

**TRIP:** Mountain Royale

**ACCOMMODATION:** Highland Lodge/Cabins, B&B

**TECHNICAL GRADING:** 3+

**ENDURANCE GRADING:** 3+

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## TRAVEL

**OUTWARD** (please use the hyperlinks for maps/directions)

- Please confirm your travel plans and pick-up point with the office in advance
- Initial departure point: 08:45, [Co-op Supermarket](#), Innerleithen
- Pick-up point two: 09:30/45, [Edinburgh Park train station](#)
  - Rendezvous point: Lochside Avenue entrance / Premier Inn (Gyle) side of the track ([Edinburgh Airport Tram connection is available](#), 12 min journey).
- Pick-up point three: 10:30/45, [Perth Services Travelodge Hotel](#), Perth
- Journey time to the accommodation in Deeside is approximately three hours excluding stops
- Near Braemar, we'll have a quick lunch and afterwards enjoy a short ride to sample the trails and stretch the legs before reaching your accommodation
- Arrival – approx 17:00/30 - we'll pick up supplies on our way through Blairgowrie

## RETURN

At the end of the trip, we will be arriving back in the Edinburgh (Park) area around 15:00, and Innerleithen by 16:00.

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## SAMPLE ITINERARY

### Saturday

Did somebody say coffee? Trips typically begin with a fresh coffee (of course!) and a rendezvous in the Tweed Valley with pick-ups in Edinburgh and Perth. After high-fives and handshakes, a last-minute supply run may be the order of the day, then we safely secure our precious cargo onto our custom bike trailer, load the minibus, turn on the tunes and kick off the adventure!

As we truck north to our Deeside HQ, we'll treat ourselves to a tasty ride on some lesser-known trail delights in this slice of mountain biking heaven.

By the time we swing back into the village we'll be ready to crack open the beers and rustle up a hearty dinner at our accommodation or nip out and enjoy some local pub grub and ale of course!

### Sunday

Five minutes out the door of your fantastic accommodation, you'll be picking up your second taste of what's on offer.

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Big ups for big downs and wide smiles. We'll take it easy on the climbs though, keeping plenty in the tanks for the good bits. A mix of fast natural heathery singletrack, granite slabs and long steep descents are the rewards for today's efforts.

That evening, we'll probably give in to the lure of the local pub and enjoy some great grub, a tasty ale and the buzz from shredding some of the funnest descents anywhere.

### **Monday**

Big mountains and big flow. Epic panoramas are just one reward for reaching the plateau of one of the UK's highest summits - the real dessert comes when we tackle the maze of pristine singletrack below us.

Before we focus on the trail, we'll take five to soak it all up - in this landscape of giants, we're just dots. It's the perfect environment to forget the daily grind.

### **Tuesday**

The tiny mountain town of Braemar is the gateway to the most rewarding back country mountain biking in Scotland – today's going to be quite an 'out there' Experience. Definitely a three sandwich kind of day!

### **Wednesday**

It feels like we've been riding here forever and the mountain biking never gets stale because there's so much to choose from. Mountain Royale is a land of contrasts – the Queen's highland retreat is nearby, hidden deep in the silent forests of ancient Scots Pine sheltering beneath some of the UK's highest summits, where the sub-arctic landscape is more similar to Scandinavia than the rest of the British Isles. Today is one of our favourites - a loam-rich roller coaster through the pines.

### **Thursday**

With so much riding on our doorstep, we've plenty of time for another dose of singletrack goodness to keep your head spinning for weeks - this time a sweet ribbon, only reached by an ancient drove road and long forgotten track we uncovered over the years of exploring this maze of mountain biking fun.

### **Friday**

Just as you're getting into the groove, you realise it's our very last day...after a relaxed breakfast, we'll sort out our kit, take one last look at this incredible part of Scotland before starting our homeward journey south.

## **TRIP GRADING**

Please read the following guidelines carefully to ensure the mountain bike holiday is suited to your skill and fitness. If you are unsure if the trip is right for you, please contact us .

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## TECHNICAL RATINGS

The trip is recommended for Level 3+ (i.e. high competence Level 3) riders.

The goal of the Technical Rating is to understand the ability of the rider as it pertains to obstacles, conditions and trail design. This means it has nothing to do with your physical endurance, but is instead strictly a measure of your technical ability.

### Rating: 3

You are a confident mountain biker and have been riding technical terrain for at least 2 years including exposed singletrack and rough landrover track, on uneven, loose and frequent steep gradients, with frequent variation in trail surfaces from rocks to roots. You are comfortable riding on trails approximately 12 inches wide that vary greatly in their stability and may be unpredictable including loose rock. You are comfortable regularly traversing unavoidable obstacles such as roots, rocks, logs and drop offs up to 15 inches tall, and some obstacles encountered may exceed that.

### Rating: 4

You are an expert mountain biker and have been riding expert level trails for at least 5 years. You think of yourself as a 'mountain biker' and you already know that the more competent a bike handler you are beforehand, the more you'll get from the trip; you're confident riding unpredictable terrain and using bunny hopping and front/rear wheel lifting techniques and relish unpredictable, varied natural ungraded trail surfaces including a mix of flowy and loose rocky or rooty singletrack, landrover tracks, steep technical climbs (including hike-a-bike sections) and descents, frequent rocks, slabs and water bar drainage features.

You are comfortable riding on trails of any width that are highly unstable and are completely unpredictable including loose rock. You are comfortable regularly traversing unavoidable obstacles such as roots, rocks, logs and drop offs well over 15 inches tall, and many obstacles encountered will exceed that. You are comfortable riding any technical trail features that may be present on the trail.

### Rating: 5

Level 5 is reserved for our Level 4 Expert riders who live and breath mountain biking and take every opportunity to manual, nose-wheelie and bunnyhop the trails. You love the biggest, most technically challenging trail features - up or down. Speaking of which, you also know that in order to go down, you must pedal (and carry) up and can handle any trail conditions or obstacles identified in Level 4.

## ENDURANCE RATINGS

The trip is recommended for Level 3+ riders. The goal of the Endurance Rating is to understand the ability of the rider as it pertains to overall physical endurance.

### Rating: 3

You are an avid mountain biker riding twice a week or more, and the weather isn't a big factor for you. You are at an above-average fitness level, and regularly do other

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activities that qualify as exercise. You usually find yourself riding for 3 hours on the trails, you'll ride on consecutive days, and you ride at a moderate pace.

**Rating: 4**

You are a very avid mountain biker, who is considered an 'athlete' by friends and only getting out on the trails twice in the week is a bad week for you. Riding and exercising is a frequent part of your weekly routine: you relish sustained challenging riding including long rides of 4 - 6 hours at a moderate pace for four or more days in a row. The weather is never a factor for you, rain or shine – you are riding.

**Rating: 5**

You are fit! You devour 6 - 8 + hour rides for five or more days in a row. You are an XC or Enduro racer who probably missed their flight to the World Cup / Enduro World Series this year because you were too busy training so you opted to come for a ride with us instead. You train on your mountain bike daily, and you are comfortable riding on trails for distances in excess of 60km per day and climbing vertical in excess of 7000 feet in a day. You ride your bike everywhere, in all weather conditions, and would likely enjoy riding in a hurricane.

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**SUITABLE BIKES**

A fully serviced 3 - 6 inch travel full suspension bike with dropper seatpost and hydraulic disc brakes is recommended.

It's entirely possible to take part in our trips on more modest setups or hardtails but we find that over the course of several consecutive days riding, the added comfort and confidence of a full suspension trail bike is a real asset, and enhances the overall experience.

**RENTAL BIKES**

If you've hired a bike, for your safety and comfort we always recommend bringing your own helmet and pedals.

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**ESSENTIAL GEAR**

Our recommendations are based on many years experience of riding in Scotland, and regardless of season we recommend that you prepare for a wide range of conditions and temperatures – that way you'll be fully prepared and get the most from your trip. Please also note that mechanical failures do happen and spares are limited (if you're prone to breakages, please bring spares) - so here are our kit suggestions (please note the list is not exhaustive):

- 16 - 20 litre+ backpack (i.e. sufficiently large for you to carry your gear and foodstuffs, plus any group shared kit that will be divided up e.g. storm shelter, long-range radios) e.g. [EVOC](#) Enduro
- Fully serviced bike in good working order with fresh brake pads
- Cash and credit card (access to cash machines is limited in some locations)
- Cycling glasses / protective eyewear

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- Cycling gloves
- Cycling shoes (with cleats) or flat pedal trainers (hire bikes come with flat pedals; if you want to use spd's please bring your pedals with you)
- [Helmet](#) is essential
- Inner tubes (Presta valves x 4 minimum) or spare sealant if running tubeless tyres
- Leggings or long trousers (not cotton) for riding
- Padded cycling shorts
- Personal first aid and medication you require (guide must be informed of relevant medical history prior to the tour)
- Protective Gear ([knee/shin pads](#)): we wear soft knee pads as a precaution
- Pump & shock pump
- Riding socks
- Snacks / energy bars / drinks
- Sufficient base layers including long sleeved tops
- Tools / spares / lubricants specific to your bike (including wet lube, brake pads x 2 sets minimum, chain power links, gear cables, replacement gear hangers, puncture repair kit, and tyre boot for repairing torn tyres)
- Tyres: dependable robust all-mountain tyres are a must (not flimsy/lightweight XC tyres); tubeless recommended
- Warm clothes: fleece top, lightweight fleece jacket or gilet, warm fleece hat or buff
- Warm cycling gloves e.g. Sealskinz
- Water bottle or hydration system
- Waterproof [jacket](#)
- Waterproof [socks](#)
- Waterproof trousers / [shorts](#)

#### DESIRABLE GEAR

- Dropper Seatpost
- Camera (waterproof case is a good idea)
- Sun protection
- Lip balm
- Insect repellent (we suggest 'Smidge') and midge net (hood)
- Torch or head torch
- Waterproof overshoes
- Earplugs (especially useful in group accommodation)

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#### LUGGAGE / BIKE TRANSPORTATION

- For all trips, there is allowance for one large holdall plus riding backpack per person
- We do not have provision to store/carry bike bags and boxes during trips but we're happy to assist with arrangements
- Bikes are securely carried (fully-assembled) and attached to our custom Burtech trailer
- We always recommend guest bikes are fully insured

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#### ACCOMMODATION

We use the best accommodation available to suit the trip. This is detailed on the trip

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webpages. Depending on the trip, and the optional upgrades available/selected - we use a mix of rustic group accommodation, hostels, self catering cottages, high quality inns, hotels and guest houses, and a range of luxury options are available upon request. For those requesting single or private accommodation – in some instances, where this is available – an additional supplement may be chargeable.

Your base for the week is the wonderful Braemar Cabins and the The Auld Bank House in the village of Braemar: <https://braemarcabins.com/>

For those requesting single or private accommodation – in some instances, where this is available – an additional supplement may be chargeable.

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## FOOD & DRINK

Mountain biking in Scotland means you will be hungry (very hungry!) and despite the remoteness of this particular trip, there are opportunities to enjoy great fresh Scottish fayre and of course a dram or two and a fine ale!

- **Breakfasts** Breakfasts are included and are provided on a help yourself basis to set you up for the day e.g fruits, yogurts, muesli, cereals, porridge, juices, breads etc (dietary requirements are taken into account from your booking).
- **Lunches** There will be opportunities for you to buy packed lunch provisions to carry on the rides, or, depending on routes we may enjoy a great cafe stop or lunch at a traditional Inn (your guides will let you know the plan each day).
- **Evening Meals** Some meals are enjoyed in locally selected inns and bistros, and for the rest, provisions can easily be purchased locally to enjoy preparing meals at the beautiful accommodation facilities. A BBQ on the deck and a beer by the firepit is a regular occurrence (your guides will let you know the plan each day).
- **Budget** Overall, we estimate a budget of £20 to £35 per person per day is adequate for lunches and evening meals with refreshments.

### Saturday Evening Meal

When staying at The Auld Bank House, our first meal with refreshments there is our welcome to you (no cost).

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## DAILY SCHEDULE

Over a beer in the bar, after dinner or breakfast we'll discuss what's in store for the day ahead. Because the weather plays such a big part in which routes we ride, and for how long we'll be out riding in the mountains, sometimes we have to modify the itinerary.

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