

ENGLAND – THE CYCLIST’S COAST TO COAST

6 days / 5 night's **SELF-GUIDED** inn-to-inn cycling from Whitehaven to Tynemouth



Wainwright's "Coast to Coast" walking route is regarded as one of the must-do walks of England. Given the rise in interest in cycling it was inevitable that cyclists would also look at interesting ways of crossing beautiful, scenic northern England. The original cycling route was developed using minor roads and rideable 'off road' bridleways to thread together small towns and country areas across Cumbria and the Pennines, through the River Wear watershed and on to the more urban parts of the North East. The route is called the "C2C" – literally "Sea to Sea" – to differentiate it from the "Coast to Coast" walk which covers a different route with different terrain.

The C2C stretches from the harbour at Whitehaven on the Irish Sea, to the abbey and castle at Tynemouth on the shores of the North Sea. The 142-mile (230km) route is a fantastic way to see how the northern England landscape changes, sometimes abruptly, sometimes gently, as you cycle along. There are some hills, and the weather of course is changeable, but generally the wind will be at your back as you cycle west to east.

There is so much to see: lakes and fells, the bleak Pennines, beautiful dales, and towns and villages of all sizes. Along the way there is time to visit teashops, pubs, interesting sites and little museums such as the Keswick Pencil Museum, Neolithic Castlerigg stone circle, or the Rookhope lead mine.

Cost from: \$1290 per person twin share Single room supplement from \$475

Departs: Daily from early April to early October

Starts: Whitehaven **Ends:** Tynemouth

Includes: 5 nights' bed and breakfast accommodation with ensuite facilities where available; luggage transfers (one bag per person, max. weight 20kg); route notes & maps (1 set per room); emergency hotline.

Bike hire: Bike hire is £100, paid locally, for multi-gear touring bicycles, or £200 including transfer fee, paid locally, for E-bike hire. Bikes and E-bikes are suitable for road and mild off-road variants. They are equipped with saddlebag, lock and basic repair kit including spare inner tube and tyre levers. A security bond of £50 is applied to your credit card upon collection of the bikes, refunded when the bikes are returned safely.

Grading: Moderate to challenging. Some long steep hills especially across the Pennines. Off-road sections can be steep or muddy. Daily cycling stages range from 23 miles (37km) to 47 miles (75km) and can seem more challenging in inclement weather. Expect mixed weather including strong winds, rain, low cloud or fog, and varying temperatures. We would recommend undertaking regular training rides including hills in the lead up to this holiday.

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Accommodation: Our usual choice of accommodation is described below; if not available we use alternatives of the same standard where possible; on occasion a supplement will apply. Most accommodation in Keswick has a 2-night minimum on weekends, so please bear this in mind when selecting your start date, or consider an extra night here (at additional cost). Easter weekend and UK bank holiday weekends (in 2019 this will be: 6th May, 27th May, 26th August) are very busy and should be requested well in advance.

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive Whitehaven

Whitehaven is accessible by train from London via Lancaster and Carlisle (journey time about 5 hours) or from Manchester or Glasgow via Carlisle (3 hours). This pleasant, if sometimes blustery, Georgian seaside town has an attractive harbour and remnants of its mining past. You'll collect your bikes on the morning of day 2, unless day 2 is a Sunday (bike shop is closed on Sundays so arrive early enough to collect bikes on Saturday afternoon). Stay in an attractive guesthouse 10 minutes' walk from the hire shop, 15 minutes from the seafront.

Day 2: Whitehaven to Keswick

cycling @ 31 miles (50km)

Collect your bikes this morning, dip your wheel in the Irish Sea, then ride out gently for the first few miles along the former Ennerdale Railway Line. Leaving this, you approach the Lake District with views over Ennerdale Water and then pedal around Loweswater. The big hill of the day is Whinlatter Pass (1050ft / 318m); it is then a fast and undulating descent with views over Keswick and to Skiddaw, into one of the most popular towns in Cumbria, Keswick, on the shores of Derwentwater. Keswick is an old cheese town, with a market charter going back to the 1200s. It grew wealthy from mining, from the popularity of Lakeland poets and writers and finally from the growth of tourism led by the railways. There are many shops, pubs and restaurants. Stay in one of several attractive Victorian guesthouses, generally in quiet locations and within walking distance to the centre.

Day 3: Keswick to Alston

cycling @ 47 miles (75km)

The most challenging but perhaps the most picturesque day. Follow minor roads out of the centre of Keswick, then the route climbs steeply past the Castlerigg Stone Circle and passes through the village of Threlkeld. Ride on a quiet road round the hamlet of Mungrisdale, with views of the northern Lake District at intervals. Next is a long traverse of the Vale of Eden with a visit to the 'Green Village' of Greystoke and then on to historic Penrith. The afternoon is punctuated by a number of steep climbs culminating in the longest ascent of the trip to Hartside summit (1903ft / 580m), the watershed between the Irish and North Seas. Here you enter the Pennines. There are great views from the summit over the Vale of Eden, and a café, before a freewheeling descent into the market town of Alston. In Alston stay in a small hotel with comfortable rooms and a restaurant. On occasion we may also use one of a number of cosy B&Bs.

Day 4: Alston to Stanhope

cycling @ 23 miles (37km)

An uphill track from Alston takes you into a region of old lead mines to Nenthead. Another steep climb out of Nenthead village to Black Hill, the highest point on the C2C (2116ft / 645m), then descend into the valley of the River East Allen and the village of Allenheads, which has a heritage centre and coffee shop, as well as some interesting Victorian pumps, especially the Armstrong steam pump that was used for clearing water out the lead mines in the area. From here it's a steady climb to the summit of the hill at Currick, followed by a long descent into the Rookhope valley. Scars (or hushes) from centuries of lead mining are evident in the valley. Another climb takes you along the ridge of a hill before descending into the small pretty town of Stanhope. Stay the night in a friendly B&B right in the centre of town, alternatively you may be staying a further hilly 5km on at Parkhead Station B&B in the former railway station. (This does make tomorrow's ride a bit easier!)

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Day 5: Stanhope to Tynemouth

cycling @ 42 miles (68km)

The ride out of Stanhope is the steepest, but not the longest ascent of the C2C, parallel to where train engines were once steam hauled up the incline. At the top you could have a quick coffee at Parkhead Station before cycling generally flat or downhill along the Waskerley Way, a reclaimed railway path. Cross the Hownsgill Viaduct, and then continue on, joining another ex-railway cycle path along the Derwent Valley with beautiful views over the Durham countryside.

Cross the River Tyne and turn towards Newcastle, soon passing under some of its seven bridges including the famous Tyne Bridge (designed by the engineers of the Sydney Harbour Bridge). The Tyne is now wide looking across to Gateshead. Near the Millennium Bridge is a great dedicated bicycle café. Ride through the suburbs, passing Wallsend (where Hadrian's Wall ends, or begins), then pass docklands and new marinas to reach the bay near Tynemouth. Dip your wheel in the sea here, because where you finish at the castle and Abbey is high above the water! There is a pub right at the end where you leave your hire bikes and celebrate your completion of the famous C2C. Stay in one of two attractive guesthouses in the centre of Tynemouth, close to the Metro system and other amenities in the town.

Day 6: Departure day

Tour ends after breakfast. Take the Metro train from Tynemouth to Newcastle for onward travel connections.



Outdoor Travel offer small group guided or self-guided inn-to-inn cycling tours in many areas of England – such as the charming Cotswolds, on the spectacular West Coast of Ireland and across Europe. We offer famous cycling trails such as from Passau to Vienna along the **River Danube** or along the **Inn River Bike Trail** from Switzerland to Austria, from **Vienna to Budapest** in Hungary, in **Umbria** or in **Tuscany** in Italy. Take on the challenge that is the **Camino de Santiago** in Spain, from Leon or Pamplona to Santiago de Compostela. Other destinations include areas of Italy, Spain, France, Germany, the Czech Republic, New Zealand and Australia. E-bikes are available for hire in many areas.

We also offer group guided **Bike & Barge** cruises for a more relaxed pace combination of cycling and cruising in many destinations in Europe including the **the Valley of the Somme**, **Bordeaux** or **Provence** in France, Belgium, Holland, along the **River Saar** or **Moselle** in Germany, the **Amalfi Coast** or **Venetian Lagoon** in Italy, the **Dalmatian Coast** of Croatia, the many beautiful islands of Greece, and Vietnam.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations:

- Call toll free on 1800 331 582 or (03) 57551743 or Fax (03) 57501020
- Email: info@outdoortravel.com.au
- Web: <http://www.outdoortravel.com.au>
- Mail: Outdoor Travel Pty Ltd, PO Box 286, Bright, VIC 3741, Australia