

## Mammoth Journeys

### The Asian Gateway

London to Istanbul

A map of Europe will never look the same again after you have cycled across the entire continent from west to east. The country count continuously ticks over as you edge your way towards our final destination Istanbul; the Gateway to Asia. This Journey really does have it all taking you from one extreme to the other. From the undulating Western European rural countryside, energetic capitals, summing iconic Alpine passes, before isolating ourselves within the sparse Balkan region, you finally arrive into the pleasantly chaotic world of Istanbul. Upon completing you will have cycled across an entire continent, an extremely privileged and exclusive club to be a member of.

Routes, distances and durations are merely a rough guide and may change before or during the Journey. However this should give you a good idea of what's coming up.

Distance: 3860km / 2400 miles

Duration: 47 days

Countries: England, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Greece and Turkey



**Leg 1: London to Munich****Distance: 1215km / 755 miles    Duration: 15 days**

Arrival into London the day before departure date for briefing session, kit check, questions and most important; pre-Journey photos.

We depart London early the following morning hoping to avoid the busiest traffic – wishful thinking I appreciate. Slow going as it is always with cities, but the Mammoth guide will be helping you navigate through web of London roads. Once into Kent the speed will pick up and the roads/pathways will be a little quieter.

An early morning ferry across to Dunkirk then, a short distance planned for the day to Bruges, it's a great opportunity to explore the waterways of this beautiful little town. This is followed by another shorter ride into the capital of Belgium for our first rest day. As always the first few days of any Journey are the toughest. This early rest day gives you a great opportunity to sort any admin from kit that's cropped up on the first few days, and also a chance for your body to catch up. A shorter day into Brussels allows you hopefully to arrive early afternoon and then sort out any of these issues that have come up. Leaving the whole rest day to explore Brussels highlights - or simply rest!

A tougher second section earns you the reward of exploring some hidden European gems - amongst relatively flat terrain. This will set you up well for the rest of the Journey, allowing you to gain some much needed miles in your legs.

After sampling waffles, cheese and beer the easier day into Luxembourg will be welcomed. We will have undulating picturesque countryside before we hit the Mosel region of Germany. Here it levels out as we follow it's many famous wineries along the way.

With a half day cycle into Heidelberg you'll have a free afternoon at your disposal for either tourist sightseeing, or taking advantage of more down time before the tougher roads start.

Leaving Heidelberg we start to creep up in altitude as we head ever closer to the Alps. Snaking through monstrous valleys as we pass small Bavarian towns, crossing the 'Romantic Road' before arriving into Munich. With another shorter day planned on that final push, any kit and life administration can be sorted in the afternoon giving you a whole's day break and rest away from all things cycling – always good for the body and mind. From Worms to Munich there are numerous famous castles perched on mountain tops and hidden within towns along our route, hopefully you will tick off as many as possible from your list.

A quiet end to this leg will hopefully mean the body isn't too tired to explore, however with almost the length of UK cycled to date, it may be wishful thinking.

Day 1: London to Dover - 140km

Day 2: Dover to Bruges - 75km

Day 3: Bruges to Brussels – 100km

Day 4: Rest day in Brussels

Day 5: Brussels to Rochefort 120km

Day 6: Rochefort to Luxembourg 115km

Day 7: Luxembourg to Bernkastel 100km

Day 8: Bernkastel to Worms 140km

Day 9: Worms to Heidelberg 50km

Day 10 Rest day in Heidelberg

Day 11: Heidelberg to Ludwigstg 100km

Day 12: Ludwigstg to Nordlingen 120km

Day 13: Nordlingen to Augsburg 75km

Day 14: Augsburg to Munich 75km

Day 15: Rest day in Munich

**Leg 2: Munich to Dubrovnik      Distance: 1300km      Duration: 16 days**

Leaving Germany we stop off in Salzburg for another rest day, not for the body hopefully, but to see this charming Austrian city. From here there are some tough hilly sections, as you'd expect as we head over the Alps, with massive bragging rights within the cycling world as you summit the Grossglockner Col at 2428m. Some shorter days as a result of these tough climbs, so don't be fooled by the distance marked for each day. Along this leg you are treated to some absolutely breath-taking Alpine views others can only dream of. A week on the Journey that must be savoured for those normally stuck behind a computer in their concrete jungle – a world apart!

Moving through another mountain range, the Karawanks, we now move into our sixth country of the Journey; Slovenia. Stopping at Lake Bled for a relaxing afternoon being a tourist, before we arrive into the multinational cuisine capital of Ljubljana. A great little capital where the culinary infusion of Italy, Germany and Hungary result in an amazing combination unlike anywhere else.

Fully rested we traverse through the Dinaric Alps towards the Adriatic Coastline. Travelling along the popular Croatian coastal roads with their cheeky pinch climbs, we have some shorter days here to help soak in the local delights before finishing this leg in the southern town of Dubrovnik.

This landmark is huge, the physical location on the map really highlights the distance travelled. You have passed halfway and maybe had one of the most productive months of your life. Perhaps a wee Rakija to celebrate?

Day 16: Munich to Salzburg: 140km

Day 17: Rest day Salzburg

Day 18: Salzburg to Zell am See 90-105 km

Day 19: Zell am See to Leinz 95km

Day 20: Leinz to Podkoren 115km

Day 21: Podkoren to Ljubljana 100km

Day 22: Rest day in Ljubljana

Day 23: Ljubljana to Rijeka 125km

Day 24: Reijeka to Senj 65km

Day 25: Senj to Karlobag 70km

Day 26: Karlobag to Zadar 100km

Day 27: Zadar to Split 145km

Day 28: Rest day in Split

Day 29: Split to Place 140km

Day 30: Place to Dubrovnik 100km

Day 31: Rest day Dubrovnik

**Leg 3: Dubrovnik to Istanbul    Distance: 1345km    Duration 15 days**

Saving the best till last. A tough final 2 sections to finish off the Journey. All the hill work you have practised will be put to good use here. From Dubrovnik, we start pushing east. Feeling dwarfed within the Bay of Kotor we attempt to meander through mountainous Montenegro into Albania. A nights rest in the capital Tirana, before we head over our old friends the Dinaric Alps for the second time this Journey, to the picturesque Lake Ohrid. Cycling in the heart of the Balkans is breathtaking, not only for the views but as you will see from its contour lines on the map, the climbs as well! Keeping the Nidze mountain range on our left we head through the Macedonian plains to Greece, which can at times be a slow and tough border crossing. Across the border we head to the City of Waters before our rest day in the historic Greek city of Thessaloniki.

Thankfully the worse of the climbing is behind you. However, with that drop in altitude, and the migration towards the equator, comes the humidity. The cycle pathways become less frequent, the roads become busier and the drivers more erratic, you are close to the finish but it's no time to switch off.

Turkey becomes increasingly busier as we head towards its capital so salvage the quieter coastal towns we pass through. Some small climbs scatter the Aegean coastline as we catch glimpses of distant Greek islands. The iconic white washed houses litter our route before heading into Turkey. A tough penultimate day will set us up well for our push onto our final destination. Congested roads into Istanbul however will not dampen your mood. Snaking through the labyrinth of this historical city we finish at the Sultan Ahmed Mosque. Overlooking the infamous Bosphorus Strait and out to Asia, bask in your own glory; you have just cycled the width of an entire continent.

Day 32: Dubrovnik to Kotor 95km

Day 33: Kotor to Shkoder 110km

Day 34: Shkoder to Tirana 100km

Day 35: Tirana to Lake Ohrid 140km

Day 36: Rest day Lake Ohrid

Day 37: Ohrid to Bitola 80km

Day 38: Bitola to Edessa 100km

Day 39: Edessa to Thessaloniki 90km

Day 40: Rest day Thessaloniki

Day 41: Thessaloniki to Stavros 80km

Day 42: Stavros – Xanthi 135km

Day 43: Xanthi to Alexandroupoli 105km

Day 44: Alexandroupoli to Malkara 105km

Day 45: Malkara to Siliver 130km

Day 46: Siliver to Istanbul 75km

#### What's Included?

- 47 nights accommodation, including the night in London for the Journey brief.
- 47 Breakfasts, 23 Dinners
- Support vehicle for luggage transport, mechanical assistance, and tired cyclists
- Cycle guide daily
- Mammoth Journeys Cycle Jersey
- Advice and help on any pre-Journey kit purchases
- Airport pick up to the start of your Journey

#### What's not included?

- Insurance
- Airfare to the start of your Journey
- Transport back to London at the end of the Journey
- Bike hire
- Visas (although help and advice can be arranged through Mammoth Journeys staff)
- Any tours, tips/gratuities, or meals outside of the described Journey
- Any in-hotel purchases e.g. phone bill, laundry, room service etc.