

# Cape Wrath and John O'Groats

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**Tour Organiser: Martin Jamieson**

**Thursday 14th to Saturday 30th May 2026**

Circular tour starting from Inverness and cycling up the north west coast of Scotland to Cape Wrath, then east to Thurso and John O'Groats with views to Orkney. Returning via Lairg, Dornoch and the Black Isle to Inverness. We have two nights in most locations. This area is called Caithness and Sutherland and is sparsely populated with scenic quiet roads. The accommodation is in hotels but at one location you might be in a B&B or apartment.

## Itinerary

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### **Thursday 14th May 2026 Inverness**

Most people have a long journey to get to Inverness, so we will meet there, have dinner together, and start cycling on the Friday

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (D)

### **Friday 15th May 2026 Gairloch**

Starting with a beautiful cycle along the north shore of the Beaully Firth, then up to Garve. Concluding with a cycle along Glen Docherty and descending along Loch Maree to Gairloch.

- Route distance: 112.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1382m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

### **Saturday 16th May 2026 Gairloch day trip**

This is a recovery day, and if you are keen on visiting gardens then an alternative would be to go north to the InverEwe Gardens.

- Route distance: 34.0km
- Route altitude gain: 509m
- Accommodation: Hotel

- Meals: (B, D)

## Sunday 17th May 2026 Ullapool

Options to visit Inverewe gardens, and do walk down to see the Corrieshalloch Gorge.

- Route distance: 89.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1532m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

## Monday 18th May 2026 Ullapool - rest day or optional kayak to the Summer Isles

We have the opportunity to kayak out from Ullapool to go round the Summer Isles. This will give us views from the water that you just can't get from the land.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

## Tuesday 19th May 2026 Lochinver

This is probably my favourite day of the tour as the coastline road meanders along the shore and the views are just fantastic. Starting from Ullapool and continuing to the headland over the entrance to Loch Broom where you have views of the beautifully named "Isle Martin". Weather permitting, this day can be extended with a short trip down to the hamlet of Achiltibuie with views to the Summer Isles.

- Route distance: 68.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1266m
- Accommodation: Mixture of B&B and self-catering
- Meals: (B)

## Wednesday 20th May 2026 Boat Trip

We have a wildlife boat trip, so hopefully you will see lots of sea life that you might not otherwise see.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: mixed
- Meals: (B)

## Thursday 21st May 2026 Scourie

Early on our route there is a detour to Achmelvich with a beautiful sandy bay. It is stunning especially on a sunny day. We arrived in Sutherland before Lochinver, and will be for almost all of the rest of the tour. The total population is just 13,000. Cumbria is slightly bigger but has a population of 500,000. This is relevant because it impacts on the number of vehicles,

cafe stops and accommodation. So please do not worry too much about cycling on A roads (they should be quiet and might be the only choice).

- Route distance: 61.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1748m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

## Friday 22nd May 2026 Durness

There is coffee and beautiful views at Balnakeil Bay and the spectacular Smoo Caves to visit

- Route distance: 45.0km
- Route altitude gain: 778m
- Accommodation: mixture
- Meals: (B)

## Saturday 23rd May 2026 Cape Wrath

Join the Cape Wrath Fellowship by cycling from the ferry to the Cape Wrath lighthouse. The day is subject to MOD firing practice and tides. The surface is suitable for 4x4 transport, and the wider the tyres you have the more comfortable the ride will be. It has been done on a road bike.

- Route distance: 48.0km
- Route altitude gain: 984m
- Accommodation: mixed
- Meals: (B)

## Sunday 24th May 2026 Bettyhill

Cycling around Loch Eriboll through the village of "Hope" and across Loch Tongue. You will have views towards the "Rabbit Islands". After we cross the river Navar, you can turn right towards the Coille Na Borgie Horned Chambered cairn. There are 5 cairns and 3 stone circles (huts) only a few kilometers south of the bridge. Then turn back and head up to Bettyhill.

- Route distance: 70.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1254m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

## Monday 25th May 2026 Thurso

You should start seeing Orkney with the Island of Hoy clearly visible from the mainland

- Route distance: 49.0km
- Route altitude gain: 770m

- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

## Tuesday 26th May 2026 John O'Groats

Cycling round the sandy Dunnet Bay, up to the headland and then along to John O'Groats to get your photo taken.

- Route distance: 79.0km
- Route altitude gain: 632m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

## Wednesday 27th May 2026 Bettyhill

The east coast route via Wick is much more busy, so we take the longer route back to Bettyhill and south via Lairg to Dornoch

- Route distance: 49.0km
- Route altitude gain: 770m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

## Thursday 28th May 2026 Dornoch

Altnaharra is famed for recording the lowest Scottish winter temperatures. We cross the World Heritage Flow Country - which is a blanket bog with peat metres deep. It covers an enormous area of over 4,000 km<sup>2</sup>

- Route distance: 107.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1099m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

## Friday 29th May 2026 Dornoch Day trip

Circular cycle from Dornoch

- Route distance: 42.0km
- Route altitude gain: 453m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## Saturday 30th May 2026 Inverness

Crossing on the tiny Cromarty ferry and cycling along the north shore of the Moray Firth we visit the pretty Rosemarkie and Fortrose. Then on to Inverness where the tour concludes.

- Route distance: 82.0km

- Route altitude gain: 712m
- Accommodation: none
- Meals: (B)

## Dates and Prices

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### Cost

- Land only price: £2475

### Payment Schedule

Deposit of £400 on booking, followed by the balance £2,075 by 05/02/2026

Price includes:

- Accommodation mostly in hotels, but B&Bs or self catering in 1 location.
- Breakfast each day - if in self catering it will only be for one location and breakfast will be modest
- Luggage transfers - please limit weight to a maximum of £10kg each
- Ferry tickets
- Boat trip from Lochinver
- Dinner on 6 nights (2 nights not yet specified)

Price does not include:

- Dinner (except on 6 nights)
- Kayak day trip - this is a £100 supplement
- Lunches or cafe stops

### Cancellations

Written Notice Received

Cancellation Charge

before 05/02/2026

£400 deposit

after 05/02/2026

Full tour cost of £2,475

The price of £2475 (land only) is based on a minimum number of 10 people taking part in the holiday. If there are insufficient bookings by Wednesday 31st December 2025, we will contact you and return all monies paid.

## Holiday Information

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## Area

It is a moving on tour on the north coast of Scotland, starting and finishing in Inverness. There are two-night stays in six locations to allow time to see the places we visit.

The tour includes Cape Wrath the furthest north west point on the mainland and also Dunnet Head and John O'Groats at the north East. This area is called Caithness and Sutherland and is very sparsely populated.

This Holiday is classed as "Moderately Energetic" because it averages 66km on cycling days, but has two days of over 100km.

For many the highlight of the tour may be the adventure of cycling to Cape Wrath. You can join the Cycling UK Cape Wrath Fellowship after you complete the ride. With only 2,000 members of the Fellowship there are more people who have swum the English Channel. At this time of year, we should see puffins too.

The route is mainly on very quiet roads, often single track with passing places. Sometimes these will be main roads, but with the low population, and limited accommodation they should be quiet.

## Travel and Communication

The tour starts and finishes in Inverness which has several trains a day from both Glasgow and Edinburgh.

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.

Potentially a tour may be cancelled (e.g. if it does not attract the minimum numbers) so please do not commit to any travel arrangements until you have received confirmation that the tour will go ahead. In the event of cancellation Bikexplore will only be responsible for refunding you the cost of the tour itself.

We will use WhatsApp to communicate details like café stops, meal arrangements, places of interest and any emergencies on route. Ideally everyone will bring a smart phone and be happy to be included in the group. If you are unable to join the WhatsApp group we can only communicate with you in an emergency.

## Accommodation

The maximum number of participants will be 20 including the tour organiser. We will stay a variety of standards of hotels depending on the availability in each location

All rooms have en-suite facilities (except one room in one location). Prices are based on two people sharing a room. When booking with a partner to share please specify twin or double beds. There are no single occupancy rooms available.



## Meals, Health and Diet

Breakfast each day is included and in addition dinner is included on six evenings. We will pay for our own lunches, café stops and beverages. Most of the tour is in sparsely populated areas so there may be few options for procuring lunch and these could be closed on the day we need them. Please carry sufficient food and water to last you all day if necessary. Most places are happy to accept credit cards but please carry some cash just in case.

Please advise the tour organizer of any dietary requests in your Booking application, and do remember to pack any medications that you need. Can you also remind the tour organizer of any dietary requests and health issues at the start of the tour.

## Cycles, Equipment and Luggage

### TYPE OF BIKE

A touring cycle, gravel bike, hybrid, tandem, recumbent or lightweight road bike would all be suitable for most of this holiday. However, the route to Cape Wrath is more rough and would be challenging on a road bike.

### MAINTENANCE

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. 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 must carry sufficient spares and tools to deal with punctures and minor repairs, including two inner tubes, spare gear and brake cable, split link and spare brake pads. There are almost no 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.

### LUGGAGE

Luggage will be carried in normal circumstances. However, for the convenience of the group, you will need to be able to carry all your own luggage in an emergency as the luggage carrying facility of the accompanying vehicle is just one vehicle and we will sometimes be travelling in remote areas where breakdown assistance could be inconveniently slow to arrive.

The luggage weight is limited to 10kg per person, which is usually sufficient for any holiday, washing spare clothes each night.

Please bring a bike lock suitable to your attitude towards the risk of theft.

Please carry waterproof clothing and sun screen. Helmets are optional but are recommended.





## Rides, Rest Days and Fitness

This is a cycling holiday for 17 days with just three days with no cycling. At six locations we stay for 2 nights and could treat the day trip from that location as a potential rest day. Alternatively, it can be just a shorter cycle as planned. The other locations are just for one night.

Most of the cycling is on minor roads, but we also use cycle paths and there are some sections on main roads. People tend to cycle in small groups, and meet up with the rest of the group at view points and cafes. The tour should be manageable for someone who cycles regularly and has reasonable fitness. There are some longer days and some days with a lot of ascent, as well as shorter and easier days. Please train for the tour and ride some 100km day trips in preparation.

People may want to stop for photographs, look at the view or explore some local object and this is encouraged. You are on holiday. If you wish to go further from the group and do your own thing then please do advise the tour organiser.

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 tour 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 independent and aware of the route and likely stopping places.

## Weather, Clothing and Culture

The weather in the UK can be very variable so please carry waterproof clothing and sun screen. You might end up using them on the same day. It is best to bring layers so you can adjust to suit the weather.

The average maximum temperature in Durness during May 8.5 degrees C, while the average rainfall for the whole month is 87mm. In comparison figures for London are 12.7 degrees and 57mm.

Diane and I like open water swimming, and there will be some opportunities to swim or just paddle if you would like to join us. Please only do what you are safe and comfortable with. A swimming costume, goggles and microlight towel would not add much weight to carry.

Helmets are optional, but are recommended.

## Cycle computers, Maps and Guides

The tour organizer will email a link to Plotaroute with all of the planned rides for the tour. These can be downloaded to your Garmin, or other cycle computer, or phone. If you do not use such technology, please do bring the relevant pages from a road atlas and highlight the planned routes. Maybe bring the road atlas pages as well as a Garmin.







### Travel Insurance and Vaccinations

Holiday costs in the UK have risen so we strongly recommend purchasing travel insurance in case you have to cancel for any reason.

There are no additional medical requirements for UK residents holidaying in Scotland, but please do bring any medications that you need to use. Please also make the tour organizer aware of any health issues.

### Passports, Visas and Monies

Scotland voted to stay in the EU and stay in Britain, so there is no requirement for Passports or Visas. The currency is pounds Sterling.

Joking aside, since covid most cafes now take credit cards (but please do bring some cash as well). You will need access to sufficient funds for evening meals (six are included in the tour price) and all lunches and café stops.

### Tour Organiser Contact Details

I have organised cycle tours in Scotland for over 10 years, visiting all of the larger islands including Orkney and Shetland. My partner Diane helps during the tours and we both love showing people some of the most beautiful places in Scotland. I am gradually widening the choice of tours that I run with a tour to Morocco in November 2025 and Ireland in 2026. Please do contact me if you have any queries.

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