



The Cairngorm Classic 2019

Scotland

FAQ and Preparation Information

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If you have any questions which aren't covered by this FAQ please do not hesitate to contact us.

What's included in the Price?

- 2 Nights of Hotel Accommodation in shared rooms (Fri, Sat)
- 2 Scottish Breakfasts Inc. Continental Breakfast Buffet (Sat, Sun)
- 3 Packed Lunches + Unlimited Trail Snacks (Fri, Sat, Sun)
- 3 Days of Guided Riding (Fri, Sat, Sun)
- Van Support - necessary uplifts/transport

What's not included in the Price?

- Transport to and from our meeting point: Stirling, Scotland, UK
- Evening Meals
- Alcoholic and Soft Drinks in the Evenings

Is there an Itinerary?

Please see our website for a more detailed day by day route plan. The route may change slightly due to weather, forestry, road-closures etc. However, the accommodation is in the following location:

- Aviemore, Scotland (Friday and Saturday Night)

Getting Here

Where does the trip start and finish?

The trip starts and finishes in Stirling, Scotland, UK and can pick-up and drop-off at local hotels upon request. Stirling is in Central Scotland and is served by good transport links from both Edinburgh and Glasgow. We can also meet you at the trailhead near Braemar where the riding starts and finishes.

Can I stay before or after the trip?

You could choose to stay in Stirling on Thursday and/or Sunday night if this makes travel arrangements easier. The Premier Inn in Stirling City Centre (premierinn.com) is recommended as a low cost and convenient option.

What time do we meet on Friday Morning?

We meet in Stirling around 08:15. In Stirling, we can pick you up from your accommodation or you can meet us at our meeting point (Bridge of Allan Train Station) and park up for the long weekend. We will send you specific arrival instructions before your trip.

What time do we finish on Sunday?

We finish riding around 16:00 and will have you back in Stirling by 18:00. By arrangement we can get you to Edinburgh/Glasgow Airport on Sunday evening at around 19:30 for a small charge.

Which airport should I fly into?

Edinburgh or Glasgow are both International Airports in Central Scotland and have good transport links to Stirling. Stirling has a train station that connects easily to the main Edinburgh and Glasgow stations, which both have good airport links.

How can I get from Edinburgh International Airport (EDI) to Stirling?

We can arrange a private transfer to/from Stirling at a competitive price.

By Train: From the arrivals area, follow the signs to the Tram. Buy a ticket to Edinburgh Park. At Edinburgh Park connect with the main Edinburgh Park Scotrail Station and buy a ticket to Stirling (Usually the Dunblane train every 30mins). Total Journey Time: 1hr 10mins. Check timetables at scotrail.co.uk.

How can I get from Glasgow International Airport (GLA) to Stirling?

We can arrange a private transfer to/from Stirling at a competitive price.

By Train: From the arrivals area, follow the signs to the bus shuttle to Glasgow City Centre (Bus Number 500). Purchase a ticket to Queen Street Railway Station. Enter the Scotrail Station at Glasgow Queen Street and buy a ticket to Stirling (usually Dunblane or Aberdeen trains regularly). Total Journey Time: 1hr. Check timetables at scotrail.co.uk.

Driving Directions:

You can drive to Stirling easily. If you are driving we'll send you detailed instructions of where to meet us and park your car before your trip.

Can I get to Stirling by Train?

Stirling is served by good rail links. Use thetrainline.com or scotrail.co.uk for timetables. The Caledonian Sleeper between Inverness and London Euston arrives into Stirling at just before 05:00 on Friday Morning. For the return, the sleeper leaves Stirling at 23:45 on Sunday evening. Check timetables and book at www.sleeper.scot.

Parking:

There is free parking at Bridge of Allan Train Station which is one of our meeting points. The other option is to drive to our start and finish point near Braemar (2 hours from Stirling) where there is National Trust parking for a small fee. We cannot take responsibility for the security of your vehicle at either location - but any problems are rare.

Can I leave my bike bag in Stirling?

Yes, there is storage space to leave your bike bags/boxes for the week. Please contact us to arrange this.

Admin:

What insurance do I need? READ THIS!

Search and Rescue and Medical Care are services that are provided free of charge in Scotland to UK Citizens and EU Nationals. EU Nationals should ensure they have an EHIC (formerly E111) card which proves they are entitled to reciprocal medical care. For non-EU Citizens you must have insurance that will cover you for medical costs, as well as repatriation. *For non-EU nationals it is a condition of booking that you take out insurance that meets the above criteria.*

We highly recommend that everyone has travel insurance cover for extra costs and charges incurred as a result of delays, cancellations, rescheduling, repatriation or any factors outside our control.

Should I insure my bike and/or belongings?

We make every effort to ensure the security of your belongings and your bike. However, we don't under any circumstances accept reasonability for damage, loss or theft. It is up to you to ensure that you are happy with the security arrangements in place at accommodation and whilst transporting belongings, including your bike, on vehicles and other uplifts. We accept no liability for damage incurred to your bike during uplifts, either by vehicle or other mechanical means. *Please ensure that your belongings and bike are adequately insured during the trip for damage, theft and loss.*

Can I cancel or transfer my space to another week?

Due to the high costs we incur to your pre-book accommodation, guiding and transportation, your final payment becomes non-refundable 8 weeks before departure. We highly recommend that you have adequate trip cancellation insurance in place to financially cover non-attendance due to uncontrollable circumstances. Please see our Terms and Conditions of Booking for more information.

What happens if I injure myself during the week?

We will help you where we can with logistics in the event of a hospital visit, however, ultimately, our trip will continue without you and you may need to rely on your insurance cover to provide onward transport to either catch up with the trip, or for repatriation.

How much spending money should I bring and what currency should this be in?

British Pounds (GBP) are used in Scotland. You'll just need some cash for drinks during the evenings. We'd suggest that £50 will be more than enough for the long weekend.

Should I tell you about a medical condition?

In the event that you are referred to hospital by our staff we may need to pass on medical information on your behalf. It is therefore extremely important that we are aware of any medical conditions. The booking form you will complete requests this information, however, please ensure that our staff are aware of any medical conditions on the first day of the trip.

The Riding

How long are the days and how much ascending and descending is there?

We'll usually ride for around 6 hours per day. We have to ascend every metre we descend – with the exception of Saturday when we use the van to gain 600metres at the start of the day! Usually we'll be climbing around 600metres per day and covering around 40-50km.

How difficult is the riding?

You should be a very experienced rider, used to riding natural mountainous trails with confidence. You **do not** need to be comfortable or capable of riding "bike park" style features like jumps or drops – these man-made features are not generally found on our trips.

How fit do I need to be?

An excellent level of endurance fitness is required. You must be prepared to climb for around 500-1000metres per day. You must be prepared for long days in the mountains, sometimes with few escape options.

What kind of trails do you ride on this trip?

We ride singletrack that has become established through hundreds of years of use, often starting out as droving and smuggling routes and now maintained as mountain paths. Most of the singletrack has good drainage built in to protect the paths from erosion. Scotland has right of access for mountain bikers across the entire country and therefore all of the routes we ride are legal.

What will the weather be like?

The weather in Scotland at any time of year is unpredictable. During the months we operate - temperatures can be warm, to well below freezing. Because of how unpredictable and variable the weather can be - it's very important that you prepare properly and have all the items on our kit list.

Will there be midges?

For those that don't know, midges are small biting insects that plague the Scottish Highlands in the summer months. Our trips generally run in Spring/Autumn and midges are not a big problem then; however, we may still encounter them. We'll have some repellent you can use – if you want your own, Smidge is recommended.

Do you use qualified guides?

All our guides are experienced, qualified, first aid trained and fully insured.

What do you to ensure safety of the riders?

We operate in a friendly and relaxed manner - but behind the scenes we are a professional and insured operation, with our head office in Scotland, United Kingdom. Our trips are fully risk assessed - have pre-planned bail out options, numerous bad weather alternatives and robust late-home procedures. Our guides carry state of the art satellite tracking and 2 way communication equipment.

Kit

What bike do I need?

We suggest that you use an enduro or cross country bike for this trip - ideally a bike with 5-6" of front and rear suspension.

Is a hardtail okay?

We would suggest that a full suspension set-up will be a more comfortable choice for the trip. However, if you are comfortable riding a hardtail on technical, natural trails then this will be fine. The bike set-up advice applies equally to anyone riding a hardtail.

Can I bring a fat bike?

No.

Can I bring a plus sized bike?

Yes and our bike trailers can accommodate.

Can I bring a 26", 27.5" (650b) or 29" bike?

Yes, we don't care what wheel size you choose as long as it's an appropriate bike as above.

What tyres should I run?

We personally prefer a tubeless set-up, using Maxxis High Roller or Maxxis Minion tyres. The EXO versions of Maxxis tyres have proved to be a great combination between weight, puncture resistance and durability. We always carry at least two tubes with us as tubeless repairs on the move can be time consuming or impossible. You can also run a traditional tubes set-up with any of these tyres. Go for a tyre width between 2.2-2.4". Avoid any skinny cross country tyres and super lightweight tubes, you will not have the comfort, control or puncture resistance that you'll need for this trip. Also avoid heavy DH style tyres as they'll be too heavy and slow. Regardless of your tyre set-up please carry some form of sidewall patch.

What gear set-up shall I use?

Most riders now use a 1x set-up and it works great as its very simple and requires little maintenance. However, please avoid a huge front ring – a 34t, 32t or 30t all work well. With modern clutch rear derailleurs and narrow-wide rings, front ring chain retention is not usually required. You can also use a 2x set-up. **Bring a spare rear mech hanger.** The other option is a gearbox bike – from a manufacture such a Deviate Cycles.

Can I use my *insert exotic bike component here*?

We don't really care as long as your set-up is proven and you know how to maintain it.

SPD's or Flats?

This is a personal choice. Some of our guides clip in, others use flats. Our only comment on the subject is to kindly request that you do not arrive with SPD's unless you are 100% comfortable with them in all riding situations. This trip is not the time to learn how to ride with SPD's. If you really are unsure please contact us and we can offer further advice.

Can I hire a bike?

You need to bring your own bike on this trip.

What tools/workshop spares should I bring alone?

We'll provide a bike stand, track pump and a tool-box (with basic workshop tools) that will be available for use each evening. You should bring any tools that are unique to common servicing of

your bike. We'll also provide DOT and Mineral Brake Fluid along with a bleed kit for Avid and Shimano Brakes.

What spare parts for my bike should I bring?

We do try and carry some essential spares in our van to get you back on the trail again. However, we can't carry specific spares and therefore **IT IS VERY IMPORTANT** that at the very least you bring, a few sets of replacement brake pads AND a couple of spare derailleur hangers. A spare rear derailleur is a good idea and perhaps a spare tyre in your baggage. We would also recommend any specific suspension linkage bolts that commonly fail on your bike. It might take a bit of effort and pre-planning to source some of these spares but this will be worth it if it keeps you on the trail.

What happens if my bike breaks beyond repair?

This is unlucky, but does happen from time to time. We'll do our best to get you up and running by getting hold of a hire bike for you. Unfortunately, we can't be held responsible for any riding you miss as a result of this event.

What riding kit should I bring? (PLEASE READ THIS SECTION CAREFULLY)

You're riding for 3 days and you're unlikely to have the opportunity to do any laundry. Therefore, please bring enough riding kit for this duration of trip. In good weather, you'll probably only end up using some of it, but in bad weather you'll be thankful of the extra items instead of having to put wet and dirty kit back on in the morning! You'll need riding shorts (ideally 3 pairs) and we always like some under-tights as well in case it's miserable. You will want 3 riding tops, preferably long sleeved and made of wool or synthetic (not cotton t-shirts). Padded chamois undershorts work well. You'll want a pair of chamois undershorts for each day. **A good waterproof jacket is essential and we will not guide you without one.** You'll also **require** a warm mid layer to go underneath your waterproof and possibly a light wind-stopper type jersey as well.

A helmet is required, please bring a half lid though, a full face is not suitable! Knee guards are optional, but recommended. Riding glasses are recommended and you'll want the option to have clear and dark lenses or a photochromic lens. Full finger gloves are recommended and please also bring some warm riding gloves, which are at least windproof, but waterproof gloves are nice to have as well. You'll need a 15-20litre pack with the ability to carry at least 1.5 litres of water. In this pack should be a selection of spares including at least 2 inner tubes, good tyre levers, a pump, a puncture repair kit, a tyre sidewall repair kit (cut up toothpaste tubes and duct tape work well), one complete set of brake pads and a spare derailleur hanger. You'll want a selection of trail tools for running adjustments and repairs. You'll want a spare warm top in there and we would also suggest including a couple of energy gels.

One of the most important items to bring with you is a mobile phone – reception is patchy but there are still situations where it might be useful. Please ensure before you depart that your phone will work in the UK. You can keep it turned off if you like, however, please pack it in your riding kit each day.

You should pack a camera!!

Can you list that kit for me?

- Riding Shorts (3)
- Under tights (if it's cold and/or wet you'll appreciate them)
- Riding Tops (4, NOT cotton, ideally merino wool, preferably long-sleeved)
- Chamois Liners (3)
- Good Waterproof Jacket (Goretex or similar) – **YOU NEED THIS!**
- Warm Mid Layer – **YOU NEED THIS!**
- Windstopper Jersey or another Mid Layer
- A half lid Helmet
- Knee Guards (optional)
- Riding Glasses (with clear and dark lenses, or a photochromic lens)
- Full Finger Riding Gloves (we suggest a couple of pairs)

- Warm and Windproof riding gloves (ideally waterproof)
- 15-20litre Riding Pack with at least 1.5litre water bladder
- Usual trail spares as discussed above
- Basic trail tools
- Energy Gels
- Mobile Phone
- Camera

What off-bike kit should I bring?

A kit bag, somewhere around 50-70litres should work. Please keep in mind we have limited capacity for kit in our van so keep it to one kit bag per person please. **Please ensure all your spare parts fit in this bag** – loose boxes of spares in the van are just asking to get lost. You'll need clothes for the evenings and some basic items to keep yourself smelling fresh! Any questions, fire us an e-mail.

Should I bring any body armour?

As above, knee guards can be worn. Generally we find elbow guards a little much for this trip – but you are welcome to bring them along.

Accommodation and Food

What accommodation will we be staying in?

We use a comfortable 3* hotel in the Cairngorm National Park. The hotel is friendly and comfortable and all rooms have hot showers and comfortable beds. There is somewhere to relax in the evenings and a bar. You will be in single beds and double beds are available for couples on request. Our price is based on 2 sharing and we'll allocate you with another same-sex guest. Single rooms can be requested for a surcharge.

Is there WiFi?

Yes, although we kindly request that you do not use your phone/tablet at the dinner table.

What is the food like?

The hotel provides an evening meal and breakfast as detailed in The "What's Included" Section. The evening meal offers a selection from the hotel's guest menu and is a 3 course meal. The evening meal does not include wine or any drinks, however, soft and alcoholic drinks can be purchased from the hotel bar. Breakfast is buffet style with a hot option (full cooked breakfast etc.). We provide a packed lunch each day. This will consist of a large sandwich, crisps, a chocolate bar as well as unlimited trail mix (dried fruit, sweets) and a selection of fruit.

Can you cater to specific dietary requirements?

The choice on the hotel's menu should cover most requirements and we'll do our best to accommodate in terms of packed lunches. However, please check with us if you have any specific requirements before you book. If you have not entered a specific requirement on your booking form, we often won't be able to modify packed lunches and sometimes the hotel will be unable to cater for this on the evening.

Will there be enough food?

Yes, we have made sure that the hotels we are using will provide "mountain biker" portions and our guests are usually more than happy with the quantity of food. But it is a set meal and the food will not be unlimited. If you have specific calorific requirements, you may feel as though bringing some extra food is appropriate, for example some guests like to bring along powdered carbohydrate shakes.

Can I have a room to myself?

Maybe - please contact us if you would like to check if this is possible. It totally depends on the availability of our accommodation providers. There will be a single room supplement of £25 per night.

Do you provide towels?

Yes, there is no need to bring your own towel, the hotel will provide.

Can I wash my kit at any point during the trip?

We strongly advise you to have enough riding kit for the entire duration of your trip.