Cycling is a great way to discover our islands and enjoy the outdoors. With routes to suit all ages and abilities, and minimal traffic on many island roads, cycling can be as leisurely or as challenging as you choose.

If you don’t own a bike, a number of establishments offer bike hire – check out www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk for more details.

Courteous and Safe Cycling
Most of the vehicles that pass you on your bike are going about their daily business, so we would ask you to respect these few guidelines to keep everyone safe and moving with ease:

- There are some roads that are single track with passing places. Please cycle in single file and keep to the left.
- Use passing places to allow cars behind to overtake and to allow cars coming towards you to keep moving.
- Do not block passing places – leave them clear to allow traffic to keep flowing.
- If you have to leave your bicycle, leave it off road and not in the way of other road users.

“Cycling the length of the Outer Hebrides has become a popular past time over recent years. Surprisingly few visitors, however, take the opportunity to ride this fabulous circuit of South Harris. This is a route of two halves – a fascinating tour along the rocky bays and inlets of the east coast, followed by a journey past some of Scotland’s most beautiful beaches.”
The Golden Road

1. The route starts in Tarbert, the attractive capital of Harris. Heading out of the village, turn left onto the A859 following the signs for Roghadal and the Sound of Harris ferry. Immediately the road starts to climb and for the first couple of miles it is all uphill. The gradients are barely too steep however and the drama of this rocky, watery landscape makes the effort worthwhile.

2. Soon you will reach a small side road branching off to the left signposted ‘The Golden Road’. Turn left along this, avoiding the long climb ahead on the main road, and swoop downhill into the little village of Mallaig. This is the first of many villages you will pass through on the Golden Road, so called because its tortuous route through the intricate landscape of the Bays of Harris makes it extremely expensive to build. Before its construction in the 1940s, all traffic between the villages went either on foot or by boat.

St. Clement’s Church

3. The Bays of Harris has enticed many artists over the years - attracted here by the ever changing light and complex landscape. If you fancy a break, call in at one of a number of galleries along your way - some have excellent cafes.

Just after the turn off to one of these – Holmason Gallery at Cuidhtinis – the road descends to the shore. Stop here for great views of common seals which haul out onto the tiny islands close to the road.

Machair and Beaches

4. Carrying on from Roghadal, ignoring any side roads, and once there you will find St. Clement’s Church, perched spectacularly on a rock. Well worth a stop, the church was built in the 1520s but has since been heavily restored. It looks out over the sea to the Isle of Skye - the home of its founder, Alasdair “Crotach” MacLeod of Dunvegan. Inside there are several stone effigies, including that of Alasdair Crotach himself, as well as some fascinating medieval stone carvings.

Keep following the signs for Roghadal (Rodel), ignoring any side roads, and once there you will find St. Clement’s Church, perched spectacularly on a rock. Well worth a stop, the church was built in the 1520s but has since been heavily restored. It looks out over the sea to the Isle of Skye - the home of its founder, Alasdair “Crotach” MacLeod of Dunvegan. Inside there are several stone effigies, including that of Alasdair Crotach himself, as well as some fascinating medieval stone carvings.

5. After the exquisite beaches of Scarista, Borve and Luskentyre, continue past one of the many villages you will pass through on the Golden Road, so called because its tortuous route through the intricate landscape of the Bays of Harris makes it extremely expensive to build. Before its construction in the 1940s, all traffic between the villages went either on foot or by boat.

Luskentyre

6. On your left, across the turquoise sea, is the island of Taransay. Once home to hundreds, in the 18th Century it too was ruthlessly cleared by landlords keen to replace unprofitable islanders with lucrative sheep. Today, it is completely uninhabited.

Cross the salt marsh at Seilebost – another great spot for admiring wading birds – and then it is time to swing inland, away from the coast, and follow the road for the final climb of the day.

Harris, Twinned with Jupiter

7. On your right, across the turquoise sea, is the island of Taransay. Once home to hundreds, in the 18th Century it too was ruthlessly cleared by landlords keen to replace unprofitable islanders with lucrative sheep. Today, it is completely uninhabited.

Cross the salt marsh at Seilebost – another great spot for admiring wading birds – and then it is time to swing inland, away from the coast, and follow the road for the final climb of the day.

“Head north and follow the west coast, past the magnificent golden beaches at Scarista, Borve and Luskentyre. In summer the meadows here are ablaze with wild flowers.”

The Route

Cycling the length of the Outer Hebrides has become a popular past time over recent years. Surprisingly few visitors, however, take the opportunity to ride this fabulous circuit of South Harris.

This is a route of two halves – a fascinating tour along the rocky bays and inlets of the east coast. Followed by a journey past some of Scotland’s most beautiful beaches.

Keen cyclists will easily manage the whole circuit in a day. If you’re more of an occasional cyclist, you might like to split it into two leisurely days.

“...this rugged landscape used to be virtually uninhabited – almost everyone in South Harris lived on the fertile west coast.”

From West to East

2. After Mallaig the road continues to thread its way past countless rocky outcrops and beautiful freshwater lochs. Although the scenery is impressively wild, with tremendous views over the Little Minch to Skye and the mainland, you are never far from civilisation.

Every couple of miles you will come across another small settlement, usually at the head of one of the many sheltered inlets that break up this section of coastline.