

SCOTLAND – THE GREAT GLEN

LIMITED DATES – EARLY BOOKING ESSENTIAL

7-days / 6-nights **STANDARD PLUS** Highlands view cycle cruise Inverness to Fort William or return



Departs: 23rd May, 1st August, 3rd October, 2020

Cost from: **\$2265** per person twin share Single supplement on request

Includes: 6-nights' accommodation in twin-share cabins with ensuite, all meals, tea and coffee, bike hire, equipment and tour guide / instruction for standard activities

Not included: Drinks, optional extra activities not listed in the itinerary, personal expenses, gratuities.

Enjoy spectacular scenery and **moderate** cycling as you follow the Caledonian Canal in the Highlands of Scotland. Journey along the 60-mile (100km) length of the canal which connects a series of lochs in the Great Glen, linking the east and west coasts, at an unhurried pace on board comfortable, cosy hotel barge.

On this unique Bike & Barge cycling cruise the cycling has been designed so you can sample the best biking that the Glen has to offer. Tracks and paths lace the hills and mountains around the canal, including the world-class trails of the Leanachan Forest and the long-distance Great Glen Way. The towpath provides easy, flat cycling for a gentler option, or of course you can always stay onboard the barge and enjoy the cruise.

Besides incredible mountain vistas, the area also offers a wide range of wildlife – golden eagles, peregrine falcons, red deer and the elusive pine marten. Hilltops are dotted with ancient castles, friendly loch-side villages feature atmospheric pubs and cafes, and there are tranquil woodland and riverside walks for a change of pace after the day's cycling.

The atmosphere onboard the barge is intimate and friendly. In the evening partake of a traditional freshly made meal (yes, haggis is included), share stories and make plans for the following day. At mealtimes all guests and crew sit together around a large communal table, providing a sense of warmth and family. The barge carries a maximum of 12 passengers, in 6 well-designed comfortable bunk cabins with ensuite toilet and shower. The blond timber featured throughout the barge gives it a light, airy feeling, and there is a spacious lounge and dining area.

The tour begins at the Muirtown locks, near the iconic Highlands city of Inverness, and cruises along Loch Dochfour, Loch Ness, Loch Oich and Loch Lochy, through the Caledonian Canal locks at Fort Augustus and Laggan. The canal, designed by Thomas Telford, was built in the early 1800s to supply employment to the depressed Highlands region and provide a safer route for shipping (avoiding the wild north coast of Scotland).

We end our cruise near Fort William at Banavie, where Neptune's Staircase locks lift boats some 20 metres. We highly recommend spending extra nights (at own cost) in lively Fort William, where there is an opportunity to climb nearby Ben Nevis, the tallest mountain in Britain at 1344 metres.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331582 for details & reservations



Suggested Itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive Inverness

cycling @ 7 miles (12km)

Arrive at the barge moored near Inverness at 2.00pm. Inverness is well-connected to Edinburgh, Glasgow and London by train, including the sleeper from London. We start our cycle cruising holiday with the barge ascending the staircase of locks at Muirtown, then later we cycle to the sea lock at the eastern entrance to the bustling Caledonian Canal and ride the mostly flat towpath alongside the canal to Dochgarroch.

Day 2: Dochgarroch to Foyers

cycling @ 16 miles (26km)

After breakfast we go ashore by tender and begin our day's cycling on a forest track past Aldourie Castle, a 17th Century manor house (which we admire from afar as it is not open to the public), to Dores on the shores of Loch Ness. We follow a back road along the shores of Loch Ness and then head uphill for views of the lake. At Upper Foyers perhaps take the short, spectacular walk through the forest to the Falls of Foyers, with dramatic views of the gorge and the loch below. Then we coast downhill to Lower Foyers where the barge awaits.

Day 3: Foyers to Fort Augustus

cycling @ 15 miles (25km) + optional trails

A choice this morning: either cycle the South Loch Ness Trail on back roads and cycle tracks offering views down to Loch Ness and Fort Augustus, or stay on the barge to cruise this wilder end of Loch Ness – keep your eyes open for Nessie! We have lunch aboard the barge in Fort Augustus, a bustling historic town. After lunch there is an option to cycle on trails in the forest above Fort Augustus and alongside the river Oich, or you may prefer to explore Fort Augustus – there are cosy welcoming pubs and cafés, or perhaps visit the Clansman Centre museum for a slice of Highland life as it was 500 years ago.

Day 4: Fort Augustus to Loch Oich

cycling @ 18 miles (29km)

We cruise along the canal and Loch Oich then go ashore by tender and cycle alongside the River Garry to quaint Invergarry. We ride out on the road to Skye before crossing at the head of Loch Garry and descending through scenic forest to Loch Oich, where the barge is moored near to Old Invergarry Castle.

Day 5: Loch Oich to Gairloch

cycling @ 14 miles (23km)

After breakfast we cruise Loch Oich and Laggan Avenue, a tree-lined section of canal. From Laggan Locks we cycle a loch-side forest trail then ascend into the mountainous landscape of Lochaber with views of Scotland's high peaks. We ride over undulating terrain to Clunes, the start of the Dark Mile, where the trees and walls are adorned with a rich carpet of mosses and lichens, and cycle through Achnacarry Estate, home of Cameron of Lochiel. The Clan Cameron Museum is an interesting stop, offering refreshments and information about the area's history. We then pedal along the Great Glen Way to the *clachan* (hamlet) of Gairloch.

Day 6: Gairloch to Banavie

cycling @ 16 miles (26km)

From Gairloch, we cycle past the Commando Memorial to the village of Spean Bridge, then ride on forest tracks through the spectacular scenery of the Nevis Range, the local ski area as well as home of the Mountain Bike World Cup. Here you can take the optional scenic gondola ride (cost not included, single return trip approximately £21 per person) for spectacular views and a high level café stop. Later we take the cycle track towards Fort William, passing the local distillery, before returning to the barge moored in Banavie.

Day 7: Tour ends in Banavie

cycling @ 12 miles (20km)

For our final morning we concentrate on the engineering feat that is the Caledonian Canal. We cycle along the towpath to an aqueduct that carries the canal over the tributary rivers to the River Lochy, and visit Corpach where the canal meets the sea. We then cycle back to the top of the spectacular flight of eight canal locks known as Neptune's Staircase at Banavie, where we disembark the barge by 1pm. Banavie is a short journey from Fort William, with onward connections to Glasgow and elsewhere in Scotland and England.

This is a Bike & Barge cycling cruise however, you can decide each day if you want to cycle with the group and guide, ride independently or stay on the barge and relax. Alternative activities may also be offered – check with your guide and barge crew subject to weather conditions. Cruise also operates in reverse direction.



Outdoor Travel offers **Bike & Barge** cycling cruises on many of the canals and rivers of Europe including the Seine, Loire Valley and Burgundy or Provence in France and on the 2-week route between Paris and Bruges through the Somme WW1 battlefield and memorial sites in northern France. We also offer the popular route in Holland and Belgium from Amsterdam to Bruges or reverse. **Bike & Boat** cruises are offered in many areas of Europe including the **Amalfi Coast** or **Aeolian Islands** in Italy, the **Dalmatian Coast** of Croatia, the islands of **Greece**, the **Lycian Coast** of Turkey and also in **Vietnam**.

In Scotland, Outdoor Travel offers **guided walking holidays** in the Scottish Highlands at **Glen Coe**, or inn-to-inn self-guided walking on the **West Highland Way** from outside Glasgow to Fort William. Hire a **self-skipped traditional narrowboat** from our base at Falkirk and cruise the canals that link Edinburgh and Glasgow. Luxury hotel barge cruises are available along the **Caledonian Canal**.

Inn-to-inn cycling tours are also available in most destinations in Europe, US, Australia or New Zealand.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more itinerary details and reservations

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