

Highland 500



Welcome to Peak Tour's cycling version of the North Coast 500, a stunning tour of the Scottish Highlands. Over the course of 7 days, we cycle from Inverness over to the inimitable Scottish west coast and head north to Durness before looping back south through the central Highlands and returning via the Black Isle peninsula.

The Highland 500 is our most tailorable and flexible Scottish tour including several choices to increase/decrease the intensity to find a balance that suits your needs and ability. For those that love a challenge we provide a chance to accomplish the holy grail of UK ascents; the Bealach na Ba. On the contrary, there's an option to have a rest day part-way through the tour; a chance to sample local life and maybe a boat trip to do some marine wildlife spotting!

Covering between 420-460 miles / 675-740km (approximately) this exciting and challenging tour provides another rewarding experience hosted by Peak Tours. Per day, we average 63 miles/ 100km and 3900ft/1100m elevation over 7 days of cycling.

Highlights

- Spectacular scenery of west and north coasts of Scotland
- White sandy beaches, crystal clear waters, abundant wildlife
- The infamous Bealach na ba and the Applecross peninsula
- Flexibility on some days with a choice of routes
- Opportunity to have a rest day in Ullapool—take a boat trip to see the wildlife or relax in the vibrant town—gateway to the Highlands

What's included?

8 nights' accommodation, 8 breakfasts, 7 lunches

Refreshment stops with our famous red brew vans

Mechanical support including spare bikes and equipment

GPS files and route notes

Full logistical planning and support from the first to the last night including luggage transfers

Bike transfer between Peak Tours HQ and the start/end (Optional)

2 back up vans and a guide cycling at the back of the group

Pick up from the station on arrival day and transfer to Inverness station and airport at the end of the tour.

Peak Tours cycle shirt and certificate

Lots of fun!



Itinerary

Saturday: Non-riding day

Arrival day – welcome to the tour!

Sunday: Day 1 Inverness to Lochcarron

Distance: 61 miles / 99 km
Elevation: 2300 ft / 700 m

Head west from Inverness on a mixture of peaceful country roads and a few quieter A roads.

Pass a number of small hamlets and serene lochs and venture into ever more remote country towards Lochcarron.

Monday: Day 2 Lochcarron to Kinlochewe

Distance: 60 or 33 miles / 96 or 52 km
Elevation: 6100 or 2500 ft / 1850 or 750m

Take on the challenge of the UK's greatest ascent, Bealach na Ba, rising from sea level to 626m and ascend into beautiful Applecross, then over to Shildaig and on to Kinlochewe.

Alternative shorter and easier option straight to Shildaig, avoid the big climb!

Tuesday: Day 3 Kinlochewe to Ullapool

Distance: 75 miles / 120 km
Elevation: 5200 ft / 1600 m

Continue past the impressive mountains around Beinn Eighe and Kinlochewe.

Cycle along the banks of stunning lochs on the way to charming and idyllic Ullapool.

Wednesday: Day 4 Ullapool loops

Distance: 51 or 66 miles / 82 or 105 km
Elevation: 3700 or 5500ft / 1100 or 1700m

Flexibility of two different routes available for exploring the area north of Ullapool, both of which pass the beautiful Lochs Lurgainn and Bad a' Ghail.

Alternatively, take a rest day to explore Ullapool and have a boat trip to see the wildlife.

Thursday: Day 5 Ullapool to to Durness

Distance: 68 miles / 109 km
Elevation: 5000 ft / 1500 m

Hug the coastline and take in stunning views from the shores of Loch Assynt.

Head across the Kylesku Bridge on to the tip of the Kyle of Durness.

Roll into the pretty Durness – our most north-western tip of Scotland.

Friday: Day 6 Durness to Lairg

Distance: 61 miles / 99 km
Elevation: 3300 ft / 1000 m

Continue along the north coast with stunning views of white sandy beaches.

Climb up to Crask for lunch then descend steadily into Lairg for our evening rest.

Saturday: Day 7 Lairg to Inverness

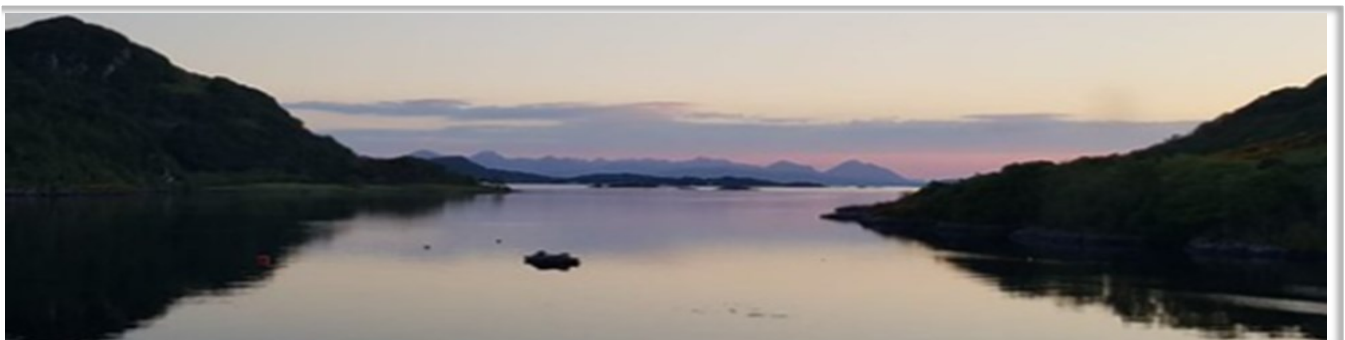
Distance: 68 miles / 110 km
Elevation: 2700 ft / 800 m

Follow the roads to Dornoch before catching a little ferry across the Cromarty Firth.

Enjoy quiet single track roads as we approach Inverness, enjoy the celebrations by the riverside ahead of the final evening group meal and sing along!

Sunday: Departure Day

Hurrah! - you've completed the Highland 500 tour. See 'End of the Tour' section on the next page for return logistics.



Tour Logistics

The start of the tour

The tour starts and finishes in Inverness.

The guides will meet you at the welcome meal at approximately 7.30pm for an introduction.

There are a few options for arriving to the city.

Train: Inverness Train Station has regular direct trains, connecting it with major Scottish transport hubs such as, Inverness Airport, Edinburgh and Perth with onward trains serving the rest of the UK mainland.

Plane: You may choose to fly to Inverness airport.

Car: If you are using a hire car there are plenty of car hire companies who have a depot at Inverness.

Bike: You may choose to cycle to Inverness!

Let us know if you would like collecting from the train station, airport or car hire depot and we will meet you and transport you and your luggage to your first night's accommodation.

The end of the tour

The tour ends on Saturday where we will stay for the final meal in Inverness. The following morning, the guides will leave early with all the kit, leaving you to make your way home (or enjoy some further time in Inverness).

We can transport your bike to our HQ in Glosport for you to collect at a later date.

If you choose the 'return transport' option then your bikes will be packed & couriered back to your address for you.

Support

Usually each tour has 3 guides:

- One driving the 'brew van' - each day will usually have a morning and afternoon 'brew stop,' with a table full of snacks and drinks. You will also bring a small bag/rucksack to the morning brief and leave this in the 'brew van' which can be accessed throughout the day.
- One driving the 'luggage / lunch van' - transporting your luggage from hotel to hotel, as well as setting up your lunches.
- One riding at the back of the group - you will have detailed route notes so that you can go slower or faster than the leader if you prefer or you can cycle with the tour guide at the back so that you don't have to navigate at all.
- Mechanical support: we carry a range of spare parts so that repairs can be made en route and we also have spare bikes available in the event that your bike has a serious breakdown. If we can't fix your bike then we will get it to the nearest bike shop.
- Each guide will be contactable by phone during the day so if you have any issues you can get straight in touch with them.
- For smaller groups you might only have one guide that cycles with the group and one back up driver or for groups of 12 or less just one tour leader will provide back-up for you.



What's Included?

- 8 nights accommodation, 8 breakfasts, 7 lunches
- Refreshments from the brew van
- Mechanical support including spare bikes should these be needed
- GPS files and route notes
- Full logistical planning and support from the first to the last night including luggage transfers
- 2 back up vans
- A guide cycling at the back of the group each day
- Pick up from airport / station on arrival day (Saturday)
- A Peak Tours cycle shirt and certificate
- Bike transfer between Peak Tours HQ and the start/end (optional)
- Lots of fun!

Food

Breakfast

Breakfast is included in the cost of the tour, and will vary slightly between the various hotels and B&Bs that we use, but you can usually expect have a choice of some cooked breakfast options, as well as toast, cereals, fruit juices, tea, coffee etc.

Lunch

Lunches will be provided each day and will generally be a buffet at a cafe or a country pub.

Evening meals

Evening meals can be bought at your accommodation or in a nearby pub, café or restaurant. On the first and final evenings of the tour we will have a group meal at the hotel.

Dietary requirements

Please let us know of any dietary requirements you have and we will ensure that all lunch stops and places we eat evening meals are informed.

There will also be snacks on the 'brew van' to suit any and all dietary needs!

Accommodation

You have a choice sharing a double or a twin room. If you would like your own space then you can choose the single room option, or sole occupancy of a double. Most of the rooms are en-suite however there maybe a few nights where your room isn't en-suite (Sole occupancy of a double room or double is guaranteed en-suite). Generally on the Highland 500 tour we stay in hotels, pubs or smaller bed and breakfasts.

What's not included?

- Evening meals / dinner
- Drinks at lunchtime
- Transport to Dover/Back from Inverness
- Insurance
- Cycle hire (available for a fee)
- Garmin hire (available for a fee)
- Bike transfer between Peak Tours HQ and you (available for a fee)



Kit list

Clothing for all weathers is recommended so waterproofs are essential.

A full recommended kit list is provided and we are always happy to answer any questions that you may have. You can see details of a kit list [here](#).

Luggage is restricted to a maximum of 18kg per person—we have to look after our guides and their backs as they will be carrying your luggage in and out of the hotels!

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out adequate insurance for your tour which, as an absolute minimum should provide cover for your bike and belongings and cancellation cover in the event that you have to cancel your tour for unforeseen circumstances.

You should be aware that if you have an accident or fall ill while on the tour you will lose the money paid for the trip. A travel insurance policy would allow you to reclaim most of the money as well as providing insurance in case you lose your bags or if your bike is stolen, broken etc.

Your policy should also cover cancellation costs if you cancel the tour within 8 weeks of departure. If this happens we will try to fill your space and return your funds to you but if we are unable to fill your place you will lose the funds paid for the tour.

We have partnered with Yellow Jersey who provide Travel and Cycle insurance for UK residents. You can find further details [here](#).

Am I fit enough?

Difficulty

The Highland 500 route is a challenging and rewarding route, full of stunning scenery as you cover this beautiful loop from Inverness.

This tour is classed as a grade 6 tour. See details of difficulty rating [here](#).

You will be expected to be able to complete an average of 63 miles / 100 km per day (and have the option of a day's rest in Ullapool.)

Most people on the tour will be active cyclists, and cycling the above distances on consecutive days will not be too challenging for them.

How fast do I need to be?

Generally, most cyclists completing this tour will be capable of cycling at 10-12 miles / 16-19 kmph over the whole day, keeping in mind that some days are hillier than others, and you will be stopping for breaks and lunches.

Most days start at 8:30 and we ask that all riders are finished by 19:00 at the latest if possible, to allow you time to relax and explore the places that you stay in the evenings.

Are there any hills on the tour?

The tour has some tough climbs, including the iconic Bealach Na Ba but you will be hugely rewarded with some beautifully quiet roads and unrivalled views across oceans and mountains.

Training

The fitter you are and the more training that you do beforehand will add to the enjoyment of your tour and improve your chances of succeeding the challenge.

If you need any advice about fitness please contact us and we will be happy to discuss any questions and concerns that you may have.

We have a training document which has a suggested training programme, which you can access [here](#).

Bikes

The Highland 500 tour can be completed by people on all types of bikes: it is important you ride on a bike on which you are most comfortable. Most people choose to ride on road or touring bikes for this tour.

You can transport your bike in the following ways:

- bringing your own - most people using this option will arrive by car or train.
- we can transport your bike for you if you can get your bike to us in Glossop in the Peak District

Please ensure that your bike is fully serviced and in good working order before the start of the trip. It is advisable to have your bike serviced a few weeks before the start of the tour. This will allow time to 'bed in' before you start your ride.

Alternatively you can hire a bike from us, please see our website for more information.

