



Hebridean Cycle Tour

Island hopping by bike



with the Highlands' bike hire experts



The Outer Hebrides

A six day biking tour of the Western Isles, starting and ending in Inverness.

The islands off the west coast of Scotland - the Western Isles or Outer Hebrides - make up one of the most beautiful, unspoilt, friendly, exciting and interesting areas to cycle in Europe. The roads can be very, very quiet, the scenery exceptional and the feeling of exploration overwhelming. We have suggested a six day tour, but of course, you are free to take as little or as much time and you want to enjoy cycling in this wonderful part of Scotland.

Ticket To Ride Highlands provide high quality bike hire and transport for you and your bikes to and from the start point of your tour, in this case taking you from Inverness to Oban for the ferry to Barra, the start of your Hebridean biking adventure. At the end of your holiday we'll pick you up in Ullapool on the Scottish west coast, to take you back to Inverness.

Here is our suggested itinerary, but we're as flexible as you, so just let us know if you would like something different.

N.B Ferries and accommodation - although, as a foot passenger with a bike, you are able to simply turn up and book onto ferries, please do check all ferry times before you go, and we suggest you book your accommodation in advance too.





Itinerary

Day One - Arrive Inverness, transfer to ferry

Make your way to the Ticket to Ride bike hire centre in Bellfield Park, Inverness. We can also collect you from Inverness airport or train or bus stations. At our bike hire centre we will sort out your hire bikes, if you are hiring, and any other equipment you need. We start with a transfer from Inverness to Oban for the ferry to Barra. The spectacular islands scenery and wildlife make the five hour ferry trip fly by and you'll arrive in Castlebay on Barra in time to check in to your accommodation. There are hotels, B&Bs and a hostel in Castlebay. Foot passengers from Oban to Barra pay around £14 for the trip and bikes go free.

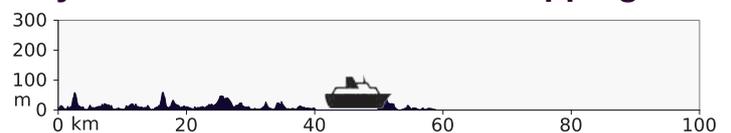


Day Two - Castles and cockleshells

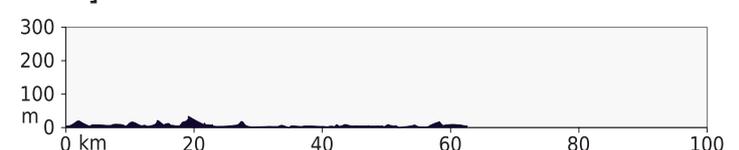
In the morning visit the Kisimul castle, you'll have been wondering if you could do that ever since you sailed past it on the way into Castlebay the night before. Then cycle south down to Vatersay (6 miles) where the island's tombolo, a narrow neck of land, has pristine white beaches scalloped out each side of it. Head north, up the west coast of Barra, where there are lovely beaches around every corner. It's well worth

making a short detour to visit the tiny Cockle Strand airport (14 miles from Vatersay), if you're lucky you'll see planes landing and taking off on the UK's only beach airstrip. You're aiming to arrive at the Barra - Eriskay ferry (4 miles from the airport) by 15.30, the ferry costs £8 and bikes go free. Arriving in Eriskay about 16.30, head north over the causeway, watching out for otters, to South Uist (6 miles or so) to find your accommodation, there are plenty of places to stay in South Uist but it's worth booking ahead. [31 miles / 50km]

Day Three - Hebridean island hopping



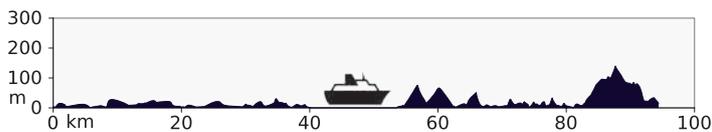
Only three islands in the one day today! Following the road north up the west coast of South Uist, you'll be surrounded by the fertile 'machair', formed by sands blown onto the peat beneath and covered with flowers in the spring. The machair runs the whole length of the island and is fringed by an almost continuous beach. Cross the causeway to the island of Benbecula, sticking to the west coast road for more lovely beaches, and then over the causeway to North Uist. All of the Western Isles have a special atmosphere. North Uist feels like the very edge of Europe, the very edge of the world, undiscovered, wild. Don't worry, wild it may feel, but there are still plenty B&Bs and a fine hostel to stay in. [33 miles / 53km]





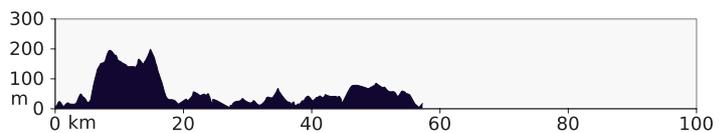
Day Four - Berneray, Harris and Lewis

Head around the west coast of North Uist for some of the most lovely beaches in Europe. There is one of the most scenic, and photographed, cottages in all the Western Isles, and wildlife galore. Over the wee causeway to Berneray, from where you catch the ferry over to Leverburgh on Harris. The ferries run frequently through the summer and must be one of the most scenic routes in the world. Landing at Leverburgh, take a detour southeast to Rodel to see the really lovely, old church there. Then retrace your steps back to Leverburgh and take the west coast route around Harris. You pass the exceptional Scarista and Luskentyre beaches (in the Western Isles a beach has to be something special to get a mention, and these two really are special) before getting to Tarbert for the evening. [52 miles / 83km]



Day Five - Over Clisham to Stornoway

Make sure and eat your porridge this morning, you've got some hills to climb today. Heading north from Tarbert you soon come to the 'big hill'. The cycle up Clisham is not that bad and, even in your lowest gear, doesn't last that long, and what a view from the top. Then it's a straightforward, roller coaster trek across the island of Lewis to a well earned beer or two in the capital, Stornoway. A detour to the magnificent standing stones at Callanish is also possible, adding 21 miles / 34km to the trip. [36 miles / 58km]



Day Six - Cross the Minch to the Mainland

It's an early start on the last day of your trip, catching the ferry from Stornoway over to Ullapool on mainland Scotland. The trip takes about three hours, getting you into Ullapool about 10:00. The Ticket to Ride bike bus will pick you up at the Ullapool ferry terminal and have you and your bikes back in Inverness by midday, in time 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 Hebrides 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 Oban and from Ullapool to Inverness).

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.

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 April to October, 7 days a week, 9am to 6pm however the best months are April to September. The trip finishes in Ullapool where we'll collect you from the ferry terminal for your return transfer to Inverness.

Suggested kit list



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

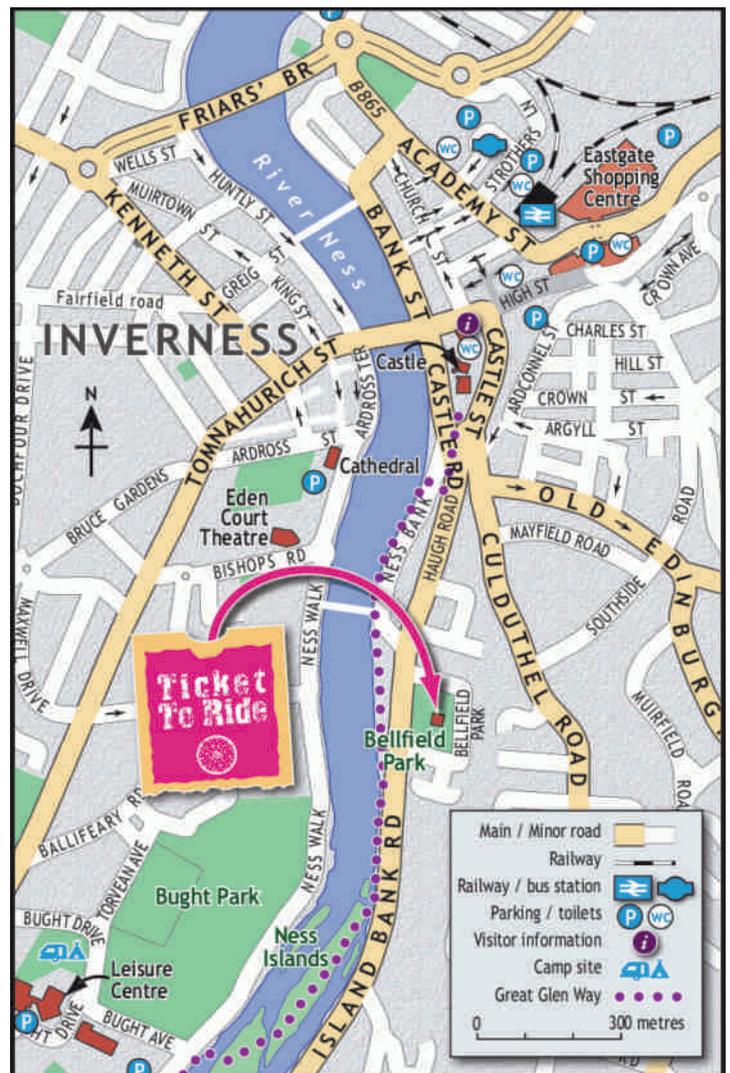
Inverness by bus

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 52 miles (56km - 83km). The terrain is reasonably flat with a few short steep hills.

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 several branches of The Co-op throughout the islands where you can stock up with groceries. If you are camping, you'll clearly need your camping gear too. We can hire you panniers to carry all your gear.

www.Co-OperativeFood.co.uk

Q What will the weather be like?

A The weather in this part of the country is famously unpredictable. It is surprisingly warm for a such a northerly location but also known

to be windy. There are long hours of daylight in summer and it is driest between May and August. For all the facts see:

<http://www.visitthebrides.com/>

Q Do I need to book in advance?

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

Q What if I have a mechanical problem?

A We buy new bikes every year and maintain them carefully between each trip to ensure reliability. We experience very few mechanical issues with our bikes other than the occasional puncture. For trips to remote areas we supply extra spares and tools and are happy to spend time with you at the start of your trip showing you how to fix punctures etc. If it is not possible to continue your journey by bike the cost of onward transport and return of the bike to us is your responsibility.

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?
Strathness House	www.strathnesshouse.com	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
Barra	Website	What's it like?
Bayview Guest House	www.barra-bayview.co.uk	Warm welcome and great views
Northbay House	www.barraholidays.co.uk	Four star former schoolhouse
Dunard Hostel	www.dunardhostel.co.uk	Small, family run hostel
South Uist	Website	What's it like?
Polochar Inn	www.polocharinn.com	Four star inn by the sea
Howmore Hostel	www.gatliff.org.uk	Hebridean Hostels Trust
North Uist	Website	What's it like?
The Ships Wheel	www.theshipswheel.co.uk	Friendly. Restaurant 4 miles.
Rushlee House	www.rushleehouse.co.uk	Lochside four star B&B
Harris	Website	What's it like?
Ceol na Mara	www.ceolnamara.com	Award winning guest house
Number 5	www.number5.biz	Stone cottage hostel
Stornoway	Website	What's it like?
Leumadair	www.leumadair.co.uk	At Callanish Stones. 16mls to ferry
Jannel Bed & Breakfast	www.jannel-stornoway.co.uk	Modern and high standard
Laxdale Park	www.laxdaleholidaypark.com	Family run bunkhouse & camping

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