

# London to Birmingham

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**Tour Organiser: John Upton**

**Saturday 16th to Monday 18th May 2026**

Bridge the gap between England's first and second cities on this 3 day moving-on tour, enjoying the sights and sounds along the way. Canal towpaths and cycle lanes to the edge of London, then rolling countryside and mainly quiet roads all the way to Birmingham.

## Itinerary

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### **Saturday 16th May 2026 London to High Wycombe**

Starting at Marylebone station at 11am, it's less than 1km to the Grand Union Canal which we will take for the first 15 km towards the edge of the city. We then follow cycle lanes and minor roads to Uxbridge, from where it is mainly minor roads and lanes through farmland most of the way to High Wycombe. There are 2 cafe stops planned through the day, roughly splitting the distance into thirds. 11:00 start 17:00 end

- Route distance: 58.0km
- Route altitude gain: 400m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: Self-Catering

### **Sunday 17th May 2026 High Wycombe to Banbury**

The first 10km is an uphill slog out of High Wycombe and up the last bit of Chilterns, but then down and onto the Phoenix Trail, an old train line from Princes Risborough to Thame and our first cafe stop. Then meandering through gently rolling countryside to our second cafe stop in Bicester and more of the same up to Banbury. 09:30 start 17:30 end

- Route distance: 82.0km
- Route altitude gain: 400m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

### **Monday 18th May 2026 Banbury to Birmingham**

More of the same beautiful undulating English countryside, though admittedly a bit hillier today. The Dene valley, going past the very grand looking Walton Hall is a highlight, as is the



first coffee stop at Wellesbourne Airfield. We will navigate between Warwick and Stratford on Avon until we get to the Umberslade farm estate and our final café stop. It's then on towards Birmingham where we pick up the Rea Valley Cycle Route and hence miss most of the traffic all the way into the city centre and New Street Station, our final destination 09:30 start 18:30 end at the latest (hopefully around 17:30)

- Route distance: 83.0km
- Route altitude gain: 800m
- Accommodation: None
- Meals: (B)

## Dates and Prices

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### Cost

- Land only price: £200

### Payment Schedule

A deposit of £50 per person is required as soon as possible once the Tour Organiser has confirmed your booking, with the final balance to be paid by 01-Apr-2026

Price includes:

- 2 Nights hotel accommodation
- Bike storage (in hotel room)

Price does not include:

- Travel to the start or from the finish
- Any food except breakfasts
- Travel insurance
- Single room supplement - £100

### Cancellations

| Written Notice Received | Cancellation Charge |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 01-Apr-2026             | £50 (deposit)       |
| 02-Apr-2026 onwards     | Full price of tour  |

The price of £200 (land only) is based on a minimum number of 4 people taking part in the holiday. If there are insufficient bookings by Thursday 16th April 2026, we will contact you and return all monies paid.



# Holiday Information

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## Grade and Area Covered by the Holiday

This Holiday is classed as Moderate Energetic.

In the main, the terrain is rolling. There are a few flat sections, like the canal tow path on day 1 and the Phoenix trail on day 2; there are also a few slightly larger hills such as the one leaving High Wycombe on day 2 and one or two during the course of day 3, but anything steep is short and walkable if needs be.

## Travel and Communication

The tour starts from London Marylebone Railway Station and finishes at Birmingham New Street Railway Station.

Travel to the start and from the finish is not included in this holiday. Thus, it is very important that you note that neither your Tour Organiser nor Bikexplore are responsible for you in any way until the appointed time at the designated meeting point. Should you fail to arrive at the appointed time for whatever reason, we will not be responsible for any additional expenses you may incur in order to meet up with the tour group. Before finalising travel arrangements, you should ensure that the tour is definitely going ahead.

Should there be insufficient bookings or pandemic travel restrictions are re-imposed, we reserve the right to cancel the tour at any time. It is therefore recommended that you book fully flexible and refundable transport and accommodation or wait until you have been told the tour will go ahead. In the event of the tour being cancelled we will not be responsible for any losses incurred outside what you pay us.

I will use Whatsapp for general communications whilst on tour. If you are unable to join the WhatsApp group I can only communicate with you in an emergency.

## Accommodation

Both of the hotels we are staying in are Premier Inns. Bike storage is in-room, though if they have space in a e.g. a storage room, they may let us use that. I will request that all rooms are on the ground floor, but ultimately we will get what we are given.

In both hotels, I have booked 7 rooms, aiming for 10-12 participants.

In High Wycombe, these are all twins. They do not have singles rooms as such (I think this is the same for all Premier Inns). If you are booking with a partner and prefer a double bed, please let me know at the time of booking and I will request the swap.

In Banbury, all rooms have a double bed with an additional single bed. If you are sharing, you will have to decide who gets which between yourselves!



Prices are based on two people sharing a room.

### Meals, Health and Diet

On both mornings, a full buffet breakfast will be provided at the hotel, which is included in the tour price. We will source and pay for lunch and dinner ourselves.

I have planned for 2 café stops per day, roughly splitting each day into thirds. I am planning to have lunch at the first stop which will be around 12:00, but if you prefer to have lunch at the 2nd one instead (or as well!), this is fine.

I will do my best to check that all cafes will be open before the start of the tour, but there is always a chance that one might not be and there is no alternative near by, so you should buy and carry sufficient food and drink to keep you going in case of emergencies.

Check that you have informed the Tour Organiser of any dietary requirements in your Booking Form.

Please remember to pack any medications that you need to take regularly.

### Cycles and Equipment

A touring cycle, hybrid, tandem, recumbent or lightweight road bike would all be suitable for this holiday.

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 Bikexplore organiser about them.

Mudguards are optional but demonstrate respect to those who are following you in wet weather.

Lights are recommended in the very unlikely event of arriving back late and 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 may not be many bike shops on route and they are never when you need them.

You are advised to use 28mm tyres, or larger, to suit the variable terrain.

You will be carrying your own luggage and therefore you must ensure that your panniers, or bike packing bags, are of sound construction and are secure to the bicycle.





Before the holiday you are advised to have a trial run with the weight on board to ensure that you are happy with the handling and that the equipment is suitable. Do not over pack as you will have to carry this for the whole tour. It is suggested that the overall luggage weight should be no more than 5-8kg, which is usually sufficient for such a short trip. If you need advice please contact the Bikexplore Organiser.

### Rides, Rest Days and Fitness

The holiday is for 3 days with no rest day.

This is a moving on holiday staying in a different location each night.

Most of the roads are minor or at least quiet, are used by tourist traffic and maybe/will be hilly in parts. Though we may need to use some busier roads at times, we avoid them as much as possible.

There are a couple of sections which are not paved. The main ones are the canal sections coming out of London and into Birmingham, and the Phoenix Trail. On all, the surface is good – I've taken my 25mm tyred road bike on them without hesitation.

Most of each cycling day may be spent cycling. People will be expected to ride at their own pace and often in loose groups, at around 15-18 kmph (10-12 mph) on the flat, slower up hills, usually meeting up at cafes for lunch and refreshment breaks.

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

Inevitably, you might consider parts of the route hilly, and there is no back-up vehicle to carry your luggage, so you need to be fit to get the most out of this tour.

It is essential to get out on your bike and do some rides of comparable distance before the tour starts.

There are descents too, so you should be able to negotiate these safely.

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 Organiser 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 and likely stopping places each day.

### Weather, Clothing and Culture

The best advice is to check the forecast and to pack accordingly.

Lightweight clothing, suitable for a range of temperatures is advised and possibly smarter, warmer clothing for the evenings.





Lightweight waterproofs/windproofs will be needed.

Sun cream, lip balm and sun glasses are recommended along with insect repellent and bite cream.

My packing list is available on request - advisable if this is your first tour.

The weather can be variable, with a possibility of both heat waves and cold, wet weather, so be prepared for all possibilities including storms.

### **Maps and Guides**

A gpx, or an online link to a gpx, of each day's route and/or detailed route notes, will be provided before of the tour.

If you would like any other means of navigation, please contact the Tour Organiser well before the start of the tour.

### **Travel Insurance and Vaccinations**

Travel insurance is not compulsory for UK nationals traveling in the UK.

Current Covid and Influenza vaccinations are recommended for participants of 75 years of age and over and those deemed medically vulnerable.

### **Passport, Visa and Monies**

N/A

### **Tour Organiser contact details**

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