

THE FARNE ISLANDS



"The sheer numbers of nesting Puffins, Guillemots, Razorbills, Kittiwakes and Shags is simply astonishing, with every ledge and crevice being taken by one of these gorgeous seabirds. We slowly cruise around the islands seeing this wonderful spectacle, along with 'hauled out' Grey Seals. These cities and rookeries are such an incredible experience, one we tend to take for granted in Northumberland - unsurprising as the Farnes and Coquet Island have it by the bucket load!" Julian Sykes

Dates Sat 12 - Sat 19 Jul 2025
Price £2,745
Deposit £500 Single Supp £420

Leader Julian Sykes

Weather Variable, with a good chance of sunshine, (10°-20°C) but on the boat trips waterproofs, warm clothing and walking boots are needed

Walking Walks of up to two miles, mainly on level tracks around Reserves

Boat Trips Our trip to the Farne Islands lasts 4.5 hrs, The trip to Coquet Island lasts 2 hrs & North Sea RHIB tour lasts 4 hrs. This trip can be over choppy seas

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8

Insects Could be a problem, especially on the inland day, you may wish to bring repellent

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 5

Just some of what we hope to see:

Common Scoter	Little Tern
Manx Shearwater	auks
Spoonbill	Rock Pipit
Osprey	Dipper
Red Kite	Willow Tit
Goshawk	Common Crossbill
Avocet	Bottlenose Dolphin
Spotted Redshank	Grey Seal
Black-tailed Godwit	Dark Green Fritillary
Great Skua	Lindisfarne Helliborine
Little Gull	Pyramidal Orchid
Arctic Tern	
Roseate Tern	

Fabulous summer birdwatching, as we explore the coastlines, forests and moorlands of this corner of historic Northumberland, based around the famous Farne Islands.

- Boat tours around the Inner and Outer Farne Islands, experiencing a seabird spectacle
- The famous Kielder Forest for Red Squirrel, Osprey and Common Crossbill
- A day on Holy Island for birds, butterflies and botany
- Beautiful coastline with long sandy beaches, jagged rocks and migrant waders
- Superb RHIB tour into the North Sea for seabirds and cetaceans
- A trip out to Coquet Island to see breeding Roseate Terns and Grey Seals
- Staying in a wonderful hotel in the shadow of the iconic Bamburgh Castle

We are based in the beautiful, coastal town of Bamburgh, in the shadow of its famous historic castle, perfectly placed to explore the wonderful scenery and fantastic wildlife of this fabulous north east county. This quaint hotel is noted for its excellent local and wholesome cuisine, with portions to satisfy the keenest of appetites. If time allows we might get a chance to venture out locally for a short time at Monks House Pool or Stag Rocks, to kickstart our daily checklist.

2-7 This is a full and diverse week, where a certain amount of flexibility is required, due to the uncertainty of the weather and wildlife on offer, with a possibility of scarce and rare migrants. Our lovely hotel is within easy reach of the North Sea and an easy walk along the many coastal paths can produce Northern Wheatear, Linnet, singing Reed Bunting and possibly Yellow Wagtail. Offshore we shall find Eider, or the local 'Cuddy Ducks' (after

St Cuthbert's) loafing around the bays, along with Red-breasted Merganser, Cormorant, Guillemot and possibly Common Scoter. South of Bamburgh is Newton by the Sea, where a stop overlooking the North Sea can produce a Little Tern fishing in the beautiful bay, along with more potential seaduck. There are a couple of excellent pools here that are always worthy of investigation, as migrant waders tend to make a stop here on their journey south.

Our longest drive is further south to an area close to Newcastle Airport, where we search for two key species – Red Kite and Willow Tit. We shall spend the day around here visiting some productive local Reserves, which will also produce some of the commoner species found in the county.

Thousands of seabirds breed in Northumberland and we'll enjoy special boat trips to see them astonishingly close up. A trip around the Farne



"The crossing starts well, with a fairly close flyby Gannet, followed by our first auks flying low past the boat. There's a commotion and our attention is quickly diverted to a small pod of Bottlenose Dolphins playing and leaping out of the water. I cannot help pinching myself, all this in the opening 20 minutes of the tour! Then it's our first Puffins, lots swimming right next to the boat. As we get closer to the sea cliffs there are literally 1000's of birds. The sight, sound and smell are an arrest to the senses - flippin heck it's good!" Julian Sykes



Islands needs no introduction and will be one of the highlights of the week. Our boat-based tours here includes trips around both the Inner and Outer Farne Islands, where we shall see birds at incredibly close range - expect Kittiwakes, Guillemots, Razorbills, Puffins, Shags and Eider within feet of you - a photographer's dream!

Arctic, Sandwich and Common Terns all nest here, along with inquisitive Grey Seals, which lift their heads out of the water as we pass. A second boat trip takes us around RSPB Coquet Island where 90% of the UK's Roseate Terns breed. It's a great opportunity to see this scarce breeding species fishing and loafing around on the rocks adjacent to their nesting boxes.

The target of our third boat trip is to glimpse one of the small groups of White-beaked Dolphins in these waters. This little known cetacean spends its summer along the Northumberland coastline, feeding in the fish-rich waters and trying to avoid their larger cousins who they see as a threat. This 10m RHIB tour takes us out into deeper water and as a consequence we have a chance to see Gannets fishing, Great Skua and possibly Manx Shearwater.

One day (or at least part of it!) we shall be crossing the causeway over to Holy Island, which is tide dependant. This is primarily for one of the rarest plants in the UK - Lindisfarne Hellaborine, which is endemic to this beautiful island. The unique sandy soil is also home to other species such as Marsh Hellaborine, Northern Marsh and Common Spotted Orchids with a chance of Coralroot too.

The rest of our time will be spent wandering around the island looking for scarce butterflies and birds in this special place.

Our coastal hopscotch day is punctuated with visits to the pools and wetlands just inland from Druridge Bay. Reed and Sedge Warblers sing from the extensive phragmites bed, along with the more difficult Grasshopper Warbler. We hope to encounter the UK's most northerly breeding Avocets at one of the Reserves, along with Common Snipe, Redshank, Dunlin and Green Sandpiper. There are usually a few surprises, with Little Gull, Mediterranean Gull or Spoonbill being distinct possibilities.

One day we drive inland to the mighty Kielder Water - a huge reservoir that's surrounded by coniferous forest. Due to the construction of platforms, it offers the chance of finding the nest of an Osprey and if our luck is in, one fishing in the lake itself. A stop enroute could also produce Grey Wagtail on the river and we shall also be keeping an eye out for game birds on the drive across the moorland. Typical pine forest species all breed in Kielder and we shall look for Common Crossbill and Red Squirrel in this vast forest - there's always a chance of finding a Goshawk here too.

8 After our last 'full English' breakfast we say our fond farewells and conclude this 'canny' visit to the north east.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** We meet at Newcastle train station or The Victoria Hotel, Bamburgh for a 7 night stay
- Days 2-7** Exploration of the coast, forest and moorland, including three boat trips around The Farne Islands and Lindisfarne, the Farnes Deeps and Coquet Island
- Day 8** We say our farewells and depart after breakfast

Lesley Gadsden: Puffins
Tim Drew: Inner Farnes
Mark Denman: Kittiwake and Sandwich Tern
James Glover: Roseate Tern, Snipe
Simon Eaves: Guillemot
Chrissie Nicholson: Common Seal

