

ISLAY AND JURA IN AUTUMN



"Islay is certainly one of my favourite destinations, partly because of the opportunity for great views of at least eight raptor species, but just the sheer numbers of birds is both breathtaking and uplifting."
Sally Nowell

Dates Sat 26 Oct - Sat 2 Nov 2024

Price £2,595

Deposit £500 Single Supp £400

Leaders Sally Nowell and Ailie Brown

Weather Autumn in The Hebrides can be anything from gloriously calm and sunny to quite cool, wet and windy, with weather quickly changeable.

Come prepared for everything from cool, rainy and breezy through to dry, warm and sunny weather (0-15°C)

Walking Mainly short walks on good tracks, with longer coastal walks on rougher ground. Lightweight walking shoes and boots are advisable. You may also wish to bring walking poles

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

Insects Unlikely to be a problem at this time of year

Accom Double, twin and single ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Barnacle Goose	Peregrine
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rock Dove
Chough	Glaucous Gull
Twite	Iceland Gull
Golden Eagle	Red Deer
'Wild' Canada Goose	Otter
Pink-footed Goose	Grey Seal
Pale-bellied Brent Goose	Common Seal
Long-tailed Duck	
Scaup	
Red-throated Diver	
Great Northern Diver	
Hen Harrier	
Merlin	

Experience thousands of wintering geese, Chough and spectacular raptors on Islay, with a day on Jura's rugged coastline watching thousands of Red Deer in their autumn rut.

- Spectacle of thousands of Barnacle and Greenland White-fronted Geese
- A trip to beautiful Jura to witness the Red Deer rut and visit a Gin distillery
- Hunting raptors including Hen Harrier, Peregrine, Merlin, Golden Eagle
- Chough, divers, seaduck, Twite and Rock Doves
- Abundance of historical sites round every corner
- Enjoy delicious local food at our welcoming hotel
- Explore Islay and Jura's rugged coastlines, lochs and bays for a chance of Otter

| We'll meet in Glasgow and begin our journey north and west. On this scenic drive we pass Loch Lomond, Loch Long and Loch Fyne before finally reaching our hotel on Loch Gilp. The views across the loch here are beautiful and if we arrive early enough, we shall take a short stroll to start our birding for the week, before enjoying our first dinner together.

2-6 Today we head to Kennacraig where we catch our ferry to Islay. As we wait to board, from the harbour we shall scan for Black Guillemot, seals, gull species and eagles. The two-hour ferry journey will give us time to search the seas for Great Northern Diver and cetaceans, plus seabirds such as Kittiwake, Gannet and possibly even a Great Skua. Arriving on Islay, we'll begin to explore as we cross the island to our accommodation for the next five nights, the Bowmore Hotel, a comfortable base with excellent locally sourced food and great hospitality.

Our next four days on Islay will be spent exploring the best wildlife spots and most famously, the spectacle of arriving wintering geese. Thousands of Barnacle Geese and Greenland White-fronted Geese arrive here from the Arctic to feed on this milder coastline and the view is utterly breathtaking. A highlight of our visit will be the RSPB Reserve of Loch Gruinart, where a sea of geese will cover the landscape, a treat for both our eyes and ears. We shall of course scan for other species such as Pink-footed, Greylag and Pale-bellied Brent Geese. More scarce species such as vagrant 'wild' Canada Goose, Lesser Canada Goose, also known as Cackling Goose and Snow Goose will also be searched for.

Machir Bay dunes and Ardnave Point give us a great opportunity to look for Red-billed Chough, with Scotland's largest population here on the island. Glorious Loch Gorm will give us more





concentrations of geese, Whooper Swan, Snipe, Redshank, Shoveler and Brown Hare. We shall also be on the look-out for raptors, such as Hen Harrier, Merlin and Peregrine.

Down on the south west point of the island, the rugged Rhinns of Islay peninsula is a good place to look for Golden Eagle and other raptor species, with Rock Dove, Linnet and Twite all possible too. At this time of year we can expect large numbers of wintering thrushes to be arriving, so fields here can be filled with Fieldfare, Redwing and migrating Blackbird. If we are very lucky we might even catch up with Waxwing! The point is a great place to look out to sea for cetaceans, Eider and Gannet. Looking onto Loch Indall from the west side, we shall keep a look out for divers, wintering seaduck such as Long-tailed Duck and Otter on the rocky shore.

The Oa peninsula on the south west corner is an RSPB Nature Reserve in a remote and rugged environment with a good concentration of wildlife. If the weather allows we shall walk out to the remote American Monument, a good place to look out for Peregrine. The Reserve, with grazed grassland, heath, lochs and cliffs provides excellent habitat for Hen Harrier, Golden Eagle and Buzzard over the land. We should find Stonechat, Twite and Chough and if it is a clear day, we should be able to see Northern Ireland from the point.

Islay has a richness of medieval history, Celtic crosses and warrior grave slabs which we shall pass on our travels. Islay's name is famously linked to its whisky export, so there may be a chance to

stop by a distillery or two. Loch Indall near our hotel is a perfect place to check for gulls such as Glaucous and Iceland, as well as all three species of diver, Long-tailed Duck, Common Scoter and Scaup. As the light fades, flocks of geese drop into the bay to roost and we may even be treated to a sunset.

We shall choose a day to go over on the ferry to Jura to explore this rugged and remote island, its single road hugging the east coastline. With only 200 human inhabitants, the island is home to 6,000 Red Deer and autumn is the time when these magnificent mammals will be bellowing in the annual stag rut. With the Paps of Jura mountain peaks as a backdrop, we shall also look out for White-tailed Eagle, Golden Eagle and Merlin amongst other species. Along the rugged coastline a keen eye may also spot Otter and seals out on the rocks. We shall also pop into a local Gin Distillery to sample their wares.

7-8 After breakfast we shall spend our final hours on Islay checking the bay for divers as we take the ferry back to the mainland. On our journey towards Loch Gilp for our final night, we shall explore some coastal areas in Kintyre and maybe take a woodland wander. We shall arrive at our hotel as darkness falls to enjoy a relaxed evening with our final meal together and relive our highlights of the trip.

The next morning, we shall continue our travels back through stunning landscape to Glasgow, where we shall say our farewells.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Meet in Glasgow and drive to Lochgilphead
1 night: Grey Gull Hotel, Lochgilphead
- Days 2-6** Travel to Kennacraig for the 2 hour ferry to Islay. Walking and birding on Islay with a day on Jura
5 nights at Bowmore Hotel, Islay
- Days 7-8** After breakfast we take the ferry back to Kennacraig and travel to Lochgilphead, travelling back to Glasgow the following morning.
1 night: Grey Gull Hotel, Lochgilphead

Simon Eaves: Barnacle Geese, Chough
Duncan Macdonald: Distillery
David Petts: Hen Harrier
Ian Tulloch: Brambling, Linnets
Mike Grimshaw: Twite

