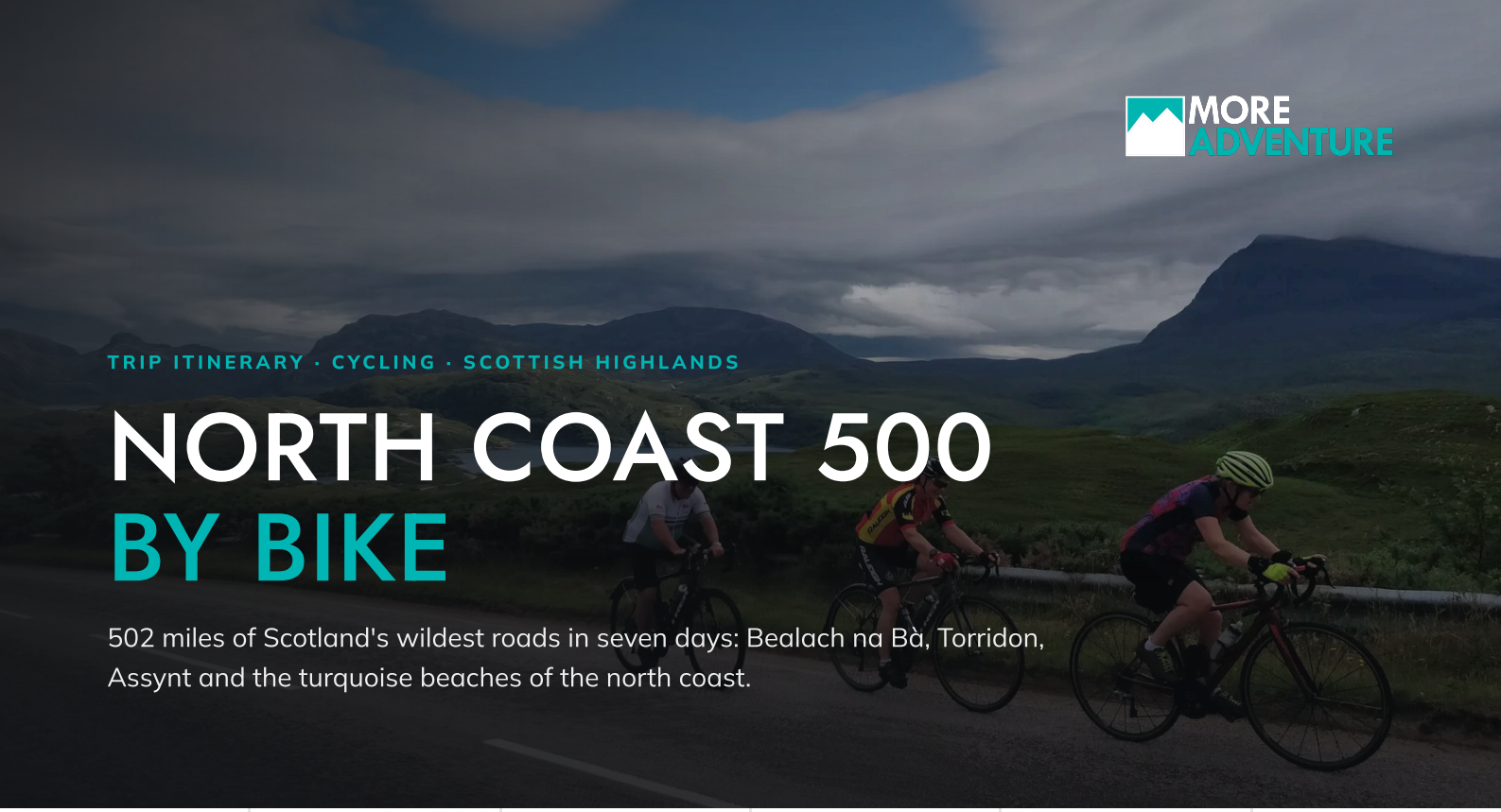


TRIP ITINERARY · CYCLING · SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS

NORTH COAST 500 BY BIKE

502 miles of Scotland's wildest roads in seven days: Bealach na Bà, Torridon, Assynt and the turquoise beaches of the north coast.

9 days	7	502 miles	Hotels	★★★★★	May – September
DURATION	DAYS RIDING	DISTANCE	ACCOMMODATION	DIFFICULTY	SEASON

OVERVIEW

From vast lochs to turquoise beaches and towering mountains to thundering rivers, the North Coast 500 is legendary. Ride our version of the route, which swaps the busy A9 for quiet roads through the heart of the Highlands.

This incredible journey begins in Inverness and is a variation of the official North Coast 500 route, avoiding the dangerous A9 down the east coast. From vast lochs to jaw-dropping turquoise sandy beaches, towering mountains to thundering rivers, these highlands, islands and seascapes are truly remarkable. The wildlife is also world-class, with stags, eagles, dolphins, otters, salmon and inhabiting the glens, skies, rivers and seas of this unique wilderness. Over seven epic days cycling you'll experience this unique landscape from your saddle and ride blissful roads including Bealach na Ba, one of the most iconic climbs in the UK.

★★★★★

"Tremendous organisation and top quality adventure management. Skilled and experienced, Tom and his team were always on top of the ride and quick to adapt. Very personable and always helpful. Definitely recommend them."

Brian Kalms · Google review

HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Climbing Bealach na Bà with views of the Isle of Skye
- ✓ The mountains of Torridon and Loch Maree
- ✓ Stac Pollaidh, Lochinver and Kylesku Bridge in Assynt
- ✓ The turquoise beaches of the north coast
- ✓ Stags, eagles, otters, seals and dolphins
- ✓ Quiet roads through the Flow Country instead of the A9

DATES & BOOKING

See the latest dates, availability and book online at moreadventure.co.uk/event/cycling-the-north-coast-500/

DAY BY DAY

DETAILED ITINERARY

1

ARRIVAL EVENING | OVERNIGHT: INVERNESS

DAY 1: MEET AT INVERNESS HOTEL OR TRAIN STATION

The Cycling the North Coast 500 trip begins 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.



2

65 MILES · 2,000 FT | OVERNIGHT: LOCHCARRON

DAY 2: INVERNESS TO LOCHCARRON

After a wholesome and substantial breakfast in our hotel, we'll load up the support vehicle then pedal around to Inverness Castle where our ride begins. After a few team photos, our route follows the River Ness west out of the city through Inchmore. Here we head to Beauly then onto the Muir of Ord, a village home to the Glen Ord Distillery and Muir of Ord Fort , a Neolithic henge and national monument of Scotland. Just beyond Contin is Rogie Falls, a stunning waterfall where it's sometimes possible to see wild salmon leaping upstream. Our first climbs of the day feature here as we ascend to Loch Garve and Loch Luichart. At the small village of Achnasheen we head southwest to follow River Carron through stunning glens to Lochcarron where we'll spend the night. This pretty town of white-washed cottages is situated on the shore of Loch Carron, the perfect place to unwind and relax before tomorrow's ride.



3

80 MILES · 7,300 FT | OVERNIGHT: GAIRLOCH | BEALACH NA BÀ

DAY 3: LOCHCARRON TO GAIRLOCH



Cycling days don't get much more memorable than this. We begin our ride after breakfast with a climb before descending to the mouth of the River Kishorn, ahead the mountain peak of Beinn Bhàn looms in the distance. At Tornapress we turn off the main road* and tackle one of the UK's finest climbs, Bealach na Ba (Pass of the Cattle) which is the third highest road in Scotland at 623m. Featured in the UK's top 100 climbs, this epic single-track stretch of tarmac ascends through a picture-postcard glen that dissects the Applecross peninsula. Just beyond the pass itself, a large layby provides one of the finest views of the sea and the Isle of Skye in the distance – it'd be a shame to whizz past so take it easy and make sure you stop for a photo! There's a dazzling descent down to sea level at Applecross where we continue north along the coastal road until we reach Loch Torridon. Here we'll hopefully have time to drop into Applecross Smokehouse for some world-famous smoked salmon, trout or cheese, and spot sea otters near Shieldaig Island. From the loch rises the mighty peaks of Torridon, Beinn Eighe, Liathach, and Beinn Alligin, all providing some of the most spectacular scenery in the whole country. At Kinlochewe we ride northwest onto the banks of Loch Maree to our overnight stop in the village of Gairloch.

*Please note that if you'd prefer a more leisurely ride today and want to skip the Bealach na Ba climb, it's possible to continue north at Tornapress to Sheildaig and have more time to relax on Loch Torridon. This option would reduce today's ride to 52 miles & 3000 feet⇧ or 84km & 900m⇧.

4

56 MILES · 4,300 FT | OVERNIGHT: ULLAPOOL

DAY 4: GAIRLOCH TO ULLAPOOL



Today is shorter than the previous two days but don't be fooled, there are some considerable climbs today and the ride is undulating and challenging throughout. Our route begins northeast to Poolewe situated at the sheltered south side of Loch Ewe, then skirting around Dundonnell and Fisherfield Forest. This large mountainous area is situated between Loch Maree and Little Loch Broom and is nicknamed The Great Wilderness as it's entirely devoid of permanent settlements. We descend past whitewashed cottages to Little Gruinard Beach at the mouth of the Inverianvie River. This immaculate sandy stretch of beach overlooks Gruinard Island which was made famous by the testing of biological weapons during the Second World War. You'll be pleased to know they've cleaned up their act since! We climb up and out of the bay followed by a brilliant descent alongside Little Loch Broom with the craggy peaks of An Teallach (The Anvil) to our south. At Dundonnell our climb of the day begins. It's steep at first but eases off as the landscape opens up and vast moorlands offer views to Sgurr Mor and other stunning peaks. During the descent we turn left at a T junction, passing Corrieshalloch Gorge National Nature Reserve, a mile-long canyon complete with rushing waterfalls and a Victorian suspension bridge. Continuing northeast we descend, following the River Broom to Loch Broom. Our destination this evening is the large lochside town of Ullapool which is an important port and considered the Gateway to the Northern Highlands. We'll hopefully arrive in plenty of time for you to relax and explore the town of Ullapool, with it's fine selection of restaurants, bars and live music.

5

80 MILES · 7,000 FT | OVERNIGHT: KINLOCHBERVIE | KYLESKU BRIDGE

DAY 5: ULLAPOOL TO KINLOCHBERVIE



This is perhaps one of the toughest days of our North Coast 500 journey, with relentless undulations throughout, the scenery will however make it all worthwhile we promise! Our route begins northwest from Ullapool with a short climb before descending to Ardmair Beach, a stunning swathe of grey pebbled coastline with the table-top backdrop of Ben More Coigach. We then take an important left at Drumrunie and follow Loch Lurgainn with the iconic peak of Stac Pollaidh to our north. This unique mountain features a rocky crest of Torridonian sandstone, a ridge of many pinnacles and gullies that protrude from the smoother green sides of the mountain underneath. Just beyond Loch Bad a' Ghaill we head northeast along a single-track road on a tough climb through heath and moorland. After crossing the River Kirkaig we pass through Inverkirkaig situated on a sheltered pebbled bay before arriving at the picturesque village Lochinver where we'll regroup. This region is extremely popular with anglers due to over two hundred lochans (mini lochs) dotted around the area. As we skirt around these seemingly endless bodies of water, the road reveals some of the most beautiful landscapes of the trip including a magnificent viewpoint at Drumbeg that showcases this stunning coastline and then beyond the striking peaks of Quinag. A highlight of today's ride is undoubtedly Kylesku bridge. This iconic and innovative 275-metre long structure spans Loch a' Chàirn Bhàin and is extremely deserving of a photograph or two! From the bridge we continue along the coast to Scourie with views of countless tiny islands before cutting inland to Laxford Bridge. At Rhiconich we turn northwest to our overnight stop of Kinlochbervie, the most northerly port on the west coast of Scotland.

6

74 MILES · 5,600 FT | OVERNIGHT: MELVICH | THE NORTH COAST

DAY 6: KINLOCHBERVIE TO MELVICH

The road from Rhiconich to Durness has to be one of the finest of the trip, carving its way through untamed moorland as you climb alongside craggy outcrops and wild plains to Loch Taebhaidh. From here a dazzling descent meets sea level at the Kyle of Durness as we finally reach the north coast of Scotland. Here we'll continue east through magnificent coastal scenery, with picture-postcard turquoise sandy beaches that are positively tropical (though the temperatures will almost certainly not be!). If there's time we'll call into Smoo Cave, a sea and freshwater limestone cave just east of Durness, nearby it's not uncommon to spot basking seals in the surf. Keep your eyes peeled for the beautiful bay at Ceannabeinne Beach before skirting around the edge of Loch Eriboll to tackle our biggest climb of the day – this is what cycling in Scotland is all about! After the descent we cross over the Kyle of Tongue before a smaller climb up to the village of Tongue. From here the road continues to undulate east with some sharp yet steep climbs and descents. The road just beyond the bridge crossing the River Naver is simply stunning, climbing up above the sandy estuary that's very popular with horse riders all year round. From Bettyhill we pedal east to our overnight stop at Melvich.



7

71 MILES · 3,000 FT | OVERNIGHT: LAIRG

DAY 7: MELVICH TO LAIRG



Today our journey diverts from the official North Coast 500 route to avoid the busy and dangerous A9 that runs south along the east coast. However, today's roads are arguably some of the finest of the trip as we head directly south from Melvich, exchanging wild and rugged coastline for wild and rugged moorland. We begin by following the River Halladale south, this spectacular river has an abundance of birds and is also an extremely popular salmon fishing location. Keep your eyes peeled for Forsinard Flows, an RSPB nature reserve home to breeding waders, hunting hen harriers and herds of grazing red deer. Just beyond here marks the top of the first climb of the day where we follow the railway tracks to Kinbrace at the confluence of Claggan Burn and Bannock Burn. Here we head west through open moorland to the pretty red-roofed church at Syre. Just south of here is the clearance village of Rosal which is now simply the ruins of over seventy buildings. Once a thriving village community, the remains of the settlement are a reminder of the Highland clearances that changed the communities and landscapes of this region forever. We continue southwest along what might be considered one of the most scenic roads in Scotland, following the River Naver to Loch Naver. This spectacular stretch of tarmac lines the perimeter of the Loch Naver with the majestic peak of Ben Kilbreck looming in the distance. A highlight of the day is a stop at the Altnaharra Hotel, a renowned hunting and fishing lodge complete with some interesting taxidermy and an entertaining visitors book. From the hotel we follow the River Vagastie up to the Crask Inn which also marks our high point of the day. A fantastic descent then leads us to our penultimate hotel of the trip in the highland village of Lairg.

8

76 MILES · 3,800 FT | OVERNIGHT: INVERNESS

BACK TO INVERNESS CASTLE

DAY 8: LAIRG TO INVERNESS CASTLE



After a traditional Scottish breakfast in our hotel, we head south from Lairg past the Falls of Invershin. Nearby, the Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust is a community project promoting sustainable tourism development whilst creating employment opportunities for locals. We follow the Kyle of Sutherland to Bonar Bridge then onto Ardgay which is a great place to pick up souvenirs! Crossing the Kyle of Sutherland, we tackle the biggest climb of the day, the Struie . This 3.5km climb has an average gradient of 5.2% and a maximum of 21.1%. Stats aside, the views of the Dornoch Firth are simply spectacular, you should definitely find time to cross over to the large viewing area if you're so inclined! There's a brilliant descent to look forward to as we continue south towards Evanton and the Cromarty Firth. You'll notice a difference in the roads as we approach Dingwall, we're now in civilisation with more people, buildings and cars! Crossing over the River Conon, we turn off left towards Alcaig for a more scenic route with glorious views of the Cromarty Firth. Heading south we tackle our last major climb of the trip through Millbuie and Findon Forest to Rosemarkie where we might have time to spot bottlenose dolphins, grey seals and Fort George across the Moray Firth. It'll be a bittersweet final few miles as we ride southwest to cross the Kessock Bridge and into Inverness where your incredible journey ends where it began, at Inverness Castle. Congratulations, you've just cycled our North Coast 500 route, it's time for a celebratory meal and our final night together in our hotel in Inverness.

9

TRIP ENDS

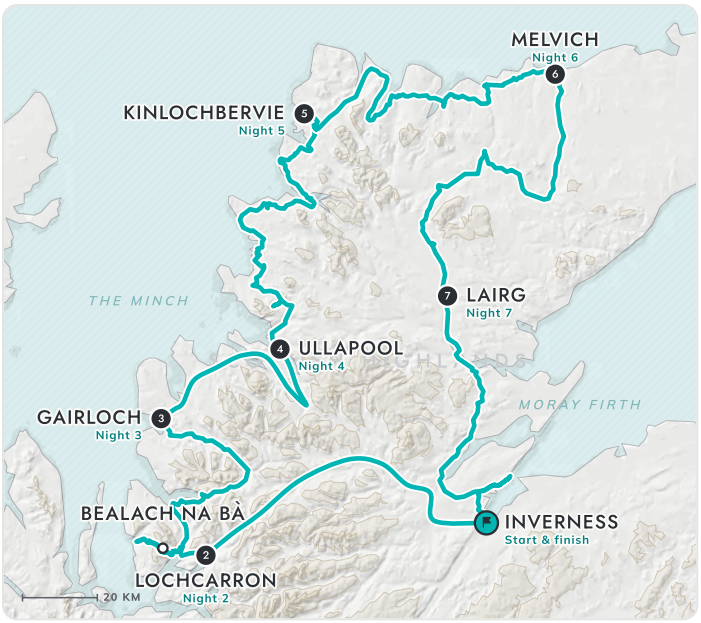
DAY 9: TRIP ENDS IN INVERNESS



After breakfast in our hotel we say our farewells and the trip ends. 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.

THE ROUTE

OUR NORTH COAST 500



Day 2 · Inverness → Lochcarron	65 miles
Day 3 · Lochcarron → Gairloch	80 miles
Day 4 · Gairloch → Ullapool	56 miles
Day 5 · Ullapool → Kinlochbervie	80 miles
Day 6 · Kinlochbervie → Melvich	74 miles
Day 7 · Melvich → Lairg	71 miles
Day 8 · Lairg → Inverness	76 miles

GPX files of the full route are emailed when the trip is confirmed.

GRADE: ADVANCED ★★★★★

See our cycling grades at moreadventure.co.uk. If you're unsure whether this trip is right for you, give us a call.

INCLUDED

- ✓ Cycle leaders
- ✓ Support vehicle and bicycle mechanic
- ✓ Snacks and water whilst riding
- ✓ 8 x night's hotel accommodation (twin sharing)
- ✓ 8 x breakfasts
- ✓ 8 x lunches
- ✓ All luggage transported during your trip
- ✓ GPX files of the full route (emailed when the trip is confirmed)
- ✓ Joining instructions and kit lists
- ✓ Financial protection in accordance with the 1992 Package Travel Regulations
- ✓ Risk assessments and event insurance
- ✓ 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
- × Evening meals, personal drinks and snacks
- × Travel/bicycle Insurance

Single room: +£400, payable with the balance.

Bike transfers: Ask about our bike and luggage transfer to and from Inverness.

GOOD TO KNOW

TRIP NOTES

TRIP SUITABILITY

This is a demanding trip with plenty of climbing and descending on some technically challenging roads through remote environments. An excellent level of fitness and road cycling experience is required. 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 six and eight hours each day but this is not a race! This is a group trip and we like to cycle as such. You will be cycling through rolling countryside which will be hilly, and the pace will be determined by your Cycle Leader. If you are unable to keep to this moderate pace, you will be asked to travel in the support vehicle. You must prepare before coming on the trip, anything cardiovascular will help as will of course cycling. Importantly you need to do some 6+ 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

The weather in Northern Scotland 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 for 5% 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 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 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 the long 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 cycle leader who will cycle with the group at all times. They guide and encourage the group, and help deal with any bicycle mechanicals. In addition to this, another leader drives a support vehicle offering assistance where necessary and transfers luggage from 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

1. Choose a date on our website and click 'Book now'
2. Fill in your details (you can book for a group) and your medical details
3. Pay a 40% deposit securely by card to secure your place
4. You'll get a confirmation email with further trip information
5. Pay the balance no later than 5 weeks before the trip, in instalments or in one go

Questions? We're happy to help.

Call 020 8720 6607

WhatsApp 07719 224663

Email info@moreadventure.co.uk

Web moreadventure.co.uk

This itinerary is a guide and may change due to unforeseen circumstances. Please don't book travel until we've confirmed by email that the trip will run.