

## SCOTLAND – HIGHLANDS, MOORS, SPEYSIDE & THE MORAY COAST

8-days / 7-nights moderate **SELF GUIDED** inn to inn cycling in the Scottish Highlands



This tour starts and ends in Inverness, the capital of The Highlands. It follows paths and quiet country roads through The Cairngorm National Park, Speyside, the spectacular Moray Coast, Highland whisky country and historic Culloden Moor. Take a ride through the best of Scotland's diverse landscapes with mountains, moors, river valleys and a dramatic coastline. There is much to see here, our well-constructed cycling route offers castles, wildlife, steam trains, museums and whisky distilleries and much, much more.

The River Spey rises in the hills above Newtonmore (home of the Highland Folk Museum) in the heart of the Scottish Highlands. It's the fastest river in Scotland and as it dashes northwards to the sea it plays a vital role in salmon fishing and Whisky production. This cycling route follows much of the course of the Spey through a wide range of landscapes with many historical, natural and cultural experiences along the way.

The route isn't as easy as a gentle riverside path though, this is the Scottish Highlands after all, but the days are quite short and E-Bikes are available for those concerned about the hills and are a great way to smooth out the ups and downs.

**Cost from:** \$2220 per person twin share Single room supplement from \$1250 – limited availability

Upgrades available from \$400 per person for hotels to \$750 per person for superior hotels

**Departs:** Daily, May to September, 2020 (subject to a minimum of 2 people)

**Starts & Ends:** Inverness

**Includes:** 7 nights' quality accommodation in comfortable guesthouses with ensuite where available, 7 breakfasts, luggage transfers, hybrid bike hire with helmet, pannier, water bottle and repair kit, route notes and maps, whisky tour with tasting.

**Not included:** Drinks, meals not mentioned, entry fees, personal expenses, gratuities, E-bikes.

**Grade:** Moderate cycling with 30 to 60km per day, over undulating terrain.



**Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details & reservations**



## Suggested Itinerary: \*

### Day 1: Arrive in Inverness

Arrive at your accommodation by mid-afternoon. The city is serviced by an airport, train and bus station. Collect your bike and explore Inverness town centre and along the river.

### Day 2: Inverness to Aviemore

**cycling @ 54km**

Cycling from the mouth of the River Ness heading south, across the River Nairn valley. You'll have views of the railway viaduct at Clava, the longest in Scotland at 549m. Emerging from the forest onto open moorland, the route crosses the River Findhorn south of Tomatin, with the first opportunity to visit a whisky distillery of the tour. The mountain pass at Slochd is the highest point in the route and is an ancient route, formerly a "drove road" used to move cattle from Highland crofts to market. Ride to Carrbridge, home to the Scottish Chainsaw Carving Competition each September and World Porridge Making Championship in October. Our destination is Aviemore, a village popular all-year-round with visitors to the Cairngorms National Park.

### Day 3: Aviemore to Newtonmore and back

**cycling @ 51km**

After breakfast a circular cycling route to Newtonmore and back. Newtonmore is home to *The Highland Folk Museum*, an open air depiction of highland life through history featured in the TV series *Outlander*. Pass *The Highland Wildlife Park* at Kincaig, home to many once native species including pine martens, wildcat, lynx, wolves and owls. On the return the route passes Ruthven Barracks built following the first Jacobite Rebellion in 1715 and saw action in the build up to and aftermath of the Battle of Culloden three hundred years ago.

### Day 4: Aviemore to Grantown-on-Spey

**cycling @ 31km**

Today is just a short ride, so you can take a zip wire or canoe Loch Morlich or visit The Strathspey Steam Railway a 18km section run by volunteers. The cycle route winds through the native pines and juniper of the Abernethy Forest, home to red squirrels, wildcats, deer, grouse and birds of prey. The village of Nethy Bridge offers a refreshment stop on the way to today's destination the traditional Highland town of Grantown-on-Spey.

### Day 5: Grantown-on-Spey to Dufftown

**cycling @ 53km**

This is the hilliest cycling day as you traverse the moorland landscape at the northern edge of the Cairngorm Mountains. Tomintoul is the highest village in the highlands and provides a good opportunity to refuel after the biggest climbs of the day. Tomintoul has an art gallery and many whiskies for sale at The Whisky Castle. It's not all downhill after lunch and there are a couple of long descents along Glenlivet then Glen Rinnes to the "Malt Whisky Capital of the World" Dufftown, home to the Glenfiddich Distillery and visitor centre.

### Day 6: Dufftown to Elgin

**cycling @ 52km**

Much of the flavour of whisky comes from the barrels and a visit to the Cooperage at Craigellachie, just out of Dufftown, is highly recommended. The Macallan has opened an amazing new distillery and visitor centre just south of Craigellachie where the traditions of whisky production are married to modern technology. Follow the River Spey and descend towards the coast. At Fochabers visit Baxters Highland Village which is part museum, part shop, part café or the restaurant at the Walled Garden of Gordon Castle. Continue towards Spey Bay where the river meets the sea and the Scottish Dolphin Centre, a haven for seals, ospreys, coastal birds and dolphins. Retrace your tracks to cross the Spey and continue through the village of Garmouth and on to Elgin, with its largely ruined cathedral and the Johnstons of Elgin textile mill producing fine knitwear.

### Day 7: Elgin to Nairn

**cycling @ 61km**

Cycle along quiet country lanes to the coastal village of Hopeman then follow the coastal path to the village of Burghead, historically a Pictish fort and later a centre for herring fishing. Further on you'll pass the former air force base at Kinloss, once home to the RAF Nimrod anti-submarine squadron and mountain rescue operations. The small aviation museum "Morayvia" is highly recommended with many ex-airmen on hand to tell the story of the interactive exhibits. The route takes a short detour to the eco-village of Findhorn which has a beach, harbour, small heritage centre and is home to The Findhorn Foundation spiritual community.

Return to Kinloss and on to Forres, home to the Benromach distillery, before reaching 16<sup>th</sup> Century Brodie Castle with its art collection, furniture and library. Continue by Culbin Forest to Nairn for your last night stay.

### Day 8: Nairn to Inverness

**cycling @ 59km**

Nairn is known for its championship golf courses and the sandy beaches. On the way to Inverness see the historic (and current) army base at Fort George. Then Macbeth's Cawdor Castle and gardens. We follow the Nairn Valley which goes under the arches of the Culloden Viaduct. Visit the prehistoric burial cairns of Bulnuaran of Clava and Culloden, site of the last battle fought on British soil in 1746 and home to a visitor centre showcasing the battle's timeline of events in great detail.

The route ends in Inverness. No accommodation is provided here - ask if you want extra nights in Inverness.



**Outdoor Travel** offers walking or cycling holidays in Scotland and the UK including the **West Highland Way**, the English **Coast to Coast** or **Cotswolds Way**. Cycling holidays are offered in France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Poland, in Romania and in New Zealand, USA and Australia.

**Contact Outdoor Travel for details and reservations:**

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