

UNITED KINGDOM
Land's End to John O'Groats Cycle

Duration: 13 days / 12 nights

Trip Grade: Tough

Dates:

4 – 16 May 2010

3 – 15 May 2011

31 Aug – 12 Sep 2010

30 Aug – 11 Sep 2011

Payment Options:	2010	2011
Self Payment	£249	£299
Registration Fee	£249	£299
Trip Cost	£1150	£1160
Fundraising	£249	£299
Registration Fee	£249	£299
Min. Fundraising	£2850	£2900
Target		

Cycling from Land's End to John O' Groats, the furthest possible distance in the British Isles, is a classic challenge that many dream of. Starting at Land's End on the south-westerly tip of England, we pedal our way through Cornwall, over Dartmoor and north along the Welsh border, skirting the Lake District into Scotland, via lochs and the highlands to the North Coast and John O'Groats.



In all we will cover roughly 1000 miles in 12 days, passing through some of the most stunning and remote countryside in the British Isles. This is a tough challenge but a fabulous way to see the country, and one of the most rewarding things you will ever do!

ITINERARY

Day 1: Lands End – Liskeard

Land's End is stunningly situated on the southwestern-



most tip of England. Its rocky cliffs and pounding seas make a fabulous backdrop for the obligatory photos before we start! Then we gather at the Start Line and begin our challenge. Our journey starts on winding Cornish roads as we head east towards Penzance, cycling along the sea for a short stretch as we pass the famous monument of St Michael's Mount.

Today is mainly undulating but with a few longer climbs and some shorter steep ones! Inland again, we take winding back-roads before joining a quiet main road to Truro and St Austell, passing close to the Eden Project, before cycling on towards Liskeard. *(Breakfast not included).* **Approx**

Distance Cycled: 83 Miles

NB We will start fairly early from Land's End, so you will probably find it more practical to arrive the night before. We can arrange transport from Penzance, the nearest mainline railway station, the night before as well as accommodation in St Just (approx 5 miles from Land's End).

Day 2: Liskeard – Sampford Peverell



Today we cross Dartmoor, which is generally recognised to be the most challenging section of the ride. We cycle

over rolling hills into Devon and through Tavistock, where we have a steep climb onto Dartmoor itself. The views are fabulous if it's a clear day, though it can often be foggy in this wild part of southwest England, so we take it easy as we climb towards the village of Two Bridges. There is a great descent into Postbridge, site of the well-known stone Clapper Bridge, and then we climb again. By the time we reach the small town of Moretonhampstead the harder climbs are over, though there are still a few short sharp hills

as the road winds its way to the edge of Dartmoor, where it's downhill all the way to Exeter. Crossing the centre of Exeter as a group, we follow a quiet road north through the small town of Cullompton and finish a few miles further north at the small town of Sampford Peverell. **Approx Distance Cycled: 84 Miles**

Day 3: Sampford Peverell – Tintern

Continuing north, we cycle mainly on quiet, rural roads as we cross into Somerset, passing Wellington and the busy town of Taunton. On back-roads again, we cycle towards Cheddar, enjoying the typically English rural scenery. There are a few short hills but we avoid the steep Gorge itself. We near



the Severn Estuary as we approach the outskirts of Bristol, and take the Avon Gorge cycle path for a short stretch as we head up through Avonmouth to the Severn Bridge. We cross the bridge using the cycle path and celebrate our arrival in Wales! Our day ends with one of the most scenic parts of our route as we follow the rolling road through the forested Wye Valley, enjoying views of the beautiful ruin of Tintern Abbey and its pretty riverside village. **Approx Distance Cycled: 98 miles**

Day 4: Tintern – Shrewsbury

We follow the Wye River to Monmouth, where we head north into Herefordshire, leaving Wales



behind. The long, fairly gentle gradients are still with us though, as we ride north towards the town of Hereford, with its striking cathedral and red sandstone buildings. Here we see the Wye for the last time as we cross it going into the city. We head out of town on a quiet road heading to the small village of Leintwardine, crossing into Shropshire a few miles further on. We cycle on undulating country lanes, passing fields and small villages, and the lovely scenery of the Hope Valley. We re-join the main road just south of Shrewsbury, where we have a short run-in to our hotel.

Approx Distance Cycled: 90 miles

Day 5: Shrewsbury – Preston

Our morning starts with a gentle cycle through the medieval town of Shrewsbury, with its historic black and white timbered buildings, and we cross the River Severn – much smaller than when we crossed it two days ago! We head north, turning onto a quiet country road and passing through the small market towns of Wem and Whitchurch. Our route is mainly flat and the miles pass quickly. We head through a quiet corner of Cheshire on main roads into the most built-up area of our journey, by-passing busy Warrington and Wigan as we cycle on fast flat roads into Lancashire and on to our hotel just below Preston. **Approx Distance Cycled: 86 miles**

Day 6: Preston – Carlisle

Today is long, but our last full day on English soil! We cross Preston early, avoiding the morning traffic, and head north on quiet roads once more



through Garstang and along the edge of the impressive Bowland Forest. The roads are primarily flat as we follow our route through the attractive town of Lancaster, cross into Cumbria, and pedal on through Kendal, renowned for its energy-boosting mint cake! The hills of the Lake District rise to our left as we head towards Shap Fell, at over 1000ft the most notable climb since Dartmoor. The climb is long but the gradient is fairly gradual. From the top there are great views of hills and rolling green valleys. A fabulous long twisting descent now takes us almost all the way to Penrith, where we cycle past the castle and on to Carlisle. **Approx Distance Cycled: 100 miles**

Day 7: Carlisle – Kilmarnock

We head north from Carlisle through the small village of Longtown, just before the border with Scotland.

Crossing over into



Scotland, we pass the famous blacksmith's forge at Gretna Green, elopement capital of the world, and head through the village. Our first day on Scottish roads takes us on mainly

following, quiet back roads east, bypassing the pretty town of Dumfries. The morning's ride is very picturesque with the lush green rolling hills of the Southern Uplands to either side as we cycle northeast through small towns and villages. There are some long but fairly gentle climbs and descents as we cycle through this beautiful countryside. We pass through the small town of Sanquar, home to Britain's oldest post-office, and a great old Tolbooth. In Sanquar, along with Cumnock and New Cumnock a few miles ahead, look out for memorials and plaques commemorating the Covenanters who rebelled against the religious dictates of the Stuart Kings in the late 1600s. Nearing Kilmarnock the roads get busier but our hotel lies just the other side of town.

Approx Distance Cycled: 95 miles

Day 8: Kilmarnock – Inverary

We turn onto quieter roads as we head east to the Firth of Clyde via Irvine and Kilwinning. Following the coast road via the pretty waterside town of Largs, we enjoy fabulous views across the water to the Isles of Arran and Bute. The road continues to climb and descend as we cycle along the coast to Gourock, where we take the ferry across the short strait to Dunoon. We cycle north through beautiful forest and along the shores of Loch Eck, sometimes hidden from view by the trees, at other times we cycle right beside the water. This section is mainly flat, until we reach the shores of Loch Fyne, where from the small village of Creggans we have a stiff climb to the top of the loch, with tempting views of Inverary a short distance away (as the crow flies) on the opposite side of the loch! We pass the world-renowned oyster-beds of Loch Fyne and approach Inverary on flatter roads. Look out for the fairy-tale towers of the castle among the trees to your right just before the town.

Approx Distance Cycled: 90 miles

Day 9: Inveraray – Loch Lochy

Our day starts with a long climb out of Inverary, and we start to feel as though we are really in the Highlands! After a few miles we reach the shores of Loch Awe and cycle around the top of it, admiring the ruins of Castle Kilchurn at its head. Heading east to the coast again, we cross over the iron bridge at Connell, with great views of Loch Etive to our right and the Isle of Mull across the sea on our left. Our route now is beautiful, as we follow the coast road with views of stunning desolate beaches, and hilly



islands and peninsulas across the water. Inland, the higher peaks are visible in good weather. Skirting the forests of Appin, we head north again, still following the coast, to Ballachulish – where the road splits off to the famous Glencoe. We continue straight on, crossing Loch Leven, and cycle along the banks of Loch Linnhe, enjoying a much-deserved flat run into Fort William. In good weather we may get good views of Ben Nevis and the surrounding high peaks. We climb out of the town, passing the impressive Commando Memorial after about 6 miles, and cycle an undulating route alongside Loch Lochy.

Approx Distance Cycled: 97 miles

Day 10: Loch Lochy – Bonar Bridge

Another day of beautiful Highland scenery awaits us as we head further north. We are nearing our destination now, taking the hills in



our stride and our legs feel great! We follow the Caledonian Canal to Fort Augustus, with its impressive ladder of canal locks, and come to the foot of Loch Ness, which will be our companion for many miles. We pass Invermoriston and then the ancient Urquhart Castle, very picturesque against the backdrop of the loch. At Drumnadrochit we leave Loch Ness and head north again, uphill to Beaully, skirting the end of the Moray Firth, and on to Dingwall. Look out for seals as we pass alongside Cromarty Firth. The roads are flatter here but we start to climb again as we take the back-roads from Alness across bleak but beautiful moorlands to the Dornoch Firth. From the great viewpoint above the Firth we have a fantastic descent to Bonar Bridge, where we find tonight's accommodation.

Approx Distance Cycled: 83 miles



Day 11: Bonar Bridge – Bettyhill

A shorter day again today, though the terrain is not easy and we will deserve our half-day's rest later today! Leaving Bonar Bridge, we head due north once more, passing through Lairg at the foot of Loch Shin and encountering our first long climb of the day. Now in northern Scotland, the Highlands are behind us and the landscape is much bleaker, with rich peaty moorlands and clear rivers. A few miles from Lairg we turn onto single-carriageway road, which is the standard for the rest of the day. We will encounter very few vehicles on this road. Look out for herds of red deer and birds of prey such as osprey or even the elusive golden eagle, as this area is very untouched. Our road is undulating, and can be hard if there is a strong wind. We skirt the beautiful Forest of Naver and pass the end of its loch at Altnaharra. This is the most sparsely populated region in Northern Europe, with the nearest shop about 20 miles away. A few more miles take us to Loch Loyal, with Ben Loyal towering above it, and after another couple of climbs we reach the North Coast, with views of beautiful, deserted golden beaches. We follow the road east and inland to Bettyhill and our hotel. This last section is quite tough with some hard climbs, though the views on a clear day are stunning. **Approx Distance Cycled: 62 miles**

Day 12: Bettyhill – John O'Groats



Leaving Bettyhill, our road now is due west and runs parallel to the North Coast. After the long climb out of this small village, the road becomes

two-way again and after the villages of Melvich and Bighouse, a few miles further on, the roads become flatter. We pass the power station at Dounreay and approach Thurso, and from this point we pick up mileage signs for John O' Groats and your legs will feel much lighter! The small town of Thurso comes as a slight culture shock after all the miles we have cycled on near-deserted roads in the last two days. A few miles further, our road passes through the high sand-dunes of Dunnet Bay, with its beautiful white-sand beach and renowned bird-life. We pass the turn-off to Dunnet Head, Scotland's most northerly point, and pedal the remaining miles along a mainly flat road to John O'Groats and our Finish line! After time to celebrate and sign the

official End to End book, we load up the bikes and head south to Inverness, where we celebrate our achievements!

(Dinner not included). **Approx Distance Cycled: 62 miles**

Day 13: Depart from Inverness

After breakfast we go our separate ways; there are good onward transport links from Inverness.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

The tour cost includes all accommodation and meals (except 2 as detailed in the itinerary). It also includes full trip support of experienced Discover Adventure leaders, drivers and mechanics (see Trip Support below).



As a general guide, items not included in the tour cost are your personal travel insurance, any extra meals, drinks, personal items and entry to any optional tourist sites you may wish to visit.

Approx. £100 - £150 is recommended for personal expenses. We strongly recommend you carry a credit card in case of personal emergency.

ACCOMMODATION

Our accommodation is varied and ranges from small B&Bs to larger hotels. Due to the route we take, some nights are in Travel Lodge-style accommodation to minimise unnecessary extra mileage. In Scotland we may stay in hostel-style accommodation for one or two nights (depending on group size) as there are few options in remote areas. Be prepared for variety!

Accommodation is comfortable and well situated but not luxurious. Rooms are twin-share (apart from any hostels) and have en suite facilities.

Due to accommodation restrictions in certain areas, the night-stops as shown in the itinerary may change in order to accommodate different-sized groups.

FOOD

All food is included during the cycle other than 2 meals as detailed in itinerary. Lunches are generous buffet-style with plenty of energy food to keep you going! Dinners are generally eaten in hotels or nearby inns.

Dietary Requirements



Being vegetarian or having other dietary requirements is not usually a problem provided you let us know well in advance. If you know there are plenty of foods you cannot eat you may wish to bring extra snacks from home so you can top up your energy supply, or buy them as you go along. Please feel free to ask us for advice.

VACCINATIONS

We recommend the following vaccinations:

- Tetanus (essential)

CYCLING INFORMATION

FITNESS WARNING: DESIGNED TO BE CHALLENGING!

This ride is designed to be challenging for those of good health and fitness, and is achievable for most people provided they train well in advance. We will supply you with a thorough training guide when you have registered. Training for the challenge is all part of the preparation and requires commitment! Without it, you will find the ride less enjoyable – and we want you to have the time of your life!

We are always happy to talk through the trip in more detail with you if you are worried about your fitness at any stage.

Terrain

The cycling is mainly undulating over rolling countryside, though there are some longer, tougher climbs (primarily in Dartmoor and Scotland). Distances are fairly long, averaging approx 80 – 100 miles per day, with two shorter

days at the end. You will cycle approximately 1000 miles on this trip overall.

Participants should make sure they are fit enough to manage these distances over 12 consecutive days. This is not a ride which any cyclist should attempt without specific training.

Traffic is light on most of the roads but when we pass through large towns we go through as a group. Normally you are free to cycle at your own pace.



Bikes

We strongly recommend that you ride a road bike/racing bike for this trip due to the long distances involved on well-surfaced roads. For a trip of this difficulty, it's really important that you ride the bike you have been training on so you are used to it. Although training in the gym is useful, there is no substitute for getting out into all weathers and really getting to know your bike – especially the range of your gears. However, Discover Adventure can provide hybrid or mountain bikes at extra cost if you wish.

Bike Repairs

Our support vehicles will carry range of spares along with a full tool kit. However it is impossible for us to carry spares for every eventuality so it is vital that you check your own bike is in good working order before departure.



Clothing & Equipment

We are travelling through varied terrain and could be exposed to bad weather at any time. The information below gives you an idea of the climate, but be prepared for all weathers and temperatures. Weather conditions can change quickly in the UK, especially the hillier regions we pass

through. We provide you with a detailed packing kit-list on registration, as well as details on useful discounts you are entitled to as a Discover Adventure customer. We are always available if you need advice.

Weather

The weather in May and September should be generally good, though it can be changeable especially in Scotland, where there is an increased chance of rain and strong winds. The prevailing wind direction will have more of an impact on the cycling difficulty than rain.

TRIP SUPPORT

Discover Adventure Crew

Your trip will be led by experienced Discover Adventure leaders. Our leaders are selected for their experience in harsh wilderness environments, knowledge of travel in remote areas, friendliness and approachability, sense of humour and ability to safely and effectively deal with any situation that arises. They are also trained in expedition first-aid. You are in very safe hands with a Discover Adventure leader.

All our leaders are from the UK or other English-speaking countries. Most work for us on an ad-hoc basis and have 'real' jobs in-between trips! We never send our leaders to the same destination for months on end – we want them to be as enthusiastic about your trip as you are.

The number of crew and support vehicles looking after you will depend on the final size of your group, but the team will be looking after every aspect of your trip whether that's transporting your luggage, making your lunch or sorting out any mechanical problems. At Discover Adventure we pride ourselves on our high leader: cyclist ratio and believe it leads to greater trip enjoyment as well as excellent trip safety.

Luggage

Support vehicles are with the group all of the time. All luggage and spares will be carried in them. Space is limited and hard-sided luggage is not suitable, so it is essential that your kit is packed in a soft sailing bag, rucksack or expedition kitbag. Ask us about our specially-designed low-cost kitbags if you don't have one already.

Your bikes will be well-packed and protected during transit to Inverness, but if you prefer to store your bike in a bike bag or cardboard bike box just bring it along. You should

also bring a small daypack or large bumbag to carry for items needed during the day as you will not have access to your main luggage until the evening.

TRIP SAFETY

Your safety, and that of the rest of the group, is our highest priority. Our trips are designed and planned with safety in mind. Your crew will always have access to our 24-hour emergency back-up here in the UK. Our leaders are responsible for safety on the trip, and will make any changes to the itinerary they deem necessary should local conditions dictate.

Pre-trip administration – such as compulsory medical questionnaires and travel insurance – is all done with your safety in mind.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Long before 'Responsible Tourism' became a recognised phrase, we designed and ran our trips to ensure they made minimum impact on the environment and a positive impact on the local communities we pass through. AITO, our Trade Association has recognised the work we do in this area and has awarded us 4 stars as a Responsible Tour Operator.

CARBON OFFSETTING

We actively encourage all our customers to offset any emissions connected with their trip. You can offset at any time in the lead-up to departure by visiting Climate Care via our website and making a donation to a worthwhile project supported by them. Alternatively, if you wish to take more practical action you can volunteer for a day with BTCV and work on an environmental project near to where you live. Work may include construction footpaths, dry stone walling, creating wildlife habitats or planting trees in your community. Make your volunteer pledge by going to www.btcv.org/dapledge



Please contact the Discover Adventure office with any queries using the contact details below.

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