

A long weekend at Tour O The Borders by Tweed Valley Blogger

It may be tempting to head to the Scottish Borders for the Tour O The Borders, ride the stunning closed roads race and then jump in the van to head for home. But what if I was to tell you that a great weekend at 'Touro' could become a truly memorable one by extending your stay for four days of fun in the Tweed Valley?

This corner of southern Scotland has so much to offer with landscapes as dramatic as the Highlands, history layered as deep as anywhere in the country and a warm Borders welcome that keeps people coming back. If you're making the journey, then I think there's a strong case for turning Touro weekend into the perfect short break. Here are my suggestions...

FRIDAY

You'll arrive in the late afternoon, ready for a chilled evening and a bite to eat. Peebles and the surrounding area have no shortage of great options for food, including Francos Italian restaurant on Port Brae. Perfect for generous portions, and the classic cycling décor will leave you in no doubt that Peebles is a bike friendly town! From takeaways, pub grub to fine dining Peebles has plenty of options to keep you well fed all weekend.

SATURDAY

Start your pre-race day with breakfast before taking the time to register for the race at the Tweed Green. The Touro team will be there from 10am to 7pm so plenty of time to get registration sorted and ask any last-minute questions of the friendly team. You then have a day at leisure to explore a little further afield and see what the Tweed Valley has to offer. If you are feeling the need to get some gentle miles in your legs for a warm up then Peebles has a picturesque, 8-mile loop which will be just the thing. The classic [Cademuir](#) loop is 8 miles, on quiet roads and takes you in the shadow of Cademuir Hill and Manor Valley, peaceful farmland today but once the busy heart of the earliest civilisations in Peeblesshire. This will also give you a sneak peek at a small part of tomorrow's ride...

For those preferring to stay out of the saddle today, then why not explore Peebles High Street and its many indie shops, cafes and pubs? It's always a busy and buzzy place on Saturday and the town is rightly proud of the variety of shops from clothing to books, wine to artwork - there is something from everyone in Peebles.

Here in the Borders, we often say we're a wee bit like the Highlands, just with 90% fewer visitors. And on Saturday 5 September you can get a real taste of the Highlands, right in the heart of Peebles at the stunning Haylodge Park – a short walk from the town centre. The Peebles Highland Games brings all the colour and sounds of the classic games – including pipe bands, sword dancing and the heavy throwing events – right here in the Borders. A great, fun way to spend your pre-race afternoon. There is a beer tent, but riders may want to 'ca canny' on the beer given the following days early start...

If you fancy something a little more sedate, then why not cross Tweed Bridge and head down the 'back road' to visit two great Tweed Valley estates. First Kailzie, with gorgeous formal gardens which will still have lots of life in September. The estate also has fishing ponds if you fancy bagging a borders trout, a first rate café in the courtyard and this year's new star attraction – Tablet, Eccles, Shortbread and Whisky, the estates Highland Coos! Beyond Kailzie you come to Traquair, Scotland's oldest inhabited house where you will first see the bear gates – closed since Bonnie Prince Charlie left here in 1745, and left locked until the Stuarts retake the throne... Centuries of history come alive here and the grounds are perfect for exploring with a large hedge maze, walled garden and excellent café. They also have a brewery on site where you can sample the award winning 'wee heavy' ales – though again, save them for post-race! From here you can loop back up the Tweed valley via Innerleithen, a former industrial town which has reinvented itself as an outdoors hub with lots of cafes, pubs and restaurants for refreshment. Do not miss the famous Caldwell's ice cream, 4 generations of treats with my own personal favourite being the classic vanilla!

In the evening you once again have an excellent selection of food options in Peebles, and if you fancy something a little lighter ahead of the big day then consider booking a

table at Milne & Pickles on Northgate. They offer cheese & charcuterie platters, homemade quiches and much more all paired with excellent wine and coffee. Then it's an early night, with the first riders rolling out of Tweed Bridge at approx. 06:45...

'Must Sees' nearby for your 'Touro Saturday'

- Traquair House - Scotland's oldest inhabited house
- Kailzie Gardens - late summer colour and Highland coos
- Peebles High Street - one of Scotland's best indie shopping streets

SUNDAY

It's race day! It's going to be an early start for the South of Scotland's closed roads classic. Whether you are doing the full 120km route or the 89km Challenge route, you will be treated to stunning scenery of the Tweed Valley, Moffat hills and Yarrow. Enjoy every minute and be sure to take the opportunity to grab one of the races trademark Forsyth's Macaroni Pies!

Once you have finished the race and basked in the glory of completing Scotland's most scenic closed roads sportive you have a number of options for a chilled Sunday. I would be remiss if I didn't plug the fact that I have a walking tour of Peebles at 2pm! Join me for Peebles 900 years in 90 minutes – a slow paced walk through this historic town, with stories of how Peebles became the town we see today, in the hands of a local, award-winning guide. Tickets available on [Eventbrite](#).

If you are in need of soothing aching muscles then why not make use of the leisure facilities at Peebles Hydro Hotel or Barony Castle, in nearby Eddleston. Both offer day passes and can be combined with a celebratory meal. Or if you are a bit more rugged than that then the River Tweed has welcomed swimmers for centuries, and a dip at Peebles iconic 'Dookits' swimming spot, just upstream from Haylodge Park would be an invigorating way to wind down. Of course it goes without saying that wild river swimming comes with risks, so please take care. [Safety tips can be found here](#).

Dinner tonight should be a bit of a treat so perhaps the highly rated Asado Gaucho steak house in Peebles or a short hop to the Cringletie Hotel just north of the town for a gourmet treat. Or failing that, another macaroni pie, or two...

If you are ready to boogie into the night then Peebles excellent Eastgate Theatre and arts centre has you covered with Jersey Notes, celebrating the iconic music of Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons. Who knows, after a day in the saddle on some of Scotland's finest hill roads you may even be able to reach the high notes...

MONDAY

After a brilliant weekend at Touro, it's time to head home with great memories and a real sense of achievement. Before you go, I suggest heading to Forsyth's butchers on Eastgate to pick up a couple of macaroni pies – get them in the freezer so you can relive that Touro spirit all year round! Whichever way you are heading home you will find excellent places to stop for brunch – my suggestions being Whitmuir Café on the A701 north, The Wee Crook at Tweedsmuir on the A701 south or Caberston Café on the A72 east at Walkerburn.

If this is your first time in the South of Scotland, don't let it be your last as the Tweed Valley and wider Borders are full of stories, attractions and lesser known gems waiting for your next visit.

5 top tips for your Touro weekend

- Plan to eat out in advance and book early – it's a busy weekend in town.
- Register early on Saturday and take the time to explore the 'must sees' a little further afield. The Touro team on Tweed Green are there to help.

- Check out Peebles Highland Games on Saturday afternoon, a great mix of Borders and Highlands in Haylodge Park.
- A post Touro dip or chilled walking tour (*shameless plug...*) is a great way to wind down after the big event.
- Grab a Forsyth's macaroni pie on Monday morning to take a taste of the Tweed valley home!