

Argyll and the Inner Hebrides

Thurs 4th July to Wed 17th July 2024

Starting with cycling to Arran (from Paisley) where we have 2 nights in a luxury spa hotel. Then continuing out to Islay, Jura and finally Mull. In between that we visit the beautiful Kintyre peninsula and the Crinan canal. Optional boat trip to Fingal's Cave on Staffa. The tour finishes in Oban with easy train connections back to Glasgow.



Itinerary

Thursday 4th July - Paisley

Paisley is just a 10 minute train journey from Glasgow, and if anyone is travelling by car then there is the choice of airport parking for the duration of the tour.

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

Friday 5th July - Arran

The ferry arrives in Brodick on Arran and we are staying in the Auchrannie luxury spa hotel. Do bring a swimming costume if you want to use the pool and spa facilities.

- Route distance: 55.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 453.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Saturday 6th July - Arran

Arran is often described as Scotland in miniature, so it is lovely to include it in the tour. Today we have a coastal ride with fabulous views to the Ayrshire mainland, Ailsa Craig, Northern Ireland, and Kintyre.

- Route distance: 90.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1323.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Sunday 7th July - Islay

Cycle to Lochranza for the ferry to Claonaig on the Kintyre peninsula. We take a pretty detour down flat coastal single track roads to Skipness, before turning back and west for Kennacraig. The ferry to Islay sails up the Sound of Islay (with beautiful views to both Islay and Jura) and docks at Port Ascaig.

- Route distance: 37.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 573.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Monday 8th July - Islay

Cycling around the Rhinns of Islay in the north western corner of, and visiting the Loch Gruinart Nature Reserve.

- Route distance: 81.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 846.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Tuesday 9th July - Jura day trip

Jura is very similar in area to the Isle of Wight, but Jura has 196 residents compared with Isle of Wight with 141,606. IT IS QUIET AND REMOTE. We will go part way along the coast towards a beautiful sandy beach and the bay at Lighthouses.

- Route distance: 54.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 751.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Wednesday 10th July - Kintyre peninsula

Once back on Kintyre, we have the beautiful Kilberry loop along the coast, then across and up to Ardrishaig at the mouth of Loch Gilp.

- Route distance: 86.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1094.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Thursday 11th July Crinan Canal

Easy cycling along the canal, beautiful scenery down Loch Sween and a just a sample of the many historic sites in the area at Dunadd Fort.

- Route distance: 58.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 545.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Friday 12th July - Oban

Cycling through the historic sites close to Kilmartin, including stone circles, then north along Loch Awe. Visiting Taynuilt on Loch Etive, then a beautiful single track route into Oban.

- Route distance: 87.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1419.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Saturday 13th July - Oban

Option for a rest day, or a new route for me that I am quite excited about. Ferry from Oban to the Isle of Lismore, then cycle to the north tip of the island and another ferry to Port Appin. We cycle round the shore, have a section on the main road, then minor roads over the headland and along the north shore of Loch Etive.

- Route distance: 54.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 738.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Sunday 14th July - Tobermory

Ferry to Mull then the road follows the coast all the way to Tobermory, with fabulous views across the Sound of Mull to Morvern and only towards the end do we see Ardnamurchan.

- Route distance: 34.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 512.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Monday 15th July - Staffa

Optional day trip out to Staffa to see Fingal's cave and sail round the Treshnish Isles.

- Route distance: 0.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 0.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Tuesday 16th July - Tobermory

Mull is just too big for us to cycle all of the way around in one day, so we cycle around the north west end of the island. Potential to see sea eagles.

- Route distance: 71.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1454.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Wednesday 17th July - Home

Last half day of cycling back to catch to the ferry to Oban and onwards home.

- Route distance: 34.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 512.0 m
- Accommodation: None
- Meals: (B)

Dates and Prices

Cost

- Land only price: £1850.0

Payment Schedule

A deposit of £300 per person is payable to complete a booking, with the final balance of £1,550 per person to be paid by Saturday 30th March 2024. For Staffa a deposit of £80 is required on booking and this is the full payment for the boat trip.

Price includes:

- Ferry costs
- Luggage transfer
- 13 nights accomodation and breakfast
- dinner on 3 nights

Price does not include:

- Travel to and from the start / end points
- lunch, café stops, drinks
- Dinner on 10 nights
- Any other personal expenses
- Travel Insurance

Cancellations

Written Notice Received: Cancellation Charge: Tour + Staffa day trip

- before Saturday 30th March 2024: £300 tour Deposit + £80 Staffa tour costs
- after Saturday 30th March 2024: £1,850 tour costs plus Staffa trip costs £80



Holiday Information

Area covered by the holiday

- The tour is in Argyll and the Inner Hebrides which are very sparsely populated, but there is some on the Scottish mainland. The mainland roads may be more busy than on the islands, but probably quiet compared with most of the UK. In addition, where possible, minor roads have been planned.

Travel

- The tour starts from Paisley, and ends in Oban, so travel by train is recommended. At the end of the tour you may catch an afternoon train later, or extend your holiday for another night. If coming by car there is airport parking beside the first hotel.

Accommodation

- Hotel accommodation, but possibility of B&B in one location

Rooms

- Accommodation on a shared room basis (due to lack of space to offer single occupancy).

Luggage transfer

- A van will be provided for luggage transfer (up to 8-10kg), but in case of a medical priority or breakdown, it may be necessary to carry your own luggage.

Rest Day

- All of the days when we are not moving on are optional rest days. In general many of the days that we are not moving on are a bit shorter.

Roads used

- The holiday is classified as grade 5 (medium/ energetic)
The holiday is for 14 days and has no formal rest days.
This is a moving on holiday staying for 2 or more nights at 5 locations, and the rest will be a different location each night. So, if anybody needs a rest and repair day, they can sit out on one of the days that we are not moving on. No-one is obliged to ride those days. Most of the roads are minor (some single track) and used by rural/tourist traffic and are hilly in parts. Though we may need to use some busier roads at times.
Detailed route notes will be provided before the tour, along with GPS tracks for those who want them.
Most of each day will be spent cycling. People will be expected to ride at their own pace and often in loose groups, at an average of around 10-12 mph, usually meeting up at cafes for lunch and refreshment breaks. You will be notified on the groups WhatsApp of recommended refreshment stops each day.
It is expected that you may want to stop for photographs, look at the view or explore

some local point of interest and this is okay. You are on holiday.

Inevitably, parts of the route are hilly, so you do need to be fit to get the most out of this tour. It is essential to get out on your bike and do some 50-mile rides before the tour starts. There are some steep descents too, so you should be able to negotiate these safely.

On days where we are catching a ferry, it is important that we meet up on time. The route is planned to allow time for cycling at modest speeds and still be on time for the ferry. For most of the ferries we need to meet up at least 1 hour beforehand in order to allow time for any punctures but also because bikes are sometimes loaded first.

Please note it may not always be possible to follow the itinerary exactly due to road works or weather etc, as things do not always go as planned. In these circumstances, you will be advised of alternative arrangements.

The Leader and Deputy will share the luggage transfer and ride leadership between them. They will usually be towards the rear of the group, so you will need to be aware of the route each day. This information will be given to you before the tour and you should clarify any points that you are not sure of before departing each morning.

Weather and Clothing

- Like the rest of the UK the weather in Scotland is very variable. Please bring sun screen and waterproofs, as you might need to use both on the same day.

There is a possibility of both heat waves and cold, wet weather, so be prepared for all possibilities. The temperature in July is likely to be between 10 and 16 degrees. On average some rainfall can be expected on 5 days of the tour with an average total of 30 mm of rain. Summer is also the least windy season.

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).

Lightweight waterproofs/windproofs will be needed and also warmer clothing for the evenings.

Cycling clothes. Two sets of clothing are recommended as you can wash each evening; two short sleeved tops, a long sleeved top, or arm warmers, shorts, longs or leg warmers, two pairs of socks, a cap or helmet cover and two pairs of short gloves with a pair of finger gloves for rain and cold. Helmet and cycling shoes. Clear riding glasses. Sun cream, lip balm and sun glasses are recommended along with insect bite cream. Evening Dress. You will not need too much; Two T-shirts/shirts, one pair lightweight trousers, maybe a pair of shorts, two sets of underwear, two pairs of socks, light pullover/top and lightweight shoes. The lightweight cycling windproof top can be used in the evening if extra warmth is required. Swimwear if you would like the chance of a swim in the sea, average water temperature 13.5 degrees, also in the hotel pool on Arran.

Toiletries; These can be kept to a minimum by bringing very small toothpaste tubes, shampoo bottles etc. A very basic first aid kit of plasters and pain killers etc are always

recommended. Some places supply shampoo, but not guaranteed, and a small hotel size bottle is always useful to take and use for clothes washing, which can be done whilst showering. Shaving can also be done using shampoo, as can face washing. A piece of string is useful for hanging washing in the absence of coat hangers.

Cycles / Equipement

- A touring cycle, hybrid, tandem, recumbent or lightweight road bike would all be suitable for this holiday, since we will endeavour to avoid tracks if possible. You should ensure your cycle is well maintained, paying particular attention to wheels, tyres and brakes. A low bottom gear (eg. small chainring the same size or smaller than the largest cog on your rear wheel) is recommended; if unsure about gears, please talk to the Bikexplore Leader about them. Mudguards are optional but demonstrate respect to those who are following you in wet weather. Lights are recommended in case of arriving back late, and are useful if walking outdoors at night. A bell is advised and bring a bike lock for security. Water bottles are required to ensure you are hydrated at all times. You will be expected to carry sufficient spares and tools to deal with punctures and minor repairs, including two inner tubes, a spare gear cable, split link and spare brake pads. There are very few bike shops on the route, and if so they are never when you need them. You are advised to use 28mm tyres, or larger, to suit the variable terrain. You will not need to carry luggage except in case of a breakdown or medical priority. It is suggested that the van luggage weight should be no more than 8-10 kg. A rack-top pack or bar bag will be useful for carrying wet weather gear, spare clothing needed for the day, camera, emergency rations and a map.

Maps & GPS

- GPS maps for each day will be provided in advance of the tour. I recommend bringing a paper backup in the form of relevant pages from an old car road atlas.

Fitness and Health

- Please ensure that you are fit and healthy enough to cycle the distances (and ascents) planned for the tour. If you use any medication, please do remember to pack it. Use of an electric bike can help enable cyclists to complete long rides.

Travel Insurance

- Travel insurance is very highly recommended.

Tour Leader Details

- I led my first tour in 2014, and since then have run tours every year (except one - guess which) and all in Scotland. Visiting almost every one of the larger islands. Originally tours were through CTC Holidays, but now with Bikexplore. My style is to help people enjoy their holiday and visit the many beautiful remote parts of my home country. In fact, one of my greatest pleasures is in sharing the wonderful quiet Scottish roads and scenery. On tour, my partner Diane shares the ride leadership and luggage transfer. Typically people do not cycle all together, but split into small groups of similar speed / interest and we meet at cafes and leap frog along the route. My other great pleasure from running tours is the social aspect: seeing people form friendships that transcend the duration of the tour.

Tour Leader Contact Details

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