BOOKS & BIKEs - ALNWICK TO WIGTOWN - £570

8th May 2020 - 15th May 2020 (8 days)
This tour will appeal to cycle tourists and book lovers alike. It links the towns of Alnwick, home to the enormous and well known bookshop Barter Books, and meanders across the Border countryside to Wigtown, Scotland's very own book town. Wigtown is home to a dozen or so bookshops and has its own week long annual book festival in September, a sort of Scottish Hay-on-Wye.
This is planned to be a relaxed, fun tour with distances of 35 to 45 miles on most days, although there will still be some short steep climbs in places and plenty of glorious scenery. Two nights are spent in Wigtown, with a circutous ride along the remote Dumfries peninsula known as the Machars. The area is one of the last overlooked areas of the UK, and indeed of Scotland. It contains a wealth of fascinating historical and cultural interest including the birthplace of Gavin Maxwell, the Mulberry Harbour D-Day test site and is home to numerous fantastic gardens. Accommodation is in hotels and hostels with some meals included.

HOLIDAY TYPE: Guided
TOUR MANAGER: Gary Cummins
GRADE: Moderate
BOOKING STATUS: Places Available
ACCOMMODATION: Hotel & Hostel
BOARD BASIS: Some Meals
TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS: Land Only
ROAD / OFF ROAD: Road
HOLIDAY STYLE: Moving-on
VEHICLE SUPPORT: Carry Own Luggage
HOLIDAY REF NO: 03448

Holiday Itinerary

Friday 8th May
Rendezvous at Alnwick Youth Hostel in time for a briefing at 6pm. Alnwick, described as the town with the highest quality of life in the UK, is home to Barter Books famous as the home of the rediscovered 'Keep calm and carry on' poster that inspired multiple imitations a few years ago. Stay 1 night (hostel). Meals: None

Saturday 9th May
We leave Alnwick and travel on scenic minor roads picking up National Cycle Network (NCN) route 68, staying on minor roads as much as possible and making the most of the remote Northumberland countryside. We overnight in a bunkhouse attached to a gastropub in Elsdon, a perfect English country village. 36 miles. Stay 1 night (hostel). Meals: D

Sunday 10th May
Today we enjoy Kielder Water and Forest Park, cycling alongside the south bank of Kielder Water. We overnight in an Outdoor Centre in Newcastleton with access to the centre's swimming pool. Bring appropriate clothing if you fancy a swim. 44 miles. Stay 1 night (hostel). Meals: B

Monday 11th May
Having woken up in Scotland we leave Newcastleton promptly and head to Dumfries, probably best known for its association with Robert Burns. Today we'll make use of the largely overlooked National Byway. Our ride takes us on a very up and down route through some remote but green sections of the Dumfriesshire countryside. 45 miles. Stay 1 night (hotel). Meals: D

Tuesday 12th May
We leave Dumfries on a lovely quiet route following the Cairn Water. Our book theme continues as we cycle through Dunscore, home to a library founded by Robert Burns himself. For cyclists, the interest comes after 21 miles at Keir Mill where we visit the Blacksmith's Forge that was home to Kirkpatrick Macmillan who is credited with inventing the world's first pedal drive bicycle in 1839. We'll also visit his grave in Keir churchyard. We overnight in New Galloway. 45 miles. Stay 1 night (hotel). Meals: B D

Wednesday 13th May
Today we have some interesting sections with short, but very steep climbs making it a popular area with MTB enthusiasts. We pick up parts of the NCN and enjoy very rural riding alongside scenic Loch Clatteringshaws towards Newton Stewart. Finally we ride alongside the River Cree into Wigtown. 35 miles. Stay 2 nights (hotel). Meals: B

Thursday 14th May
Today we take a scenic circular ride into the very underrated Wigtownshire rolling countryside known as the Machars with no big climbs and very quiet lanes. Past the southern tip of the peninsula the shoreline leaves Wigtown Bay and becomes part of Luce Bay, a combination of rocky shoreline, sandy beaches and cliffs. We'll cycle through Garlieston, the village that became part of the secret Mulberry Harbour project, the test site for D-Day, then down to the Isle of Whithorn before returning to our hotel. 38 miles. Meals: B D

Friday 15th May
The tour ends after breakfast. Meals: B

Meals: B = Breakfast  D = Dinner

Holiday Summary

Accommodation & Meals
Four nights are spent in hotels, two rated 3-star and one 4-star, sharing twin rooms. Three nights are spent in hostels sharing dormitories which include a Youth Hostel, a bunkhouse attached to a gastropub and an Outdoor Centre with a swimming pool for our use in the evening. No single accommodation is available. Meals are included on some days and these are detailed in the itinerary. Vegetarian meals are available if requested when booking.

Vehicle Support
No vehicle support is provided and participants will need to carry their own luggage.

Travel Insurance
Obtaining travel insurance is optional for UK residents as your Cycling UK membership provides third party cover. However, this does not cover any other risks such as cancellation charges, personal injury or lost property. We therefore strongly recommend that suitable insurance is taken out to safeguard against such risks. Members who do not reside in the UK are not covered for third party and are advised to obtain suitable cover before leaving their normal residence. If you already have an annual policy, you may need to confirm that it will cover a UK holiday or make provision for it to do so.

Price
The price of £570 is based on a minimum number of 12 people taking part in the holiday; please note Booking Conditions, clause 3. If there are insufficient bookings by 28th February 2020, we will contact you and return all monies paid, although in certain circumstances the holiday may still run at below minimum numbers but at the same price.

Price Includes
- 4 nights hotel, 3 nights hostel, sharing room/dormitory
- 5 breakfasts, 4 dinners
- CTC Cycling Holidays & Tours costs

Price Does Not Include
- Travel to Alnwick and from Wigtown
- Drinks with dinner
- Lunches or refreshments during the day
- Entry fees at any attractions visited
- Any other personal expenses
- Travel Insurance

Payment Schedule
A deposit of £200 per person is payable upon booking, with the final balance of £370 per person to be paid ten weeks prior to departure, by 28th February 2020.

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

Written notice received: Cancellation charge:
Before 28th February 2020 Deposit (£200)
**Additional Information**

**Area Covered By The Holiday**
This tour crosses large areas of rolling countryside to link two towns associated with books, Alnwick and Wigtown. It's not an academic trip but the book element adds a little extra interest and fun to what should be a nice week of cycle touring. Highlights of the trip will include the areas in and around Kielder and Galloway Forest Parks, both awarded the status of "International Dark Sky Park", an indication of their remoteness. We also visit Keir Mill, the birthplace of Kirkpatrick Macmillan.

The tour finishes in Wigtown where we will have a day ride to take in the area known as the Machars. The book association continues here with author Gavin Maxwell who wrote Ring of Bright Water. Maxwell was born near the small village of Elrig, near Port William, in Wigtownshire, and his relatives still live in the area.

**Rides & Rest Days**
This is not a big distance tour, more of a sightseeing tour facilitated by bike, albeit one covering between 35-45 miles on most days. It is expected that participants will ride in loose groups at around 8-12mph on the flat and rolling sections, slower up hills, usually meeting up at cafes or picnic spots for lunch and refreshment breaks.

Inevitably, parts of this route will have hills and there is no back up vehicle to carry your luggage so you do need to be fit to get the most out of the tour.

We will make use of the National Cycle Network and the Tour Manager will try to make sure that the sections we use are appropriate for touring bikes. We will also be rediscovering some sections of the now largely overlooked National Byway that was developed to take advantage of well surfaced but very remote minor roads.

**Accommodation & Meals**
At the hostels the usual division of male and female dormitories may not be strictly adhered to. Bedding and towels will be provided. Where dinner isn't provided there should be somewhere nearby to get this but if not we can use their self catering kitchens. Subject to everyone's agreement, on one night we will try and arrange a group dinner at which everyone can contribute to the cooking or washing up – naturally nobody will be obliged to join in if they prefer not to.

**Travel**
Rail travel to Alnwick is recommended. Alnwick is about 5 miles from Alnmouth on the East Coast Main Line with trains operated by LNER and CrossCountry. Cycles can be carried but you MUST book your cycle in advance. Wigtown, where our tour ends, is more remote. The nearest rail stations are Barhill or Stranraer, both around 25 miles away. Coaches travel from Wigtown and nearby Newton Stewart and Stagecoach, one of the coach operators, have advised that they carry cycles in the luggage area underneath the coach.

**Group Information**
The maximum number of participants will be 15 excluding the Tour Manager(s).

**Weather & Clothing**
This south western part of Scotland is surprisingly mild if not always dry. May can be breezy and blowy, particularly as we reach the west of Scotland. The weather is very variable so there is a possibility of both very warm spells and cool wet weather. It’s not unusual to see palm type plants growing in gardens in Wigtownshire. Lightweight clothing suitable for a range of temperatures is needed and good waterproofs are a must, as is warmer clothing for the evenings. Hopefully sun cream will also be useful. Midge repellent should also be carried although the midges are generally kept at bay by only a modest coastal breeze. Avon’s ‘Skin So Soft’ has shown good results but anything with Deet in the ingredients usually works. As we are not travelling during the height of the midge season we don’t anticipate this being a problem.

**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 chaining the same size or smaller than the largest cog on your rear wheel) is recommended.

Previous participants have completed this type of tour on a good hybrid bike or touring cycle with low gears. If you are unsure, please get lower gears fitted. Grinding away up a short steep hill is tiring and soul destroying, particularly when others in the group who are similarly loaded are spinning their legs away from you.

Mudguards are optional but show courtesy to those who are following you in wet weather and it is strongly recommended that you fit them. Lights are recommended but might not prove essential. New tyres are recommended of at least 28mm diameter. Participants will be expected to carry each day sufficient spares and tools to deal with punctures and minor repairs. There will be some, but not many cycle shops on route.

Your bike must be in good working order, especially the brakes, and spare brake pads should be carried. You should have ridden your cycle 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.

Each participant is expected to bring, and carry, all of their own clothing, personal items and spares. Previous participants have enjoyed tours with only three sets of cycle clothing and a couple of sets of evening clothes. But do ensure you have something warm for the evenings in case we have a series of wet riding days.

**Maps & Guides**
Route descriptions will be supplied electronically for printing out as paper route sheets. If you cannot access a printer the Tour Manager can post these out if requested. GPS routes are also available if requested. Unless you use a GPS system you should bring your own maps and will probably find the OS Road Map 3 useful. If you like Landranger maps then 78, 79, 80, 81, 83 and 84 should cover the route. However, relevant pages taken from a good Road Atlas will be adequate for following most of the routes, but this will not indicate off-road National Cycle Network paths. The address, phone number and location of your accommodation will be provided on the route sheets and you should carry these each day and a mobile phone, if you use one.

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**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.

Gary Cummins

Email:
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