

# Bikexplore

*The World beneath your wheels*

[www.bikexplore.co.uk](http://www.bikexplore.co.uk)

Lands End to John O'Groats 3 – 22 September 2021 £2295

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One of the world's great rides, from one end of the British Isles to the other, this September tour is designed for the more experienced, fitter, cyclo-tourist - it is not for inexperienced riders or beginners. There is no really flat route from Lands End (Cornwall) to John O'Groats (Scotland), expect many hills, some very steep, and although most of the route (probably 95%) is on minor rural back roads there are some town centres to ride through and short stretches of main road. The route is unusual in that it avoids the urban sprawls of Manchester and Glasgow and passes through the beautiful Derbyshire Peak District and Yorkshire Dales. It is about 1050 miles in total. Our youngest and oldest successful riders since 2009 have been 13 and almost 86 (The amazing Alex Menarry who is now in the Guinness Book of Records). We get quite a few female riders and we get a steady trickle of riders returning to do it for a second or very occasionally, third time (The current record holder is Irishman Garry Lee who has done it four times with us). We get slow, steady and fast riders and usually everyone enjoys themselves. In the last nine years we have a 96% success rate. To train you need to build up to doing an 80 mile hilly day before the tour if you want to enjoy it. The average day is 65 miles and to repeat; it is hilly! The route offers plenty of beautiful scenery and a lot of British history. The first four days can be tough with many short steep hills, but things do get easier, with a rest day before the final Scottish hills. Succeed in this challenge and you will have some wonderful memories to treasure.

We have run the tour about 23 times and even managed to run this tour in September 2020 with 15 people when various strict Covid-19 restrictions were in place. With the knowledge and experience gained from that tour we are fairly confident we can run it in September 2021.

## Area Covered by the Ride

The UK mainland contains an amazing variety of scenery in a relatively small area and a useful network of country lanes and minor roads. To help us on this 1000+ mile ride the prevailing wind is from the southwest and the weather is usually reasonable at this time of year.

In the first section you will experience the remote hills of Cornwall and Devon and the Somerset Levels before crossing the high-tech Avon and old Severn bridge cycle paths into the Welsh border country (We are very briefly in Wales at Chepstow) and Ross-on-Wye. From here we cycle north through Ludlow and Corve Dale towards Telford before turning northeast and cycling across the top of Cannock Chase into the Derbyshire Peak District.

Heading more or less north and staying on the high ground of the Pennines, we cross Monsal Head and the Strines (Used by the Tour de France) and cycle through moorland to Haworth (Bronte country) and into the Yorkshire Dales before emerging in the Eden Valley and stopping near Carlisle.

Cycle into Scotland via Gretna Green to Wanlockhead, the highest village in Scotland, before cycling through the Scottish Lowlands to Stirling where we enjoy a rest day. From here we cycle via Glen Cochill to Pitlochry then, using the Sustrans route, up Glen Garry and the Pass of Drumochter to Nethybridge. Then via Inverness and the Black Isle to Tain from where the route goes via Strath Tirry and Strath Vagastie to Tongue and Bettyhill, for a final push along the northern coast to John O'Groats.

## Riding

Most of each day will be spent cycling. Typically people will cycle in loose groups of three or four, around 11-14mph on the flat, slower up hills, usually meeting up at road junctions and cafes for lunch and morning and afternoon refreshment breaks. We have a policy of supporting the local economy wherever we go, by using local cafes and shops.

The Tour Leader normally 'leads' from behind, driving the support vehicle, which will set off after you have set out and repeatedly leapfrog you during the day. There might also be a deputy leader riding, depending on the size of the group, but please do not expect to be constantly accompanied. In practise we should always be fairly close if you need us, and you should see or meet us several times during the day. We supply the route as a file for use with a Garmin GPS or similar and have Garmins available to hire.

Inevitably, many parts of this route are very hilly, so you do need to be fit to get the most out of this tour, and it is essential to get out on your bike and build up to 70 or 80 mile hilly rides before the tour starts.



## **Accommodation & Meals**

This will be mostly in 3-star hotels, apart from two nights rated 4-star and two nights rated 2-star. Single occupancy may be possible (£530 supplement). Rooms will be en-suite apart from two nights in Scotland. Full cooked or Continental breakfast is included and three course dinner except on two nights. Vegetarians should indicate their preferences on the booking form and may have limited choice in some places.

## **Vehicle Support**

A back-up van will carry your luggage and will give support to the group during the day; we aim for it to be never more than 30 minutes from the slower riders if needed. We can carry injured or ill riders for a day or two but the tour is not set up or designed to accommodate riders who are seriously ill or injured or simply unfit and we expect you to finish the ride each day.

## **Travel to and from the Tour**

We recommend that you travel to Penzance by rail or car; nearly all trains carry cycles, but they can be busy. One-way hire cars can be cheaper and more convenient, with a drop off point for the major hire firms in Penzance station car park about 100 yds from our Pub hotel. Parcelforce and other couriers have in the past shipped bikes to the first hotel for tour members. If coming into the UK through Heathrow Airport, you may want to consider bike hire from one of the London bike shops, as arranging bike hire can be difficult in Cornwall.

At John O'Groats we have arranged a bus for 0800 on the final morning, returning you and your bike to Inverness by about 1200. It is possible to have your bike shipped anywhere in the UK from John O'Groats, see

<http://www.johngroatsbikettransport.co.uk/bike-couriering.php>.

Previous tour members have used them with good results.

## **Group Information**

The maximum group size will be 16 excluding the Tour Leader(s).

## **Weather & Clothing**

British weather can be very variable, so there is a possibility of both heat waves and cold, wet weather on a tour like this. Lightweight clothing, suitable for a range of temperatures, is needed and possibly smarter clothing for the more up-market hotels (though they seem to be very relaxed about what people wear). Hopefully sun cream will also be useful. Three or four of the hotels have swimming pools or spa facilities so you might want to bring swimming costumes.

## **Cycles & Equipment**

A lightweight road bike or touring cycle with low gears (eg a small chainring the same size or smaller than the largest cog on your rear wheel) is recommended. On a ride of this length a weight saving of even a couple of pounds (a kilogram) can make a big difference. Your bike must be in good working order, especially the brakes; spare brake pads may be useful (They can sometimes wear out by the time we reach Scotland). Lights and mudguards are optional but sensible. You should have ridden your cycle before the tour to ensure you are happy with its handling. You are expected to carry tools and spares to deal with punctures and minor repairs, including two new inner tubes. There are local bike shops on or near the route, but they might not be available when you want them.

## **Travel Insurance**

We strongly recommend that suitable insurance is taken out to safeguard against risks such as cancellation charges, personal injury or lost property, as soon as you book so you will then be covered if you have to cancel due to injury or illness before the tour starts. If coming with a partner consider insurance that covers both of you cancelling if one of you is injured or ill.. If you already have an annual policy, you may need to confirm that it will cover a UK holiday and cycling every day or make provision for it to do so. If a participant signs up and has to cancel, any refund will be determined based upon whether a replacement is found, as well as the impact of any unrecoverable costs incurred in the cancelling participants name. Hence the need for good travel insurance.

## **Price**

The price of £2295 is based on a minimum number of 7 people taking part in the holiday. If there are insufficient bookings by 26th June 2021, we will contact you and return all monies paid.

A deposit of £595 is required when booking .

## **Price Includes**

Transfer by bus from John O'Groats to Inverness  
Back-up vehicle to carry luggage / people where necessary  
19 nights hotel, sharing room  
17 breakfasts, 17 dinners

## **Price Does Not Include**

Travel to Lands End and from Inverness  
Drinks with dinner  
Lunches or refreshments during the day  
Entry fees at any attractions visited  
Single occupancy supplement (£530), limited availability)  
Hire of a Garmin GPS and bike mount(£20)



**Points to note:**

We have run this tour a lot of times - and each time we run it we make improvements

The tour is designed to be good value and include more 'extras' in the cost than rival tours that are purely commercial.

The tour is supported with leader, assistant and a van which carries the luggage and accompanies the riders during the day.

The tour can be run with a group of 7-20 persons which reduces the chance of cancellation

The accommodation is mostly good quality **hotels and inns**.

We include most of the **evening meals** in the cost as we have found that tour members prefer this to arranging their own meals.

We include transport for you and your bike to **Inverness** and can drop you off at the train station or airport.

Garmin GPS hire is possible as tour members have found these to be the easiest way to navigate.

We have a **rest day at Stirling** before the Scottish Highlands.



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