This is an Open Challenge itinerary; you can take part on the dates shown and raise money for a charity of your choice.

**Duration:** 13 days / 12 nights  
**Trip Grade:** Tough

**Dates:**
- 6 May – 18 May 2014  
- 26 Aug – 7 Sep 2014  
- 5 – 17 May 2015  
- 1 – 13 Sep 2015

**Payment Options:**

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* Registration Fee is in addition to Trip Cost / Fundraising Target.  
For further detail on payment options see our website or contact us

Cycling from Land’s End to John O’Groats, the furthest possible distance in the British Isles, is a classic challenge that many dream of. Starting at Land’s End on the south-westerly tip of England, we pedal our way through Cornwall, over Dartmoor and north along the Welsh border, skirting the Lake District into Scotland, via lochs and the Highlands to the North Coast and John O’Groats.

In all we will cover roughly 1000 miles, passing through some of the most stunning and remote countryside in the British Isles. This is a tough challenge but a fabulous way to see the country, and one of the most rewarding things you will ever do!

**ITINERARY**

**Day 1: Land’s End – Liskeard**

Land’s End is stunningly situated on the south-westerly tip of England. Its rocky cliffs and pounding seas make a fabulous backdrop for the obligatory photos before we start! Then we gather at the start line and begin our challenge. Our journey starts on winding Cornish roads as we head east towards Penzance, cycling along the sea for a short stretch as we pass the famous monument of St Michael’s Mount. The terrain is mainly undulating but there are a few longer climbs and some shorter steep ones! Inland again, we take winding back-roads before joining a quiet main road to Truro and St Austell, passing close to the Eden Project, before cycling on towards Liskeard. Night hotel.

*(Breakfast not included)*

**Cycle approx 80 miles**

NB We will start fairly early from Land’s End, so you will probably find it more practical to arrive the night before. We can arrange transport from Penzance – the nearest mainline railway station – the night before, as well as accommodation in St Just (approx 5 miles from Land’s End).

**Day 2: Liskeard – Tiverton**

Today we cross Dartmoor, which is generally recognised to be the most challenging section of the ride. We cycle over rolling hills into Devon and through Tavistock, where we have a steep climb onto Dartmoor itself. The views are fabulous if it’s a clear day, though it can often be a little
foggy in this wild part of southwest England, so we take it easy as we climb towards the village of Two Bridges. There is a great descent into Postbridge, site of the well-known stone Clapper Bridge, and then we climb again. By the time we reach the small town of Moretonhampstead the harder climbs are over, though there are still a few short sharp hills as the road winds its way to the edge of Dartmoor, where it’s downhill all the way to Exeter. Crossing the centre of Exeter as a group, we follow a quiet road north to Tiverton. Night hotel.

**Cycle approx 77 miles**

**Day 3: Tiverton – Tintern**

Continuing north, we cycle mainly on quiet, rural roads as we cross into Somerset, passing Wellington and the busy town of Taunton. On back-roads again, we cycle towards Cheddar, enjoying the typically English rural scenery. There are a few short hills but we avoid the steep Gorge itself. We near the Severn Estuary as we approach the outskirts of Bristol, and take the Avon Gorge cycle path for a short stretch as we head up through Avonmouth to the Severn Bridge. We cross the bridge using the cycle path and celebrate our arrival in Wales! Our day ends with one of the most scenic parts of our route as we follow the rolling road through the forested Wye Valley, enjoying views of the beautiful ruin of Tintern Abbey and its pretty riverside village. Night hotel.

**Cycle approx 96 miles**

**Day 4: Tintern – Shrewsbury**

We follow the Wye River to Monmouth, where we head north into Herefordshire, leaving Wales behind. The long, fairly gentle gradients are still with us though, as we ride north towards the town of Hereford, with its striking cathedral and red sandstone buildings. Here we see the Wye for the last time as we cross it going into the city. We head out of town on a quiet road heading to the small village of Leintwardine, crossing into Shropshire a few miles further on. We cycle on undulating country lanes, passing fields and small villages, and the lovely scenery of the Hope Valley. We re-join the main road just south of Shrewsbury, where we have a short run-in to our hotel. Night hotel.

**Cycle approx 90 miles**

**Day 5: Shrewsbury – Preston**

Our morning starts with a gentle cycle through the medieval town of Shrewsbury, with its historic black and white timbered buildings, and we cross the River Severn – much smaller than when we crossed it two days ago! We head north, turning onto a quiet country road and passing through the small market towns of Wem and Whitchurch. Our route is mainly flat and the miles pass quickly. We head through a quiet corner of Cheshire on main roads into the most built-up area of our journey, by-passing busy Warrington and Wigan as we cycle on fast flat roads into Lancashire and on to our hotel just below Preston. Night hotel.

**Cycle approx 92 miles**

**Day 6: Preston – Carlisle**

Today is long, but our last full day on English soil! We cross Preston early, avoiding the morning traffic, and head north on quiet roads once more through Garstang and along the
edge of the impressive Bowland Forest. The roads are primarily flat as we follow our route through the attractive town of Lancaster, cross into Cumbria, and pedal on through Kendal, renowned for its energy-boosting mint cake! The hills of the Lake District rise to our left as we head towards Shap Fell; at over 1000ft it’s the most notable climb since Dartmoor. The climb is long but the gradient is fairly gradual. From the top there are great views of hills and rolling green valleys. A fabulous long twisting descent now takes us almost all the way to Penrith, where we cycle past the castle and on to Carlisle. Night hotel.

**Day 7: Carlisle – Kilmarnock**

We head north from Carlisle through the small village of Longtown, just before the border with Scotland. Crossing over into Scotland, we pass the famous blacksmith’s forge at Gretna Green, elopement capital of the world, and head through the village. Our first day on Scottish roads takes us on mainly rolling, quiet back-roads west, bypassing the pretty town of Dumfries. The morning’s ride is very picturesque with the lush green rolling hills of the Southern Uplands to either side as we cycle northeast through small towns and villages. There are some long but fairly gentle climbs and descents as we cycle through this beautiful countryside. We pass through the small town of Sanquar, home to Britain’s oldest post-office, and a great old toll booth. In Sanquar, along with Cumnock and New Cumnock a few miles ahead, look out for memorials and plaques commemorating the Covenanters who rebelled against the religious dictates of the Stuart Kings in the late 1600s. Nearing Kilmarnock, the roads grow busier but our hotel lies just the other side of town. Night hotel.

**Day 8: Kilmarnock – Inveraray**

We turn onto quieter roads as we head west to the Firth of Clyde via Irvine and Kilwinning. Following the coast road via the pretty waterside town of Largs, we enjoy fabulous views across the water to the Isles of Arran and Bute. The road continues to climb and descend as we cycle along the coast to Gourock, where we take the ferry across the short strait to Dunoon. We cycle north through beautiful forest and along the shores of Loch Eck; sometimes hidden from view by the trees, at other times we cycle right beside the water. This section is mainly flat, until we reach the shores of Loch Fyne, where from the small village of Creggans we have a stiff climb to the top of the loch. There are tempting views of Inverary a short distance away (as the crow flies) on the opposite side of the loch, but we have to cycle the long way round! We pass the world-renowned oyster-beds of Loch Fyne and approach Inveraray on flatter roads. Look out for the fairy-tale towers of the castle among the trees to your right just before the town. Night hotel.

**Day 9: Inveraray – Loch Lochy**

Our day starts with a long climb out of Inveraray, and we...
start to feel as though we are really in the Highlands! After a few miles we reach the shores of Loch Awe and cycle around the top of it, admiring the ruins of Castle Kilchurn at its head. Heading west to the coast again, we cross over the iron bridge at Connell, with great views of Loch Etive to our right and the Isle of Mull across the sea on our left. Our route now is beautiful, as we follow the coast road with views of stunning desolate beaches, and hilly islands and peninsulas across the water. Inland, the higher peaks are visible in good weather. Skirting the forests of Appin, we head north again, still following the coast, to Ballachulish – where the road splits off to the famous Glencoe. We continue straight on, crossing Loch Leven, and cycle along the banks of Loch Linnhe, enjoying a much-deserved flat run into Fort William. In good weather we may get good views of Ben Nevis and the surrounding high peaks. We climb out of the town towards Spean Bridge and the impressive Commando Memorial, and finish our day’s ride on an undulating route alongside Loch Lochy. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 95 miles

Day 10: Loch Lochy – Tain

Another day of beautiful Highland scenery awaits us as we head further north. We are nearing our destination now, taking the hills in our stride and our legs feel great! We follow the Caledonian Canal to Fort Augustus, with its impressive ladder of canal locks, and come to the foot of Loch Ness, which will be our companion for many miles. We pass Invermoriston and then the ancient Urquhart Castle, very picturesque against the backdrop of the loch. At Drumnadrochit we leave Loch Ness and head north again, uphill to Beauly, skirting the end of the Moray Firth, and on to Dingwall. Look out for seals as we pass alongside Cromarty Firth. A short climb takes us through Alness, then our road undulates through farmland until we drop downhill to the Dornoch Firth and Tain, the oldest Royal burgh in Scotland and home to the Glenmorangie whisky distillery. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 75 miles

Day 11: Tain – Thurso

Today’s terrain is not easy but this is our last full day of cycling – we’re almost there! We leave Tain, crossing the Dornoch Forth Bridge and riding alongside the coast for a few miles on undulating roads. As we approach the small town of Helmsdale we leave the coast and head north. As soon as we turn inland our road goes up, and we climb for over 30 miles through the moors. There are a few flat stretches which help to break up the terrain and it’s not too steep; it can be quite exposed, but very beautiful. The landscape is bleaker here than in the Highlands, with rich peaty moorland and clear rivers. We will encounter very few vehicles on this road. Look out for herds of red deer and birds of prey such as osprey or even the elusive golden eagle, as this area is very untouched. We pass several small lochs and some forested areas, and can simply enjoy the scenery. From the top of the climb it’s a lovely descent to the North Coast, where we head east, enjoying glimpses of beautiful, deserted golden beaches. We cycle roughly parallel to the coast; our roads are flatter now but this short section can feel very tough in strong winds. We pass the power station at Dounreay and approach Thurso. This small town comes as a slight culture shock after all the miles we have cycled on near-deserted roads in the last two days. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 87 miles

Day 12: Thurso – John O’Groats

From Thurso we pick up mileage signs for John O’Groats; the distance remaining, compared to how far you have come, is negligible! A few miles from Thurso we pass through the high sand-dunes of Dunnet Bay, with its beautiful white-sand beach and renowned birdlife. We take
Day 13: Depart Inverness

After breakfast we go our separate ways; there are good onward transport links from Inverness.

Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

GENERAL INFORMATION

TOUR COST

All accommodation is included, as well as all meals except 2 as specified in the itinerary. It also includes full trip support of experienced Discover Adventure leaders, drivers and mechanics (see Trip Support below).

It does not include personal travel insurance, two meals as specified, personal items and entry to any optional tourist sites you may wish to visit.

Costs during the Trip

We recommend you budget for the following costs en route:
- Meals not included: £25-35
- Optional accommodation in Cornwall: approx £45

Remember to allow extra for drinks, souvenirs & other personal expenses. This recommendation is a guideline only. Please note that costs may fluctuate and we have no control over any changes.

We strongly recommend you carry a credit card in case of personal emergency.

ACCOMMODATION

Our accommodation is generally in larger hotels, though there may be some B&Bs. Due to the route we take, some nights are in Travel Lodge-style accommodation to minimise unnecessary extra mileage. Be prepared for variety!

Accommodation is comfortable and well situated but not luxurious. Rooms are usually twin-share and have en-suite facilities.

Due to accommodation restrictions in certain areas, the night-stops as shown in the itinerary may change in order to accommodate different-sized groups.

FOOD

All food is included during the cycle other than 2 meals as specified in the itinerary. Lunches are generous buffet-style with plenty of energy food to keep you going! Dinners are generally eaten in hotels or nearby inns.

ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE!

Travelling, whether in the UK or abroad, is always unpredictable. Whether it’s the varying state of public toilets, puncturing in the rain, quirky accommodation staff … it’s all part of the challenge you are signing up for!

We can guarantee that coming face-to-face with experiences outside your normal ‘comfort zone’ will help you bond with your fellow cyclists and provide you with plenty of things to laugh about! A sense of humour and sense of adventure are two of the most important things to bring with you!
Dietary Requirements

Being vegetarian or having other dietary requirements is not usually a problem provided you let us know well in advance. If you know there are plenty of foods you cannot eat you may wish to bring extra snacks from home so you can top up your energy supply, or buy them as you go along. Please feel free to ask us for advice.

Other Meals

Any meals not included are listed in the itinerary and are generally when we are in towns or cities where you are free to explore and find something to suit your budget.

VACCINATIONS

We insist that you have had a tetanus injection in the last 10 years.

CYCLING INFORMATION

Terrain

The cycling is mainly undulating over rolling countryside, though there are some longer, tougher climbs (primarily in Dartmoor and Scotland). Distances are fairly long, averaging approx 80 – 100 miles per day, with a shorter day at the end. You will cycle approximately 1000 miles on this trip overall.

Participants should make sure they are fit enough to manage these distances over 12 consecutive days. This is not a ride which any cyclist should attempt without specific training.

Traffic is light on most of the roads but when we pass through large towns we usually go through as a group.

We are always happy to talk through the trip in more detail with you if you are worried about your fitness at any stage.

FITNESS WARNING: DESIGNED TO BE CHALLENGING!

This ride is designed to be challenging for those of good health and fitness, and is achievable for most people provided they train well in advance. We will supply you with a thorough training guide when you have registered. Training for the challenge is all part of the preparation and requires commitment! Without it, you will find the ride less enjoyable — and we want you to have the time of your life!

Bikes

We strongly recommend that you ride a road/racing bike (rather than a mountain bike) for this trip due to the long distances involved on well-surfaced roads. It's really important that you ride the bike you have been training on so you are used to it. Although training in the gym is useful, there is no substitute for getting out into all weathers and really getting to know your bike — especially the range of your gears. However, Discover Adventure can provide hybrid or mountain bikes at extra cost if you wish.

Bike Repairs

Our support vehicles will carry a range of spares along with a full tool kit. However it is impossible for us to carry spares for every eventuality so it is vital that you check your own bike is in good working order before departure.

It is a condition of travel that you supply your own helmet and wear it at all times while cycling.

Clothing & Equipment

We are travelling through varied terrain and could be exposed to bad weather at any time. The information below gives you an idea of the climate, but be prepared for all weathers and temperatures. Weather conditions can change quickly in the UK, especially the hillier regions we pass through. We provide you with a detailed packing kit-list on registration, as well as details on useful discounts you are entitled to as a Discover Adventure customer. We are always available if you need advice.

Weather

The weather in May and September should be generally good, though it can be changeable especially in Cornwall and Scotland, where there is an increased chance of rain and strong winds. The prevailing wind direction will have more of an impact on the cycling difficulty than rain. We start
TRIP SUPPORT

Discover Adventure Crew

Your trip will be led by experienced Discover Adventure leaders. Our leaders are selected for their experience in harsh wilderness environments, knowledge of travel in remote areas, friendliness and approachability, sense of humour and ability to safely and effectively deal with any situation that arises. They are also trained in expedition first-aid. You are in very safe hands with a Discover Adventure leader.

All our leaders are from the UK or other English-speaking countries. Most work for us on an ad-hoc basis and have ‘real’ jobs in-between trips! We never send our leaders to the same destination for months on end – we want them to be as enthusiastic about your trip as you are.

For logistical and safety reasons we sometimes need to re-group, so the front-runners will find themselves waiting for the slower ones. Please relax, and remember that this is a team effort that enables people to achieve their personal goals and earn sponsorship.

The number of crew and support vehicles looking after you will depend on the final size of your group, but the team will be looking after every aspect of your trip whether that’s transporting your luggage, making your lunch or sorting out any mechanical problems. At Discover Adventure we pride ourselves on our high leader: cyclist ratio and believe it leads to greater trip enjoyment as well as excellent trip safety.

Luggage

Support vehicles are with the group all of the time. All luggage and spares will be carried in them. Space is limited and hard-sided luggage is not suitable, so it is essential that your kit is packed in a soft sailing bag, rucksack or expedition kitbag. Ask us about our specially-designed low-cost kitbags if you don’t have one already.

You should also bring a small daypack or large bumbag to carry for items needed during the day as you will not have access to your main luggage until the evening.

FITNESS LEVELS

Our challenges attract people of all levels of experience and fitness, all ages and backgrounds. We expect all participants to train hard in advance to achieve this challenge, but we respect everyone’s limits. We design our challenges so that everyone can go at their own pace: this is not a race.

For logistical and safety reasons we sometimes need to re-group, so the front-runners will find themselves waiting for the slower ones. Please relax, and remember that this is a team effort that enables people to achieve their personal goals and earn sponsorship.

TRAINING WEEKENDS

SPECIAL OFFER: £150

Only when you book at the same time as registering for your main challenge

Discover Adventure Cycle Training Weekends in the New Forest and Wiltshire are designed to help you prepare for your challenge. Whether you use the weekend to gauge your fitness, get your training back on track, boost your confidence, get advice or meet other cyclists, you’re bound to find it incredibly useful!

For dates and further information see our brochure or website.
If you prefer not to travel home from Inverness with your bike, we offer a bike courier service (at extra cost). Further details will be sent to you nearer the time.

**TRIP SAFETY**

Your safety, and that of the rest of the group, is our highest priority. Our trips are designed and planned with safety in mind. Your crew will be equipped with radios and emergency mobile phones, first-aid kits and other safety apparatus where necessary. They always have access to our 24-hour emergency back-up. Our leaders are responsible for safety on the trip, and will make any changes to the itinerary they deem necessary should local conditions dictate.

Pre-trip administration – such as compulsory medical questionnaires and travel insurance – is all done with your safety in mind.

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**WORLDWIDE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

Long before ‘Responsible Tourism’ became a recognised phrase, we designed and ran our trips to ensure they made minimum impact on the environment and a positive impact on the local communities we pass through. AITO, our Trade Association, has recognised the work we do in this area and has awarded us 5 stars as a Responsible Tour Operator.

**Discover Adventure Projects**

We are supporting a tree-planting project in Peru and a children’s home in Tanzania on a long-term basis. If you would like to ‘give something back’ please consider donating £5 to our projects when you sign up. Please see our website for more details.

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**Carbon Offsetting**

We encourage all our customers to offset emissions connected with their trip. You can offset at any time in the lead-up to departure by visiting Climate Care via our website and making a donation to a worthwhile project supported by them.

Alternatively, if you wish to take more practical action in the UK you can volunteer for a day with TCV and work on an environmental project local to you. Work may include construction footpaths, dry stone walling, creating wildlife habitats or planting trees in your community. Volunteer today at [www.tcv.org](http://www.tcv.org) or call 01302 388883.

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Please contact the Discover Adventure office with any queries, using the contact information at the foot of this page.

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