

# of the BEST

## CYCLING HOLIDAYS

As the UK's most popular long-distance cycle route celebrates 30 years, **India-Jayne Trainor** checks out other top biking breaks

**1** The C2C cycle route – short for 'Sea to Sea' or 'Coast to Coast', depending who you ask – has been bringing together fine country views and heart-pumping hills since it opened in 1994.

The popular long-distance trail winds through 137 miles of British countryside, stretching from the Irish Sea coast at Whitehaven to the North Sea at Tynemouth, via the landscapes of the Lake District and the Pennines.

But for those who enjoy a more leisurely ride or are new to holidays by bike, there are dozens of routes along the National Cycle Network that combine a little exertion with history, culture and sights. Here's our pick of the best.



### CYCLE THE COAST OF THE EMERALD ISLE

Ireland's northwest is fringed by dramatic cliffs, mountains and sandy beaches perfect for a rugged ride along the coast. Wilderness Ireland has a seven-day cycling trip in the region aimed at intermediate cyclists, beginning in Sligo then passing across the wild Glengesh Pass, voted one of Ireland's most scenic routes. Riders also take in epic views from the Slieve League Cliffs and the Horn Head Peninsula, before exploring the valleys of Glenveagh National Park. It's not all about cycling, though; the trip also stops at ancient Neolithic tombs and lakeside castles, before ending at Malin Head, Ireland's most northerly point. The holiday includes bike hire, which can be upgraded to electric for a more relaxing ride.

**Book it:** Wilderness Ireland's Donegal from Cliffs to Coast trip starts from £2,740 including transfers, B&B accommodation plus lunch and the services of a guide, departing August 24. [wildernessireland.com](http://wildernessireland.com)



### PEDAL THE PEAK DISTRICT

For those wanting to dip their toe into cycling, Derbyshire and the Peak District are a natural choice, as Derbyshire has more than 260 miles of traffic-free cycle paths. Within the national park are lots of flat trails, many of which are converted railway lines, including the Monsal Trail (pictured) and Manifold Valley route, which are safe and easy even for kids. More challenging options include the Central Peaks loop, which begins in the grounds of iconic Chatsworth House and meanders through the scenic Hope Valley. Clients can bring their own bikes or rent from one of the many outlets in Matlock, Buxton or the Hope Valley.

**Book it:** Great Little Breaks offers a two-night stay for two at the Derby Mickleover Hotel, with breakfast, dinner on the first night, bottle of wine on arrival and late checkout, from £109. [greatlittlebreaks.com](http://greatlittlebreaks.com)

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### SCOTLAND FROM THE SADDLE

National parks are just the ticket for amateur cyclists, with fewer cars and quieter paths. Cairngorms National Park has five of the UK's six highest mountains, along with ethereal forests, lochs and villages. Responsible Travel's Cairngorms cycling break is led by an experienced mountain biking expert, who first takes riders through Abernethy National Nature Reserve, home to dozens of wildlife species. Experienced cyclists will enjoy day two's push across the so-called 'Burma Road', a dramatic mountain track that leads into the High Cairngorms. Along the way, the group stops at lakeside pubs before ticking off the iconic Loch Einich, flanked by snow-capped mountains. The trip ends in the picturesque town of Aviemore, which has easy connections to London via the Caledonian Sleeper.

**Book it:** Responsible Travel's Cairngorms Mountain Biking Three-day Short Break starts from £412 including bike hire and B&B accommodation, based on 2025 departures between April and October. [responsibletravel.com](http://responsibletravel.com)



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### FOLLOW ROMAN HISTORY

Stretching for 73 miles, Hadrian's Wall is one of Britain's most magnificent remnants of the Roman Empire. Explore's five-day cycling odyssey follows a similar route to the C2C while staying close to the wall, and is a must for those keen to combine ancient history with a healthy dose of activity. The first leg twists up the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on the west coast, then heads inland towards the Pennines. Visitors will also stop at fascinating sites such as a 12th-century priory, the Roman Army Museum and the Roman fortress of Vindolanda near Hadrian's Wall, before glimpsing the windswept east coast in Tynemouth. The itinerary follows quiet country roads, and has a safety vehicle, bikes and spare parts – all clients need to bring is their helmet.

**Book it:** Explore's five-day Cycle Hadrian's Wall – Coast to Coast starts from £799, including B&B accommodation and bike hire. It has a 'moderate' difficulty rating, averaging 34 miles per day. [explore.co.uk](http://explore.co.uk)



PICTURES: ViaRhein/Andrew Pickett; Rupert Shanks; Shutterstock/Joë Dunckley



# DESTINATIONS

## UK & IRELAND | CYCLING

### ASK THE expert

"We've seen huge growth in both normal cycling holidays and e-biking, which allows for cyclists of all abilities to take part. People don't need to go to challenging destinations like the Alps – we have lakes, mountains and islands in the UK. Cycle trips follow quieter country trails and get off the beaten path, such as in the Outer Hebrides, which feels quite wild and adventurous. Weather is more of a consideration here than in mainland Europe, and shoulder months such as April and October generally have fewer crowds. We provide transfers, a guide and a support vehicle – this means guests only need to cycle for as long as they want, and can jump in the van for the rest of the day. Tours shouldn't just be cycling-focused; ours visit cultural highlights such as villages, whisky distilleries and castles."

**Russell Murray,**  
head of trade partnerships,  
Wilderness Scotland



### CYCLING THE COTSWOLDS

On Exodus Adventure Travels' new cycling holiday through the rolling Cotswolds, riders will meander from Oxford's dreaming spires to Bath's ancient Roman spa. The six-day tour takes in Stow-on-the-Wold (site of a decisive battle in the English Civil War); Daylesford, where they can stop at the village's posh farm shop; plus the market town of Cirencester. Besides biking, guests will also be able to take a walking tour of Oxford's inspiring colleges, stop for photos at the postcard-perfect row of 17th-century cottages in the village of Bibury (pictured), and visit the 2,000-year-old Roman baths in Bath. The pace is leisurely and riders will stay at two stunning medieval inns along the way.

**Book it:** Exodus Adventure Travels' six-day guided Cycle the Cotswolds: Oxford to Bath trip starts from £2,299 including transfers, accommodation, bike hire and selected activities, for departures in 2025. [exodus.co.uk](http://exodus.co.uk)

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### WELSH WONDERS

For a DIY family cycling break, look no further than the Talacre Beach Resort. It's situated at the start of a 34-mile cycle path along the windswept north Welsh coastline, which is ideal for nervous cyclists as the path is almost entirely off-road. Setting out from the resort, clients join a promenade leading through some of the region's classic seaside resorts – Rhyl, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno. At Conwy, clients can stop at the Unesco-listed castle built by Edward I in the 13th century, before completing the route at the foot of Eryri National Park (Snowdonia). Avid cyclists can do it in a day, but those seeking a slower pace – or families with little legs to consider – may want to spread the riding out. **Book it:** Hoseasons offers a seven-night stay at the Talacre Beach Resort for four people from £325 in August. If clients need bike hire, Rhyl-based The Bike Hub rents bikes from £108 for three days. [hoseasons.co.uk](http://hoseasons.co.uk)



PICTURES: Shutterstock/Peter Etchells, Club4traveler; Wilderness Scotland