


Weekender
Etape
Loch Ness

Every year Scotland's Great Glen hosts a 100km sportive that starts and finishes in Inverness. **Katherine Moore** is your guide

Etape Loch Ness is one of those rare cycling events that manages to mix a huge field (6,000 riders!) on a spectacular closed-road loop with a wonderfully friendly atmosphere. Lining up for an early start at dawn, there's a mix of regular club riders, ambitious racers and charity challenge riders, and the event caters for them all surprisingly well, with the support of a huge number of local volunteers.

The loop starts from the charming little city of Inverness, which has been dubbed the capital of the Highlands. It takes in both sides of Scotland's most famed freshwater loch, Loch Ness.

As if riding beside the shores of Loch Ness wasn't scenic enough, the return leg from Fort Augustus provides a hillier second half that is even more impressive. A sharp climb leads you up to Loch Tarff and onto General Wade's Military Road, reaching up to nearly 400 metres of elevation. From up here, between the surrounding peaks and overlooking Loch nan Eun, it's enough to take away what little breath you have left.

All that climbing is rewarded with a sublime open descent, before a narrow, twisting and undulating rollercoaster-like road through the



Heading out along the northern shores of Loch Ness to start the sportive

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trees takes you from Whitebridge back towards Loch Ness and your return to Inverness.

While the brilliant Etape Loch Ness event only takes place once a year (26 April 2026 is your next chance; register at etapelochness.com), this classic loop can be enjoyed at any time, making this a fantastic option for a day ride when visiting the Scottish Highlands. ●