

GREAT BEAR - GRAND LANDS END TO JOHN O'GROATS CYCLE

The Grand Tour price for **2024 is £1690** per person

This tour will be running with approx 16 riders

31st August – 15th September 2024

WHAT THE PRICE INCLUDES

- * Transport to Lands End from Milton Keynes or places on the route down to Cornwall / Transfers from John O'Groats to Inverness - Transport South for your bike and bag.
- * 15 nights accommodation in twin rooms in hotels/B&Bs
- * Ferry crossings to Ireland and back
- * Breakfasts
- * Baggage transfers for the duration of the trip
- * Vehicular support for the entire cycle including back up vehicle carrying spares, mechanical support and use of spare bike should you need it
- * Overnight bike storage
- * Photos of your trip

WHAT THE PRICE EXCLUDES

- * Bike and helmet hire
- * Personal clothing and equipment
- * Insurance
- * Lunches and evening meals

PAYMENT

I take a £200 deposit per person to secure your place on a tour – this is non-refundable unless if I can find a rider to take your place then the deposit can be refunded should you need to cancel. The balance of payment is due 12 weeks prior to the trip departure date.

DAILY - 985 miles total (approx) –

31st - Pre ride – Transport to Cornwall – Meet in Cornwall

- 1st - **Day 1** - Land's End to Liskeard – 74 miles
- 2nd - **Day 2** – Liskeard to Wellington – 77 miles
- 3rd - **Day 3** – Wellington to Newport – 81 miles
- 4th - **Day 4** – Newport to Carmarthen - 83 miles
- 5th - **Day 5** – Carmarthen to Fishguard – 39 miles / Ferry / Rosslare to Wexford – 14 miles
- 6th - **Day 6** – Wexford to Wicklow – 60 miles
- 7th - **Day 7**– Wicklow to Dublin - 30 miles
- 8th - **Day 8** – Dublin to Newcastle – 85 miles
- 9th - **Day 9** – Newcastle to Belfast – 32 miles / Ferry / Cairnryan to Ayr – 45 miles
- 10th- **Day 10** – Ayr to Inveraray – 88 miles
- 11th- **Day 11** – Inveraray to Fort William – 73 miles

12th- **Day 12** – Fort William to Inverness – 64 miles

13th- **Day 13** – Inverness to Helmsdale – 78 miles

14th – **Day 14** – Helmsdale to John O’Groats – 52 miles / Afternoon transport to Inverness

15th - Post ride – End of tour

*Daily mileages can sometimes vary due to road closures, route deviations etc and also due to slight changes in accommodation

TRANSPORT

The transport for this trip starts at Milton Keynes train station at 11am on the 31st August 2024; we can then also collect on the way down to Cornwall (A34 services at Oxford, Sainsburys in Swindon, M5 Gordano services at Bristol). Some previous riders like to be waved off by family but if you are travelling down alone you have the option of the train to Penzance which has regular day services including the overnight train from London.

You can drop your bike with me or have it couriered to me for transport to Cornwall to make the travelling easier for you if you decide to not come in the bus. Just let me know what works and Ill try to accommodate (Its whatever works for you, don’t feel obliged to travel to MK if you just want to meet the group in Cornwall).

HOME - We head south and back to Inverness when you have finished at John O’Groats for the final night of the trip where you can finally relax/collapse. The transport down to Inverness is included in the price. Most riders now are flying out of Inverness and couriering bikes or collecting them from me a few days later, (if you live on the M6 corridor I will drop off bikes en route South) or I can arrange a service in Inverness that will courier the bike directly to your home address or bike shop if preferred. Overnight sleeper trains to London or even National Express coaches are an option to head South.

WHAT HAPPENS DAY TO DAY?

This is your ride and we want you to make of it what you had in your head when you first googled ‘Lands end to John O’Groats cycle’. There are no set times to leave in the morning (except ferry days!), you don’t have to ride in a group if you don’t want to, there are no set dinner times. Usually on the ride people make great friends and all end up riding together, eating together and setting a time for next day’s riding and sometimes people do their own thing. I have Garmin edge cycle computers for navigation which have the daily routes planned into them. There is a Garmin for every two riders if you wish to use one. For those of you with your own Garmin’s I will send out the routes in the weeks prior to the ride. If you want to go on a different route entirely then it is up to you providing that you turn up at the same accommodation as us! Please be advised that support in case of a severe breakdown off of the main route may be limited.

ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation provided on the trip is a variety of independent and chain hotels and B&B’s. They vary due to nature of our locations each night and are based on 2 people sharing a twin room. Most accommodation has food and a bar available on site or nearby as well as Wi-Fi. Single supplements are charged for those not wanting to share – please contact for availability.

NAVIGATION

I have recommended routes available in GPS format and have enough Garmin cycle computers available for one between every two riders. If you would like to use one of the Garmins then please just say and I will load each daily route on for you and it will be waiting for you on your bike when you set off every morning. If you already have a Garmin of your own and would like the routes emailing over please just let me know.

BIKES AND EQUIPMENT

I strongly recommend that you ride a road or touring bike for the cycle and have put in sufficient training on this same bike. Whatever you choose make sure the bike has a suitable range of gears as you will be climbing steep hills in places and if you are not familiar with the mechanics of your bike it would pay to take it to a cycle shop for a service prior to the trip. If you intend on completing the ride on anything other than a road bike then please let me know prior to the ride as the vehicles are set up to carry road bikes.

One bike only please. You really won't need panniers; now and then people turn up with them and end up leaving them in the van halfway through day one. Also please consider if you really need that bar bag on your road bike, I would guess that 90% of people who turn up with one end up leaving it in the van for the entire trip after the first day.

If you don't already own a pair prior to the ride you may want to get hold of some waterproof overshoes. These are often overlooked when planning the trip as most riders don't choose to go out in the rain but in completing the LEJOG it is inevitable that you will have to set out in the rain at some point.

Lights, you may think well 'I won't be riding at night', but in heavy rain, fog and under tree cover you need to give that vehicle approaching you from behind at 60mph every chance they can to see you. Some people turn up with lights that can barely be seen halfway down a lay-by and I would only recommend a high output LED pulsating rear light as there is a good chance you will have dense sea fog on the final push up to John O'Groats. Knog, Moon, Lezyne and Exposure all make good powerful rear lights.

Same goes for clothing, that all black Castelli gear looks great but when you have a logging truck bearing down on you in the rain in the Scottish Highlands you want to make sure he knows you are there.

Gloves - you can never have too many pairs. (You may even find that skiing gloves will end up being your best friend...)

Water bottles – If you have 1 x 500ml bottle then you may want to invest in a couple of nice big bottles.

Helmets – It is now mandatory to be wearing a helmet while on one of our rides.

It is recommended that you bring a few spares for your bike (chain links, spokes, inner tubes) I have a certain amount for sale on board the support vehicle, please understand however that it is not possible to stock for every single bicycle. I have tyres, tubes, bar tape, cleats, brake pads, gear and brake cables, chains, chamois cream and more. Long distance tours tend to involve a lot of 'firsts' for people – I've had people say well I've never broken a spoke before in my life why will I need them now – that's always the person that finishes the ride on the spare bike. Better to be prepared if you want to stay on **your** bike.

You are responsible for your own routine maintenance throughout the trip (it is your bike after all) but I will help out in any way that I can. I have track pumps and you do not need to bring your own.

BAGGAGE ALLOWANCE

Your baggage allowance for this trip is just the one piece of main luggage in the form of a sports/expedition bag or suitcase (not 4 small bags please). There are lockers in the van measuring 30cm x 40cm x 50cm so is also a good idea to bring a small rucksack/bag for life to keep in your locker for you to keep all of your items in that you may need during the day (sun cream, tablets, chamois cream etc) to save you dragging your suitcase out and rummaging through it in a wet lay-by. I can only accommodate a small number of bike bags and these spaces will be reserved for people flying in to complete the ride so please enquire if you intend to bring one.

To confirm 1 piece of main luggage and your locker bag.

PREPARATION

There is no sugar coating it, the Lands End to John O'Groats cycle ride is tough, you can however make it easier on yourself by preparing for the trip as much as possible. It is generally noted that preparing physically for the ride is only 50% of the battle; the other 50% is managing those sores, pains, getting into a routine and summoning the drive to get back on that saddle each morning no matter what your situation. You ideally need to make time to get in 3 good rides consecutively in training and set off one day in the rain and replicate the sort of mileage you will be doing on your chosen ride to see what gear you need to buy to make yourself more comfortable.

Avoid doing all of your training on a turbo trainer or you may as well book your train home from Bristol now. If you plan to be stopping off taking pictures and frequenting pubs and tea rooms (why wouldn't you be?!) you may want to consider not riding SPD-SL pedals, as good as they are on the Sunday morning club run they are rubbish for walking in and are the cause of quite a few injuries every year (almost no one heads this advice but I thought I'd mention it!).

Treat yourself to some new gear cables, or while the bike is in for a service ask your bike shop to do this, after punctures a snapped gear cable is the most common breakdown on these trips, they can be brought for as little as £2.50 each and replacing them pre ride can save you a whole world of hassle! (Fitting of gear cables on the trip by me will incur a charge of £35 each cable)

Bottom brackets – a good day in the wet will bring out all of the gremlins so pop a new one in now instead of scratting around trying to find one in Scotland (many before you have had

bottom brackets and headset bearings disintegrate after days of rain and had to reach John O'Groats on the spare bike – 12 pieces of Castelli/Rapha gear but they couldn't put a £20 bottom bracket in pre tour – come on guys..)

SUPPORT

The support vehicle will always be on hand should you need assistance at any time during the trip. In the van is a full tool kit, spare wheels and spare bikes. I will always be close to the riding group and will get ahead of you now and again for you to fill up water bottles and have a sit down. Whether you need a break, have bike trouble or just need emotional support getting up a big hill, I will do what I can to keep you going.

FOOD

Breakfast is provided by your accommodation and ranges from the usual full English/Scottish through to cereals, yoghurts, fruit, toast and fruit juices, tea and coffee.

Lunches – from 2015 onwards I regret that I will no longer be able to offer lunches as I used to due to unpredictable weather, unpredictable locations and unpredictable breakdowns.

Feel free to leave any food you require in the van or sample all of the great local produce as you wind your way North, I have a fridge and a freezer in the new van.

Evening meals and drinks are not included in the price. Evening meals are available at most accommodations or we are close to pubs/towns with selections of eating places. If you have any dietary requirements i.e. vegan, vegetarian etc please let us know so we can advise accommodations in advance.

LAUNDRY

Due to the fact that we are constantly moving on during the cycle trips it is not practical to be using commercial washing services and it is recommended that you bring enough cycle clothing to rotate and wash in your accommodation by bringing some detergent with you. Due to the half day in Dublin you may have an opportunity to visit a launderette. Due to the material that most bibs are made from people find they are normally dry by the next morning's ride anyway. If not you will be able to dry clothes in the van during the day.

GUIDES

I do not use guides on the Lands End to John O'Groats trips for a couple of simple reasons:

- * No guide enables us to keep the costs as low as possible and pass that on to you as a customer.
- * Mainly though we feel that for the majority of you, as riders, this is a huge personal challenge, which with the odd exception will only be completed once ever in your lifetime and to add a guide/babysitter selling you to slow down or where to have lunch would massively take away from the personal achievement of riding the length of mainland Britain! We are not providing you with a 'tour' we are providing you with support for your expedition!

You will be provided with relevant information on a suggested route by way of Garmin GPS with the route planned into it. Feel free to undertake whichever route you wish, I am just there to help out in any way I can!

Any further queries or questions please contact me on –

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Or through the website at www.great-bear-tours.co.uk