

Cycling the Hebridean Way (8 Days)

Trip code: HW8



Overview

 Total 8 days

 Hotels / B&B's

 Difficulty: 

 Cycling 5 days

 Scotland, UK

 April - September

“The Hebridean Way is a true adventure, a wild and remote cycle route which takes in the awe-inspiring landscapes of the islands off the west coast of Scotland. One of the ultimate get-away-from-it-all cycling trips” Sustrans

Explore one of the most magnificent, unique and unspoiled chain of islands in Europe on two wheels. Pedal along quiet island roads through an ancient landscape that has remained unchanged in centuries, rich in cultural and natural history. You'll ride through dramatic coastal scenery, with pristine white sandy beaches, sparkling turquoise waters and plenty of marine wildlife. This trip begins and ends in Inverness and includes no fewer than four ferry crossings, it's a truly magnificent journey through an area of the UK that is not to be missed.

Highlights

- Quiet country roads, spectacular island scenery and plenty of fresh air
- Standing beneath the Celtic stones at Callanish
- Riding across spectacular causeways linking the islands
- Countless white sandy beaches and sparkling turquoise bays
- Spotting wild animals such as otters, dolphins and white tailed eagles
- Indulging in some of the region's culinary delights
- Explore the rich cultural and natural history of these unique islands
- Arriving at the red brick Butt of Lewis Lighthouse

Detailed Ride Itinerary

Day 1: Meet at Inverness hotel or train station

Our trip begins in the evening at our hotel in Inverness. If you're driving then we'll meet you at the hotel and give details on where to park. If you prefer to arrive by public transport we can meet you at Inverness train station to transfer your bikes and luggage to the hotel. If you're taking advantage of our bicycle and luggage transfer service, your More Adventure leaders will have your bikes and luggage ready for collection in the hotel. At the hotel you will be met by the More Adventure team for a trip briefing and evening meal in preparation for tomorrow's ride.

Day 2: Inverness - Oban - Castlebay

After breakfast in our hotel we'll load up the support vehicle with your bicycles and luggage, then begin our journey to Oban. In Oban we'll board our first ferry to Castlebay on the island of Barra. Here you'll see Kisimul Castle which was leased by the chief of the Clan MacNeil to Historic Scotland for 1000 years for the annual sum of £1 and a bottle of whisky! We'll stay overnight in the pleasant village of Castlebay and get ready for our first day's ride the following day.

Day 3: Castlebay - Vatersay - South Uist

(32 miles & 1800 feet[⬆] or 52km & 550m[⬆])

The start of the Hebridean Cycling Way is at the obelisk in the village of Vatersay, six miles south of Castlebay. From the obelisk we'll ride north back over the causeway onto the island of Barra and ride along the incredibly scenic western coastal road with crashing waves, rocky outcrops and the chance to catch glimpses of marine wildlife below. Our second forty-minute ferry departs Ardmhor and crosses over to the island of Eriskay. We ride on Eriskay for only a short distance before crossing the impressive causeway north, keep your eyes peeled here for birds of prey, porpoises and dolphins. Our next island is South Uist which is where we spend our third night on our Outer Hebrides journey.

Day 4: South Uist - Benbecula

(30 miles & 750 feet[⬆] or 48km & 250m[⬆])

After breakfast in our hotel we'll continue north through the island of South Uist, taking a few tiny backroads that are as rural and quiet as roads can be. The views out to sea are spectacular as our route passes numerous white sand beach coves looking across the shallow waters beyond. A highlight of the day is undoubtedly crossing Loch Bi, the largest loch in South Uist. The causeway is one of the oldest in Scotland, originally built in the 17th century to allow horse and cart to cross the island. We leave South Uist via a final causeway onto the island of Benbecula where we'll spend the night.

Day 5: Benbecula - Berneray - Tarbet

(64 miles & 2800 feet[⬆] or 103km & 850m[⬆])

The toughest and longest ride of our journey due to a diversion to Berneray, our route continues north today from Benbecula. We leave the island of Benbecula to the north over the single-lane North Ford Causeway which, at three miles long, is the longest causeway in the Outer Hebrides. The causeway ends at our next island, North Uist where we continue northwest along the stunning coastline to the white sandy



beach at Balranald. This RSPB Nature Reserve is a wildlife-rich grassland haven complete with sweeping sandy beaches, a rocky foreshore, wild marshes and sculpted sand dunes. We continue east from here to the island of Berneray. Berneray is home to some of the Hebrides finest machair, low-lying grasslands made up of windblown shell sand. These unique machair coastal plains are incredibly fertile and are ploughed in rotation, giving a patchwork of crops and fallow of different ages which supports a wide range of flowers. It is from here that we catch our next ferry across the Sound of Harris to Leverburgh. As soon as we've arrived on the Isle of Harris we continue our journey north on a beautiful coastal road with dramatic views out to the island of Taransay and the clear waters of Luskentyre and Seilebost beaches. After a climb up and over the flanks of Beinn Dhubh, a dazzling descent leads to our destination, Tarbet, home to the famous Harris Distillery.



Day 6: Tarbet - Stornaway/Callanish

(37 miles & 2500 feet[⬆] or 60km & 750m[⬆])

Today's ride begins with a short but sharp climb up from Tarbet then descends to the northern end of Loch Shiphoirt and through Aline Community Woodland. The Isle of Harris and the Isle of Lewis are actually two parts of the same island, forming the largest landmass of the Outer Hebrides. We'll ride alongside Loch Eireasort for a few miles before arriving at our overnight destination either at Stornaway or Callanish (hotel dependent). Stornaway is the main town of the Western Isles and also the capital of Lewis and Harris. Founded by the Vikings in the early 9th century, Stornaway is now the largest town in the Hebrides and has plenty of restaurants and cafes for a relaxing evening before our final ride the following day.

Day 7: Stornaway - Butt of Lewis Lighthouse

(52 miles & 3100 feet[⬆] or 84km & 950m[⬆])

Our route today begins with a climb up from Stornaway then descends to Callanish, home to some entertaining alpacas and a selection of fascinating standing stones. The stones are arranged in a cruciform pattern and are thought to have been erected in the late Neolithic era, predating StoneHenge. In Bragar we pass an impressive archway made from whale bone. Beyond here a visit to the fascinating Blackhouse at Arnol is a must. Once the home of a Hebridean crofting family and their animals, this unique thatched house is preserved almost as the family left it when they moved out in 1965. We continue northeast to the very tip of Lewis to the famous Butt of Lewis Lighthouse which marks the end of the Hebridean Way. The beautiful red brick tower was established in 1862 and is purportedly located in the windiest spot in the UK! After coffee nearby you can either ride a slightly quicker way back to Stornaway (29 miles) or be transferred with your bike back to our hotel for our final night in the Hebridean Islands.

Day 8: Stornaway - Ullapool - Inverness

This morning we leave the Outer Hebrides and make our way back to the mainland. It's a two-and-a-half hour ferry journey from Stornaway back to Ullapool from which you will be transferred with your bicycles and luggage back to Inverness where the trip ends. Alternatively it is possible to fly from Stornaway to Inverness or Glasgow for your onward travel home (not included). If you're taking advantage of our bicycle and luggage transfer service, your More Adventure leaders will be driving your bikes and luggage to your home or chosen destination. If you're flying or getting a train home, it may be possible for the team to help with transferring your bicycle and luggage to the airport or train station.

Included

- Support vehicle and bicycle mechanic
- Snacks and water whilst riding
- 7 x night's hotel accommodation (twin sharing, 3* min)
- 7 x breakfasts
- 5 x lunches
- Transfer from Inverness to Oban
- Ferry from Oban to Castlebay
- Ferry from Ardmhor to Eriskay
- Ferry from Berneray to Leverburgh
- Transfer from Butt of Lewis Lighthouse to Stornaway
- Ferry from Stornaway to Ullapool
- Transfer from Ullapool to Inverness
- All luggage transported during your trip
- GPX files of the route
- Comprehensive joining instructions and kit lists
- Friendly advice and support in the lead up to your trip

Not Included

- Bicycle and helmet
- Parking fees in Inverness
- Transport to and from start and finish points
- Lunches on Day 1, 2 & 8
- Evening meals, personal drinks and snacks
- Travel/bicycle Insurance

This itinerary is a guide only and can sometimes be subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. Whilst we endeavour to uphold the proposed daily mileages, this cannot be guaranteed due to changes to hotel bookings.

Trip Notes

Bicycles and luggage transfer

We will be providing our ever-popular bicycle and luggage transfer service on this trip. If you'd prefer not to travel with your bicycle and luggage to the start and from the end of the trip, the More Adventure team can pick up and drop them off a day or so either side of the trip. This means that you can travel with hand luggage only and it saves you a great deal of hassle. Details of how this service works are issued upon booking. The price will depend on where your pickup/dropoff location is and where the More Adventure leaders will be travelling from within the UK. We have however received fantastic feedback from the value and convenience of the service and we believe it provides excellent value for money.

Self-Guided Trips

This trip is self-guided which means you will be provided with the GPX files and route notes before the trip begins. You can ride at your own pace and really soak up this incredible region. Your More Adventure Tour Leader will brief you and the rest of the group each morning about the route including where the coffee breaks and lunches are. If you do not own a bicycle-mounted navigation device or bicycle computer, we can provide these for you for a small extra charge so please email if you require one. Navigation is definitely not difficult in the Outer Hebrides and there are very few turns and even fewer roads! Your More Adventure Tour Leader will never be too far away to assist with navigation, provide snacks and water, pick you up if

needed, and deal with any bicycle mechanicals you may have. You can of course team up with others in the group if you're worried about being alone too.

Trip suitability

This is a relatively easy trip with a few smaller climbs, quiet roads and some shorter days in the saddle. A good level of fitness and cycling experience is recommended. The support vehicle will be on hand should you wish to have a break too. The weather is unpredictable at any time of year so you will also need to have experience riding in all conditions, come rain or shine.

You will be cycling for between four and six hours each day but this is not a race! This is a leisurely group trip and we like to cycle as such. If you fancy a break from riding then your More Adventure Tour Leader should be able to pick you up in the support vehicle to avoid some sections (subject to any other issues they may be dealing with at the time).

We recommend you prepare before coming on the trip, anything cardiovascular will help as will of course cycling. Importantly you need to do some 4+ hour cycles so you will know what is required. **You will need to get some hill practice in!**

A link to our trip grades that explains in depth our star rating is here:

www.moreadventure.co.uk/cycling-grades

Weather & Climate

The weather in the Outer Hebrides is variable throughout the year and in a single day you can experience all four seasons. **It is absolutely essential that you are prepared for all weathers and be able to carry up to 1.5 litres of water.** Whilst the region has its fair share of good weather, it can rain at any time of the year and mornings can be chilly. Our recommendations on what clothing to bring will be issued upon booking.

Health

Your health and safety is our number one priority during any trip with More Adventure. For this reason, our leaders are the very best in the business, they all hold relevant outdoor First Aid Certificates, and have hands-on practical medical experience in a variety of environments.

It is recommended that you visit your GP well in advance to discuss your trip and any pre-existing medical conditions you have. We will require a comprehensive medical declaration form that may need to be verified by your GP.

Insurance

We recommend that you obtain personal travel insurance before booking any trip. Personal travel insurance is compulsory on any More Adventure trip and as a minimum, we require your cover to include medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and damage/loss of luggage and personal effects (including your bicycle).



We also recommend you obtain bicycle insurance for this trip. If you're looking for reasonably-priced, specialist bicycle insurance, we have teamed up with [Yellow Jersey Cycle Insurance](#).

They offer specialist cover for bicycles including all the standard cover you'd expect but also cover other things like race fee cancellation, crash damage, wheels cover and even theft from inside a vehicle. Use the code MOREADV10 for 10% off.

Please be aware that your More Adventure leader will be checking your insurance documents on the first day of this trip and may refuse you to join the trip if your insurance cover is insufficient. The insurance company's 24 hour emergency contact number will need to be seen by your leader.

Money

Evening meals are not included and cost between £10 and £20 each. You will need British pounds sterling to spend in Scotland.

Accommodation

Due to the potential for restrictions caused by the pandemic, you may be required to upgrade for a single room if you're travelling alone. For this reason we'd recommend selecting a single room when booking (payment is not required upon booking) then email us to let us know you're happy to share a room if restrictions and group demographics allow. We'll then do our best to find someone for you to share with a little closer to the time and avoid you having to pay the single room supplement.

Accommodation for this trip is in good quality hotels and B&B's which have hot water showers, excellent amenities and secure bicycle storage. The price is based upon twin sharing and a single room supplement is required if you wish to have a room to yourself or if restrictions demand it.

Food

Breakfast will vary each morning but will generally consist of continental-style with some hot food items, hot drinks and juices. Lunches will be provided at suitable locations throughout the day's ride and will include meats, cheeses, breads, salads, pastas, snacks, fruit and hot drinks. We will also be stopping at shops and cafes along the way for you to buy snacks and drinks if you so wish.

Evening meals and drinks are not included in the price. Depending on restrictions, we will eat out as a group at a local cafe/restaurant or you're free to do your own thing if you wish.

Equipment

We recommend road or touring bicycles for this trip. Please contact us if you are unsure whether your bike is suitable.

Bikes are not included in the price. It is very important that your bike is in good working order and that you bring plenty of spares. Please bring at least two spare inner tubes. Your Cycle Leader will assist you with any minor bicycle repairs.

You must bring suitable, reasonably new tyres (e.g. Continental Gatorskin, Bontrager AW2; Schwalbe Marathon Plus). We recommend using [Wiggle \(click HERE\)](#) for the best value and quality in cycling clothing and equipment.

We do not provide helmets but it is essential you bring your own to wear.

Clothing

It is crucial to be prepared for the weather! The trip will continue in all but the absolute worst of weathers. Generally the best clothes to wear while cycling are light and comfortable. Please bring a lightweight waterproof top and a lightweight windproof top for descents. Make sure you bring enough clothes for each day cycling and for evening meals. Better to "have and not need than to need and not have"!

Luggage

All luggage will be transferred in the support vehicle from hotel to hotel as you cycle, but you will need to carry inner tubes, snacks and water. The support vehicle will also be on hand to carry further spares and layers whilst cycling if required. Bike boxes and bags can be transported in the support vehicle throughout the trip.

Leaders

This trip is led by at least one experienced and qualified tour leader who will drive the support vehicle, encourage the group, and help deal with any bicycle mechanicals. They will be on hand to offer assistance where necessary and transfer luggage from one hotel to the next.

This trip will run on a minimum number of 6 persons. Please do not book any transport to/from the trip until it has been confirmed by email that it will run.

How to book (we recommend you have adequate travel insurance before booking any trip)

1. Find a date that suits you on our website
2. Click 'Book Now'
3. Fill in your personal details (if you are booking for a group, there is an option here to do so)
4. Fill in your medical details
5. Invite your friends if you wish!
6. Click on 'Make Payment' and securely pay a 40% deposit through Stripe.
7. **Congratulations - you've now secured your place!**
8. You will receive a confirmation email and further information about the trip
9. The remaining balance needs to be paid no later than 5 weeks before the trip begins. This can be paid in installments or in one payment through your More Adventure account.