Scottish border but just in England. To get there by road, from the south the A7 is accessible at J44 on the M6 (just under 10 miles to the hotel); from the north, at J22 on the A74(M) via the A6071 to Longtown (6.5 miles). Car parking is available on the far side of the hotel.

For those who wish to travel by train, the nearest railway station to the hotel is at Gretna Green, just 7 to 8 miles away. This is served by semi-fast trains between Carlisle and Glasgow via Dumfries, albeit with a low frequency on Sundays, especially from the north. Cycles are carried free of charge on these trains, without the need for reservation and subject to sufficient space being available.

Carlisle itself has regular services along the West Coast main line, all the way from London Euston as well as from the West Midlands and the North West, Glasgow and Edinburgh. All trains on this line require advance reservations for cycle carriage. Connections into these services are also available from East Anglia, the East Midlands, most parts of Wales and northern and eastern Scotland. There is also a local service linking Newcastle to Carlisle via Hexham, which might be more convenient for participants from East Anglia, the East Midlands and Yorkshire by using the East Coast main line from Peterborough, Grantham, Doncaster or York. The Settle-Carlisle line from Leeds also provides a direct link from Yorkshire.

If you have the time, it is possible to cycle the 15 miles from Carlisle using NCN Route 7 as far as Longtown, then along the A7 to the hotel.

Rides & Rest Days

Each day there will be a choice of rides of varying distances. The 'Moderate' grading of the holiday applies to the majority of the rides; please note that some of the longer routes involving over 1,000 metres of ascent should be considered as 'Energetic'. The routes are recommended rather than set in stone; short cuts can be taken to suit abilities, or in





response to adverse weather conditions. In many instances the first and/or last parts of the routes are shared, thus enabling riders to 'mix and match' if they wish.

The general routine will be for those following a given route to depart as a group between 09:30 and 10:00 each morning. The Tour Organiser will marshal the ride he has chosen to do, whilst the other ride will rely on participants to be self-organised. As far as possible, the plan will be to ride together like a regular CTC group, with regrouping as required at junctions, hilltops and viewpoints. There should be scope to stop and take photographs at points of interest, but of course most of the time will be spent cycling. Each ride will include at least one suggested refreshment stop at a café or pub, depending on availability and opening hours.

Group Information

The maximum number of participants will be 12 including the Tour Organiser.

Weather & Clothing

While the tour will be taking place in the height of summer, remember that Scotland has an unenviable reputation in terms of holiday weather. Previous tours in the Borders have generally enjoyed fine conditions, with only very occasional wet days and others alternating between sunny and changeable. The best approach would be to plan for a similar unpredictable mixture in 2026. On the whole temperatures should be pleasant, but even in summer it can feel cold on the bike in rainy conditions, so make sure you have an effective set of waterproofs with you, as well as gloves and an appropriate base layer to keep yourself warm.

Cycles & Equipment

A touring cycle, hybrid or gravel bike, or even a lightweight ATB would be suitable for this holiday. You should ensure your cycle is well maintained, paying particular attention to wheels, tyres and brakes. Given the poor state of repair of some of the roads, it is advisable to fit new hardwearing touring tyres, of at least 28mm, rather than racing slicks. As there are plenty of hills in the area, a bottom gear of no larger than 25 inches is recommended. If you are unsure about this, please discuss with the Tour Organiser. Bikes should be fitted with mudguards, to avoid spraying others in the group, and have racks to secure panniers, saddlebags or day packs. Participants will be expected to carry each day sufficient spares and tools to deal with punctures and minor repairs. Advice on what spares and tools you should bring will be provided in the final tour information bulletin. A rack pack or bar bag will be useful for carrying wet weather gear, spare clothing needed for the day, camera, snacks and your map. Wearing a helmet is of course down to personal preference.

Maps & Directions

A full set of detailed written route cards as well as GPS files will be provided to help you navigate the recommended routes. However, you should also bring a suitable map with you in case you lose your way or become separated from the group. The Ordnance Survey (OS) 1:250,000 Road Map 3 (Southern Scotland and Northumberland) covers the area visited



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and should be available in most branches of Waterstones or other large bookshop (cost £7.99). It is also available online from map specialists such as Stanfords (stanfords.co.uk). Alternatively you could detach the relevant pages from a standard road atlas. If you require more detail, the OS 1:50,000 Landranger series Nos. 78 (Nithsdale and Annandale), 79 (Hawick and Eskdale), 85 (Carlisle and Solway Firth) and 86 (Haltwistle and Brampton) offer complete coverage.

Travel Insurance

As this is a home-based holiday, obtaining travel insurance is optional for UK residents, especially if you already have third party cover through membership of British Cycling, Cycling UK or the National Clarion Club. However, this does not cover any other risks such as cancellation charges, personal injury or lost property. We therefore strongly recommend that suitable insurance is taken out to safeguard against such risks. Members who do not reside in the UK are not covered for third party and are advised to obtain suitable cover before leaving their normal residence. If you already have an annual policy, you may need to confirm that it will cover a UK holiday or make provision for it to do so.

About the Tour Organiser

I have been combining my love of the outdoors and travelling through cycle-touring for more than 45 years, exploring many parts of the British Isles and Europe, as well as further afield in South Africa and the Americas. I was a CTC Tour Leader for 22 years, running over 40 tours, 15 of which visited different parts of Spain. I have also organised several cycle trips in Britain, both fixed centre and moving on, and currently I am keen to explore different areas of our own country that are hitherto unknown to me. This will be my fourth Bikexplore holiday.

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