

Weekend ride

KYLE OF SUTHERLAND EXPLORER

• **Route name:** Bonar Bridge up and over loop • **Start/finish:** Balblair Woods and mountain bike trails, off the A836 just north of Bonar Bridge [OS grid ref: NH60405 92918] • **Maps:** OS Landranger 21 Dornoch & Alness • **Distance:** 35km [22 miles] • **Climbing:** 594m [1,950ft] • **Bike type:** gravel bike, hardtail mountain bike or e-bike • **Ride level:** regular; moderate fitness is required for the climbs. • **GPX file:** cyclinguk.org/weekender-bonarbridge



1 SHIN VIADUCT
An outstanding Scottish example of an early wrought-iron, lattice-girder viaduct, it crosses the Kyle of Sutherland with a single 230ft span. The footbridge was opened in 2000 and offers great views of Carbisdale Castle and the Kyle of Sutherland. Climbing the steps with your bike has been made easier with the installed cycle channel but you'll want to use walk-assist if you're pushing an e-bike.

2 Carbisdale Castle
Built in 1907 in Scottish baronial style for the Duchess of Sutherland after the death of the duke. The marriage was not approved by the family and the will was contested. The castle's tower has only three clock faces. The side facing Sutherland is blank as the duchess refused to give her former relatives the time of day.

3 Loch Carbisdale
A natural lochan with a small island, set among an extensive network of forest tracks. There are decommissioned MTB trails, which although no longer maintained are still accessible. The Battle of Carbisdale (1650) took place here and there is a viewpoint overlooking the site.

4 Kyle of Sutherland Hub

The Hub is a voluntary managed social enterprise. Open nine to five, seven days a week, it's a great café stop for cyclists as it has a bike maintenance station, an e-bike charging point and cycle racks. East Sutherland Bothy Project supports the Hub with cycling activities.



5 LOCH MIGDALE
A fresh water loch surrounded by steep, wooded cliffs within Ledmore and Migdale Woods. The area is home to red squirrels, pine martens, deer and, along the shore, otters. If you are very lucky you may even spot a Scottish wildcat! It is also a popular spot for wild swimming and paddle-boarding.

6 BALBLAIR MTB TRAILS
These mountain bike trails have options for all abilities. There's an extensive network of easy forest tracks and blue routes, while more experienced riders can tackle strenuous climbs and descents over rock and slab on the flowing, 17km-long black route. The trails are topped off with stunning views over the Kyle of Sutherland.

