

SOLWAY FIRTH



"This holiday is just stacked with stunning birds and gives us opportunities to see some of them very close up indeed!"

Julian Sykes

Dates Sat 1 Nov - Sat 8 Nov 2025

Price £2,215

Deposit £400 Single Supp £200

Leader Julian Sykes

Weather The weather can vary enormously at this time of year. Typically we can expect a mixture of sunshine and showers with temperatures in the range 0-15°C. Some sites are exposed, so wind will be a factor

Walking We shall walk on a variety of wide and narrow paths, generally in good condition. Some walking will be on boardwalk and some will be on rough coastline. Walking boots are recommended

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

Insects Not a problem

Accom A comfortable former Coaching Inn offering double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 6

Just some of what we hope to see:

Red-throated Diver	Short-eared Owl
Slavonian Grebe	Pintail
Black Guillemot	Scaup
Hen Harrier	Long-tailed Duck
Red Kite	Barn Owl
Golden Plover	Willow Tit
Turnstone	Crossbill
Purple Sandpiper	Black-tailed Godwit
Pale-bellied Brent Goose	Roe Deer
Barnacle Goose	Red Squirrel
Pink-footed Goose	
Whooper Swan	
White-fronted Goose	
Goosander	
Peregrine	
Merlin	

A bird-rich winter retreat, with thousands of geese, swans, raptors and waders, plus a fabulous Red Kite feeding station in this beautiful, historic, but often ignored part of Scotland

- Six species of goose, including Greenland White-fronted Goose
- Great close up views of Whooper Swans being fed
- Chance of Golden Eagle, Merlin, Hen Harrier and Goshawk
- Impressive flocks of Barnacle and Pink-footed Geese on coastal marshes
- Red Kite feeding station giving spectacular views
- Diversity of waders, gulls, ducks, divers, auks, grebes and more at Loch Ryan
- Visit a wide variety of beautiful habitats from woodlands to mountains, saltmarsh to rivers

We meet at our hotel in Castle Douglas, with time before dinner to chat about the week ahead.

2-7 The Solway now hosts approximately 40,000 wintering Barnacle Geese - the entire Svalbard population!! This astonishing number is all the more remarkable when you realise numbers crashed to just 400 in the 1940s, before WWT bought land at Caerlaverock, instigating the start of their recovery. We hope to see several thousand on our visit to this iconic Reserve, alongside other species such as Greylag, Pink-footed and perhaps even rarities such as Snow Goose, that have occurred here.

The trumpeting of Whooper Swans is a constant soundtrack, but becomes especially loud just before feeding time and as they fly in to the feeding



pool. In the hides we'll get good views of duck such as Pintail, Gadwall, Wigeon, Teal and maybe even Green-winged Teal. Waders in the pools and surrounding fields include Golden Plover, Lapwing, Oystercatcher and Black-tailed Godwit and distant flocks of Knot and Dunlin on the coast, where Peregrine, Hen Harrier or Merlin may fly through.

Along the coast, the RSPB Reserve at Mersehead is another fabulous spot for wintering wildfowl, with flocks of Wigeon, Teal, Shoveler, Shelduck and Pintail and more flocks of Barnacle and Pink-footed Geese. Perhaps we'll find one of the small number of leucistic Barnacle Geese here - almost white, but with faint markings just visible. There is a good chance that Hen Harrier or Short-eared Owl are using the area to winter. Nearby coastal areas such as Southernness Point and Carsthorpe Bay, can be a good sites to see wintering waders, with flocks





"A late Autumn visit to the Solway coast is a real treat. We often find we have the place to ourselves to enjoy some really wonderful wildlife." Julian Sykes

of Oystercatchers, Dunlin, Bar-tailed Godwits and Grey Plover; while rocky areas host Turnstone and a few Purple Sandpiper. This is a good place to look for Scaup and there may be flocks of Pintail offshore and perhaps a few Common Scoter. We also drop in to see Sweetheart Abbey.

We'll visit Loch Ken and RSPB Ken Dee Marshes, to search for the small number of Greenland White-fronted Geese that winter here. This is one of the few places where Willow Tit are still doing well, perhaps coming to the feeders, while Red Kites soar overhead. Nearby is a Red Kite feeding station and we'll time our visit to see these mesmerizing birds swooping down for tit-bits of meat and eating on the wing, almost within touching distance.

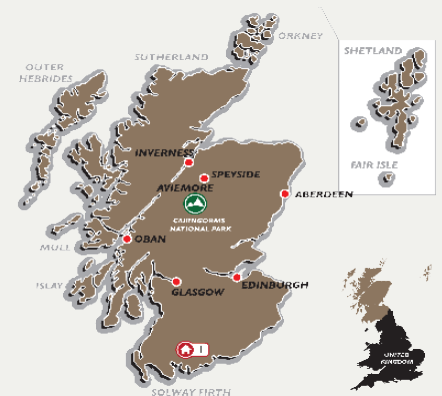
Peregrines now nest on the church tower in Castle Douglas and stay on territory all winter. On the neighbouring Nature Reserve is a wonderful location to look for wintering Pink-footed, Greylag and Greenland White-fronted Geese. There should be a variety of duck, including Pintail and Wigeon, while Hen Harrier regularly quarter the ground in search of prey.

Travelling further afield, the sheltered waters of Loch Ryan may be teeming with birds. Waders include Dunlin, Redshank, Ringed Plover and Turnstone, alongside feeding Light-bellied Brent Geese. This is one of the best sites for Scaup and we'll check through them for Eider, Red-breasted Merganser and Common Scoter. Red-throated Diver and Slavonian and Great Crested Grebes

winter here, plus Black Guillemot and small numbers of Long-tailed Duck. Black-necked Grebe used to winter and occasionally still appear. If we have time, we may visit Corsewall Point, where Gannets are often close to shore. We may also visit West Freugh for more chances of Greenland White-fronted Geese and the possibility of Hen Harrier or Barn Owl coming to roost, if we time it right.

The interior of Dumfries and Galloway has rivers and lochs and expanses of rolling, rugged hills, woodlands, forests and moorland. We shall visit sites with high hills where, if luck is with us, we may see Golden Eagle soaring and there should be Ravens galore and perhaps Peregrine or Merlin. The extensive forestry has Common Crossbill, Siskin and Redpoll. The oak woodlands are home to nuthatch and treecreeper and in the beech trees we'll seek out Brambling. An exciting feature at this time of year is the arrival of Redwings and Fieldfares, so we'll be hoping to enjoy the spectacle of them feasting on the autumn berries and who knows, we might strike it lucky and bump into Waxwings! Buzzards are a common sight and we shall keep a sharp eye out for soaring Goshawk, while marvelling at the drama of this beautiful, historical landscape.

8 After breakfast we'll say our farewells before setting off on our journeys home.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive in Castle Douglas in time for our evening meal, followed by a chat about our plans for the coming week. 7 nights Kings Arms Hotel, Castle Douglas
- Days 2-7** Wildlife and birdwatching exploration including Caerlaverock WWT Reserve, Ken-Dee Marshes RSPB Reserve, Cairnmore of Fleet NNR and Red Kite feeding station
- Day 8** After breakfast we shall say our farewells

Jane Hope: Red Kites
Morag Rea: Barnacle Geese
Craig Round: Whooper Swans
Kate Mennie: Golden Plover, Merlin
Chrissie Nicholson: Pale-bellied Brent Geese, Pink-footed Geese

