

ISLES OF SCILLY



"It's fascinating that each of the islands has different individual characteristics, both in habitat and birdlife, so on top of the wildlife, it's a great experience just walking around exploring this beautiful part of our country." Simon Eaves

Dates Mon 7 - Mon 14 Oct 2024

Price £2,695

Deposit £450 **Single Supp** £400

Leaders Simon Eaves and Craig Round

Ferry Penzance to St Mary's

Weather The weather can vary enormously in the autumn. The Isles of Scilly can be wet and windy, however we may also expect some warm weather as well! During a typical week in this season we would expect to experience mixed sun and showers, with temperatures in the range 10-25°C

Walking We shall be on foot most of the day making medium length walks between stops on easy paths and roads over even ground, but on occasion we may walk on slightly rough coastal paths. We shall cover an overall distance of about 3 to 4 miles during the day. Walking boots are recommended on wet days, with trainers being fine when the weather is dry. Don't bring wellingtons – it's unlikely to be muddy and in most places they are unsuitable. Collapsible telescopic/walking poles could be useful for this trip

Boat Trips We shall take short boat trips to the smaller islands from St Mary's

Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8

Insects Biting insects are unlikely to be a problem

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Manx Shearwater	Firecrest
Balearic Shearwater	Wryneck
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Rose-coloured Starling
Jack Snipe	Common Rosefinch
Short-toed Lark	Lapland Bunting
Red-breasted Flycatcher	Plus rarities!!
Yellow-browed Warbler	

Famous for scarce birds, we return to this scattering of tranquil islands on the south west limit of Britain, at the best time of year for the greatest variety of migrants to turn up!

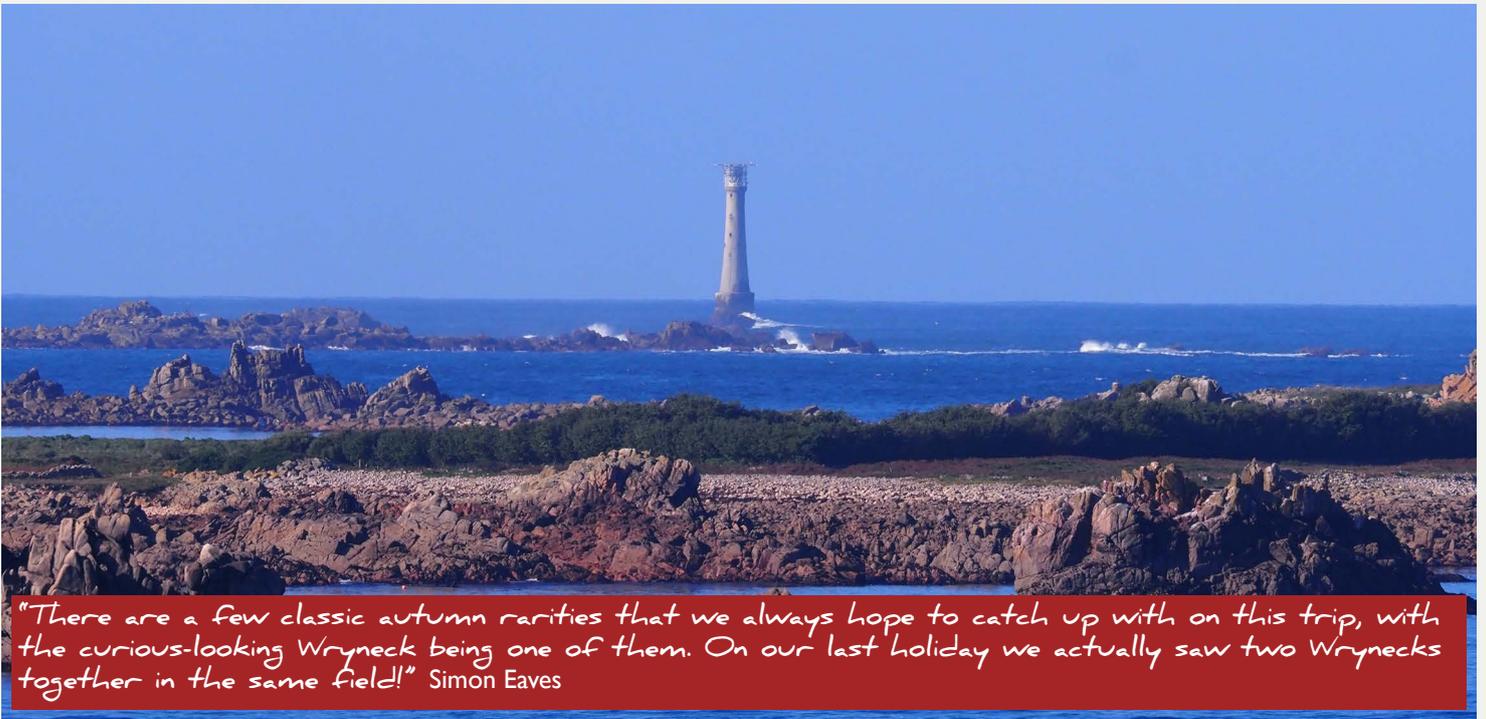
- Scarce bird migrants from all points of the compass
- Walking quiet lanes amidst sub-tropical plants
- Dazzling seascapes and a patchwork of little fields
- Following up all the latest news each day
- Inter-island boat trips
- All from a small hotel on the main island of St Mary's
- Excellent local knowledge from our guides

We meet together in Penzance at the harbour before taking the ferry out to Scilly. Birds and wildlife will be apparent from the moment we leave the bay, with several species of seabird on the 28 mile crossing to the islands. Gannets and Fulmars cruise the open waters, along with a really good chance of seeing the rare Balearic Shearwater, which move into these British waters in late summer. Common Dolphins are increasingly common here and we hope to have some good sightings from the ship. Landing on St Mary's we can walk the short distance to our island hotel. The rest of the first day we are likely to explore the main island of St Mary's, with its diverse habitats of woodland, farmland and coastal trails.

2-7 The islands have recorded over 400 species during their birding history, having a reputation as being a must visit place for all British birders. Autumn migration will be in full swing

as we arrive, with the last of the common species passing through such as Redstarts, Chiffchaffs, Wheatears, with swallows and martins still occurring at this time of year. Along with these common migrants and depending on the preceding weather and wind directions, we can hope for rarities. If transatlantic low pressure sweeps in we may see something arrive from America, whilst easterly winds may produce birds from Europe such as Wryneck and Bluethroat. In the right conditions, eastern rarities from even further afield in Asia such as Yellow-browed Warbler and Dusky Warbler can appear. It's impossible to give a firm itinerary - let's just say that our guides will take you to where the best birds are! Migrants can turn up anywhere; on the south pointing Peninnis Head, on grassy airfields, golf courses, sheltered coves and the shelter belts which protect the bulb fields - and indeed on any of the islands. Any boat trips we need





"There are a few classic autumn rarities that we always hope to catch up with on this trip, with the curious-looking Wryneck being one of them. On our last holiday we actually saw two Wrynecks together in the same field!" Simon Eaves

to make are included in the holiday. This is prime time for scarce birds such as Short-toed Lark, Wryneck and Red-backed Shrike, but expect the unexpected, as Scilly is famed for attracting vagrant waders, ducks, warblers, pipits and even birds of prey from all corners of the compass, which rarely occur elsewhere in the UK. Anything can turn up - birds we have seen include Wryneck, Red-eyed Vireo, Red-backed Shrike, Short-toed Lark, Red-throated Pipit (among other things.)

During our trip we shall alternate between exploring the main island of St Mary's, with days out to visit two or three of the other inhabited islands using the colourful little inter-island boats. Even St Mary's is only 2.5 by 1.75 miles, so exploring on foot is easy, wandering between the different habitats of tiny bulb fields sheltered by tall pittasporum hedges, maritime heath and boggy moorland, with muddy freshwater pools, rocky headlands and sandy coves that pepper the coastline. The unique mild maritime climate has created a fascinating landscape, with special plants adapted to this environment

The Scillies are made up of around 150 islands with just five of the largest islands being inhabited. All of these five offshore islands are distinctly different in character and habitat. We shall almost certainly visit Treско, the second largest, which is famed for its exotic Abbey Gardens created in 1834 around the remains of the 12th century St Nicholas Priory. Its sweeping sandy beaches and rocky tidal bays attract waders, gulls and terns and the dense vegetation and wooded areas provide shelter and feeding for common migrants and rarities

alike, as they pause to refuel on their long journeys. The Great Pool almost divides the whole island, offering the chance of some wildfowl, with regular rarities such as Ring-necked Duck and Spotted Crake turning up in some years. St Agnes, the most south-westerly of the inhabited islands, is in the prime position for first landfall of any transatlantic migrants, so it is another island we are likely to visit. It has a rugged southern coastline and more sheltered bays in the north. Its narrow winding lanes and tiny fields give it a totally different feel to the other islands and with Wingletang Down - an area of open scrub and gorse which stretches down to the Atlantic coast, it's an island of contrasts in a tiny area.

Rare birds can turn up on any of the other islands, with visiting birders searching all over. We shall try to see as many as we can, so depending on where the birds are found, we may visit St Martin's, a long thin island with beautiful white sandy beaches, downland and a small farming community. Alternatively, we may visit Bryher, which shelters Treско from the Atlantic and is home to Hell Bay, where there is nothing between us and the eastern seaboard of America!

8 We can spend the morning birding, then after lunch we board our ferry for the sea crossing back to Penzance, with a chance of more seabirds and cetaceans on the way.



Outline Itinerary

Day 1 Ferry from Penzance to St Mary's and transfer to hotel.
7 nights at St Mary's Hall Hotel

Days 2-7 Normally 3 days spent exploring the different parts of St Mary's, the main island and 3 day trips to other islands, usually Treско, St Agnes and Bryher, but the occurrence of unusual birds will determine the exact itinerary

Day 8 Return ferry to Penzance

Simon Eaves: Wryneck, Subalpine Warbler, Young Purple Heron

Babs Moore: Bishops Rock

Steve Osborne: Cattle Egrets, Firecrest

Dave Constantine: Yellow-browed Warbler

