FRANCE, BELGIUM & THE NETHERLANDS - NORTH SEA CYCLE ROUTE - £350

16th August 2020 - 28th August 2020 (13 days)
This tour will bring you face to face with two of the most vibrant cycling cultures in Europe. If you are looking for the simple pleasure of cycling on marked cycle routes in cycle friendly countries or prefer to walk around places of interest, the informal structure of this tour allows you to enjoy parts of France, Belgium and the Netherlands in the company of like-minded cyclists. An unsupported lightweight camping tour with the opportunity to enjoy a rich mixture of golden beaches, the European Space Expo, heritage sites from the two world wars and working windmills. From the small villages to the large towns and cities you will find that the people of Belgium and the Netherlands will welcome you with their excellent English.

HOLIDAY TYPE: Guided
TOUR MANAGER: Fleur Woolley
GRADE: Moderate
BOOKING STATUS: Places Available
ACCOMMODATION: Camping
BOARD BASIS: Self Catering
TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS: Land Only
ROAD / OFF ROAD: Road
HOLIDAY STYLE: Moving-on
VEHICLE SUPPORT: Carry Own Luggage
HOLIDAY REF NO: 03297

Holiday Itinerary

Sunday 16th August
Meet at the campsite in Guines, 15km from Calais. Stay 1 night.

Monday 17th August
This short ride takes us through Ardres, Tournehem and Nordausques to a resort style campsite with a pool complex and restaurant at the Chateau du Gandspettres, near Watten. After setting up camp, time to visit the Blockhaus, a V2 rocket site in the Foret d’Eperlecques. 32km. Stay 1 night.

Tuesday 18th August
A rest day or visit the Trench of Death (a preserved First World War trench system) and the Pax Tower (a peace tower with 22 floors of exhibits and a commanding view from the top) or cycle 25km to the beach near Nieuwpoort.

Wednesday 19th August
We cycle on route LF1 through Watten, Bollezeele, Esquelbecq, Wormhout and Bambeque, crossing the border into Belgium and on to Diksmuide. The campsite here is a simple one with a small bar. 66km. Stay 2 nights.

Thursday 20th August
A rest day or visit the Trench of Death (a preserved First World War trench system) and the Pax Tower (a peace tower with 22 floors of exhibits and a commanding view from the top) or cycle 25km to the beach near Nieuwpoort.

Today we cycle along the River Ijzer to Nieuwpoort where we take route LF1 through Snaaskerke and Oudenburg to Jabbeke, near Brugge where we stay at a resort style campsite. 47km. Stay 2 nights.
Friday 21st August
A rest day, but just 10km away is the City of Brugge, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Cycle into the city or use public transport.

Saturday 22nd August
We head back to the Groot Zwin canal and travel east using this and the Damse Vaart canal to skirt Brugge, then into Sluis for refreshments and a quick look around. We continue along the coast to Breskens and then take the ferry to Vlissingen for our first taste of the Netherlands. Tonight’s campsite at Middelburg is a small upmarket one with a bar and restaurant where we can usually enjoy live music and maybe a barbecue. 64km. Stay 1 night.

Sunday 23rd August
Today we follow dams and dikes threading our way through polder, natural islands and considerable stretches of water. A challenging ride with the North Sea on our left, to our campsite on the north side of Brielle. 80km. Stay 2 nights.

Monday 24th August
A rest day or cycle to Rotterdam then take the waterbus to Ridderkerk to visit Kinderdijk, a World Heritage Site with working windmills. 55km.

Tuesday 25th August
We head east to Rozenburg and take a small ferry to Maassluis, then continue on LF12 to Hook of Holland and up the coast on LF1 to pass through Scheveningen, the playground of the Hague, with lots of choice for lunch. Then through sand dunes to pass Katwijk aan Zee and Noordwijk aan Zee to our campsite on the banks of the Oosterduinse Meer north of Noordwijkhout. Today you will see some of the best beaches in Europe. 67km. Stay 2 nights.

Wednesday 26th August
A rest day or a loop ride to Haarlem, a typical Dutch town and an excellent place for lunch and people watching. 40km approx. You could also visit the European Space Expo (11km away), or take public transport to Amsterdam to visit Anne Frank’s House (if booked online in advance).

Thursday 27th August
Following LF1 we cycle through sand dunes and along the coast of Zandvoort, a vibrant seaside town, then through Ijmuiden and Beverwijk to our campsite at Heemskerk. The short ride should allow time to explore the nature reserve that is between the campsite and the sea. 43km. Stay 1 night.

Friday 28th August
Tour ends.
Cycles & Equipment
A touring cycle, hybrid or lightweight ATB is suitable for this tour. You should ensure your cycle is well maintained, paying particular attention to wheels, tyres and brakes. A low bottom gear (e.g. small chainring the same size or smaller than the largest cog on your rear wheel) is recommended. If you are unsure about gears, please discuss with the Tour Manager. Mudguards are optional but show courtesy to those who are following you in wet weather. Lights are a legal requirement but might not prove essential. New tyres are recommended of at least 32mm diameter. Participants will be expected to carry each day sufficient spares and tools to deal with punctures and minor repairs. You should also carry a first aid kit for your own needs. Each participant is expected to bring, and carry, all of their own lightweight camping equipment, clothing, personal items and spares. You are advised to do some riding before the tour with a similar load to that which you will be carrying during the tour to get a feel for how your bike will handle. Helmets are your personal choice. You will need to carry an EN471 Hi-Vis vest in France as you are required to wear it after dark and in poor visibility. In evenings when they want, in small groups of riders with similar ability or riding style, allowing everyone to cycle at a pace comfortable to them, with chance meetings during the day at scenic viewpoints, cafe stops, lunch, etc. It is helpful if you have had some previous experience of cycle camping and carrying all your gear on your bike whilst riding over the distances that need to be covered on moving-on days. However, reasonably strong cyclists who have done other lightweight camping are usually able to put the two together without any real difficulty. It is important that you are fit enough to undertake the tour as there is no vehicle support.

Area Covered By The Holiday
The focus of this tour is the ‘North Sea Cycle Route’ from Calais (France) through Belgium to Heemskerk, near Amsterdam (Netherlands). Discover the Blockhaus in the Foret d’ Eperlecques, Diksmuide, Brugge, Middelburg, Rotterdam, Haarlem and possibly Amsterdam.

Rides & Rest Days
The North Sea Cycle Route was the first long distance cycle route in Europe to be signposted in both directions. Over the years the route has been improved, in some cases moved, and there is often a choice of route, but we will endeavour to follow the signed route. The terrain is mostly flat or undulating and with prevailing winds being from the west we can expect to have a following wind for most of the tour, though unfortunately this cannot be guaranteed. Staying at four campsites for two-nights will allow for cycling without luggage and on these days the circular rides can be shortened, or lengthened, depending on your personal cycling or exploring interests, and any of these days can be taken as rest days. There will be the opportunity to visit tourist attractions, but this tour primarily focuses on enjoying the natural environment and the numerous attractive areas we pass through.

The question of having to ‘keep up’ is not necessarily relevant, as there is no effort to keep everyone together, but rather let everyone start off in the mornings when they want, in small groups of riders with similar ability or riding style, allowing everyone to cycle at a pace comfortable to them, with chance meetings during the day at scenic viewpoints, cafe stops, lunch, etc. It is helpful if you have had some previous experience of cycle camping and carrying all your gear on your bike whilst riding over the distances that need to be covered on moving-on days. However, reasonably strong cyclists who have done other lightweight camping are usually able to put the two together without any real difficulty. It is important that you are fit enough to undertake the tour as there is no vehicle support.

Accommodation & Meals
All campsites have been chosen for their location rather than for any particular amenities they might offer. It is usual for 3 to 5 tents to share a ‘pitch’, depending on its size. All sites should have hot showers and washing facilities. Some will have a small shop, and there may also be anything from a snack bar to a full restaurant on site.

Travel
As this tour is land only, you have the option of taking the ferry, Eurostar or European Bike Express to Calais which is 15km from the first campsite. Returning, there are ferries from Amsterdam to Newcastle, Rotterdam to Hull or Hook of Holland to Harwich. Further details, as well as assistance and advice regarding the various travel options, is available from the Tour Manager. If you would like to travel to and from the tour with other tour participants, again please contact the Tour Manager who will endeavour to facilitate this.

As no travel is included it is very important to note that neither your Tour Manager nor CTC Holidays & Tours are responsible for you in any way until the appointed time at the designated meeting point. Should you fail to arrive at the appointed time for whatever reason, we will not be responsible for any additional expenses you may incur in order to meet up with the tour group. Before finalising travel arrangements to meet the tour, you should ensure that you have read and understood our booking conditions. Should this tour not attract sufficient bookings to reach the minimum operating size, we may cancel the tour at any time up to 10 weeks before departure. It is therefore recommended that you book fully flexible and refundable transport and accommodation or wait until you have been informed that the tour is going ahead, as in the event of the tour being cancelled, we will not be responsible for any losses incurred.

Group Information
The maximum group size will be 16 excluding the Tour Manager(s).

Weather & Clothing
A range of weather is likely to be experienced, with temperatures fluctuating from cool to very warm, and there is the possibility of rain at any time. Appropriate clothing needs to be carried to ensure that you can remain warm and (reasonably) dry, both during the day and around the campsite in the evening. Also bring things that wash and dry easily. High protection sun cream and a good insect repellent are both advisable, and do bring your swimwear.

Payment Schedule
A deposit of £100 per person is payable upon booking, with the final balance of £250 per person to be paid ten weeks prior to departure, by 7th June 2020.

Cancellations
Should you be forced to cancel your booking for any reason you must notify us in writing. Cancellation charges are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written notice received:</th>
<th>Cancellation charge:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 7th June 2020</td>
<td>Deposit (£100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 7th June 2020 through to departure</td>
<td>100% (£350)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Information
Area Covered By The Holiday
The focus of this tour is the ‘North Sea Cycle Route’ from Calais (France) through Belgium to Heemskerk, near Amsterdam (Netherlands). Discover the Blockhaus in the Foret d’ Eperlecques, Diksmuide, Brugge, Middelburg, Rotterdam, Haarlem and possibly Amsterdam.

Rides & Rest Days
The North Sea Cycle Route was the first long distance cycle route in Europe to be signposted in both directions. Over the years the route has been improved, in some cases moved, and there is often a choice of route, but we will endeavour to follow the signed route. The terrain is mostly flat or undulating and with prevailing winds being from the west we can expect to have a following wind for most of the tour, though unfortunately this cannot be guaranteed. Staying at four campsites for two-nights will allow for cycling without luggage and on these days the circular rides can be shortened, or lengthened, depending on your personal cycling or exploring interests, and any of these days can be taken as rest days. There will be the opportunity to visit tourist attractions, but this tour primarily focuses on enjoying the natural environment and the numerous attractive areas we pass through.

The question of having to ‘keep up’ is not necessarily relevant, as there is no effort to keep everyone together, but rather let everyone start off in the mornings when they want, in small groups of riders with similar ability or riding style, allowing everyone to cycle at a pace comfortable to them, with chance meetings during the day at scenic viewpoints, cafe stops, lunch, etc. It is helpful if you have had some previous experience of cycle camping and carrying all your gear on your bike whilst riding over the distances that need to be covered on moving-on days. However, reasonably strong cyclists who have done other lightweight camping are usually able to put the two together without any real difficulty. It is important that you are fit enough to undertake the tour as there is no vehicle support.

Accommodation & Meals
All campsites have been chosen for their location rather than for any particular amenities they might offer. It is usual for 3 to 5 tents to share a ‘pitch’, depending on its size. All sites should have hot showers and washing facilities. Some will have a small shop, and there may also be anything from a snack bar to a full restaurant on site.

Travel
As this tour is land only, you have the option of taking the ferry, Eurostar or European Bike Express to Calais which is 15km from the first campsite. Returning, there are ferries from Amsterdam to Newcastle, Rotterdam to Hull or Hook of Holland to Harwich. Further details, as well as assistance and advice regarding the various travel options, is available from the Tour Manager. If you would like to travel to and from the tour with other tour participants, again please contact the Tour Manager who will endeavour to facilitate this.

As no travel is included it is very important to note that neither your Tour Manager nor CTC Holidays & Tours are responsible for you in any way until the appointed time at the designated meeting point. Should you fail to arrive at the appointed time for whatever reason, we will not be responsible for any additional expenses you may incur in order to meet up with the tour group. Before finalising travel arrangements to meet the tour, you should ensure that you have read and understood our booking conditions. Should this tour not attract sufficient bookings to reach the minimum operating size, we may cancel the tour at any time up to 10 weeks before departure. It is therefore recommended that you book fully flexible and refundable transport and accommodation or wait until you have been informed that the tour is going ahead, as in the event of the tour being cancelled, we will not be responsible for any losses incurred.

Group Information
The maximum group size will be 16 excluding the Tour Manager(s).

Weather & Clothing
A range of weather is likely to be experienced, with temperatures fluctuating from cool to very warm, and there is the possibility of rain at any time. Appropriate clothing needs to be carried to ensure that you can remain warm and (reasonably) dry, both during the day and around the campsite in the evening. Also bring things that wash and dry easily. High protection sun cream and a good insect repellent are both advisable, and do bring your swimwear.

Cycles & Equipment
A touring cycle, hybrid or lightweight ATB is suitable for this tour. You should ensure your cycle is well maintained, paying particular attention to wheels, tyres and brakes. A low bottom gear (e.g. small chainring the same size or smaller than the largest cog on your rear wheel) is recommended. If you are unsure about gears, please discuss with the Tour Manager. Mudguards are optional but show courtesy to those who are following you in wet weather. Lights are a legal requirement but might not prove essential. New tyres are recommended of at least 32mm diameter. Participants will be expected to carry each day sufficient spares and tools to deal with punctures and minor repairs. You should also carry a first aid kit for your own needs. Each participant is expected to bring, and carry, all of their own lightweight camping equipment, clothing, personal items and spares. You are advised to do some riding before the tour with a similar load to that which you will be carrying during the tour to get a feel for how your bike will handle. Helmets are your personal choice. You will need to carry an EN471 Hi-Vis vest in France as you are required to wear it after dark and in poor visibility. In
Belgium and the Netherlands you are required to have a bell which can be heard 25 metres away. We do not intend to ride in the dark but you should have the required standard of reflectors and lights so you can ride legally if necessary. If you comply with the law in the Netherlands you will be covered for both France and Belgium too.

Bicycle light laws are very strict in the Netherlands and hefty fines await anyone ignoring the rules after dark. The lights required by law are: all bikes must have a round red reflector on the rear, yellow reflectors on the pedals and white or yellow reflective tyres.

Front light - white or yellow (must shine straight ahead); back light - red.

Flashing lights, such as the LEDs popular in the UK, are illegal in the Netherlands. Loose lights (ie those not fixed to your bike) are permitted, providing they are properly visible and attached to your upper body.

Maps & Guides

Whilst there is no need to carry detailed maps if you don’t want to, it’s generally wise to carry some form of map in case you become separated from the group by accident or should you decide to ride on your own. The best maps for the tour (you would need both, available only through European suppliers) are: LF1 Noordzeeroute ISBN 978-90-5881-638-2 and Basiskaart network LF-routes ISBN: 9789072930569. A reasonable and cheaper alternative would be taking pages from the Michelin Road atlas, Benelux and North of France: ISBN/EAN: 9782067192737. Or Michelin 1:200 000 533, 532 and 511 maps.

Travel Insurance & Advice

In addition to travel insurance, EU nationals should carry a European Health Insurance Card, obtainable from www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC/. This enables you to take advantage of emergency medical services free or at a discount under a reciprocal provision that exists between EU member states. Your travel insurer may refuse to meet the extra costs of medical treatment if you do not carry this card.

Before booking you should check the latest travel advice from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, at www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice or on 0845 850 2829.

Tour Manager's Contact Details

If you require any assistance, or have any queries, please don’t hesitate to contact the Tour Manager using the information provided below.

Fleur Woolley

Email: fleur.woolley@gmail.com

Mobile: 07803 008740

Address: 19 Bloomfield Markland Hill Bolton BL1 5AL