



www.500miles.co.uk



500 miles Charity Challenge

Summary

This is your chance to ride Scotland's (and probably the UK's) longest continuous mountain bike route. Beginning in the south-westerly tip of Scotland, this trip is an awesome test of fitness and stamina, with 9 days of adventurous, exhilarating riding crossing the country no less than three times, before finishing in Inverness. The route takes in some of the most magnificent scenery, cycling and cityscapes in Scotland and offers an unforgettable experience, not to mention a chance to truly help change people's lives for the better.

Highlights

Too many to mention, but include:
Riding some of the world's best singletrack!
Beautiful and historic Edinburgh
Mountain passes and stunning scenery around Loch Lomond
Ancient drove roads leading to Glencoe
Travelling the length of Loch Ness

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1. You arrive in Scotland. We can help you with transport to our start point, get the bikes organised and talk through the trip. We stay overnight in Newton Stewart, a bustling market town on the south west coast.

Day 2. From Portpatrick we weave along an interesting coastline on cliff top trails before heading inland across open moors where the smugglers and covenanters used to roam. The scenery changes as we approach the rugged Galloway Hills on our long descent into the market town of Newton Stewart for our overnight stop.

Day 3. We head off-road through the UK's largest forest park and on some of the world's finest single-track! We take on the granite outcrops at McMoab then head into the hills where wild goats and deer still roam. Climbing higher into the hills, a roller-coaster of a route takes us into the valley of the Shinnel Water before reaching the birthplace of the pedal bicycle at Thornhill.

Day 4. Leaving Thornhill, we take on some world class, man-made trails at the stunning Drumlanrig estate, taking time to marvel at the fantastic baroque castle. We then head for the Lowther Hills on superb wild trails before taking on the awesome routes through Ae forest. From here, we follow the 'Crooked Road', with stunning views of the Moffat Hills, dropping down into the pretty town of Moffat. Overnight stay in Moffat.

Day 5. We've got 3 tricky climbs today on some fabulous sections of wilderness trail, and are rewarded with amazing views and sweet single-track. Eventually we have a blistering descent into the bustling Borders market town of Peebles. We sneak into the fantastic Glentress trails to complete a brilliant day of biking. Overnight in Peebles.

[more>>>](#)

Duration:

10 nights' accommodation
9 days' cycling

Average Daily Distance:

55 miles or 89km

Price Per Person:

£800 minimum (£100 goes to charity) – Everything above this goes to charity - no maximum!

Includes:

- 10 nights' bunkhouse or guesthouse accommodation (some breakfasts included)
- Baggage transfers
- SMBLA qualified guide
- Vehicle back up
- Transfers and transport as required

Not Included:

- Lunches
- Evening meals and drinks

Available on request:

- Pick up and drop off from public transport links
- Bike and kit hire

Dates:

We can run the **500 miles Charity Challenge** at any time for groups of 4 or more. Contact us with the dates you have in mind.

Alternatives:

If you'd like to do the 500 miles challenge in more or less days contact us to discuss your plans.



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Day 6. We start today winding our way through farmland on old drove roads towards the outskirts of Edinburgh. From here there is one final push up and a fantastic descent down the Pentland Hills to drop us into Scotland's beautiful capital city. After the epic climbs of the morning, it's a relief to have a period of flat, easy cycling! Following the Union Canal west from the heart of Edinburgh, we dodge the pedestrians and dog-walkers and head for Linlithgow, where we'll see the magnificent, roofless remains of Linlithgow Palace. We stop in Falkirk, home of the Falkirk Wheel, the world's first and only rotating boat wheel!

Day 7. Back on the Forth and Clyde Canal for an easy start which takes us all the way to the cosmopolitan west end of Glasgow. We then head out of the city via some scenic cycle paths and through Mugdock Country Park towards iconic Loch Lomond. We follow the bonnie banks of Loch Lomond along some great cycle paths and spend the night on the western side of the Loch.

Day 8. Today we begin by charging headlong into the Highlands on old military and drove roads, surrounded by some of Scotland's most impressive, towering peaks. This is when we begin to feel like we are in the Highlands! Excellent trails and ancient trade routes lead us through to Glencoe and arguably the most magnificent scenery to be found in Scotland. Tonight we stay right in the heart of this magical place!

Day 9. Leaving the majesty of Glencoe behind we tackle one of the biggest climbs of the trip from Kinlochleven to Fort William. The trail is challenging and technical and we are totally enclosed by mountains as we head ever forward towards Ben Nevis. We cycle in the shadow of 'The Ben' and continue into the Great Glen and some quick miles along the Caledonian Canal. Our day ends in Fort Augustus at the southern end of Loch Ness.

Day 10. Today is the last on this epic journey and we cycle the full length of Loch Ness. Remember to keep your eyes peeled for the monster! Great trails and superb scenery take us along the banks of the loch. One final climb out of Drumnadrochit is rewarded by a detour to the excellent Abriachan trails and a fantastic final descent to the Capital of the Highlands and our journey's end at Inverness – what a way to finish! Tonight we stay in the lap of luxury in Inverness. For those with any energy left, a Saturday night of live music and lively bars will keep you going until the wee small hours and for those who just want to collapse, a luxurious bed and hot bath awaits!

Well done you made it!

Difficulty Grade:

This trip is the longest continuous mountain bike route that we know of in Scotland and perhaps the UK. We strongly advise that you gain some off-road mountain biking experience before the trip.

The trip is also ambitious in terms of distance and we are aiming to cover an **average of 55 miles a day**. Again, we recommend that you try to get a few big days under your belt before the challenge. A good level of fitness before the trip begins is essential.

As with all of our group trips, you will be able to ride at your own pace as much as possible but especially on this charity challenge, we aim to start and finish as a team.



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The Charity

500 miles are a charity based in Scotland that helps people in Malawi and Zambia who have lost the ability to walk or have lost full use of some of their body parts, by helping them obtain not only surgical operations, but also devices which replace missing limbs (*prostheses*) and supports for body parts which are weak or not working properly (*orthoses*). In the UK the NHS provides free prostheses and orthoses, but in Malawi and Zambia there is no such provision for unfortunate people. For as little as £60, 500 miles can pay for a prosthetic limb in Malawi or Zambia and as little as £100 can pay for a life changing operation in Zambia. For more information on 500 miles please visit www.500miles.co.uk

Accommodation and food

We use only tried and tested accommodation providers who we know will give a good quality service. They provide everything you could need after a long day in the saddle from secure bike storage to hot showers. Accommodation for the 500 mile trip will mainly be in bunkhouses or hostels with dorm style beds so expect to share with your trip mates! We may occasionally stay in guest houses where accommodation will be in twin rooms on a B & B basis. Wherever we stay linen is provided but you should bring your own towel. We will provide breakfast on each morning of the trip. The places we stay will be close to pubs or restaurants where evening meals can be found or we can cook our own meals at our bunkhouse accommodations. The final night will be in Inverness and is on a bed and breakfast basis.

Climate, weather and midges!

The west coast of Scotland is generally mild in the summer months but can sometimes be wet. Conditions can and do change quickly, especially on higher and more exposed areas, so light waterproofs are advisable. Midges (small biting insects) can be a pest in the West Highlands but usually not a problem when we're on the move. Some repellent might be advisable, check your local outdoor shop for the best kind.

The trails

There is almost every type of trail imaginable on this trip, from purpose built cycle paths to old drove roads, forestry trails, canal toe-paths and superb single-track. The surfaces are all generally hard packed or rocky trails. Some parts are technically challenging so some off-road experience will be required.

Guiding

On the 500 miles Charity Challenge, you will be accompanied by a qualified SMBLA guide who can help with aspects of your riding and take you on the best trails including hidden trail sections. As well as navigating for you, our guides also carry sufficient spares and tools to help you keep rolling in the event of a mechanical problem. First aid trained, they will also make sure you are well looked after on the trails.

Vehicle support

As with all of Trailbrakes' trips there will be a back up vehicle available to carry your baggage. Plus if you have any mechanical problems you can get assistance or if you just need to take it easy for a section, the vehicle will be there to help.

Bike hire

We would recommend for a trip of this length that it would be better to ride a bike that you are familiar with but if you do need to hire a bike we work with local bike shops to provide you the latest bikes for hire. There are a full range of bikes from standard hard-tails to flashy full-sussers! If you need to hire a bike please let us know at the time of booking and we'll make sure we get the right bike for you. If you're bringing your own bike, it is a good idea to check how you will get it to the start point, especially if travelling by public transport.

Transport and baggage transfers

We transport your bags between each night's accommodation, leaving you free to carry a small day-pack with some spare clothes, food and drink. We can also help as much as possible with transfers to and from the airport/train/bus station at the start and the end of the journey. Again, just give us as much notice as possible.

Clothing and kit

Dress for the weather in Scotland! You can check out the kit list on the website or contact us for more detailed advice if you are not sure what to bring. There can literally be four seasons in a day, so come prepared for all conditions!