

Outer Hebrides and St Kilda

Fri 29th Jul to Tues 9th Aug 2022



Tour MJ222

The Outer Hebrides has been named the best place to live in the UK. We cycle the length of the Outer Hebrides over 12 days in mid-summer, with countless golden sandy beaches and quiet roads, so you can form your own opinion. Many of the roads are single track with passing places. There are only 26,500 people spread over the 130 mile length of the islands, and the biggest town of Stornoway has just 7,000. Optional day trip to St Kilda, Britain's only mixed natural and cultural UNESCO World Heritage Site, is an absolute must for bird watchers.

On the second last day we have our longest cycle of 100km and 1,127m, but we should be ready for it by then.

Grade 5

Itinerary

Fri 29 July - get together in Fort William

Meet fellow cyclists in the hotel, which is beside the railway station.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel

Sat 30 Jul Cycle to Mallaig, and ferry to Lochboisdale

Passenger ferry across Loch Linnhe from Fort William to Camusnagaul, and cycle along the south shore of Loch Eil. Visit the Glenfinnan Viaduct (of Harry Potter fame) and the coastal village of Arisaig, before catching the Calmac ferry from Mallaig.

- Route distance: 71.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1055 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Sun 31 Jul Day trip to Barra.

The only scheduled airline to land at a beach. Our ferry arrives on Barra in time for a flight landing at 11.30. Then cycle round Barra and down to Vatersay.

- Route distance: 92.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 978.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Mon 1 Aug the Uists

Cycle from Lochboisdale to Lochmaddy crossing causeways between the islands (but no ferries today) and with a quiet detour through the Machair and along the coast.

- Route distance: 78.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 415.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Tues 2nd Aug- Harris

Visit lovely Berneray with several beautiful beaches and time to explore. Then, we take the ferry to Leverburgh on Harris, and cycle the Golden Road to Tarbert.

- Route distance: 76.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 893.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel

- Meals: (B)

Wed 3rd Aug ST KILDA

St Kilda is very highly recommended and we have a few hours on the main island of Hirta, See the web site kildacruises.co.uk for lots of fab photos, a short history of the islands and tour details. Travel to and from Leverburgh by bus is included. The trip is weather permitting, but we have Thursday as a reserve day!

There is a cycle to Huisinis as an alternative, please see details for the cycle below.

- Route distance: 52.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 961.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Thurs 4th Aug Harris and backup day fro St Kilda

This is planned as an easier day with an 11 mile cycle out to Luskentyre beach. If anyone is seeking a bigger day of cycling then I recommend adding on a self-guided trip to Scalpay.

- Route distance: 34.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 478.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Fri 5th Aug Stornoway

Crossing the hills that separate Harris and Lewis.

- Route distance: 57.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 777.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Sat 6th Aug Calanais

Circular day trip to see the standing stones at Calanais, the broch at Carloway and the coastal crofting village of Garrannan.

- Route distance: 78.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 731.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Sun 7th Aug Ullapool

Optional morning cycle along the east coast, and afternoon ferry to Ullapool.

- Route distance: 48.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 569.0 m

- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Mon 8th Aug Tain

This route avoids the main road (A835 to Inverness) and offers a mixture of quieter and very quiet roads. This will be our longest day of cycling, but there are no delays for ferries, and we should all have built up cycle fitness by this stage.

- Route distance: 100.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1257.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Tues 9th Aug Inverness

Small ferry across the Cromarty Firth onto the Black Isle, then bridge across the Beauy Firth into Inverness. We expect to arrive in Inverness mid-afternoon, so recommend not booking onward transport earlier than 3.30pm.

- Route distance: 64.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 681.0 m
- Accommodation: none
- Meals: (B)



Dates and Prices

Cost

- Land only price: £1230.0

Payment Schedule

A deposit of £200 per person is payable to complete a booking, with the final balance of £1,030 per person to be paid by Friday 6th May 2022. For St Kilda a deposit of £100 is required on booking and final balance of £145 is required by Friday 6th May 2022.

Price includes:

- Ferry costs
- Luggage transfer
- 11 nights accomodation and breakfast
- dinner on 4 nights

Price does not include:

- Travel to and from the start / end points
- lunch, café stops, drinks
- Dinner on 7 nights
- Any other personal expenses
- Travel Insurance

Cancellations

Written Notice Received: Cancellation Charge: Tour + St Kilda day trip

- before Friday 6th May: £200 Deposit + £100 St Kilda deposit
- after Friday 6th May: £1,230 plus St Kilda costs £245



Holiday Information

Area covered by the holiday

- Most of the tour is in the Outer Hebrides which are very sparsely populated, but the start and end days are on the Scottish mainland. The roads may be more busy than on the islands, but probably quiet compared with most of the UK. In addition, where possible, minor roads have been planned.

Travel

- The tour starts from Fort William, and ends in Inverness, so travel by train is recommended. The hotel for the first night is beside the railway station. At the end of the tour you may catch a train later in the day, or extend your holiday for another night.

Accommodation

- Hotel accommodation for most nights, but possibly B&B in one location

Rooms

- Accommodation on a shared room basis (due to lack of space to offer single occupancy).

Luggage transfer

- A car will be provided for luggage transfer, but in case of a medical priority or breakdown, it may be necessary to carry your own luggage.

Rest Day

- All of the days when we are not moving on are optional rest days. In particular, the first day on Harris and the last day on Lewis would be most suited for a rest.

Roads used

- The holiday is classified as grade 5 (medium)
The holiday is for 12 days and has no formal rest days.
This is a moving on holiday staying for 2 or more nights at 3 locations, and the rest will be a different location each night. So, if anybody needs a rest and repair day, they can sit out on one of the days that we are not moving on. No-one is obliged to ride those days. Most of the roads are minor (some single track) and used by rural/tourist traffic and are hilly in parts. Though we may need to use some busier roads at times, we avoid them as much as possible.
Detailed route notes will be provided before the tour, along with GPS tracks for those who want them.
Most of each day will be spent cycling. People will be expected to ride at their own pace and often in loose groups, at around 10-12 mph on the flat, slower up hills, usually meeting up at cafes for lunch and refreshment breaks. You will be notified of

recommended refreshment stops each day.

It is expected that you may want to stop for photographs, look at the view or explore some local point of interest and this is okay. You are on holiday.

Inevitably, parts of the route are hilly, so you do need to be fit to get the most out of this tour. It is essential to get out on your bike and do some 50-mile rides before the tour starts. There are some steep descents too, so you should be able to negotiate these safely.

On days where we are catching a ferry, it is important that we meet up on time. The route is planned to allow time for cycling at modest speeds and still be on time for the ferry. For the big ferries (to Lochboisdale and to Ullapool) we need to meet up at least 1 hour beforehand (to load any luggage onto the car). For all other smaller ferries we need to meet up 30 minutes before in order to allow time for any punctures etc.

Please note it may not always be possible to follow the itinerary exactly due to road works or weather etc, as things do not always go as planned. In these circumstances, you will be advised of alternative arrangements.

The Leader and Deputy will share the luggage transfer and ride leadership between them. Often with one ahead and the other behind. They will not always be at the front of the group but may be anywhere within it, as circumstances require, so you will need to be aware of the route each day. This information will be given to you before, or at the beginning of the holiday, and again at daily briefings

Weather and Clothing

- Like the rest of the UK the weather in Scotland is very variable. Please bring sun screen and waterproofs, as you might need to use both on the same day.

There is a possibility of both heat waves and cold, wet weather, so be prepared for all possibilities. The temperature in August is likely to be between 11 and 16 degrees. On average some rainfall can be expected on 6 days of the tour with an average total of 35 mm of rain. Summer is also the least windy season.

Lightweight clothing, suitable for a range of temperatures, is needed and possibly smarter clothing for the more up-market hotels (though they seem to be very relaxed about what people wear).

Lightweight waterproofs/windproofs will be needed and also warmer clothing for the evenings.

Cycling clothes. Two sets of clothing are recommended as you can wash each evening; two short sleeved tops, a long sleeved top, or arm warmers, shorts, longs or leg warmers, two pairs of socks, a cap or helmet cover and two pairs of short gloves with a pair of finger gloves for rain and cold. Helmet and cycling shoes. Clear riding glasses. Sun cream, lip balm and sun glasses are recommended along with insect bite cream. Evening Dress. You will not need too much; Two T-shirts/shirts, one pair lightweight trousers, maybe a pair of shorts, two sets of underwear, two pairs of socks, light pullover/top and lightweight shoes. The lightweight cycling windproof top can be used in the evening if extra warmth is required. A floppy hat can be useful if the sun is hot.

Trunks if there is the chance of a swim in the sea, average water temperature 13.5 degrees.

Toiletries; These can be kept to a minimum by bringing very small toothpaste tubes, shampoo bottles etc. A very basic first aid kit of plasters and pain killers etc are always recommended. Some places supply shampoo, but not guaranteed, and a small hotel size bottle is always useful to take and use for clothes washing, which can be done whilst showering. Shaving can also be done using shampoo, as can face washing. A piece of string is useful for hanging washing in the absence of coat hangers.

Cycles / Equipement

- A touring cycle, hybrid, tandem, recumbent or lightweight road bike would all be suitable for this holiday, since we will endeavour to avoid tracks if possible. You should ensure your cycle is well maintained, paying particular attention to wheels, tyres and brakes. A low bottom gear (eg. small chainring the same size or smaller than the largest cog on your rear wheel) is recommended; if unsure about gears, please talk to the Bikeplore Leader about them. Mudguards are optional but demonstrate respect to those who are following you in wet weather. Lights are recommended in case of arriving back late, and are useful if walking outdoors at night. A bell is advised and bring a bike lock for security. Water bottles are required to ensure you are hydrated at all times. You will be expected to carry sufficient spares and tools to deal with punctures and minor repairs, including two inner tubes, a spare gear cable, split link and spare brake pads. There are very few bike shops on the route, and if so they are never when you need them. You are advised to use 28mm tyres, or larger, to suit the variable terrain. You will not need to carry luggage except in case of car breakdown or medical priority. It is suggested that the overall luggage weight should be no more than 10-12kg. A rack-top pack or bar bag will be useful for carrying wet weather gear, spare clothing needed for the day, camera, emergency rations and a map.

Maps & GPS

- Philip's Red Map of the Outer Hebrides covers all of the islands on one map - ISBN 978-1-84907-010-2. For the mainland I recommend bringing a paper backup in the form of relevant pages from an old car road atlas. GPS maps for each day will be provided in advance of the tour.

Fitness and Health

- Please ensure that you are fit and healthy enough to cycle the distances (and ascents) planned for the tour. Use of an electric bike can help enable cyclists to complete long rides.

Travel Insurance

- Travel insurance is highly recommended.

Tour Leader Details

- I led my first tour in 2014, and since then have run tours every year (except one - guess which) and all in Scotland. Visiting almost every one of the larger islands. Originally tours were through CTC Holidays, but now with Bikexplore. My style is to help people enjoy their holiday and visit the many beautiful remote parts of my home country. In fact, one of my greatest pleasures is in sharing the wonderful quiet Scottish roads and scenery. On tour, my partner Diane shares the ride leadership and luggage transfer. Typically people do not cycle all together, but split into small groups of similar speed / interest and we meet at cafes and leap frog along the route. My other great pleasure from running tours is the social aspect: seeing people form friendships that transcend the duration of the tour.

Tour Leader Contact Details

- mdjamieson@hotmail.co.uk Tel: 07981 100017