

Land's End to John O'Groats Cycle Challenge



Activity: Cycle Grade:  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 roughly 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!



Dates & Prices

2016
14 – 26 Jun 30 Aug – 11 Sept

Fundraising Option	
Registration Fee	£299
PLUS Fundraising Target	£2700
Self Payment Option	
Registration Fee	£299
PLUS Trip Cost	£1350

2017
13 – 25 Jun 29 Aug – 10 Sept

Fundraising Option	
Registration Fee	£299
PLUS Fundraising Target	£2800
Self Payment Option	
Registration Fee	£299
PLUS Trip Cost	£1400

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Land's 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. The terrain is mainly undulating but there are 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. Night hotel.

(Breakfast not included)

Cycle approx 80 miles

Day 2: Liskeard – Tiverton

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



Cycling Information

Our trips are graded from 1 (Moderate) to 5 (Extreme). This ride is Grade 3.

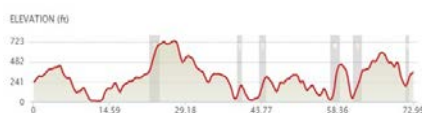
The cycling is mainly undulating over rolling countryside, though there are some longer, tougher climbs (primarily in Dartmoor and Scotland). Distances are fairly long, averaging approx 80 – 100 miles per day, with a shorter day at the end. You will cycle approximately 1000 miles on this trip overall.

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. Road bikes are the most suitable on this trip.

Traffic is light on most of the roads but when we pass through large towns we may go through as a group.

It is imperative that you supply your own helmet and wear it at all times while cycling, with straps done up.

Sample Day's Profile



Detailed Itinerary (cont)

clear day, though it can often be a little 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 to Tiverton. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 77 miles

Day 3: Tiverton – Chepstow

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 hotel on the edge of Chepstow is only a short distance away.

Cycle approx 87 miles

Day 4: Chepstow – Shrewsbury

Our day begins with one of the most scenic parts of our route as we follow the rolling road through the forested Wye Valley, enjoying the fabulous views, including the beautiful ruin of Tintern Abbey. 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. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 93 miles

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!



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What's Included

All accommodation is included, as well as all meals except 2 as specified in the itinerary. It also includes full trip support of experienced Discover Adventure leaders, drivers and mechanics.

It does not include personal travel insurance, two meals as specified, optional accommodation the night before departure, personal items and entry to any optional tourist sites you may wish to visit. We strongly recommend you carry a credit card in case of personal emergency.

Accommodation & Food

Our accommodation is generally in larger hotels, though there may be some B&Bs. Due to the route we take, some hotels are not in town centres to minimise unnecessary extra mileage. Accommodation is comfortable and well situated but not luxurious. Rooms are usually twin-share and have en-suite facilities. Be prepared for variety!

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

Lunches are generous buffet-style with plenty of energy food to keep you going! Dinners are generally eaten in hotels or nearby inns.

Detailed Itinerary (cont)

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, bypassing 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 92 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 it's 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. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 90 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 rolling, quiet back-roads west, 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 toll booth. 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 grow busier but our hotel lies close by. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 100 miles

Optional Accommodation

We start fairly early from Land's End, so most people find it more practical to arrive the night before. We arrange optional accommodation in Penzance, which is also the nearest mainline railway station. You will be given further details nearer to the time.



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Luggage & Trip Support

Your trip will be led by experienced Discover Adventure leaders. Our leaders are selected for their experience, 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.

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.

Support vehicles will be with the group at all times. All luggage will be carried in the vehicles. Our support vehicles will also carry a 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 your bike is in good working order before departure.**

Detailed Itinerary (cont)

Day 8: Kilmarnock – Inveraray

We turn onto quieter roads as we head west 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. There are tempting views of Inveraray a short distance away (as the crow flies) on the opposite side of the loch, but we have to cycle the long way round! We pass the world-renowned oyster-beds of Loch Fyne and approach Inveraray on flatter roads. Look out for the fairy-tale towers of the castle among the trees to your right just before the town. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 80 miles

Day 9: Inveraray – Loch Lochy

Our day starts with a long climb out of Inveraray, 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 west 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 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 95 miles

Day 10: Loch Lochy – Brora

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. A short climb takes us through Alness, then our road undulates through farmland until we drop downhill to the Dornoch Firth and Tain, the oldest Royal burgh in Scotland and home to the Glenmorangie whisky distillery. We then cross the Dornoch Forth Bridge and ride alongside the coast for a few miles on undulating roads to Brora. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 97 miles



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Detailed Itinerary (cont)



Bike Courier Service

Travel home from Inverness is by your own arrangement. If you prefer not to travel home with your bike, we offer a bike courier service (at extra cost). Further details will be sent to you nearer the time.

Weather

The weather in May and September should be generally good, though it can be changeable especially in Cornwall and 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. We start our ride from Land's End to benefit from the most common prevailing wind direction – but there are no guarantees!



Day 11: Brora – Thurso

Today's terrain is not easy but it's a shorter day and this is our last full day of cycling – we're almost there! We set off, the undulating coast road taking us north-east and providing a great warm-up for what comes next! After a few miles we reach the small town of Helmsdale and head north, leaving the coast behind. As soon as we turn inland our road goes up, and 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, as this area is very untouched. 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. We cycle roughly parallel to the coast; 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 65 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 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! Night hotel.

(Dinner not included)

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.

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

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