

Land's End To John O'Groats Cycle



Duration: 13 days

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 just over 1000 miles, 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!

The exact route, distances and night-stops are subject to change based on accommodation restrictions, and will be confirmed closer to departure; the daily descriptions shown are very typical.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Land's End - Liskeard Stunningly situated on the southwestern-most tip of England, Land's End's rocky cliffs and pounding seas make a fabulous backdrop for the obligatory photos before we start! We head towards Penzance on winding Cornish roads, passing St Michael's Mount. The terrain is mainly undulating but there are a few longer climbs and some short steep ones! Inland again, we take winding back-roads before joining a quiet main road to Truro and St Austell, and on towards Liskeard. Night hotel.

(Breakfast not included)

Cycle approx. 76 miles

Day 2: Liskeard - Taunton Today we cross Dartmoor, one of the most challenging sections of our ride. We cycle over rolling hills into Devon and through Tavistock, where we have a steep climb onto Dartmoor itself,

towards the village of Two Bridges. The views are fabulous if it's a clear day, though it can often be foggy in this wild part of southwest England. There is a great descent into Postbridge, with its well-known stone Clapper Bridge, and then we climb again. By the time we reach the small town of Moretonhampstead the hardest climbs are behind us. The road winds its way to the edge of Dartmoor, where it's downhill all the way to Exeter; we then follow a quiet road north to Taunton. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 91 miles

Day 3: Taunton - Chepstow Now in Somerset, we cycle mainly on quiet, rural roads, enjoying the typically English rural scenery as we head towards Cheddar. A few short hills warm us up before the day's highlight - climbing the steep, stunning road that winds up through Cheddar Gorge itself. We near the Severn estuary as we approach the outskirts of Bristol, and take the Avon Gorge cycle path through Avonmouth to the Severn Bridge. We cross the bridge on the cycle path and celebrate our arrival in Wales! Our hotel is only a short distance away.

Cycle approx. 79 miles

Day 4: Chepstow - Shrewsbury We enjoy one of the most scenic parts of our route as we follow the rolling road through the forested Wye Valley, passing the beautiful ruin of Tintern Abbey. We follow the Wye River to Monmouth and cross back into England, over long, fairly gentle hills towards Hereford. Here we see the Wye for the last time, and ride through the cathedral city with its red sandstone buildings. Quiet, undulating country lanes take us through small villages into Shropshire and through 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. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 94 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. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 94 miles

Day 6: Preston - Carlisle Our last day on English soil! We cross Preston early, avoiding the morning traffic, and take quiet roads through Garstang and alongside the impressive Bowland Forest. The roads are primarily flat as we ride through historic 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 our most notable climb since Dartmoor. It's a long climb, but not steep. A fabulous long, twisting descent takes us almost to Penrith, where we cycle past the castle and on to Carlisle. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 99 miles

Day 7: Carlisle - Kilmarnock We head north to the border with Scotland, and pass the famous blacksmith's forge at Gretna Green, elopement capital of the world. We then ride mainly rolling, quiet back-roads

west, bypassing the pretty town of Dumfries. The morning's ride is very picturesque with the lush green hills of the Southern Uplands to each 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 toll booth; look out for memorials and plaques in this region commemorating the Covenanters who rebelled against the religious dictates of the Stuart Kings in the late 1600s. Nearing Kilmarnock, the roads grow busier but our hotel lies close by. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 98 miles

Day 8: Kilmarnock - Inveraray We turn onto quieter roads as we head west to the Firth of Clyde.

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 Gourrock, where we take the ferry across the short strait to Dunoon. We cycle north through beautiful forest and along the shores of Loch Eck. This section is mainly flat, until we reach the shores of Loch Fyne, where we have a stiff but scenic climb to the top of the loch. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 81 miles

Day 9: Inveraray - Loch Lochy Leaving Inveraray behind our day begins with a long and steady climb as we start to feel as though we are really in the Highlands! Coming to Loch Awe, we admire the ruins of Castle Kilchurn as we ride around the head of the loch. Heading west to the coast again, we cross 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 clear weather we may get good views of Ben Nevis and the surrounding high peaks. We climb out of the town towards Spean Bridge and the impressive Commando Memorial, and finish our day's ride on an undulating route alongside Loch Lochy. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 96 miles

Day 10: Loch Lochy - Alness 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 Beaulieu, skirting the end of the Moray Firth, and on to Dingwall. Our hotel lies a few miles further north, in the small town of Alness. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 63 miles

Day 11: Alness - Thurso Our last full day of cycling – and it's a long one! The terrain is not easy, the moorland scenery is beautifully bleak, and the roads are almost deserted ... if we had a Queen stage, this would be it! With plenty of miles in your legs now, you should be feeling up for the challenge – and the end is in sight!

Starting with a climb through moorland, we are treated to a great early morning view above Dornoch Forth, and a fantastic descent to Bonar Bridge. Then our road goes up again, as we climb for over 30 miles through the moors. There are a few flat stretches which help to break up the terrain and it's not too steep; it can be quite exposed, but very beautiful. The landscape is bleaker here than in the Highlands, with rich peaty moorland and clear rivers. 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. We pass several small lochs and some forested areas, and can simply enjoy the scenery. From the top of the climb it's a lovely descent to the North Coast, where we head east, enjoying glimpses of beautiful, deserted golden beaches. Our roads are flatter now but this short section can feel very tough in strong winds. We pass the power station at Dounreay and approach Thurso. This small town comes as a slight culture shock after all the miles we have cycled on near-deserted roads in the last two days. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 104 miles

Day 12: Thurso - John O'Groats From Thurso we pick up mileage signs for John O'Groats; the distance remaining, compared to how far you have come, is negligible! A few miles from Thurso we pass through the high sand-dunes of Dunnet Bay, with its beautiful white-sand beach and renowned birdlife. We take a short detour onto Dunnet Head, cycling the narrow road to Scotland's most northerly point, and enjoy claiming that achievement too! We then return and pedal the remaining miles along a fairly 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! Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 30 miles

Day 13: Depart Inverness

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

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Full vehicle support en-route
- All meals except where specified and accommodation
- Discover Adventure leader, mechanic and driver(s)
- Maps and route information
- Transfer from John O' Groats

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- Any meals specified 'not included' in the itinerary
- Travel insurance (optional)
- Personal spending money, souvenirs and drinks
- Optional night's accommodation in Cornwall (before Day 1)
- Cycle helmet (compulsory) and water bottles
- Fees for any optional sites, attractions or activities
- Optional Discover Adventure bike courier return service
- Any applicable surcharges as per Terms and Conditions

GRADE | ORANGE

Trips are graded Yellow, Orange or Red, in increasing level of challenge. This trip lies within the **ORANGE** range.



The grade is determined by factors such as terrain, distance, climate, altitude, etc. Each colour grade has a **spectrum** which reflects the difficulty of these factors; trip duration, accommodation and living conditions (see icon) are also taken into account.

[Trip grading explained](#)



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Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 28 Mar 2024, and the challenge is subject to change.