

SPEYSIDE WILDLIFE

Bird and Wildlife Watching Holidays in the UK and Overseas **2020**





2020 holiday schedule

This is our 2020 schedule at a glance. Details of each holiday or experience are given in full here; just start turning the pages to find the destination that suits you. In addition, all holidays are on our website, where you'll also find photographs and feedback from guests who have been with us on previous trips. A "Holiday Highlights" trip report can be downloaded from each holiday details web page. To ask about any of these, or for any other queries, don't hesitate to email us on enquiries@speysidewildlife.co.uk or phone us on +44 (0) 1479 812498.



Jane Hope, Ferness Road

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WHAT MAKES A SPEYSIDE WILDLIFE HOLIDAY

When we started in 1991, running trips and holidays in Speyside in the Scottish Highlands, designated as the Cairngorms National Park in 2003, in recognition of how special this area is, we never dreamed that we would now be running holidays around the world from the Arctic to the Antarctic. Our ethos however remains the same, to deliver fun-filled holidays, packed with wildlife and our destinations have always been determined by this and by where you want to go next.

We pride ourselves on our high level of personal attention and won't race around in pursuit of big lists. We keep to small group sizes (normally 12), so whether you are a beginner or more experienced, young or old, we are happy to take the time, so you can enjoy the wildlife to the full. Our guides are experienced and their enthusiasm infectious, always ensuring that you see the wildlife and always happy to explain what you are looking at, whilst our dedicated office team makes sure everything runs smoothly from the beginning to the end of your holiday.

"They are a trustworthy company we have used previously, with a great range of holiday choices along with expert guides. We also like the fact that the guides stay with you and that all meals are included in the holiday price." Gill and Martin Gooch



James Stevens: West Coast splendour

Fully Inclusive

Our holidays are just that - holidays. We'll fit in as many exciting and interesting activities as we can, but still give you completely relaxed enjoyment. You'll find little if any extra spending money is needed, as our holidays are all-inclusive - the price you see is the final price you pay and covers accommodation, meals, transport, boat and ferry costs and flights, as detailed with each destination.

Not included are travel insurance, visas, personal telephone calls, drinks etc. at the accommodation and items of a personal nature.

Typical Days Out

We generally breakfast about 8am to make the most of the morning's bird and wildlife activity, but often arrange optional pre-breakfast excursions. In tropical areas we'll start earlier to avoid the midday heat, but don't be frightened to lie-in - it is your holiday after all! We eat out during the day or take a picnic lunch in the field and, at the end of the day, return to freshen up before dinner, where we all eat together.

"I love the reliability of the company, the pace of the holidays and the knowledgeable, friendly and informative guides, who always pay attention to the comfort of the guests."
Sue Ripley

OUR CUSTOMER SERVICE PROMISE:

To share outstanding fun-filled wildlife experiences, where you are always treated as an individual, not one of a crowd.

Relaxing afterwards, we'll run through the day's wildlife sightings and highlights, or perhaps arrange an optional dusk excursion.

We try and fit in as much gentle walking as we can during our days out. There may be more rigorous walks occasionally, but wherever possible we shall offer a less strenuous option. You'll require a moderate degree of fitness, but no more than average.

People find our holidays fun and informal, with guests, including both beginners and those more expert, adding to their experience. On each trip, we get a real mixture of singles and couples, spanning a range of age and ability. Our easy-going guides will make sure that your holiday is fun to be on.

Where We Stay

Wildlife watching often takes place in beautiful remote regions with beautiful remote accommodation to match. These places are often unique. We try and find the most friendly, rural, good quality, family-run accommodation with ensuite facilities. We blaze a trail by finding some terrific hotels away from the run of the mill tourist fare, places of character that others don't use. For us, great food and comfortable accommodation, with wildlife watching near at hand, are all vital ingredients for a successful holiday.

"Good knowledgeable guides who care about the guests and try to ensure you see everything, plus the organisation as a whole is very good."

Val Lambert

"The guides were great as usual; very knowledgeable and great fun. We were kept fully informed about everything."

Marilyn Davidson

Easy To Get To

If you're holidaying with us in the Cairngorms, Inverness airport is only a 1hr 30min flight from London and we can arrange an airport pick-up for you for a small charge. If you prefer to travel by train, we can collect you free of charge from Aviemore train station at 4:30pm, 6:30pm or 7:30pm and of course we'll return you to the station on departure.

All our holidays around Scotland start in the Cairngorms, Inverness, Aberdeen, Oban or Glasgow and we'll give you details of the meeting points for each. Again, if you prefer to travel by train, they all have stations and there are flights to Inverness, Aberdeen and Glasgow.

If you're joining us on an overseas holiday, a map of the airport or train station, together with a meeting point and time, will be sent to you prior to the start of the holiday.

Photography

Our holidays are aimed at providing a great wildlife watching experience. While they are not designed as photography holidays, many guests do take the opportunity to capture wonderful photographs to add to their enjoyment (and often the enjoyment of other guests). Most of the pictures in this brochure have been taken by guests or guides and we are pleased to be able to use these to illustrate "what you see is what you get" - our guides really do have the knack of finding birds and animals.



Evelyn Moorkens, Toco Toucan, Brazilian Pantanal



Christine Maughan, Sea Otter and Cub, British Columbia



Andrew Hoyne, Puffins, Spring Birds in the Highlands

HOW TO BOOK

Bookings can be made manually, or you can visit our website to check availability and book and pay online. Full terms and conditions are also available online, along with details of each holiday.

Please feel free to call or email us and we'll be happy to advise you of the spaces remaining on your chosen holiday. We can also send you a "Holiday Highlights" trip report. These are also available on the website.

Whether booking online or sending in a booking form, payments for holidays can be made by bank transfer or cheque. In addition, we accept payment from the major credit and debit cards shown below via PayPal.

Phone	+44 (0) 1479 812498
Email	enquiries@speysidewildlife.co.uk
Web	www.speysidewildlife.co.uk
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MEET OUR GUIDES

"Roy is so knowledgeable, keen to pass on what he knows and enable all of us to see the wildlife, no matter how hard it is to pick it out!!"
Fiona Turner 2019



Roy Atkins

We've known Roy for over 25 years. He's a great all-round naturalist and years' of experience in the world of teaching have made him a great people person. Our guests travel with him again and again to far-flung places such as Costa Rica, Tanzania, the Pantanal and British Columbia. His sense of fun and knowledge of birds, plants and animals make him a very popular leader.

Darren Rees

Darren is a great birder and quite simply fun to be with. He has led countless groups for us in Arizona, Texas, California, South Africa and Namibia. This year he will be taking guests to Colorado, Yellowstone, Extremadura and Spitsbergen. He is also a talented artist: 'Bird Impressions' is his acclaimed collection of bird paintings and his latest book 'Ice Bound' follows his exploits in Antarctica'.



"Darren kept everything running very smoothly. His knowledge of the area, the birds and what we should expect was top-notch."
John Beaty and Evie Malliris 2019

"Excellent in all respects. Simon was a superb leader and gave us advance details every evening for the following day."
Margaret Moore 2019



Simon Eaves

Simon is one of Speyside's keenest birdwatchers. He knows as much as anyone about the wildlife of the Scottish Highlands and has a real interest in scarce birds, mammals and identification challenges - with him as your guide you'll learn a huge amount about Speyside. That doesn't stop him taking guests further afield for us however; to places such as Tarifa/Doñana and the Isles of Scilly.

Craig Round

Craig loves Speyside and the Scottish Islands and has led tours in Scotland for nearly 25 years, taking our guests regularly to Mull, Shetland, Fair Isle and the Outer Hebrides. He has a great combination of field naturalist skills, outgoing personality and incredibly sharp eyes; along with an astonishing knowledge of birds, mammals and insects.



"I always learn lots about the birds we see from Craig and he never loses sight of the fact that we are on holiday."
Hazel Pickering 2018

"Duncan was brilliant. Very well informed, on the ball, patient at all times and tried to make sure everyone saw everything."
Sue and Mike Jenkins 2019



Duncan Macdonald

With 20 years' experience leading wildlife watching groups in the Highlands, Duncan is spending more and more time taking our guests further afield to the Pyrenees, Yellowstone, Bhutan and Romania. He has a background in environmental education and conservation, which gives him great guiding skills, as well as knowledge of a wide range of birds, mammals, butterflies and bugs!

Adam Batty

Adam is passionate about nature, a keen birder and an experienced bird surveyor. He has travelled extensively to experience and witness the natural world and enjoys nothing more than sharing those experiences with others. Since moving to the Cairngorms from Edinburgh, he has been enthusiastically expanding his knowledge of the birds, mammals, plants and insects of the area.



"First class guides, expert knowledge, great attention to detail and fun!!"
Jean Brown 2019

"Excellent - Julian worked tirelessly throughout the trip and worked hard to make sure all the guests were happy!"
Jane Nickerson 2019



Julian Sykes

A native Yorkshireman, Julian now divides his time between there and Spain, so is the perfect guide to take you on our Andujar, Extremadura and Pyrenees holidays. Not that this stops him from leading tours to British Columbia, NE India and Wrangel Island. He has a lifelong interest in wildlife and his friendly outgoing nature makes him a very popular guide and ideal member of the team.

Sally Nowell

Sally has travelled extensively to pursue her interest in wildlife watching, particularly birds, and has been based in Speyside for the last 22 years, so has an excellent knowledge of Highland wildlife. Sally is a keen walker and loves to try and get off the beaten track to discover the hidden corners of the Highlands. She co-leads a number of our Scottish holidays.

"Kate and Sally were exemplary! They kept us informed; they kept an eye on the weather and organised the itinerary accordingly"
Rosemary Burke 2019



"Sally and Kate were an outstanding team. Loved their rapport. Really excellent. Sally in particular was so knowledgeable and diplomatic."
Chrissie Edginton 2019

Kate Mennie

Kate grew up in North East Scotland and has had a passion for wildlife from a young age. Her first job involved combining childcare and forest school learning, before spending last summer volunteering with the ranger service on the Isle of Mull. Kate mainly runs our Evening Mammal Hide in the Cairngorms, but also can be found Day Guiding and co-leading some of our Scottish Holidays.

Peter Elford

Before coming to Speyside, he and his wife now live near Ferness, Peter previously lived on Skye and lead trips to watch White-tailed Eagles. He has a bit of a thing for dragonflies! Working for Speyside Wildlife he gets to share his passion for wildlife with visitors from all over the world - so what's not to love? Peter leads some of our day guides in the Cairngorms.

"James did an excellent job all week. He was enthusiastic, knowledgeable and patient. He listened to suggestions and incorporated as many as time permitted."
Kathleen Murray 2019



"Peter was a great guide and a gentleman too. He was a good communicator and we all enjoyed his company. He went the extra mile."
Richard Percival 2019

James Stevens

His passion for nature started at the age of three, growing up in the Cotswolds, after he memorised all of the birds on a poster in his room! James creates the films you can see on our website, when not filming in remote areas around the world and also co-leads some of our Scottish holidays. He's not a bad artist either!

Jack Ward

Since moving to the Cairngorms in 2010 Jack has lived and worked across the Scottish Highlands, travelling throughout the Hebrides and the far North West. He has a love of all things wild, with expertise in all UK deer species and birds and loves to explore the relationships between wildlife and their environment. His enthusiasm for wildlife is rivalled only by his desire to share his wildlife experiences with others.

"Tim Drew is excellent one of the best guides we've had on any of the six trips we've had with you."
Neil and Judy Hopkins 2019



"Jack was a great guide for the archaeological sites - remembered all the dates and names - he'd done a lot of good research on them."
Lesley Gadsden 2018

Tim Drew

With 30 years' experience behind him, Tim is a passionate ornithologist and a keen all-round naturalist who was born with 'binoculars around his neck'. He enjoys nothing more than exploring places in search of birds, butterflies and all other beasts and sharing his knowledge with others. He has a soft spot for the Scottish Highlands and Islands, but has also travelled widely throughout Europe and Asia.

MEET OUR OTHER "EXPERTS"

Our guides are the expert birders and naturalists who lead the tours, but behind them stands the invisible group of other "experts", who are just as essential in making sure that every holiday runs smoothly and guests have a great time. They include the people who plan, research and organise the individual holidays; who arrange the logistics, provide the information, deal with queries and keep the show on the road.

"This is my sixth trip with you and I return because I know I will reliably have the type of holiday I like best, as a nature-loving traveller."
Andrew Dodd 2019



Sally Dowden

Sally owns Speyside Wildlife and is still very much hands on in the organisation. Responsible for the smooth running and complex logistics of the business, she recently instigated a wildlife identification course, designed to fill the lack of 'on the ground' identification skills in the Cairngorms, which is run by two of our wildlife tour guides.

Lisa Gunn

Lisa has been with us for fourteen years now and is responsible for all the accounting and systems management. Along with the daily accounting processes, company pensions, wages, budgets, contribution schedules and VAT, she organises the hire and vehicle logistics, all of which help to keep her busier than ever!



"Thanks so much for this, Lisa. Speyside sets the bar very high for standards of customer service. All best wishes for Christmas and the New Year."
Alison Cawley 2018

"Thank you, by the way, for booking me such good seats on the flight to/from Buenos Aires - it was great to have the window seats at the front. It was a great trip." Julia Bevan 2019



Tania Pedersen

Tania is one of the voices you'll hear when you call our office. She deals with all aspects of administration to ensure you have all the information you need for your holiday, organising all our overseas trips, dealing with the complex logistics of the long-haul destinations, while still finding time to manage the European destinations.

Susanne McCafferty

Susanne has been with us for over thirteen years. Born and bred in Speyside, she deals with all aspects of a selection of our Scottish and UK holidays, such as Orkney, Wales, the Scillies, Northumberland, the Outer Hebrides and Mull, as well as organising the day guiding in the Cairngorms and further afield.



"Susanne's kind, faithful and efficient communication has been a blessing, without her I rather doubt my dreams of participation in this lovely experience could've come to fruition!" Mollie Dodd 2017

"Cath was absolutely brilliant and quietly and calmly suggested an alternative plan, which she then proceeded to organise very efficiently."
David and Gillian Smith 2017



Cath Wright

Cath leads on our marketing, deals with our design work and website and organises our presentations to bird clubs and exhibitions at birding fairs, plus our own events up and down the country. Her background in hospitality and marketing, means she is best placed to ensure we get to see as many of you as possible around the UK.

Karen Martin

Karen, the newest member of the team, has a background in hospitality, having owned a guesthouse for six years, achieving a VS 'Gold' grading. She loves travelling in Scotland and beyond, normally in her motorhome and enjoys exploring new places for guests to visit, to make their holidays with us enjoyable, exciting and memorable.



"Good guides and accommodation. Excellent destinations for watching wildlife and learning about the country."
Penny and Keith Chantler. 2019

"Very good service, with phone calls where needed to arrange our airport pick-up and found that we could leave luggage at the station. This helped us spend the final day in Inverness."
Sandra Peel and Marjory Woods, 2018



Rebecca Mackellar

Rebecca handles the logistics of all holidays that have a Cairngorms National Park element to them. Her army background stands her in good stead to combine her work for Speyside Wildlife with running her own business, while still finding time to co-ordinate and run the annual Grantown-on-Spey Tri-tri, that she established some time ago.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS

We do all we can to ensure we offer the very best standard of service and quality to our clients. 80% of guests return their questionnaires at the end of their holiday, giving us not only very valuable feedback, but also a consistent 90% satisfaction rate. 70% of guests on our trips have been before and in our 25th year, we had over 25 guests who had taken 25 or more holidays with us, a statistic we're very proud of.

Our Financial Guarantee

Keeping your money safe and sound



When you book through us your money is safe and sound. We comply with British and European legislation in respect of the travel industry, in accordance with the Package Travel, Package Tours Regulations 1992, where all guests booking with Speyside Wildlife are fully protected against the loss of any monies paid to us for a non-flight based holiday or trip (and repatriation if required) due to insolvency, by way of a Trust Account.

The holidays with flights are ATOL Protected, as we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 4259. In the event of insolvency, the CAA will ensure you are not stranded and will arrange to refund any money you have paid to us for an advance booking. For further information, visit the ATOL website at www.atol.org.uk.

On any flight-based holiday, CAA regulations dictate that all guests must have insurance. Proof of this cover must be forwarded before we can confirm your final payment, however we strongly advise guests to take out insurance cover on booking any holiday in case you need to cancel prior to departure due to accident or illness. You are free to use the information sent by us, or to take out your own policy.

Cairngorms National Park

Increasing quality whilst reducing impact



We've been granted use of this Brand by the Cairngorms National Park Authority. This is only given to those businesses who have agreed to a set of quality standards in respect of their visitor experience, together with a commitment to reducing their impact on the natural environment.



OUR CUSTOMER SERVICE PROMISE:

To share outstanding fun-filled wildlife experiences, where you are always treated as an individual and not one of a crowd.

VisitScotland

Quality Assurance Scheme (Wildlife Experience)



Speyside Wildlife was one of 40 wildlife businesses to be assessed under VisitScotland's quality assurance scheme for Wildlife Experiences, achieving four star status for our day tours. An accolade that we've kept each year since. Watch out for the designation throughout Scotland.

Green Business UK

Green Tourism Business Scheme (Tour Operator)



We have been assessed by Green Business UK for the environmental credentials operating throughout our business and are delighted to have achieved a Gold Green Tourism Award in 2016.

The assessment looks at all aspects of the business, awarding credit for different areas, from our recycling policies, through our virtual office set-up, to our increasing use of social media and our newly designed App, eliminating excess paper usage. Consequently, we scored an 'excellent' for the purchasing, travel & transport and nature & culture sections and an 'outstanding' for innovation!

Environmental Policy

Doing our best for the environment



We're all increasingly aware of our impact on the environment, so we're doing our bit to reduce our footprint. Not only are we adhering to the "recycle, re-use, reduce" ethos, but we're also making a contribution to carbon-offset.

Speyside Wildlife has linked up with 'RSPB Abernethy', who have a long-term vision to extend the Caledonian Pine Forest within the Reserve. For the travel and transport included in our holidays, we contribute to the RSPB to help fund their Abernethy Tree Nursery. Each hour of air travel is offset by $\frac{1}{4}$ of a tree and each 1,000 kms of car travel is offset by $\frac{1}{2}$ a tree.

DAY TRIPS IN THE CAIRNGORMS



"Day guiding is a great way to show off the spectacular Cairngorms National Park and its wildlife. Whether you are looking for something specific, or a broad introduction to the area, we use our local knowledge to help you find the species you are looking for."
Sally Nowell

Dates	To suit you, subject to guide availability and preferred itinerary. Our website will show which days are available
Guides	We have local guides who know the wildlife of the Cairngorms and around Scotland, so can tailor the day to highlight your interests
Cost	£195 standard day if booked online (£250 if booked manually via our office) £250 extended day if booked online (£295 if booked manually via our office)
Included	Wildlife guide on an exclusive basis for you and up to 6 guests. Transport for the day in comfortable 8-seater minibus or car
Packages	Tailor-made packages, including meals, accommodation etc. can be arranged to suit your budget - just ask and we'll be delighted to put a quote together for you
Insects	Biting midges occur in summer
Weather	Weather varies from cold to warm and sunny (-5°-25°C), with less rainfall than much of Scotland but snow possible in the mountains
Walking	Most walks will be on wide sandy tracks, except in the Cairngorms, where terrain is more steep and uneven, so walking boots are essential. Your guide will discuss walking options with you beforehand
Just some of what you could see:	
Red-throated Diver	Dipper
Black-throated Diver	Ring Ouzel
Slavonian Grebe	Crested Tit
Golden Eagle	Scottish Crossbill
White-tailed Eagle	Snow Bunting
Osprey	Red Squirrel
Merlin	Mountain Hare
Peregrine	Pine Marten
Ptarmigan	Badger
Black Grouse	Otter
Red Grouse	Red Deer
Capercaillie	Roe Deer
Dotterel	Bottlenose Dolphin
Simon Eaves: Slavonian Grebe, crossbill, Sally Nowell: Lochindorb, Colin Scott: Ptarmigan Duncan Macdonald: Redshank	

If you've only a day or two to spare, or you'd like to see the wildlife of the Cairngorms but don't know where to start, then a day out with one of our wildlife guides is just for you.

- Our expert guides have a wealth of knowledge about the wildlife of Scotland
- Book your own private guide and comfortable minibus for up to seven guests
- Target the species you want to see in the Cairngorms National Park and wider area
- Collection from your local accommodation or meeting place of your choice
- Combine this with an evening wildlife watching for Pine Marten and Badger
- Ideal for families, small groups, couples or individuals
- Perfect gift for birthdays, anniversaries, retirement etc.

The Cairngorms National Park is home to some of our most iconic but elusive species of wildlife. Finding them in this vast and spectacular landscape can be a real challenge, especially if you have limited time or are unfamiliar with the area. Our expert local guides know the area intimately, so can take you to the best locations to help you find the species you'd most like to see. Your guide will use their experience and field skills, including listening to bird calls and recognising animal tracks and signs, to help you find and identify species. They can tell you about behaviour and general biology of the species that you find in the Highlands.

We can provide an itinerary that matches your specific wildlife wishes. Alternatively, if you'd just like to see a diverse range of Highland species, then leave that to us. On the day, we'll judge the weather and decide where the wildlife can be found. In our comfortable 8-seater minibuses, we'll take you through different habitats to find the best wildlife. The day can include as much, or as little walking as you'd like.

Two or three days before your day out, your guide will contact you to discuss what you'd like to see and any specific requests that you may have. They'll also agree a start time with you and the best place to meet, this may be from your accommodation in the Grantown-Aviemore-Kingussie area, but it

may be elsewhere, depending on the itinerary you decide upon. Standard days out last around eight hours (normally 9am-5pm) and extended days out last around ten hours, with an earlier start or later finish.

To help you choose the best day, we've given you our suggested itineraries, showing the different habitats you could visit and some of the species that can be found there. These are our favourites, but if you'd like to do something different, or do a combination of different itineraries, then please email us or discuss it with your guide when they get in touch with you.

If you're staying outwith the Spey Valley, we can organise an exclusive day out, subject to mileage and guide availability and give you a specific price.



"A day with one of our guides makes a great gift for anyone with an interest in Scottish wildlife. I've taken people out for a special birthday gift, a retirement present or simply as a family treat. We try and cater for everyone's needs, whatever age or level of interest." Sally Nowell



Our Cairngorms National Park - If you've never been before and you want to see what makes this place special, from the landscape, to the wildlife, then just leave it to us. We know all the nooks and crannies in the Cairngorms and the best time of year to visit them. We'll make sure we target the Scottish specialities and leave more than enough room to drink in the scenery and marvel at the landscape. Golden Eagles in the glens, Red Deer on the hills, Ptarmigan on the mountains and Crested Tits in the forests; we can decide what's best for you.

Pine Forest - Visit the ancient Caledonian Pine Forest for Crested Tit, Scottish Crossbill and maybe even the chance of the elusive Capercaillie. Mammals may include Red Squirrel and Roe Deer. This itinerary involves a degree of walking on good tracks and trails through the forest. Wildlife can be found year round, but the best seasons can be autumn, winter and spring. Autumn and winter can be some of the best times to look for Capercaillie.

Woodland Walks - Local woods provide tranquil locations to look and listen for Wood Warbler, Pied Flycatcher and other woodland birds in the spring. Peregrine breed on crags and Ospreys are regularly seen throughout the spring/summer. We can walk to a viewpoint if you wish, to get stunning views across to the mountains and surrounding glens. This itinerary does require a reasonable degree of fitness. The best time to visit for migrant birds, is from late April through to August. We'll combine this habitat with other lowland woods throughout the Strath.

Highland Glen - Visit a spectacular local glen for Golden Eagle, White-tailed Eagle, Peregrine, Merlin, Ring Ouzel, Red Deer, Mountain Hare and Wild Goats. We drive through spectacular scenery into the heart of the mountains and then take a low level walk further into the glen on good gravel tracks. A broad range of wildlife, including the eagles, can be found all year. The Red Deer rut takes place from late September through October.

Cairngorm Mountains - Early morning in the spring is the time to see Black Grouse in the foothills of the Cairngorms, but for Ptarmigan, Snow Bunting, Dotterel and Ring Ouzel we have to walk into the Corries. The walk is on paths, but does require suitable clothing and walking shoes or boots, as the terrain is uneven. Wildlife can be seen on the higher tops year-round. Ptarmigan, Snow Bunting and Mountain Hare are present all year; Ring Ouzels arrive from mid-March onwards and Dotterel are present from May until early August.

River Spey Walk - During spring or early summer the famous 'River Spey' will be teeming with birdlife; Dipper, Goosander, Grey Wagtail, Goldeneye, Common Sandpiper and feeding Swifts, Swallows and martins, with a chance of Otter. In summer the riverbanks can be good for butterflies, including Dark Green Fritillary. In winter, the river provides a calm and tranquil place for Red-breasted Merganser, Goldeneye and other resident birds.

Moorland and Moray Firth - Explore vast open moorlands and windswept lochs for divers, Merlin, Peregrine, Red Kite and Red Grouse, before heading to the Moray coast for Osprey (during the summer), seaduck (winter), waders and terns. Dependent on tide times, there's a chance of Bottlenose Dolphin. This itinerary involves more time driving, so may be suitable for the less mobile. Divers can be found on freshwater lochs during the breeding season from April through to the end of September, when they relocate to the coast and winter on the sea. The winter months on the Moray Coast can be excellent for seaduck, including Long-tailed Duck and Common and Velvet Scoter, as well as wintering waders such as Purple Sandpiper.

Capercaillie Policy

Capercaillie can be found in the forests of the Cairngorms National Park, but they are, for whatever reason, a declining species that are easily disturbed. We minimise any disturbance at crucial times to help protect the birds, by adhering to the following policies:

We won't take guests to look specifically for Capercaillie before 9.00am during the lekking period (1 March - 31 May).

When going into Capercaillie habitat, we always stay on marked tracks and paths and never go looking off these.

When there is an alpha male (also known as a 'rogue' bird) in the area we won't go to see this bird. They are part of the lek, so we would be 'knowingly' disturbing them.

We suggest looking for Capercaillie through the autumn and winter months, when the birds can be easier to find. We won't be disturbing them then and young birds will have fledged and dispersed into the forests.



TAILORMADE TOURS TO SUIT YOU



"Kate led things like clockwork, she had the itinerary in her mind and we knew what to expect. Her knowledge of the area in both locations was brilliant and her identification of the wildlife was great. She is a very likeable and talented lady and a pleasure to travel with."
Sue Healey with Gravesend RSPB Members' Group, April 2019

Dates To suit you, subject to guide availability. We can advise on the best times of year to go to specific destinations, what can be seen at different times of year and where in the world is best for the wildlife you want to see

All our holiday itineraries within the UK and overseas can be organised for private groups, with optional extensions and different levels of accommodation and meals available for most destinations

Guides We have a pool of guides, each with specific knowledge and interests, covering birds, mammals, cetaceans, plants and insects, who have guided around Scotland and Overseas

Cost All tailormade tours are individually priced according to the number of guests and your specific requirements

Included Your package can include any of the following: flights; ferries; trains; guides; accommodation; transport; meals; and any activities or entrance fees.

We make all the arrangements, so you are left just to enjoy yourselves

Info All necessary information regarding travel, walking, weather, insects, meals, clothing and accommodation will be provided in advance of the holiday, together with an appropriate species list, notebooks and pens

Duncan Macdonald: Guests in Extremadura
Perry Fairman: Arriving on Handa
Simon Eaves: Slavonian Grebe
Jane Hope: Road over the Cairngorms,
Red Squirrel, Crested Tit
Colin Scott: Ptarmigan

For bird clubs, tour operators, or just good friends!
Take the hassle out of your group trip and let us arrange all the details, in Scotland or Overseas, any time of the year.

- Design your own holiday the way you want it - anywhere you want it!
- Guiding, accommodation, meals, transport etc. can all be taken care of
- Birds, mammals, plants and insects can all be included
- Our guides have a wealth of knowledge in Scotland and around the world
- A range of accommodation to suit the size of your group
- Combine wildlife watching with culture and heritage
- Take the hassle out of the organisation and let us arrange it for you

Bird Clubs, groups of families or friends, school parties and tour operators come to us to organise private tours for them. Sometimes it's a specific itinerary based on what they'd like to see, sometimes they rely on us to design a tour. Either way, they want us to take the hassle out of organising their holiday, so they can concentrate on enjoying the wildlife. We know the best places to go and wonderful places to stay, that are perfectly placed to enjoy the scenery and wildlife - and they know they will be well looked after by our excellent guides.

Within Scotland, enjoy the spectacular mountains, moorlands and pine forests of the Cairngorms National Park, looking for all the grouse species, plus Dotterel, Ptarmigan, Scottish Crossbill and Crested Tit, together with mammals such as Red and Roe Deer, Red Squirrel and Pine Marten; experience the majesty of the seacliffs on Shetland for auks,

Puffins and Gannets, combined with cetacean watching from land and sea and the night-time experience of Storm Petrels churring on Mousa; walk through the Machair of the Outer Hebrides, alive with the sounds of breeding waders and the distinctive call of the Corncrake, then sea-watch for Long-tailed and Pomarine Skuas on their spring passage.

Sample the delights of intimate seabird encounters on the islands off Mull, whilst looking for Golden and White-tailed Eagles, the latter at their highest breeding density in Europe, or combine island birdwatching for residents and migrants on the Orkney Isles, with the astounding prehistoric archaeology that the archipelago has in spades.

Why not combine some fantastic birding in Speyside with all the special birds and other wildlife this area has to offer with a few days on Mull, the





"Having travelled with Speyside Wildlife before, we appreciate the quality of the product and the professionalism of the leaders and staff. Julian kept us well informed and we could tailor the plans to our needs. He was always good company." Brenda and Peter Wilson, Orkney Exclusive 2018

Outer Hebrides or another part of the Highlands such as Sutherland - you might use our website with the selection of Scottish holidays listed there for inspiration!

Further afield, we can easily organise trips to Europe. Spain has so many possibilities; experience the hospitality of our long-standing beautiful hotel base in Extremadura, knowing that you'll be looking for all five Spanish eagle species, Great and Little Bustards, Roller, Hoopoe, Black-winged Kite and Eagle Owl; watch Lammergeiers and Griffon Vultures high over the Pyrenees with Wallcreeper, Citril Finch and Alpine Accentor in stunning scenery, or perhaps visit the Cota Doñana, or go in search of rare Iberian Lynx.

Other parts of Europe are equally enticing. You could chill out on a floating hotel in the Danube Delta, whilst searching for rare reedbed birds skulking in the shallows; or head to Hungary for superb birding with Imperial Eagle, Saker and tens of thousands of Common Cranes - or visit photographic hides to see birds such as Bee-eater; Roller; Hoopoe, Hawfinch and fabulous Red-footed Falcon, up close and personal! If you like islands, a visit to Corsica for endemic Corsican Nuthatch and Corsican Finch could be for you; or Cyprus for exciting east Mediterranean migration, or even Oland off the east coast of Sweden, with massive numbers of geese, cranes and raptors heading south in autumn might suit.

Why not go for something more exotic? Marvel at the majesty of Yellowstone National Park, home

to Gray Wolf, Bison, Black and Grizzly Bears and a host of birds - all of which could be new to you. Arizona, Texas, California and Vancouver Island where bears, Orcas and Humpback are amongst the spectacular scenery and are all possible, as well as India, South America and other destinations.

Let us know where you want to go and how many of you are travelling together; when you want to go; what type of accommodation you'd like; what other activities you'd like to include in your holiday experience and we'll do the rest. Or if you want to make it even easier, just ask us for our recommendations, based on our years' of experience and we'll put together the ideal holiday for you.

Our professional guides will take you through beautiful landscapes to show you the finest wildlife. We can find appropriate accommodation close to good birdwatching experiences. Wherever it is, our guides will seek out the wildlife you want to see and take you around in comfortable minibuses or cars as appropriate.

We don't race around after big lists, preferring to enjoy the wildlife that we find, so ensuring your holiday is filled with 'magic moments' to bring home with you. We know that the quality of the accommodation and food and the chance to relax at the end of the day and relive the wonderful wildlife moments from the day, are just as important to you as the wildlife you'll see. The possibilities are endless; exciting birdwatching experiences await.

"The structure and pace of the holiday were perfect for me. I have never been on a birding holiday before and I don't think I could manage anything too intense. This holiday was a really good balance." Penny Blake



"There were many highlights on the holiday. I had never seen a Golden Eagle and we were lucky enough to watch a Golden Eagle feeding its chick. We also saw them soaring overhead. The White-tailed Eagles were magnificent, flying over the landscape with such ease. The visit to Lunga was my real highlight as the Puffins stole my heart. To be able to sit with them and watch them going about their daily lives was such a privilege."
Rob Cooke, with Guildford RSPB Members' Group on Mull, June 2019



LYNX AND LAMMERGEIER



"Fancy a challenge? If so, then this is your holiday, as we hope to see one of the rarest mammals in the world - Iberian Lynx and our chances are good. Add to that the opportunity of Lammergeier, Spanish Imperial Eagle, Mouflon and European Otter - and you have a mouth-watering prospect."
Julian Sykes

Dates	Sun 19 - Sat 25 Jan 2020
Price	£1,995
Deposit	£375 Single Supp £150
Leader	Julian Sykes
Flights	EasyJet, scheduled, Speedy Boarding and extra legroom included Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-Malaga Inbound: Afternoon, Malaga-Gatwick
Weather	Probably a mixture of sun and showers (0°-20°C), warmer in lowland areas but can be very cold in the mountains whilst looking for wildlife. We could also encounter snow
Walking	There will be some short walks up to 2km on good tracks and paths, which could be slightly more difficult in the mountains
Meals	All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 7
Insects	Biting insects are not usually a problem
Accom	Twin and single rooms all ensuite
Group	7
Just some of what we hope to see:	
Iberian Lynx	Spanish Imperial Eagle
Otter	Golden Eagle
Wild Boar	Goshawk
Mouflon	Stone Curlew
Spanish Ibex	Little Owl
Red Squirrel	European Eagle Owl
Greater Mouse-eared Bat	Iberian Green Woodpecker
Daubenton's Bat	Black Wheatear
White-headed Duck	Iberian Magpie
Black-necked Grebe	Spanish Sparrow
Greater Flamingo	Alpine Accentor
Lammergeier	Hawfinch
Black Vulture	Rock Bunting
Julian Sykes: Iberian Lynx, Sierra de Cazorla, Black Vulture, Firecrest	
Steve Batt: Lammergeier	
Mark Denman: Blue Rock Thrush, Spanish Ibex	

Andalucia holds some of Spain's best kept secrets - Iberian Lynx, one of the world's most endangered cats and an increasing number of Lammergeier.

- Perfectly placed accommodation with beautiful grounds
- Spanish Imperial Eagle, Golden Eagle, Black Vulture
- Sierra de Cazorla for Lammergeier, Spanish Ibex and Red Squirrel
- Iberian Magpie, Hawfinch, Hoopoe, Firecrest
- Otter, Mouflon, bats, Boar and Red and Fallow Deer
- Beautiful scenery with remnants of true Mediterranean Forest
- Fine local Spanish cuisine every day

After our morning flight to Malaga, we drive north to the Laguna de Fuente de Piedra, where we shall spend a little time looking at this huge saline lake. Greater Flamingos feed in the shallow waters and occasionally, the rare Lesser Flamingo can be found amongst their much commoner cousins. Other species that could be found include Shelduck, Marsh Harrier, Avocet, Stone Curlew and Water Pipit. We shall enjoy lunch overlooking open fields and hope to see our first Crested Larks, Spotless Starlings and maybe a wandering Hen Harrier.

Moving north towards Córdoba we should see our first White Storks and Red Kites, with a brief view of the famous mosque El Mesquit as we pass the city.

We continue driving to our charming hotel on the edge of the Sierra de Andujar Natural Park, where our rooms overlook fantastic gardens, with a small,

onsite bird hide. Birds around the hotel include Azure-winged Magpie, Crested Tit and Short-toed Treecreeper. This afternoon, if time allows, we might make our first visit to one of the viewing areas in the hope of finding an Iberian Lynx.

2-6 Most of our days will be spent in the Sierra de Andujar, a contrasting region with some of the best representations of Mediterranean Forest still surviving in Europe. It forms part of the Sierra Morena Mountains and has a landscape of hills and mountains bordered from granite, quartz and slate, which is formed by the Jandula and Yeguas rivers. This Natural Park is home to the elusive and highly endangered Iberian Lynx, of which only 400 or so remain in the wild in Spain and Portugal.

We shall spend early mornings and late afternoons searching for this secretive animal from strategic points around the Park, with lots more to attract



"Spain in winter can be a very exciting destination with unpredictable weather and equally unpredictable wildlife. Rain and even snow is not out of the question, but mostly we shall enjoy the warmth of winter sunshine. Whatever happens, there will be a profusion of wonderful mammals and birds on offer, which will make any 'grey days' so much brighter." Julian Sykes



our attention. There are plenty of other mammals with herds of Red and Fallow Deer; the distinctive Mouflon, Wild Boar and bats at their roost. We shall also hope to see Iberian Magpies, Short-toed Treecreepers, Firecrests, Nuthatches and Crested Tits amongst the scattered Holm and Cork Oaks, with Iberian Green Woodpeckers revealing themselves with their raucous call. We should find pairs of Little Owl on this beautiful granite landscape across the valleys and hills.

This Natural Park is also home to the magnificent Spanish Imperial Eagle and many other sought after birds of prey, including Golden Eagle, Black Vulture and Goshawk. The tranquil Rio Jandula is punctuated by a series of reservoirs, with their dramatic dam walls, which attract Blue Rock Thrush, Rock Bunting, Black Redstart, Crag Martin and Red-billed Chough. The river is home to Kingfisher, Grey Wagtail and Grey Heron, with always the possibility of Otters playing and fishing in this quiet spiritual location.

We also plan to have a day away from the Reserve with a focus on a completely different target species – the magnificent Lammergeier. To the east is another wonderful Natural Park – Sierra de Cazorla, with its extensive coniferous forest and limestone massifs. Lammergeier can found drifting along these incredible mountain ridges, along with the much commoner Griffon Vulture. This place is home to a good population of Spanish Ibex, Red Squirrel and Red Fox, all of which can be difficult in Andujar – giving a fabulous boost to our extensive mammal and bird list.

7 After breakfast we'll sadly load the minibus and make our way back towards Malaga, possibly visiting a lagoon enroute for White-headed Duck and Black-necked Grebe.

Eventually we shall reach the Mediterranean coastline, where we hope to find Mediterranean Gull and Western Yellow-legged, Gannet and possibly Common Scoter offshore, with Booted Eagle and Marsh Harrier over a nearby Nature Reserve.

If time allows we shall venture into this area, where we may walk to one of the shallow lagoons looking for waterbirds. Possibilities here include Little Egret, Greenshank, Ringed Plover and Common and Green Sandpiper. All the time we shall see and hear small flocks of Monk Parakeet flying over before it's time to leave for our flight home.



Outline Itinerary

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Day 1 | Fly from Gatwick to Malaga and transfer to our base on the edge of the Sierra de Andujar Natural Park, stopping enroute at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra. If time allows, in the afternoon we may make our first visit to a viewing area to search for Iberian Lynx
6 nights at La Caracola Hotel Rural |
| Days 2-6 | Birdwatching and wildlife exploration, mostly in the Sierra de Andujar but also with a day in the Sierra de Cazorla for Lammergeier |
| Day 7 | Transfer to Malaga for our flight back to the UK, with time at the Rio Guadalhorce rivermouth |



SOMERSET LEVELS AND DORSET



"Dorset is a fabulous place with so many diverse habitats. A day's excursion can easily take in flocks of waders in Poole Harbour, through to a lowland heath where Stonechats, Dartford Warblers and Woodlarks can be seen, rounded off with the ghostly shape of a hunting Barn Owl over unspoilt meadows. Birding in Dorset is a real pleasure."
Stuart Housden

Dates Sat 22 Feb - Sun 1 Mar 2020

Price £2,250

Deposit £450 **Single Supp** £250

Leaders Stuart Housden and Darren Rees

Weather The South West is renowned for having milder winters than other parts of the UK – however in February mornings and evenings may be chilly and rain is likely, so bring warm clothing, layers and waterproofs. Waterproof walking boots or wellingtons are required. Temperatures likely to be around 2-10°C

Walking In Somerset paths are fairly flat but can be muddy, especially in the Avalon Marshes. In Dorset the terrain is usually drier underfoot, but the coastal paths are stony in places, with short stretches of moderate incline. Walks may be 2-3 miles at a gentle, birding pace, with some stiles to access footpaths

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 9

Insects Should not be a problem at this time of year

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Great White Egret	Crossbill
Bittern	Black-tailed Godwit
Common Crane	Greenshank
Marsh Harrier	Ruff
Peregrine Falcon	Bearded Tit
Merlin	Cetti's Warbler
Avocet	Barn Owl
Black-necked Grebe	Mediterranean Gull
Water Rail	Pintail
Spoonbill	Puffin
Dartford Warbler	Starling murmuration
Woodlark	

A late-winter break on the Somerset Levels and the heaths and coast of Dorset, with Common Cranes, Dartford Warbler, Bittern, Black-necked Grebe, raptors and vast flocks of wildfowl.

- Huge flocks of wildfowl on the Somerset Levels plus waders and reedbed species
- One of the UK's only flocks of Common Cranes
- Great White Egret, Dartford Warbler, Water Rail, Black-necked Grebe
- One of the UK's biggest Starling murmurations over the reedbeds
- Raptors include Peregrine, Marsh and Hen Harriers and Merlin
- With Stuart Housden, recently retired RSPB Board Member, who knows these areas well
- Visit Arne, Isle of Purbeck, Lodmore and Radipole in Dorset

I We meet at Bristol Temple Meads Railway Station and transfer to our hotel in Somerset.

2-4 The Somerset Levels have seen a remarkable transition in the last 20 years, as former peat workings and drained farmland have been restored to wetlands and reedbeds - much of it managed by conservation bodies. In late winter, vast flocks of wildfowl and many waders attract birds of prey and the reedbeds host one of the largest Starling murmurations in the UK! Add to this the recent colonisation by Great White Egret and Bittern, plus the many other species to be seen here and the area adds up to something very special!

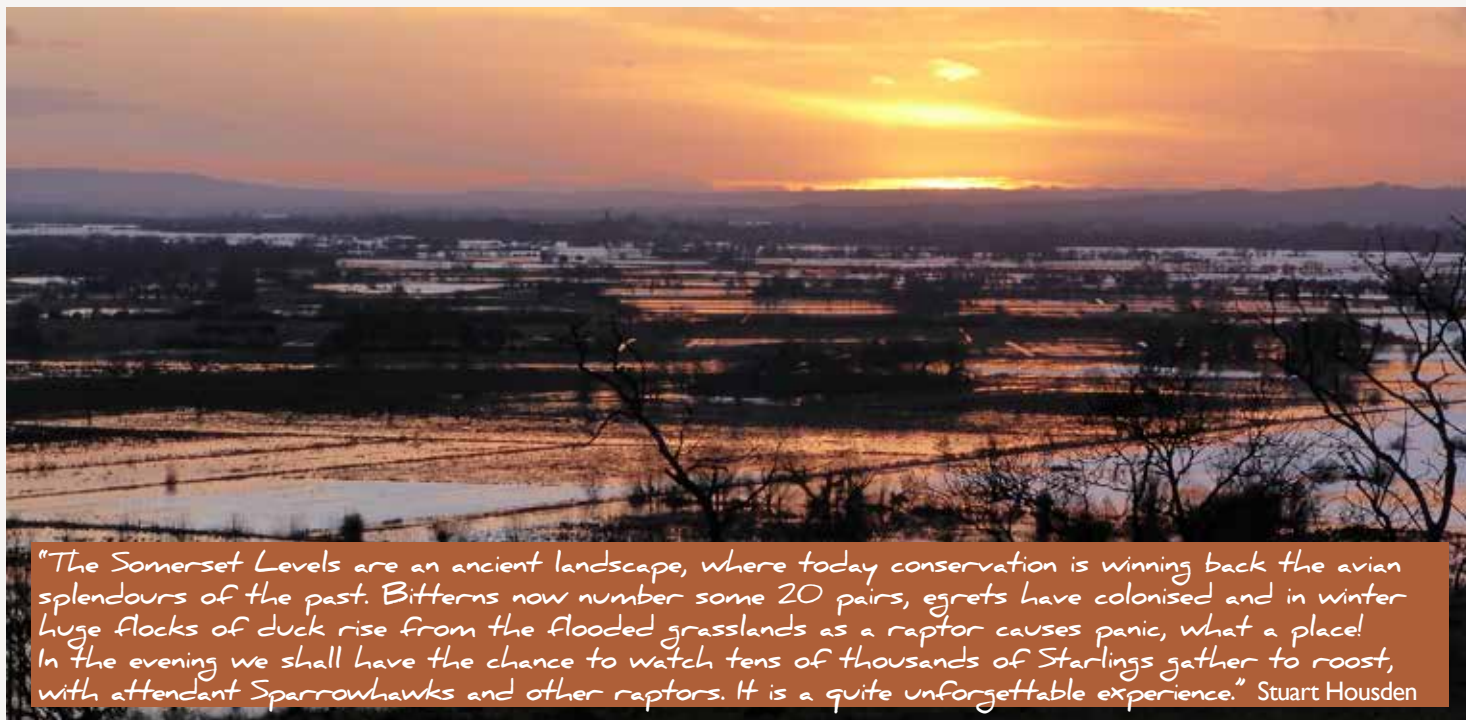
We shall explore the complex of wetlands now known as the Avalon Marshes in search of Marsh Harrier and the first booming Bitterns of the year.



Bearded Tits are found on several of the Reserves and the explosive song of Cetti's Warbler is often heard! A good variety of duck occur, including Pintail, Shoveler, Wigeon, Pochard and masses of Teal - sometimes with a Green-winged Teal hidden amongst them. We shall keep our eyes peeled for hunting Merlin, Sparrowhawk or Peregrine - with luck, sometimes an Otter can be spotted in one of the rhynes. If the conditions are right, we shall make a dusk visit to watch the hundreds of thousands of Starlings forming smoke-like clouds and rushing over the reedbeds, before plunging into the reeds to roost - it is a real spectacle!

As well as Ham Wall, we'll visit Westhay Moor and Shapwick Heath with extensive wetlands and reedbeds. Slightly further afield is Greylake and neighbouring Kings Sedgemoor, with waders on the flooded grasslands and hunting raptors,





"The Somerset Levels are an ancient landscape, where today conservation is winning back the avian splendours of the past. Bitterns now number some 20 pairs, egrets have colonised and in winter huge flocks of duck rise from the flooded grasslands as a raptor causes panic, what a place! In the evening we shall have the chance to watch tens of thousands of Starlings gather to roost, with attendant Sparrowhawks and other raptors. It is a quite unforgettable experience." Stuart Housden

which can include Short-eared Owls. As we travel across the flat landscape we shall keep a weather eye open for groups of Common Cranes which now winter in the area, following a highly successful reintroduction project. On the coast we'll visit the new Wildfowl and Wetland Trust Reserve at Steart with Avocet, Black-tailed Godwit, waterfowl and raptors – pushed closer at high tide allowing for great views.

5-8 We move on to Dorset; a varied county with rolling farmland, limestone cliffs, muddy harbours and the glorious lowland heaths made famous by Thomas Hardy. Lowland heaths are a rare habitat globally and, although much has been lost to agriculture, development or conifer plantations, what remains offers riches for the naturalist. No visit to Dorset is complete without a pilgrimage to RSPB Arne Reserve. In the long, harsh winter of 1963, this was the last refuge of the Dartford Warbler – just 2-3 pairs survived the winter! If the weather is kind, we should catch the first song of this attractive inhabitant of the gorse and heather.

Arne is more than just heathland though, it affords great views over Poole Harbour – one of the largest natural harbours in the world. Its muddy, sometimes reed-fringed margins, host plentiful groups of waders and wildfowl, often including groups of Spoonbills, while there is a chance of Black-necked Grebes and divers offshore.

We visit the Isle of Purbeck, pausing to admire Corfe Castle before exploring limestone cliffs

with views over the sea. Peregrines hunt here and offshore, especially if the sea is calm, auks gather before returning to their nesting cliffs, where a few pairs of Puffin breed amongst the Razorbills and Guillemots. Wareham Forest and Morden Bog hold crossbills with Woodlark in the clear fells – if the weather is good we should be able to listen to their beautiful song. If we hear of a wintering Great Grey Shrike on nearby heaths we may go in search.

To the west, Lodmoor and Radipole Lake beckon. Lodmoor has a reputation for long-staying rarities, with a male Penduline Tit wintering in 2018 and a Lesser Yellowlegs in 2019. Radipole is an urban site that offers excellent birding. Water Rails are regular, as are Bearded Tit and Cetti's Warbler and the gull flocks are always worth scanning for something unusual. We head over to the Isle of Portland, stopping enroute to scan the deep water harbour for duck, divers, grebes and other seabirds. From near there we can also see part of the Fleet Estuary and we'll scan for Brent and other geese which winter here. Seawatching from the 'Bill' can be productive at any time of year, so depending on the weather we may have good passage.

9 After breakfast we shall transfer back to Bristol Temple Meads and say our farewells.



Outline Itinerary

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Day 1 | Meet at Bristol Temple Meads Railway Station and transfer to our hotel in Meare, Somerset
4 nights Meare Manor, Meare |
| Days 2-4 | We shall explore the Somerset Levels visiting Ham Wall, Westhay Moor and Shapwick Heath, with their extensive wetlands and reedbeds, plus Greylake and neighbouring Kings Sedgemoor |
| Days 5-8 | We move on to explore the delights of Dorset, including RSPB Arne Reserve, the Purbeck coast, Poole Harbour, Lodmoor, Radipole and Wareham Forest
4 nights Springfield Country Hotel, Wareham |
| Day 9 | Transfer back to Bristol Temple Meads and say our farewells. |

Simon Eaves: Dartford Warbler
Sue Ripley: Sunset on the Somerset Levels
Roy Atkins: Common Cranes, Great White Egret
Morag Rea: Glastonbury Tor
Maggie & John Tester: Merlin



COSTA RICA NORTH



"Birding here is simply astonishing and after so many trips I still love it! Every new place has a whole host of new birds, with different species at different altitudes, on the Caribbean and Pacific slopes and the various different habitats, from lush rainforest to the drier north west - this is truly thrilling birding!" Roy Atkins

Dates Sat 22 Feb - Sun 8 Mar 2020

Price £5,795

Deposit £1,125 Single Supp £650

Leaders Roy Atkins and Paco Madrigal

Flights British Airways scheduled
Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-San José
Inbound: Overnight, San José-Gatwick

Weather It's the dry season, but there could be occasional showers (or prolonged downpours) in humid rainforests. Can be cool in the mountains and cloud forest, hot on the coast (12°-35°C)

Walking Generally easy level paths, up to two miles at a slow pace. There may be occasional uphill sections and some steps. Although distances are short you will be standing and scanning for periods of time

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 15

Delicious local food at hotels and restaurants, some buffets, some menus. Rice and beans (the national dish) available everywhere, but not compulsory

Cool drinks and tropical fruit provided

Insects On occasion biting insects can be a nuisance - bring repellent

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Great Tinamou	Resplendent Quetzal
Great Curassow	Keel-billed Toucan
Jabiru	Great Potoo
Sunbittern	Snowy Cotinga
Sungrebe	Hummingbirds galore
Swallow-tailed Kite	Monkeys
Scarlet Macaw	Three-toed Sloth
Spectacled Owl	White-nosed Coati

Approachable Central America, Costa Rica is a very friendly bite-size chunk of exotic rainforest adventure.....without the rough edges!

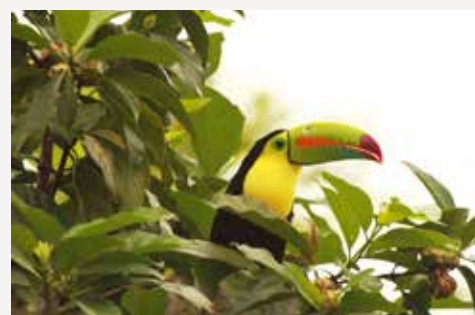
- Friendly, safe country, with 5% of the earth's entire species
- Around 400 bird species likely and a huge variety of other wildlife
- Resplendent Quetzal, Sungrebe, hummingbirds, toucans and macaws
- Sloths, howler monkeys, orchids and Arenal Volcano
- Lodges and hotels you won't want to leave
- The very best guides who'll make it extra-special
- Itinerary perfected by years' of experience - including Tortuguero!

1 Arriving in the afternoon we'll overnight at Heredia, near San José.

2-3 After some exciting pre-breakfast birding in the hotel gardens, we journey to Tortuguero NP by boat. Our lodge has beautiful gardens with trogons, toucans and nesting Oropendolas and the sea just yards away. We travel in covered boats to explore the labyrinth of waterways in this atmospheric Reserve - a wonderfully relaxing way to see the birds and mammals here. The forests are teeming with wildlife and boast specialties including Sungrebe, Agami Heron, Green-and-Rufous and American Pygmy Kingfishers, Green Ibis and enormous Blue Morpho butterflies. Three species of monkey are here, including South American Spider and we should see sloths - perhaps even two species! Mixed flocks of toucans call noisily, parrots screech overhead and we've seen fabulous raptors here, such as Swallow-tailed and Grey-headed Kites.

4-6 The forested grounds of Selva Verde Lodge in the Caribbean lowland rainforest of Sarapiquí, host skulking forest-dwellers such as wrens, jacamars, ant-tanagers, woodcreepers and Antbirds. Nearby La Selva Biological Station, one of the most famous tropical research facilities, is a must-visit site, where lowland tropical forest, swamp, pasture, rivers and creeks support an outstanding abundance of wildlife. More than 420 bird species have been recorded here, 500 butterflies, 55 snakes and 120 species of mammals! This is where your Tinamou dreams may come true, since three species are here and we hope for trogons, caciques, Rufous and Broad-billed Motmots, Snowy Cotinga and impressive Great Green Macaw. We may find peccaries, agoutis, sloths and monkeys too.

7-8 Arenal is one of Costa Rica's active volcanoes, though it has gone rather quiet lately, so chances of seeing 'fireworks' may now be



"Paco will astound you - his skill at finding birds is legendary and his enthusiasm boundless, as he picks out green parrots in green leaves, or trogons and puffbirds perched stock still in a tangle of branches - but with so many birds, we all find birds too!" Roy Atkins



slim. Our accommodation provides fabulous views of the volcano, weather permitting and excellent birding opportunities in the gardens, while trails through the surrounding forests host Crimson-collared Tanager; Long-billed Gnatwren, Spotted Antbird, White Hawk, Great Curassow and three species of toucan. Feeders here attract colourful tanagers, woodpeckers, honeycreepers and oropendolas, plus remarkably tame White-nosed Coatis, a delightful relation of the Raccoon with a tail like a lemur! This is a fabulous place for hummingbirds, with seven species or more likely.

9 Dry tropical forests of the Guanacaste area hold special species such as Turquoise-browed Motmot, Mantled Howler Monkeys, White-throated Magpie-Jay, plus orioles found nowhere else in Costa Rica. We'll visit a cattle ranch where Limpkins and Snail Kites search for Apple Snails amongst the wet grasslands. Wood Storks, Jacanas and Muscovy and Black-bellied Whistling Ducks and a host of herons and egrets are found, but the real speciality is the enormous Jabiru, one of the biggest and most spectacular storks in the world.

10-11 We'll enjoy more birding around the dry forest and salt pans here before leaving this idyllic place to travel down to the Pacific coast, making stops for birding enroute. Carara Biological Reserve, where humid tropical forest meets drier lowlands, has broad, bird-rich forest trails that are captivating at dawn, with antbirds, parrots, pigeons, warblers and four species of trogon. We'll search for Royal Flycatcher, Orange-collared and Long-tailed Manakins, while vivid Scarlet Macaws fly over our hotel and the grounds hold orioles, tanagers, antshrikes, woodcreepers, buntings, seedeaters



and toucans, perhaps including Fiery-billed Aracari. Our boat trip on the Tarcoles River is a relaxed way to watch enormous numbers of herons, egrets, frigatebirds, pelicans and shorebirds, including Boat-billed Heron, Roseate Spoonbill and kingfishers, with American Crocodiles basking on the shore. We'll look for mangrove specialities such as 'Mangrove' Black Hawk, Mangrove Warbler and Mangrove Vireo in the mangroves..... well obviously!

12-13 We head into misty highland cloud-forest, pausing at a wonderful spot where we hope to find one of the most exciting birds of the trip - the Resplendent Quetzal. There are new birds everywhere, with Slaty Flowerpiercer; Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher; Yellow-thighed Finch, Spangle-cheeked Tanager; Flame-throated Warbler and Fiery-throated Hummingbird, to name but a few. Near our hotel, more new species come thick and fast, Flame-coloured Tanager; Acom Woodpecker; Collared Redstart; Torrent Tyrannulet, Sooty Thrush, Spangle-cheeked Tanager; Ruddy Treerunner; plus a host of hummingbirds at the feeders, including Volcano, Scintillant, Stripe-tailed and Magnificent Hummingbirds. This place is simply idyllic!

14 After more birding around the trails and feeders plus the excellent entrance road, we may head up to search for Volcano Junco in the high Paramo, before heading back to Heredia and our last hotel.

15-16 The garden birds here will feel very familiar now, before we head to the airport and our flight back home, arriving in London on Day 16.



Outline Itinerary

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Day 1 | Fly to San José
1 night at Hotel Bougainvillea, Heredia |
| Days 2-3 | Transfer to Tortuguero National Park
2 nights at Laguna Lodge |
| Days 4-6 | Transfer to Sarapiquí
3 nights at Selva Verde Lodge |
| Days 7-8 | Transfer to Arenal
2 nights at Arenal Observatory Lodge |
| Day 9 | Transfer to Guanacaste, birding at Solimar
1 night at La Ensenada Lodge |
| Days 10-11 | Transfer to Carara National Park area
2 nights at Hotel Villa Lapas, Tarcoles |
| Days 12-13 | Birdwatching and wildlife at Finca Mirador de Quetzals
2 nights at Savegre Mountain Lodge |
| Day 14 | Easy day travelling back to San José
1 night at Hotel Bougainvillea, Heredia |
| Days 15-16 | Transfer to the airport for our flight, arriving in the UK on the morning of Day 16 |

Roy Atkins: Tortuguero, Sungrebe, Arenal Volcano, Two-toed Sloth

Roy Cowley: Keel-billed Toucan, Fiery-throated Hummingbird



"For such a small country the birdlife is astonishing and this tour takes in the best Bhutan has to offer. There will be some wow birds such as Gould's Sunbird, Fire-tailed Myzornis, Blue-fronted Redstart, Yellow-billed Blue Magpie and many others. Choosing a magic moment is going to be impossible!" Duncan Macdonald

Dates Sat 29 Feb - Tue 17 Mar 2020

Price £6,450

Deposit £1,250 **Single Supp** £500

Leaders Duncan Macdonald plus local guide

Flights British Airways, scheduled
Outbound: Overnight, Heathrow-Delhi
Inbound: Morning, Delhi-Heathrow
Local airlines, Delhi-Guwahati, Paro-Delhi

Weather Generally dry and cool, there may be some rain. It will be cold in the early mornings, evenings and at altitude (0-25°C)

Walking A reasonable level of fitness is required. Most of the walks are comfortable and the majority of birding is done roadside. The walk to Tiger's Nest Monastery is on uneven forest trails, with 740m of ascent. All walking at a relaxed pace, as at altitude. Average altitude is 2,400m, some mountain passes at 4,000m

Meals All included from lunch on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 18. Most breakfasts and all lunches are hot picnic style, taken in the field

Insects May encounter mosquitoes, bring repellent

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite. Hotels of mixed quality, some very nice, others basic but chosen because of location

Visa E-visa required for India, additional £110. We shall arrange your Bhutan visa

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

White-bellied Heron	Beautiful Nuthatch
Pallas's Fish Eagle	Golden-breasted Fulvetta
Himalayan Monal	Yellow-throated Fulvetta
Satyr Tragopan	Himalayan Cutia
Ibisbill	Bhutan Laughingthrush
Snow Pigeon	Red-faced Liocichla
Tawny Fish Owl	Fire-tailed Sunbird
Ward's Trogon	Himalayan White-browed
Rufous-necked Hornbill	Rosefinch
Greater Flameback	Golden Langur
Black-headed Shrike Babbler	

Secluded Bhutan, high in the Eastern Himalayas, is teeming with birds. This culturally rich and friendly country will astound us with its wealth of wildlife.

- Spectacular Himalayan mountain scenery, pristine forests and wonderful hospitality
- Dzongs, monasteries and temples including the remarkable Tiger's Nest
- Himalayan specialties: Ward's Trogon, Satyr Tragopan and Rufous-necked Hornbill
- The very beautiful and near endemic Golden Langur
- Beautiful Nuthatch, Fire-tailed Myzornis and Bhutan Laughingthrush
- Raptors including Himalayan Griffon, Lammergeier, Steppe and Pallas's Fish Eagle
- A dizzying array of birds, butterflies, orchids and ancient Buddhist culture

1-2 Overnight flight to Delhi and transfer to our airport hotel.

3 We take a morning flight to Guwahati then drive to Samdrup Jongkhar in Bhutan, watching for Lesser Adjutant, Asian Openbill and White-throated Kingfisher as we travel. Birding round the hotel is superb and if time allows, we shall search for Jungle Babbler, Asian Pied Starling, Black-hooded Oriole, Green Bee-eater and many more.

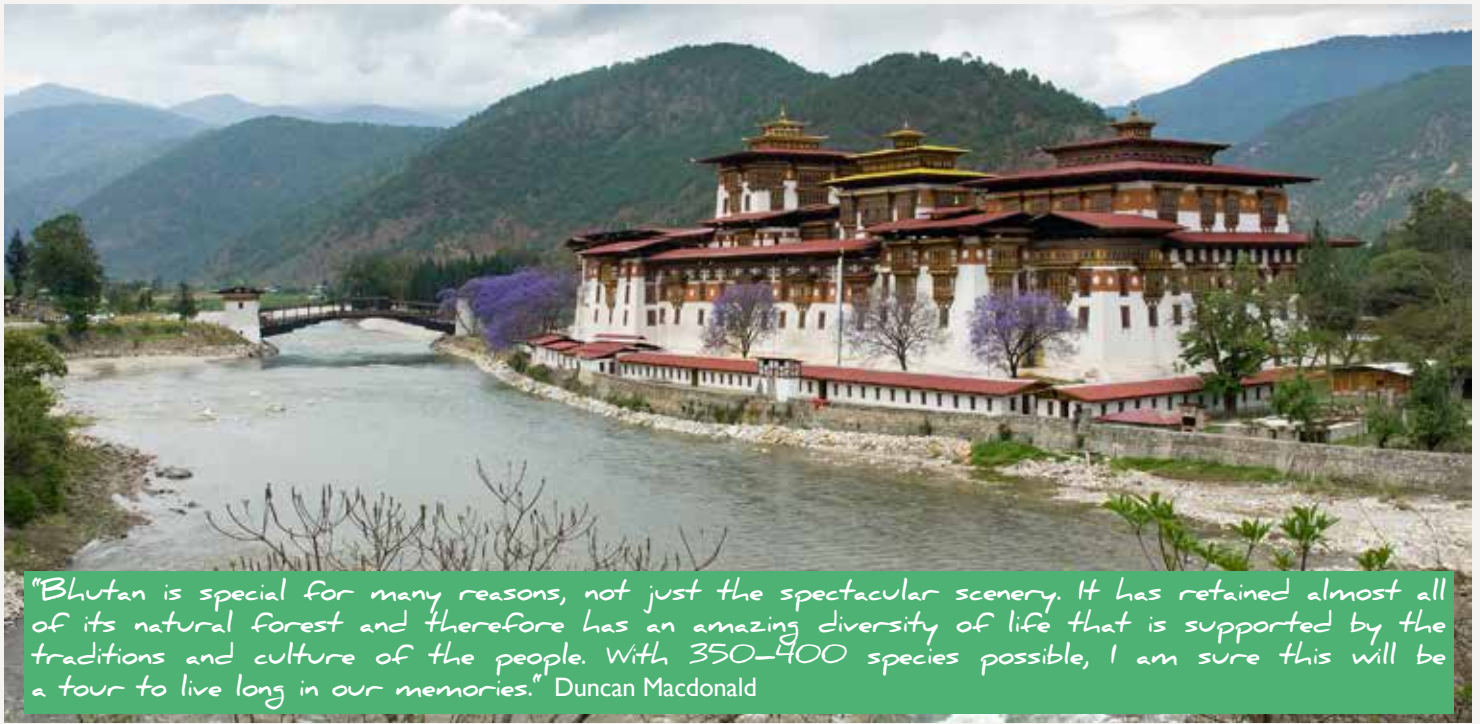
4 Travelling west, we explore the tropical forests of these lower altitudes. These forests teem with a myriad of birds and we hope to encounter beautiful species such as Ruby-cheeked Sunbird, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Coppersmith Barbet, Violet Cuckoo and the stunning Hooded Pitta, as well as enormous Wreathed Hornbill. We won't know where to look!



5 We make an early start, birding the Morong Valley and Orong and Kharung La hoping for a big list before breakfast, with chances of Red-tailed and Blue-winged Minlas, Red-headed Trogon, Chestnut-breasted Partridge and Beautiful Nuthatch. We continue through spectacular scenery to Trashigang at higher altitude, with many more birds - Yellow-billed Blue Magpie, Long-billed Thrush, Ultramarine Flycatcher, Striated Laughingthrush and elegant Spotted Forktail.

6 Starting early, our journey will take us up the exciting Yadi Loops, a series of 10 hairpin bends in just 10Km! At Kore La we work the forest road in search of Brown Bullfinch, Hill Partridge, Grey-sided Laughing Thrush and Scarlet Finch. Descending into cool broadleaved forest, dripping with orchids and fern-lined forests of rhododendrons, birds may include Bhutan Laughingthrush, Fire-capped Tit,





"Bhutan is special for many reasons, not just the spectacular scenery. It has retained almost all of its natural forest and therefore has an amazing diversity of life that is supported by the traditions and culture of the people. With 350-400 species possible, I am sure this will be a tour to live long in our memories." Duncan Macdonald

Asian Barred Owlet, Maroon Oriole, Golden-naped Finch and Kalij Pheasant. Our journey continues to Yongkola and our base for the next four nights.

7-9 We have three full days to explore the forests of Thrumshing La National Park, home to some of Bhutan's most sought-after birds such as Ward's Trogon, Blue-naped Pitta and impressive Rufous-necked Hornbill. The ancient trees are festooned with orchids, adding a riot of colour as we search for some of the region's rarest birds - Blue-fronted Robin, Golden-breasted and Yellow-throated Fulvetta and strange Blackish-breasted Babbler. The list of birds is fabulous, with many beautiful species of woodpeckers, grosbeaks, redstarts, fantails, minivets, barbets, babblers, flycatchers, yuhinas and warblers too numerous to list!

10 Our destination today is the village of Chumey. We breakfast in habitat suitable for spectacular Satyr Tragopan before continuing our journey to Thrumshing La at 3,799 metres, with breathtaking views of the eastern Himalayas. We will look for Himalayan Monal and Blood Pheasant among the hemlock, spruce and larch, with Himalayan Buzzard and Mountain Hawk-eagle above us, Himalayan Bluetail, Kessler's Thrush and White-winged Grosbeak.

11 At beautiful Tharpaling Monastery we hope for close views of spectacular Himalayan Monal plus Snow Pigeon, White-throated Redstart and more. After breakfast we explore the high mountain pass at Yotong La, where rhododendron forests hold Great and Brown Parrotbills, Himalayan Cutia, Large Niltava and Black-eared Shrike Babbler.



12-13 We explore the Punakha, Chendibji and the Pele La road with more rhododendron and fir forest with views to Mt. Kangbun and Jichu Drake from Pele La pass. Brown Dipper, Crested Kingfisher and Slaty-backed Forktail frequent the streams, with Speckled Piculet, White-browed Shrike and Collared Scops Owl among many species in the forests. In the Jigme Dorji NP we hope for Red-headed Trogon, Mountain Bulbul, Whiskered Yuhina and Pallas's Fish Eagle. We'll also see the magnificent Punakha Dzong - an astonishing building!

14 We travel through the Royal Botanical Park at Lampelri, birding the mixed conifer, sub-alpine and temperate rainforest, where we may chance upon mammals such as Musk Deer or, with exceptional luck, Tiger or Red Panda. We shall also look for rare Black-tailed Crake nearby. From roads festooned with prayer flags, views will be spectacular!

15-16 From our base in Paro we drive high mountain passes of dwarf scrub and alpine meadows (up to 4,000m), with views to the highest peaks in Bhutan, with a myriad of species to enjoy. We have the chance to make the optional five hour walk to one of the most spectacular monasteries in Bhutan - The Tiger's Nest - surely one of the most beautiful locations on Earth. Over two days we hope to encounter Ibisbill, Crested Goshawk, Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch, Rosy Pipit and both White-capped and Plumbeous Water Redstarts.

17-18 We say farewell to Bhutan returning to Delhi for an overnight stay and travel back to the UK on Day 18.



Delhi, India

Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-2** Overnight flight Heathrow to Delhi
1 night airport hotel in Delhi
- Day 3** Fly Delhi to Guwahati and drive to Samdrup Jongkhar
1 night Hotel Tashi Gasel (300m)
- Day 4** Birding tropical forests and on to Deothang.
1 night Dungsam Trashiling Resort (800m)
- Day 5** Deothang to Trashigang, birding along Morong, Orong and Kharung La
1 night Druk Deothjung Resort (1,100m)
- Days 6-9** Trashigang to Yongkola, birding Kore La, Lingmethang Valley, Yongkola, Namling and Thrumshing National Park
4 nights Trogon Villa (1,700m)
- Day 10** Yongkola to Chumey birding along Sengor and Thrumshing La Pass
1 night Chumey Nature Resort (2,600m)
- Day 11** Early morning to Tharpaling Monastery and continue to Trongsa
1 night Yangkhil Resort (2,200m)
- Days 12-13** Trongsa to Punakha, birding along Chendibji and Old Pele La road.
Jigme Dorji NP and Punakha Dzong
2 nights Meri Puensum Resort (1,300m)
- Days 14-16** Punakha to Paro, birding the Royal Botanical Park at Lampelri, hike to Tiger's Nest Monastery
3 nights Hotel Olathang (2,300m)
- Days 17-18** Fly Paro to Delhi, overnight in Delhi, arrive UK on Day 18
1 night airport hotel in Delhi

Chubzang Tangbi: Fire-tailed Myzornis, Satyr Tragopan, Rufous-necked Hornbill, Punakha Dzong, Ward's Trogon, Himalayan Monal

SPANISH BIRDS AND BOTANY



"I am excited about adding something new to this well-known Extremadura trip, with the chance of seeing some beautiful orchids - 16 or more species are possible, with Pink Butterfly, Bumblebee, Mirror, Sawfly Orchid and others, all species I have never seen." Roy Atkins

Dates Sat 14 - Sat 21 Mar 2020
Price £2,425
Deposit £450 Single Supp £200

Leaders Roy Atkins and Martin Kelsey

Flights EasyJet, scheduled, Speedy Boarding and extra legroom included
Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-Madrid
Inbound: Afternoon, Madrid-Gatwick
Other UK airports may be available

Weather Variable in spring, a mixture of sun and showers (12°-25°C)
— can be cool on the plains

Walking Generally on level firm ground, less than a mile and at an easy pace. There will be some paths with steeper gradients

Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8. Simple, interesting Spanish fare at the hotel and at local restaurants

Insects Unlikely to be a problem

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Black Vulture	Black Wheatear
Spanish Imperial Eagle	Iberian Grey Shrike
Bonelli's Eagle	Spectacled Warbler
Short-toed Eagle	Penduline Tit
Lesser Kestrel	Pink Butterfly Orchid
Black-winged Kite	Bumblebee Orchid
Scops Owl	Sawfly Orchid
Azure-winged Magpie	Mirror Orchid
Great Bustard	Yellow Bee Orchid
Little Bustard	Naked Man Orchid
Black Stork	Spanish Festoon
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	Large Tortoiseshell
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	Provence Hairstreak
Western Swamphen	Nettle-tree Butterfly
Red-rumped Swallow	Stripeless Tree Frog

A relaxed holiday for the general naturalist, taking in plenty of the wonderful birdlife of Extremadura, but also some of the special orchids, other flowers and butterflies too.

- Many of the wonderful birds this well-known birding destination has to offer
- Spanish Imperial Eagle, Black-winged Kite, Azure-winged Magpie
- Great Bustards performing their 'foam-bath' display
- Stunning orchids such as Mirror, Naked Man, Sawfly, Champagne and Pink Butterfly
- Visit to raptor central - Monfragüe with eagles, Black Vulture and perhaps Eagle Owl
- Black Wheatear, Black-bellied and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, Little Bustard and more
- Early butterflies - Spanish Festoon, Cleopatra, Provence Hairstreak and Nettle-tree

After our flight to Madrid, we travel to our base at Viña Las Torres, close to Trujillo. This charming, traditional style accommodation is the perfect base to explore the Extremadura region and our hosts are always very welcoming. Birding around the hotel and nearby lanes will provide plenty to enjoy, with White Stork, Black Kite, Hoopoe, Sardinian Warbler, Iberian Grey Shrike and immaculate Azure-winged Magpies, plus the chance of Scops Owl calling at night.

2-7 The coming week will include some wonderful birding, in sites we know well from our birdwatching breaks here - but we also explore new territory where, as well as great birding, we shall look out for a selection of fabulous orchids and butterflies.



Our exact itinerary will depend on the weather, but we may start around Alange and Mérida, where a walk beside the Alange Reservoir may produce Black Wheatear, Rock Bunting and Alpine Swift. Rocky slopes nearby are worth a look as several exciting orchids can be found here, including Woodcock, Conical, Pink Butterfly and if we are lucky, the first Bumblebee Orchids.

At nearby Sierra de Utrera large numbers of Lusitanian Fritillaries should be in flower, as well as Yellow Anemones and Champagne Orchids. It is a good site for Spanish Festoon butterflies and we'll visit the longest Roman Bridge in the world - in the centre of Mérida. Birding from this 2000 year old structure should yield species such as Penduline Tit, Little Bittern and Western Swamphen.



"My memories from my last trip here are the astonishing numbers of raptors - with five species of eagle, a black Montagu's Harrier, Black-winged Kite and Ravens dropping stones on an Eagle Owl below them! It is the only time I have seen displaying Great Bustards - astonishing - like a huge ball of fluff on legs!!" Roy Atkins



The plains near Trujillo are famous for their steppe species of birds and this is the time when aristocratic Great Bustards perform their spectacular displays, as huge males turn themselves inside out in an attempt to attract a mate! Smaller Little Bustards, which prefer blowing raspberries and nodding their heads to attract their mates, will still be in winter groups. Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Montagu's Harrier, Calandra and Crested Larks and with luck Stone Curlews are here and, in mid March, spring flowers such as Barbary Nut Iris and Hoop Petticoat Narcissus are in flower. Butterflies such as Green-striped White and Western Dappled White should be easy to find.

Birds of prey are a big part of the wildlife spectacle and both kites and vultures seem to be always on the wing. Monfragüe National Park is one of Europe's finest raptor hot-spots and its mix of wooded hillsides and deep rocky gorges is home to all five species of Spanish eagles: powerful Golden; smaller Booted; hovering Short-toed; scarce Bonelli's and the endangered Spanish Imperial.

Both Black and Griffon Vultures nest here, while overhead may be Egyptian Vulture, Peregrine and the unusual Black Stork. Smaller birds such as Crag Martin, Hawfinch, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Redstart, Subalpine Warbler and Rock Bunting occur and butterflies could include Nettle-tree and Chapman's Green Hairstreak. We may be able to see some prehistoric cave paintings here too.

South of Trujillo is an area near Zafra rich in orchids. We should find colonies of Giant Orchids still in

flower (they start in late January) as well as Hill Orchid, growing in old limestone quarry workings. To the east, following a drovers' trail, we shall find colonies of Sombre Orchids and if we are lucky the very similar "bilunulata", treated by some as a separate species. The area also has Conical and delightful Pink-butterfly Orchids and we hope to find Provence Hairstreak on the wing.

Extremadura has large areas of rice-cultivation - good habitat for passage waders, while small populations of Red Avadavat and Common Waxbill work the field margins. A walk in a dehesa here is always productive for a variety of wildlife, such as Sawfly Orchid and the possibility of early Tongue Orchids. Birding can be excellent, with chances of Black-winged Kite, nesting storks and Spanish Sparrows. The Arrocampo Reservoir is the most important single site in Extremadura for breeding herons and egrets and is also rich in other reedbed species, such as Savi's Warbler; Western Swampphen and Penduline Tit. Close by is the most important site for orchids in the north of Extremadura, with large colonies of Naked Man Orchid, Champagne Orchid and Ophrys species such as Mirror, Yellow Bee, Woodcock and Sawfly. A total of 18 taxa of orchids grow here and we shall visit the impressive Orchid Information Centre at the edge of the Almaraz town.

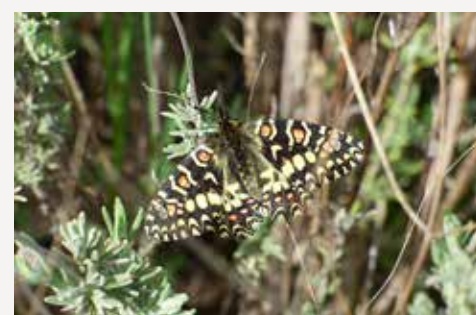
8 Time allowing, we'll birdwatch on the final morning before returning to Madrid for our flight back to the UK.



Outline Itinerary

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Day 1 | Fly to Madrid
3 hour transfer to Trujillo
7 nights at Viña Las Torres |
| Days 2-7 | We explore the steppes, woodlands, wetlands and mountain regions of one of Spain's premier wildlife locations, including Monfragüe National Park, Embalse de Arrocampo and Caceres Plain, in search of birds, orchids, butterflies and other wildlife |
| Day 8 | Transfer to Madrid for our flight to Gatwick |

Martin Kelsey: Pink Butterfly Orchid, Monfrague, Sawfly Orchid, Spanish Festoon Butterfly
Steve Batt: Azure-winged Magpie, Great Bustard
John Hawkins: Spanish Imperial Eagle mobbing Griffon Vulture



NORTH EAST INDIA



"I was told that if you want to see amazing sub-continent wildlife then go to Arunachal Pradesh, so I am thrilled that we have put together a tour combining several fabulous and iconic Reserves, including the wonderful Kaziranga National Park and their One-horned Rhinos."

Julian Sykes

Dates Sat 14 - Sun 29 Mar 2020

Price £4,755

Deposit £1,175 Single Supp £400

Leaders Julian Sykes and local guides

Flights British Airways, scheduled
Outbound: Overnight, Heathrow-Delhi
Inbound: Morning, Delhi-Heathrow
Internal, local airlines: Delhi-Guwahati, Jorhat or Guwahati-Delhi

Weather We are spending a little time at high altitude, so temperatures will likely be below freezing for some of the days, but on the plains it will get quite hot. May also be some rain (-5° to 25°C)

Walking Occasionally up to 4km but generally on good roads/tracks. Some time spent up to 4170m, any walking here kept to a minimum. Good fitness required for time at altitude, boat/raft trips, travel in jeeps at times on poor roads and travel by elephant

Health Anti-malaria meds recommended for Kaziranga and Nameri, please consult your doctor, also regarding time at altitude

Meals All included from breakfast on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 16. Mostly local cuisine

Insects Can be a nuisance, so bring repellent

Accom Twin and single rooms/cottages/tented camp, all ensuite, some accommodations more basic but comfortable

Visa/Fees E-visa required, additional £110. Charges for cameras and video cameras in the Parks, per visit, payable locally. Additional cost could total 7,000 Rupee (£75)

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Indian One-horned Rhino	Ibisbill
Golden Langur	Bengal Florican
Hoolock Gibbon	Himalayan Monal
Hog Deer	Blood Pheasant
White-winged Duck	Snow Partridge
Black-necked Crane	Snow Pigeon
Greater Adjutant	Gould's Shortwing
Pallas's Fish Eagle	Fire-tailed Myzornis
Collared Falconet	Long-tailed Broadbill
Solitary Snipe	Great Pied Hornbill

NE India is both a magical and memorable destination that has everything - rolling grasslands, dramatic rivers, dense forests, plus the Himalayas – roof of the world!

- Iconic National Parks – Manas, Kaziranga and Nameri
- Indian One-horned Rhino, Golden Langur, Asian Elephant
- Ibisbill, Himalayan Monal and Fire-tailed Myzornis
- Amazing scenery from the Himalayan foothills
- Hoolock Gibbon, Crab-eating Mongoose, Asian Water Buffalo all possible
- NE India in relative comfort, with good accommodation
- Outside chance of Bengal Florican, Blood Pheasant and even Bengal Tiger!!!

1-2 Overnight flight to Delhi and then onward internal flight to Guwahati, for our first night in India.

3-5 Transfer to UNESCO World Heritage site of Manas National Park in Assam, stopping enroute to see the endangered and humongous stork - Greater Adjutant. This spectacular Reserve has more than 40 species of mammal and a checklist of more than 450 species of birds, which speaks for itself.

During our time here we shall be exploring the grassland areas for the enigmatic and secretive Bengal Florican. The primary jungle here holds many mouthwatering bird species, including Great Pied Hornbill, Black-breasted Parrotbill and Long-tailed and Silver-breasted Broadbills. Apart from this diverse bird life, Manas is also home to

some fabulous mammals, with Indian Gaur, Asiatic Water Buffalo, Asiatic Elephant, Large Indian Civet and Crab-eating Mongoose all possible. There are both Bengal Tiger and Clouded Leopard here, but our chances are slim. In addition to these mammals we shall also be visiting nearby Kakojana village for the critically endangered and beautiful Golden Langur.

6-7 After Manas our Assam adventure continues, as we drive to Nameri Eco Camp in the Himalayan foothills. Here we shall walk into the beautiful forest areas of Nameri National Park for one of our targets, another critically endangered species - White-winged Duck.

Nameri is incredibly scenic, set in the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas. We shall take a boat across the River Jia Bhoreli, looking for Wreathed Hornbill, White-cheeked Partridge, Pied Falconet,



"I shall be visiting this very special corner of India for a month just before this wonderful tour and cannot believe I am getting an opportunity to return so quickly. With all the potentially incredible wildlife on offer still fresh in my mind, I shall certainly be 'waxing lyrical' about each destination ahead of getting there – it will not disappoint!" Julian Sykes



Long-tailed and Silver-breasted Broadbills and much more. Mammals are also prevalent here with more Asian Elephants and Indian Gaur to be found, along with Capped Langur, Hog Deer and Malayan Giant Squirrel – just superb. One major target will be the fabulously bizarre-looking Ibisbill and some time rafting along the Jia Bhoreli river could produce one, along with Pallas's Fish Eagle, Great Thick-knee and Indian Stone Curlew.

8-11 Today we cross the state border at Bhalukpong into Arunachal Pradesh to our first bamboo forest, where we shall search for Pale-headed Woodpecker; Collared Treepie, Red-billed, Coral-billed and White-browed Scimitar Babblers, Little Forktail, Yellow-rumped Honeyguide and Bhutan Laughing-thrush.

After lunch we drive to our accommodation in Dirang, where we spend the next four nights in the Himalayan foothills. On our early morning drives (one day to Sela Pass, 4170m) we truly have some spectacular avian targets, including the majestic Himalayan Monal, Snow Partridge, Grandala, Fire-tailed Myzornis, Fire-tailed Sunbird, the gorgeous Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch, Bar-winged Wren Babbler, Spotted, Rufous-chinned and Bhutan Laughing-thrushes and the dazzling Himalayan Cutia – to name just a few! One early morning we take a short drive to Sangti Valley to look for the rare Black-necked Crane, which sadly is becoming more elusive and we'll also be hoping for Wallcreeper, Long-billed Plover, Black-tailed Crane and Himalayan Pied Kingfisher. This is simply altitude birding at its best.



12-14 Today we drive to the famous Kaziranga National Park with stops enroute and from our base near the Reserve we take some jeep safaris and one elephant safari to different areas, with an aim to get up-close and personal with Indian One-horned Rhino, Swamp Deer and Water Buffalo, along with other monkeys, mustalids and mongoose.

Target birds will also be watched out for, with Bengal Florican, Swamp Francolin, Black-necked Stork, Oriental Pied Hombill, Greater and Black-rumped Flamebacks, Pallas's and Grey-headed Fish Eagles, Slender-billed Babbler, Bristled Grassbird, Pale-chinned Flycatcher and Stork-billed Kingfisher all possible.

15 This morning we check out early and drive to the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary, where we shall spend some time searching for the wonderful Hoolock Gibbon, Capped Langur and Stump-tailed and Pig-tailed Macaques – monkey magic! However this marks the end of our tour, as we drive on to Guwahati or Jorhat (dependent on flight schedules) to check in for our flight back to Delhi, where we have an overnight stay.

16 After breakfast we transfer to Delhi International Airport for our flight back to the UK.

Please Note: Accommodations/itinerary are subject to change. Depending on flight schedules we may be unable to visit the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary but we shall look for gibbons at Kanchanjuri area instead.



Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-2** Overnight flight to Delhi, then an internal flight to Guwahati
1 night at Hotel Pemaling Guwahati
- Days 3-5** Transfer to Manas, 2 full days in the National Park
3 nights at Bansbari Lodge
- Days 6-7** Nameri NP, looking for Asian Elephant, Water Buffalo and great birds
2 nights at Nameri Eco Camp
- Days 8-11** Continue to Dirang for some fabulous Himalayan wildlife
4 nights at Hotel Pemaling Dirang
- Days 12-14** Transfer to the world famous Kaziranga NP, our only chance of One-horned Rhino
3 nights at Bonhabi Resort
- Day 15** Possible visit to Gibbon WS then fly from Guwahati or Jorhat to Delhi - 1 night Lemon Tree Hotel
- Day 16** Morning flight from Delhi to London, arriving late afternoon

Ramki Sreenivasan: Golden Langur
Richard Maynard: Elephants Julian Sykes: Gaur
Jim Scott: Greater Adjutants, Indian Rhinoceros
Roy Atkins: White-browed Rosefinch

NORTH EAST 250 TOUR



"The North East 250 route takes you through a diverse selection of landscapes in this corner of Scotland. The beautiful woodlands and moors of Royal Deeside, continuing onto the rugged coastline of Moray and estuaries of Aberdeenshire's east coast."

Kate Mennie

Dates Sat 21 - Sat 28 March 2020

Price £1,850

Deposit £300 Single Supp £200

Leaders Kate Mennie and Julian Sykes

Weather Weather can be extremely variable at this time of year so come prepared for everything from rain and wind to calm early spring sunshine!

Walking Mostly easy walking on level paths up to 2 miles or perhaps a little more if rarities require it! We may be on our feet for a lot of the day even if not walking far

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:

Ptarmigan	Golden Plover
Black Grouse	Purple Sandpiper
Red-throated Diver	Bar-tailed Godwit
Great Northern Diver	Iceland Gull
Slavonian Grebe	Glaucous Gull
Red-necked Grebe	Short-eared Owl
Whooper Swan	Redwing
Pink-footed Goose	Fieldfare
Velvet Scoter	Waxwing
Long-tailed Duck	Crossbill
Red Kite	Snow Bunting
Hen Harrier	Mountain Hare
Golden Eagle	Otter
Peregrine	Bottlenose Dolphin

We'll visit some of the wonderful landscapes of north east Scotland, from Royal Deeside, to the rugged and varied coastline of the Moray Firth, through to Aberdeen Harbour

- Classic forests, upland moors, lochs and estuaries
- Chance of Mountain Hare, Otter, Bottlenose Dolphin
- Only Scottish mainland colony of Gannets
- Spectacle of UK's largest Eider population
- Gorgeous geese and divers in breeding plumage
- Breathtaking views around Royal Deeside and Balmoral
- Black Grouse, Ptarmigan, Golden Eagle, Snow Bunting all possible

We meet up in The Granite City and head inland to our lovely accommodation in Braemar, situated in the heart of Royal Deeside. Enroute we shall take the minor road from Aboyne through Glen Tanar; where roadside stops and a potential short walk, could produce some Caledonian Forest species, which with luck, could include our first crossbills. Early evening we shall reach our hotel where we spend the next three nights.

2-3 Royal Deeside offers some wonderful areas of ancient Caledonian Forest, upland moor and mountain. We shall be visiting the best of them, including the skiing area of Glenshee, where from the station car park we shall scan the surrounding mountainside for Ptarmigan, which should still be in their 'white' winter finery. Here

we could encounter Golden Eagles and Peregrine overhead and if we are lucky, a few Snow Buntings around the parking area itself. We shall spend time at the Muir of Dinnet and hopefully make a short walk around the stunningly beautiful Loch Kinord. We'll wander through Birch woodland looking for Siskin, Redpoll, tits and thrushes, with the loch possibly holding a few Goldeneye and maybe even an early Red-throated Diver. One morning we'll make a pre-breakfast visit for Black Grouse nearby and if successful, this could be one of the highlights of the week. However, this is not all about wildlife as we shall also see the historic castles of Braemar and Balmoral – who knows royalty might be an added bonus!

4-5 This is where we leave the forested mountains behind us and make our





"The variety of environments means you often get up close to the best wildlife Scotland has to offer. From Black Grouse lekking on remote hillsides in the Cairngorms, Gannets on coastline cliffs, through to Eider on coastal estuaries." Kate Mennie

way north to the Moray coast, stopping along the way at spectacular viewpoints. Our hotel is perfectly positioned at Cullen Bay so we can explore this wonderful area west towards Inverness. This whole stretch of coastline is riddled with fabulous bays and headlands, from Burghead to Spey Bay and beyond and is home to breeding pairs of Crested Tits.

This is a haven for wintering seaduck such as Common and Velvet Scoter, Long-tailed Duck and Red-breasted Merganser. We shall scan these flocks for scarcer species such as Great Northern Diver and Slavonian and Red-necked Grebes. The Moray Firth is famous for its Bottlenose Dolphins and we'll look for dorsal fins breaking the surface, as pods patrol these fish-rich waters all the time. The beautiful beaches should be quiet, so at low tide we shall search for waders such as Bar-tailed Godwit, Purple Sandpiper, Redshank and Grey and Ringed Plovers, making for a wonderful contrast to our earlier mountain days.

6-7 The next day we shall meander slowly along the coast to our final accommodation inland from Peterhead. Our first port of call is the famous RSPB Loch of Strathbeg, which is the UK's largest dune slack lake. This is a magnet for migrants and over-wintering Scottish waterbirds. The shallow pools attract waders and hordes of wildfowl, with an awesome track record for rare and scarce species turning up. In the surrounding fields there could be Yellowhammer or Corn Bunting, along with Pink-footed Geese

and within the huge flocks we might be lucky to find Barnacle or White-front. Further around the coast we shall stop off at a couple of headlands such as Fraserburgh and Rattray Head.

These make ideal watch-points to observe seabirds and at this time of year Gannets, Kittiwakes and auks can stream by. It is also a fabulous coastline for gulls, with all the commoner species well represented, but this is a good time of year to find an odd 'white-winged' such as Glaucous or Iceland.

Our final full day will be spent around the fabulous Ythan Estuary – this is the perfect early spring location, with large numbers of waders taking advantage of the intertidal mud and sand flats. Most of these will have over-wintered, but we may see the vanguard of northward moving migrants, arriving to fuel up on their epic journey. Large numbers of common waders such as Dunlin, Redshank, Knot and Golden and Ringed Plover wheel and turn above the estuary and amongst them we hope to find scarcer species such as Greenshank, Whimbrel and Ruff. It's the perfect place to get to grips with wader identification.

8 After breakfast we shall load the minibus for one final time and return south to Aberdeen where we shall say farewell to the NE 250.



Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-3** Meet in Aberdeen and drive to our hotel in Braemar, hopefully stopping enroute at Glen Tanar. Full days in the beautiful Royal Deeside, with possible visits to Glenshee, Muir of Dinnet, Balmoral and Linn of Dee
3 nights Braemar Hotel
- Days 4-5** Drive out of the mountains, north towards the coast, where we stop for the next two nights, visiting the coastal sites of Spey Bay, Burghead and Rosemarkie
2 nights Cullen Bay Hotel
- Days 6-7** Travel to our final hotel stopping at Loch of Strathbeg Reserve, Fraserburgh and Rattray Head. Last day around some of the classic east coast sites such as the Ythan Estuary and Blackdog
2 nights Saplinsbrae Hotel
- Day 8** Travel back to Aberdeen

Mark Denman: Long-tailed Ducks
John Duerden: Portsoy, Braemar Castle
Kate Mennie: Common and Grey Seals, Troup Head
Julian Sykes: Eider



TARIFA AND DOÑANA



"Teaming up with our friend Manuel of Birding Tarifa we shall have local access and knowledge to find the specialities of each habitat, including scarce localised birds such as Spanish Imperial Eagle, Bald Ibis, Little Swift and Common Bulbul. I can't wait to go back."
Simon Eaves

Dates Wed 01 - Fri 10 Apr 2020
Price £2,675
Deposit £500 Single Supp £200

Leaders Simon Eaves and Manuel Morales
Flights EasyJet, scheduled, Speedy Boarding and extra legroom included
Outbound: Afternoon, Gatwick-Seville
Inbound: Afternoon, Seville-Gatwick
Weather Variable in spring, a mixture of sun and showers (15°-30°C)
Walking There will be some short walks up to 2km, with plenty of breaks
Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 10
Lunches will mostly be picnics, with some taken at local restaurants
Insects Biting insects may occasionally be a nuisance, so bring repellent
Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite
Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Spanish Imperial Eagle	Northern Bald Ibis
Short-toed Eagle	Squacco Heron
Bonelli's Eagle	Glossy Ibis
Booted Eagle	Purple Heron
Osprey	Little Bittern
Black-winged Kite	Night Heron
Egyptian Vulture	Great Reed Warbler
Little Owl	Gull-billed Tern
Black Stork	Caspian Tern
Marbled Teal	Collared Pratincole
White-headed Duck	Stone Curlew
Purple Swampphen	Little Bustard
Red-knobbed Coot	European Bee-eater
Slender-billed Gull	Little Swift
Little Tern	

Tarifa is one of Western Europe's premier migration watch points for both raptors and songbirds, whilst Doñana National Park is host to a myriad of birdlife and even a small population of Iberian Lynx.

- Montagu's and Marsh Harriers, Little Owl, Calandra Lark, Zitting Cisticola, Little Bustard
- Egyptian and Griffon Vulture, Booted Eagle, Short-toed Eagle and Spanish Imperial Eagle
- Glossy Ibis, Little Swift, Lesser Crested Tern, Caspian Tern and Red-knobbed Coot
- Pilot and Sperm Whales, plus Striped, Bottlenose and Common dolphins
- Best places to watch birds, Iberian Lynx, cetaceans and wildlife in Western Andalucía
- Private access to the countryside of rice fields, wild Olive trees and pastureland
- Small typical local hotels, in great birding locations with fine Spanish fare

We fly from Gatwick to Seville, arriving late afternoon and then drive south to our base for the next five days, a quiet hotel close to Los Lances Beach in Tarifa. If time allows, we can stop enroute to birdwatch.

2-6 Our time here will be split between the best viewpoints for raptor migration and the private areas around Tarifa for Spanish specialities such as Glossy Ibis, Little Bustard, Little Swift, Red-knobbed Coot and Spanish Imperial Eagle. Our first short walk however will be along Los Lances beach for waders, terns and gulls, before setting off for our first raptor viewpoint.

We shall choose the best of these between Tarifa, Algeciras and Sierra de la Plata depending on the weather. Anything is possible, but our target species will be Egyptian and Griffon Vulture, Booted Eagle,



Short-toed Eagle, Black Stork, Black Kite, Bee-eater, Alpine Swift and passerines. Lunch each day will be either a picnic, or a small taverna lunch. A cliff walk will also give us the chance of more passerines and can be amazing for vultures and other raptors.

Our guide Manuel has public and private access to the areas of rice fields, wild olive trees and pasture around the wetlands of La Janda, so we shall spend a full day here looking for Montagu's and Marsh Harriers, Little Owl, Calandra Lark, Zitting Cisticola and Turtle Dove.

Weather permitting, we shall take a boat trip out into the Straits of Gibraltar for cetaceans such as Pilot and Sperm Whales, Striped, Bottlenose and Common Dolphins and pelagic birds including Cory's and Balearic Shearwater and Mediterranean Gull. After lunch, there will be time



"Tarifa is one of Western Europe's premier migration watch points in spring for both raptors and songbirds, plus there's the chance of Pilot and Sperm Whales, dolphins and seabirds on our boat trip. With the Coto Doñana National Park, renowned as one of Europe's top birding areas, we could amass an astonishing bird and mammal list." Simon Eaves



for a local walk in Tarifa and its surroundings, with the chance of Common Bulbul, Lesser Kestrel and more raptor migration!

A site close to Barbate holds a small Bald Ibis colony, so we shall spend time here and on the nearby coastal marshes, before moving out into the Medina Sidonia countryside. Access to private land will give further chances of Spanish Imperial Eagle, plus Collared Pratincole, Osprey, Short-toed Lark, Woodchat Shrike, Little Tern, Stone Curlew, Little Owl, Little Bustard, Cuckoo and many passerines including Nightingale and Melodious Warbler.

We'll drive up into the Ojen Valley to Los Alcornocales (Cork Oak Forest) Natural Park, before taking a short walk through El Tiradero Stream for passerines, butterflies and flowers. We'll visit the Barbate reservoir for Osprey and the Lesser Kestrel colony in Alcalá de los Gazules. Target species will include Bonelli's Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Short-toed Treecreeper, Lesser Kestrel, Osprey, orchids, Iberian Chiffchaff, Thekla Lark and other migrant and breeding passerines.

7 Today we transfer to Doñana. At our first lakeside stop, there will be a good chance of Red-knobbed Coot and waterfowl such as White-headed Duck, Marbled Teal and Greater Flamingo. At Chipiona harbour, La Jara (Rockrose) beach, the El Colorado lakes and Bonanza marshes, we'll look for Little Swift, Lesser Crested Tern, Caspian Tern, Common Tern, Little Tern, Kentish Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit. Heading towards Doñana National

Park, we shall visit Corta Olivillos for herons and waterfowl, then cross the Guadalquivir River by boat to get to El Rocío, our base for the next three nights.

8-10 The marshes of Doñana National Park, the Guadiana River, the plains and Dehesa de Abajo Lake, will bring many highlights over the next couple of days, such as Squacco, Purple and Night Heron, Glossy Ibis, Little Bittern, Great Reed Warbler, Garganey, Ferruginous Duck, Marbled Teal, Black-necked Grebe, Bee-eater, Spoonbill, Red-crested Pochard, Lesser Kestrel, Hoopoe and Cuckoo and we'll spend our first day exploring these areas, finishing in the afternoon at La Dehesa de Abajo Lake, leaving us time to go out in the evening for a short walk to look for Iberian Lynx.

We'll have a second chance for Iberian Lynx the next day on an early morning walk close to the hotel, with the chance of raptors and passerines as well. The rest of the morning will be spent around the El Rocío marshes and La Rocina pinewood and lakes. The afternoon we'll be in and around El Acebuche (Wild Olive Tree) Visitor Centre and Lakes, the best places for Iberian Magpie. Other birds can include Crested Tit, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Iberian Chiffchaff, Garganey, Golden Oriole, Dartford Warbler, Bee-eater, Woodchat Shrike, Tree Sparrow, Booted Eagle and Marsh Harrier.

The last morning will be spent birdwatching if time allows, before making our way back to Seville for an afternoon flight to Gatwick, arriving in the early evening.



Outline Itinerary

Day 1	Fly Gatwick to Seville and transfer to our hotel on Los Lances Beach near Tarifa
Days 2-6	6 nights Hotel la Codorniz Exploration of migration hotspots around Tarifa, together with private access to bird-rich areas inland such as La Janda, the Ojen Valley and the estuaries and marshes around Medina Sidonia
Day 7	Transfer to Doñana National Park via Chipiona Harbour, El Colorado lakes and Bonanza marshes, plus a crossing of the Guadalquivir River
Days 8-9	3 nights Hotel Doñana 51 Exploration of Doñana including the Guadiana River and Dehesa de Abajo Lake, plus early morning and late evening watching for Iberian Lynx
Day 10	Travel back to Seville for flight back to Gatwick

Brooke Miller: Collared Pratincole, Spanish Imperial Eagle
Cath Wright: Glossy Ibis
Simon Eaves: Northern Bald Ibis, White-headed Duck
Mary Braddock: Bee-eaters



EXTREMADURA



"I've been to Extremadura over 20 times now, so you may gather that it's a favourite! Our idyllic hotel in colourful grounds, has Hoopoe, Azure-winged Magpie and Bee-eater; the rolling plains, strutting bustards and buoyant harriers. Then there's the raptor-fest that is Monfrague. What a way to kick-start spring!"

Darren Rees

Dates Sat 4 - Sat 11 Apr 2020
Price £2,445
Deposit £475 Single Supp £250

Leaders Darren Rees and Julian Sykes

Flights EasyJet, scheduled, Speedy Boarding and extra legroom included
Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-Madrid
Inbound: Afternoon, Madrid-Gatwick
Other UK airports may be available

Weather Variable in spring, a mixture of sun and showers (12°-25°C)
– can be cool on the plains

Walking Some short easy walks on level ground

Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8. Simple, interesting Spanish fare at the hotel and at local restaurants

Insects Not a problem

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

White Stork	Purple Swamphen
Black Stork	Eagle Owl
Spanish Imperial Eagle	Scop's Owl
Short-toed Eagle	Little Bustard
Bonelli's Eagle	Great Bustard
Black-shouldered Kite	Black-bellied Sandgrouse
Montagu's Harrier	Pin-tailed Sandgrouse
Lesser Kestrel	Bee-eater
Black Vulture	Roller
Griffon Vulture	Hoopoe

The best place for birds of prey in Western Europe
- Griffon colonies and five breeding eagle species, as well as displaying bustards, sandgrouse and other special birds.

- Over twenty years' experience and 45 tours, we know this place well!
- Early Spring for Great and Little Bustards displaying
- Three vulture, three kite and five eagle species possible
- Difficult-to-see birds such as Eagle Owl and sandgrouse
- White Storks and Lesser Kestrels over medieval Trujillo
- Superb accommodation, amidst fabulous grounds, in the Lagares mountains
- Fabulous wetlands with a wealth of waterbirds

Extremadura is one of the least developed yet most spectacular provinces in Spain, and after our flight to Madrid we'll make our way to our base at Vina Las Torres, close to Trujillo, at its very heart. This charming traditional style accommodation is off the beaten track and our hosts and friends Juan Pedro and Belen will ensure a week to remember.

With wonderful views over the surrounding countryside of small fields, Holm Oak woodland and mountain ridges, the grounds and lanes around our guesthouse abound with birds: White Stork, Black Kite, Hoopoe, Bee-eater; Sardinian Warbler; Iberian Grey Shrike and immaculate Azure-winged Magpies. Scops Owl might be calling at night and we may not want to leave!



2-7 The rolling open country of Extremadura is a favourite place to watch birds in spring and this is the time of peak activity amongst the aristocratic Great Bustards that strut across the plains. We shall witness one of the most spectacular bird displays on earth, as huge males literally turn themselves inside out in an attempt to attract a mate! Smaller Little Bustard males prefer blowing raspberries and nodding their heads to attract their females.

On Caceres Plain, relic areas of steppeland can be covered in a delightful carpet of small flowers, while the air above is thick with the sound of Calandra and Crested Larks. Rocky outcrops hide Stone Curlews and Little Owls; flocks of Black-bellied and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse chase around the skyline and elegant Montagu's Harriers





"For the bird-of-prey enthusiast look no further: kites everywhere; sky-dancing Montagu's Harriers; squadrons of vultures circling above their rugged cliff colonies and all five species of eagle, including the rarest eagle in the world - Spanish Imperial Eagle. All against a backdrop of towering cliffs and rolling Dehesa – perfect." Darren Rees

move back to their breeding grounds. Watching their graceful sky-dancing display will be a tour highlight.

Birds of prey are a big part of the wildlife spectacle and both kites and vultures seem to be always on the wing. Magical Monfrague National Park is one of Europe's finest raptor hot-spots and its mix of wooded hillsides and deep rocky gorges is home to all five species of Spanish eagles: powerful Golden; smaller Booted; hovering Short-toed; scarce Bonelli's and the critically endangered Spanish Imperial.

Rare Black Vultures nest in good numbers and at precipitous Pena Falcon rock, there is a colony of Griffon Vultures, with many on ledges tending young, while others soar overhead amongst Egyptian Vulture, Peregrine and the unusual Black Stork. Smaller birds are welcome co-stars: Crag Martin, Hawfinch, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Redstart, Subalpine Warbler and Rock Bunting. Here, we'll also make a special dusk visit as the vultures return to roost and the Nightingales start their evening chorus, where we'll hope to see charismatic Eagle Owl – fingers crossed!

Rich wetlands in this region, such as Embalse de Arrocampo and Embalse de Alcollarin, are havens for aquatic wildlife. Marsh Harriers drift over reedbeds where we could find Purple Heron, Little Bittern, Purple Swampphen and Savi's, Cetti's and Great Reed Warblers. Gull-billed Terns fly over water dotted with grebes

and rimmed with egrets and occasional Spoonbills. The area is also home for one of Europe's rare breeding birds– sensational Black-shouldered Kites hunt over surrounding fields and woodland edge.

We'll visit medieval Trujillo, with its delightful narrow streets, charming old churches and busy Plaza Major. White Storks nest on many of the towers, newly arrived Pallid Swifts chase around the sky and at the town's bullring we can watch Lesser Kestrels and Spotless Starlings going in and out of the red-tiled roof. The rice fields in the south are also worth exploring, another different habitat attracting interesting species: small populations of Red Avadavat and Common Waxbill work the field margins; vivid blue Rollers and buoyant Collared Pratincoles (half tern, half wader) are found here, along with Little Ringed Plover and Tree and Spanish Sparrows.

All the while, in the land that time forgot, Corn Buntings sing from every perch, Woodlarks give their melodic song, Dartford Warblers and Woodchat Shrikes chatter in the bushes and Red-rumped Swallows dash by.....sadly so will our time here!

8 Time allowing, we'll birdwatch on the final morning, before returning to Madrid for our flight back to the UK.



Outline Itinerary

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Day 1 | Fly to Madrid
3 hour transfer to Trujillo
7 nights at Viña Las Torres |
| Days 2-7 | Birdwatching and wildlife exploration of the steppes, woodlands, wetlands and mountain regions of one of Spain's premier birding locations, including Monfrague National Park, Embalse de Arrocampo and Caceres Plain |
| Day 8 | Transfer to Madrid for flight to Gatwick |

Brooke Miller: Little Bustard, Azure-winged Magpies, Spanish Imperial Eagle and Griffon Vulture
Sally Dowden: Trujillo
Roy Atkins: Hoopoe, Roller
Simon Eaves: Great Bustards





"I am delighted to be guiding with an old friend, recently retired RSPB warden, Zul Bhatia. He is Tanzanian, speaks fluent Swahili and has been leading trips here for 25 years! His experience, local knowledge and understanding of the culture, will make this wildlife adventure even more special." Roy Atkins

Dates Sat 4 - Sat 18 April 2020
Price £7,245
Deposit £1,350 Single Supp £400

Leaders Roy Atkins and Zul Bhatia
Flights Kenya Airways, scheduled
Outbound: Overnight, Heathrow-Kilimanjaro
Inbound: Overnight, Kilimanjaro-Heathrow
(Outbound and inbound via Nairobi)
Weather Expect good weather but with some rain, perhaps heavy at times, as April is during the 'Long Rains'. It's difficult to predict how much rain but it should not hamper us. Temperatures can range from 20°-30°C, depending on altitude. Ngorongoro can be chilly
Walking Most of the wildlife watching is from vehicles, but we shall takw easy walks in the grounds of the lodges and also occasional walks in the NPs. Most are on easy and flat terrain
Meals All included from breakfast on Day 2 to lunch on Day 14
Health High risk Malaria area. Please take advice from your local travel clinic/doctor about Malaria Prophylaxis
Insects There may be a few mosquitoes, particularly in lower lying areas and other biting insects so bring repellent
Accom Comfortable safari lodges/cottages and tented camps, all ensuite
Visa E-visa to be obtained before travel, additional £45
Goup 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Thousands of Wildebeest	Black-and-White
African Elephant	Colobus Monkey
Black Rhinoceros	Secretary Bird
Lion	Ground Hornbill
Leopard	Kori Bustard
Cheetah	Grey Crowned Crane
Coke's Hartebeest	Palm-nut Vulture
Masai Giraffe	African Fish Eagle
Bat-eared Fox	Bateleur Eagle
Thousands of Flamingos	Purple-crested Turaco
	Narina Trogon

The famous Ngorongoro crater and the Serengeti, where Wildebeest and Zebra are present in vast numbers, as well as other antelopes and predators, plus exceptional birds.

- Wildebeest, Zebra and gazelles in their tens of thousands!
- Stunning scenery throughout, particularly in the Ngorongoro Highlands
- Astonishing wealth of larger mammals from Elephant to the tiny Dik-dik
- Top predators - Lion, Leopard, Cheetah and smaller ones such as Serval and Bat-eared Fox
- Around 300 bird species likely from Ostrich to tiny sunbirds - tens of thousands of flamingos!!
- Tanzanian guide and personal friend - Zul Bhatia, with 25 years' experience here
- Safari Lodges and luxury camps with private facilities and comfortable safari vehicles

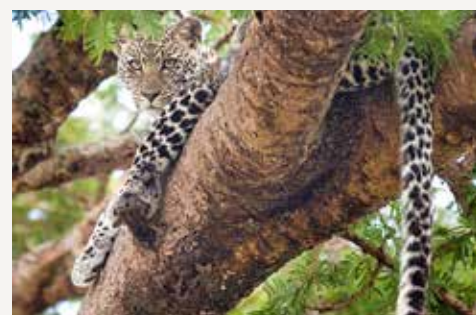
1-2 We depart London on an overnight flight, change planes in Nairobi and arrive in Tanzania on the morning of day 2, where we spend the rest of the day relaxing and birding in the wonderful grounds of our lodge.

3 Arusha National Park is little visited compared to the more famous Parks, but its freshwater and soda lakes, lush forests and Alpine areas are rich in wildlife. Mammals are very obvious with Buffalo, Giraffe, Warthog, Kirk's Dik-dik, Zebra, Black-and-White Colobus and Blue Monkeys, while birds include a mix of local residents and migrants such as Blacksmith Lapwing, Avocet, egrets, ducks, warblers and flycatchers. Little, Cinnamon-chested and White-fronted Bee-eater occur and forest birds may include White-eared Barbet, Narina Trogon, various greenbuls and Crowned Eagle. Lesser and Greater Flamingos can occur in tens of thousands on the soda lakes!



4-5 We explore Tarangire National Park to spend quality time with African Elephants at their highest density in the world! Magnificent, ancient Baobab trees, some over a thousand years old, dominate the landscape and the River Tarangire is a magnet for mammals including Bohor Reedbuck. The density of mammals attracts Lions, Leopards and sometimes Cheetahs - even the rare Wild Dog has appeared in recent years. We'll look out for Helmeted Guineafowl, francolins, sandgrouse, hornbills, waders and raptors including Brown Snake, Martial, Tawny and Bateleur Eagles, plus Tanzanian endemics such as Yellow-collared Lovebird and Rufous-tailed Weaver.

6 Lake Manyara National Park is our next stop and we spend time exploring the forests, savannah woodland, marshes and Lake Manyara itself. Birdlife is exceptional with Palm-nut Vulture, African Fish



"The Serengeti and Ngorongoro Crater are so famous it is astonishing we have not been before! You will have seen these places on TV, but seeing them for real is going to be incredible - with literally millions of animals on the plains, exciting predators and a fantastic range of birds - this is a great time to be there with so many mammals, many resident birds in breeding plumage and migrants passing through too - I can't wait!" Roy Atkins



Eagle, Purple-crested Turaco and Broad-billed Roller, while the Hippo Pool and swamps hold waterbirds including Long-toed Lapwing, Black Crake and African Jacana. On leaving the Park, we climb the Rift Valley escarpment with stunning views and enter the beautiful Ngorongoro Highlands.

7 In the early morning, a short drive brings us to the end of the tarmac, where we enter the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. Climbing through highland forest we get our first views of the breathtaking Ngorongoro Crater and from the viewpoint we'll see many distant animals 2,000 feet below - perhaps even a Black Rhino through the telescope. We'll look out for Eastern Double-collared Sunbird, Olive Thrush and Hunter's Cisticola. Traversing the crater rim we'll enjoy the spectacular scenery, before dropping down to the vast Serengeti Plains.

8-10 Up to two million animals may be on the plains of the Serengeti, with Wildebeest the most numerous, then Plains Zebra and Thomson's and Grant's Gazelles. Woodlands hold Waterbuck, Coke's Hartebeest, Impala, Masai Giraffe and Topi with hunting Lion, Leopard, Cheetah, Spotted Hyaena and Black-backed and Golden Jackals. Serval, Bat-eared Fox and rare Caracal may be seen. The many birds include residents, plus migrants from Europe, Asia and elsewhere in Africa, with species such as Montagu's and Pallid Hamiers, waders and wheatear species, mixing with striking resident birds such as Secretary Bird, Ground Hornbill, various kingfishers, vultures, coursers, francolins, barbets, weavers and endemic Grey-breasted Spurfowl and Fischer's Lovebird. The Western Corridor is where Wildebeest



and Zebra congregate, while special birds along the rivers include Karamoja Aapalis, Black-headed Gonolek and Swamp Flycatcher - expect some very large Crocodiles!

11-12 Enroute to the famous Ngorongoro Crater, we'll visit Oldupai Gorge, the 'Cradle of Mankind', where two million year old remains of early man were unearthed - the museum here is a must! Our accommodation on the crater rim is special, with a magical atmosphere and outstanding views. Next day, we descend into the crater proper, with its varied habitats of grassland, swamps, dry forest, evergreen forest, freshwater and alkaline lakes - home to huge numbers of mammals, with many predators and, with luck, endangered Black Rhino. Birdlife is prolific and species normally seen include Crowned Crane, Kori and Black-bellied Bustard, Yellow-billed Stork, Black-winged Plover, Rosy-throated Longclaw and Fischer's Sparrow Lark. Even the lodge grounds are wonderful, with birds such as Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, African Stonechat, Cape Robin Chat, Tacazze and Eastern Double-collared Sunbird - it is all an incredible wildlife experience!

13-15 We travel to Arusha for some relaxed birding around our lodge, where we spend our final night in Tanzania. The following morning we'll spend time on the Masai Steppe in search of any final birds and mammals, before heading to the airport in the afternoon and our flight back to the UK, arriving on day 15.



Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-3** Overnight flight to Tanzania, via Nairobi. Full day in Arusha NP
2 nights at Ngare Sero Lodge
- Days 4-5** Travel to Tarangire NP for game drives
2 nights at Tarangire Safari Lodge
- Day 6** Drive to Lake Manyara NP
1 night at Karatu Country Lodge
- Days 7-8** Visit Ngorongoro CA and full day game viewing on the Serengeti
2 nights at ThornTree Camp
- Days 9-10** Drive to Western Serengeti, game viewing on way. Birding in lodge grounds
2 nights at Speke Bay Lodge
- Days 11-12** Visit Oldupai Gorge then on to famous Ngorongoro Crater
2 nights at Ngorongoro Sopa Lodge
- Day 13** Drive to Arusha, birding at the lodge
1 night at Ngare Sero Lodge
- Days 14-15** Birding Masai Steppe before overnight flight to UK, via Nairobi, arrive day 15

Zul Bhatia: Wildebeest, Lesser Flamingos, Lion, Elephant, Leopard,
Christine Maughan: Secretary Bird



Turkeys

Spectacled Owls, Costa Rica. Holiday details pg 18



Sue and Bill Gill

Ospreys, Spring Birds in the Highlands. Holiday details page 50

Just a few of the images
guests and guides have taken
on Speyside Wildlife trips



Andrew Hoyne

Dotterel, Spring Birds. Holiday details pg 50



Richard Stacey

Guests on The Outer Hebrides. Holiday details page 42



Trish Auciello

Polar Bear, Spitsbergen. Holiday details page 80



Terry Swainbank

Iberian Lynx, Lynx and Lammergeier. Holiday details page 14



Richard Stacey

Corncrake, The Outer Hebrides. Holiday details page 42



Brooke Miller

Black Storks, Extremadura. Holiday details page 30



Colin Scott

Red Squirrel, Spring Birds. Holiday details page 50



Chris Piper

Macaws, Costa Rica. Holiday details page 18

18



Steve Dutton

Ptarmigan, Day Trips in the Cairngorms. Details page 10



Steve Batt

Guests on Yellowstone in Spring. Holiday details page 58

CAIRNGORMS AND MULL EASTER



"What a superb time to visit Speyside as migrants return, birds sing and snow is still on the mountains. We might even get Crested Tit in the hotel garden! Combine this with Mull and we shall struggle to find our magic moment as there will be so many."
Duncan Macdonald

Dates Thur 9 - Sun 19 Apr 2020

Price £2,495

Deposit £450 **Single Supp** £300

Leaders Craig Round and Duncan Macdonald

Weather Varies from cold to warm and sunny, with windy weather regular on the isles (0°-15°C), sun and showers

Walking Most walks are 1-2 miles on wide sandy tracks, although there is the possibility of a forest walk of up to 4 miles.
Coastal walks on uneven terrain of 2-3 miles.
Walking boots recommended and collapsible/telescopic walking poles could be useful for this trip

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 11

Insects Biting insects are unlikely to be a problem

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite or private facilities

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Great Northern Diver	Short-eared Owl
Black-throated Diver	Ptarmigan
Red-throated Diver	Snow Bunting
White-tailed Eagle	Whooper Swan
Golden Eagle	Slavonian Grebe
Capercaillie	Black Guillemot
Crested Tit	Glaucous Gull
Scottish Crossbill	Ring Ouzel
Black Grouse	Otter
Hen Harrier	Pine Marten

Colin Scott: White-tailed Eagle

Jane Hope: Loch na Kael, Black Guillemot, Otter

Mary Braddock: Crested Tit

Chris Piper: Black Grouse

Richard Stacey: Short-eared Owl

The best of Speyside's speciality birds and mammals, plus Isle of Mull magic. Perhaps the best place in the UK to see Otter and White-tailed and Golden Eagle.

- Prime time in the UK's White-tailed and Golden Eagle hotspot
- Capercaillie, Black Grouse and other Speyside specials
- Perhaps the country's best place for Otter
- Caledonian Pine Forest for Red Squirrel, Crested Tit and Scottish Crossbill
- Short-eared Owl, Hen Harrier and divers
- Explore the Cairngorms National Park including an evening mammal watching
- A trip to Iona with its famous Abbey and white sandy beaches

Dinner together on Thursday evening begins this holiday at our base in the Cairngorms, a delightful country house hotel, where we'll discuss the itinerary for the days ahead.

2-4 We'll visit the ancient pines of Abernethy Forest, a remnant of the 'Great Wood of Caledon', in search of dainty Crested Tits and parties of Scottish Crossbill. We'll need to check them carefully, as both Common and Parrot Crossbills are resident in the area. We'll keep alert for wary Capercaillie feeding in the shadows - a clatter of wings often the first sign of their presence.

We'll also make a special effort to see Black Grouse as they 'bubble and coo' at dawn - a fabulous spectacle. Red Squirrels are still abundant in the forest with Redstart, Siskin, Tree Pipit and

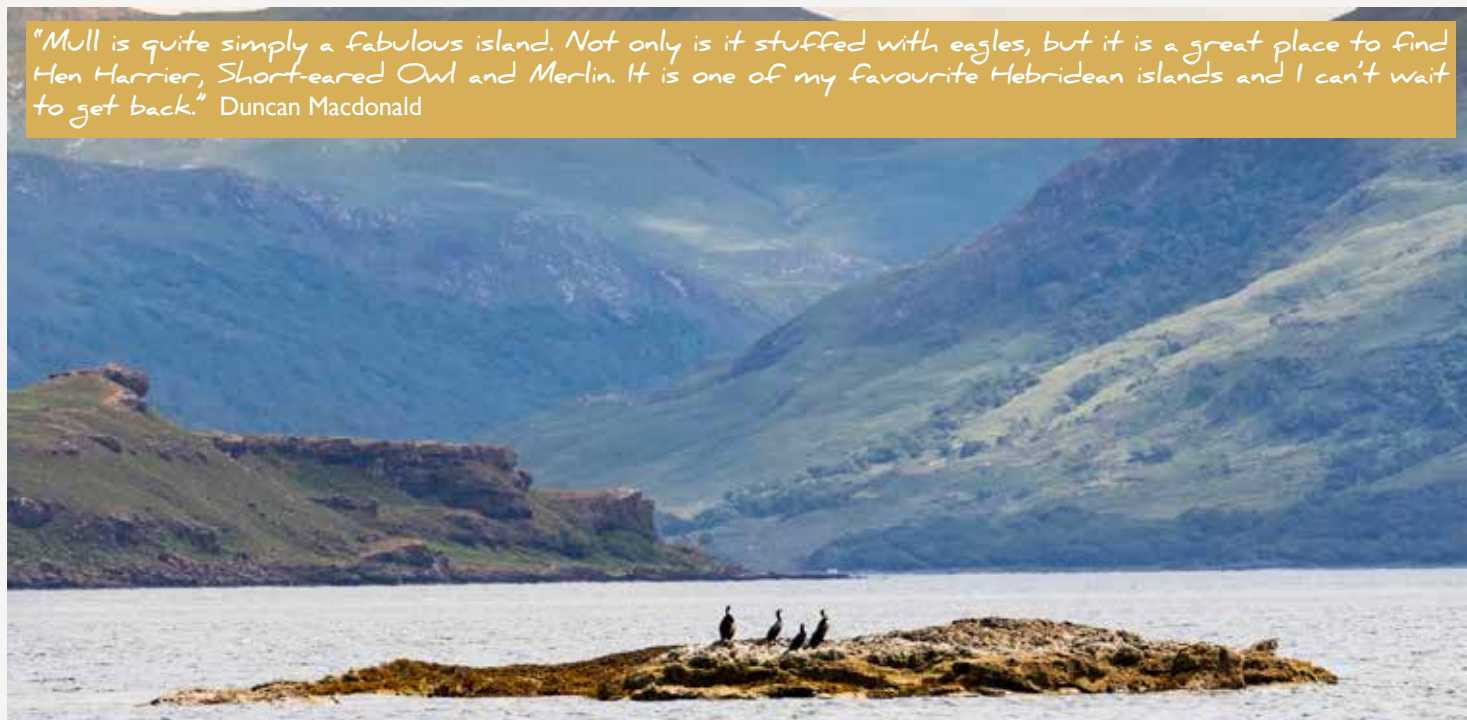
countless Willow Warblers singing in the clearings. At dusk we'll pay a visit to our mammal hide for Pine Marten and Badger.

Ospreys are at local loch-side eyries as the first Sand Martins, Swallows and House Martins sweep low over the lochs after arriving back from Africa. The River Spey holds Dipper and Grey Wagtail and maybe an early returning Common Sandpiper; while Curlew, Redshank, Lapwing, Oystercatcher and Snipe are calling and 'drumming' in display over marshes, where odd lingering Whooper Swans gleam white amongst the flooded watery landscape.

Rare and exquisitely plumed Slavonian Grebes and beautiful Red-throated and Black-throated Divers in immaculate summer plumage, are just beginning their return to remote breeding lochs.



"Mull is quite simply a fabulous island. Not only is it stuffed with eagles, but it is a great place to find Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl and Merlin. It is one of my favourite Hebridean islands and I can't wait to get back." Duncan Macdonald



Ptarmigan are beginning to lose their white plumage amidst the foothill boulders of the Cairngorms and on the wild moors of Dava and the Monadhliaths, newly arrived Wheatears add a flash of colour to the moorland and the plaintive notes of the first returning Ring Ouzel, along with the cackling of Red Grouse and the mournful piping of Golden Plover, can be heard.

5-9 Leaving the Cairngorms, we'll drive down the shores of Loch Laggan, past Ben Nevis, just outside Fort William and continue down the coast to Oban, before catching an afternoon ferry to the Isle of Mull. We'll be able to birdwatch immediately we arrive, as our hotel is on the shoreline of the Sound of Mull.

From our base overlooking the Isle of Lismore, we'll explore the weed-strewn rocky coast, moors and dramatic mountainous glens for Eider, Merlin, Raven, Twite, Great Northern Diver, Red-breasted Merganser, Rock Dove, Hooded Crow, Common Crossbill and Black Guillemot, with the chance of rarer seaduck and white-winged gulls such as Glaucous and Iceland. Common and Grey Seals will be hauled out on numerous skerries.

Early spring is a great time to watch eagles soaring and displaying over their territories. Mull is without doubt one of 'the' best places to see both species of eagle in Britain. Peaty burns are home to Dipper and Grey Wagtail, whilst coniferous woodland has Siskin and sometimes Common Crossbill. A short distance away on rugged shorelines, we have been lucky with our views of Otters; engaging

animals, as easy to see here as anywhere in Scotland. Journeying along the croft land on the Ross of Mull, Buzzards adorn every telegraph pole and we'll take the short passenger ferry to the beautiful white sandy beaches of Iona.

Although the island is rightly famous for its eagles, we shall be looking for other upland raptors as well. Hen Harrier, Merlin and Short-eared Owl frequent the moors, hillsides and estuaries, as they too have young to feed. Peregrine patrol the sea cliffs around Gribun, while family parties of Raven fill the air with their cronking calls. There are moments on this fabulous island when the sky can seem to be filled with raptors, especially eagles, so along with owls, we may come close to a double digit tally of species by the end of the trip!

10-11 Leaving Mull, we'll catch a morning ferry across to the Ardnamurchan Peninsula and a different route back to Speyside, with plenty of time to birdwatch as we go, arriving back in the Cairngorms in time for dinner:

On the last morning we'll breakfast together before making our farewells.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive in the Cairngorms, 4 nights
Tigh na Sgiath Country House Hotel
- Days 2-4** Explore the Cairngorms National Park including Abernethy Forest, the River Spey and the mountains and moors
- Day 5** Leisurely drive down Loch Laggan, past Ben Nevis, before taking ferry to Mull
- Days 6-9** Birdwatching and wildlife exploration of Mull, including a trip to Iona, the Gribun Cliffs, Loch na Keal and Loch Scridain
5 nights Isle of Mull Hotel
- Days 10-11** Catch a different ferry and travel back to the Cairngorms for 1 night
Tigh na Sgiath Country House Hotel



COLORADO



"The American southwest has some of the most spectacular landscapes on earth, nowhere more so than the state of Colorado - straddling the arid canyonlands, the mighty Rocky Mountains and the vast prairie grasslands."
Darren Rees

Dates	Fri 17 Apr - Sun 3 May 2020
Price	£5,375
Deposit	£1,045 Single Supp £900
Leaders	Darren Rees and Duncan Macdonald
Flights	United Airlines, scheduled Outbound: Afternoon, Heathrow-Denver Inbound: Overnight, Denver-Heathrow
Weather	Unpredictable, especially in mountains. Expect cold temperatures in spring, particularly at altitude and at early mornings at grouse lek sites (may be below zero), warmer at lower elevations 0°-20°C
Walking	On established tracks, some will be in mountains at higher altitude so a reasonable level of fitness required. Colorado has the highest mean elevation of all the states in the USA. We'll be at Rabbit Ears Pass (9,500 ft), Vail Pass (10,554 ft) and Loveland Pass (11,990 ft). We'll choose walks on even ground or well-maintained paths and at an easy pace, but please consult with your GP if you think altitude may be an issue
Meals	All included from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 16
Insects	Will not be a problem
Accom	Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite
Group	12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Ferruginous Hawk	Mountain Plover
Rough-legged Hawk	Burrowing Owl
Prairie Falcon	Rosy Finch (3 sp)
Golden Eagle	McCown's Longspur
Greater Prairie Chicken	Chestnut-collared Longspur
Gunnison Sage Grouse	Pronghorn Antelope
Greater Sage Grouse	White-tailed Prairie Dog
Sharp-tailed Grouse	
White-tailed Ptarmigan	

Twildlife: Greater Prairie Chicken

Mia Macpherson: Mountain Plover

Devon Pike: White-tailed Prairie Dog

NP Service: Great Sand Dunes NP **Wikipedia:**

Sharp-tailed Grouse **Lin Gregory:** Pronghorn

A multi-centre birding road trip of beautiful Colorado, seeking out the special species of mountain, desert and prairie. With a visit to Great Sand Dunes National Park and the Rockies.

- Early-morning grouse leks
- Spectacular Rocky Mountains
- Burrowing Owl and Prairie Dogs on relic grasslands
- Endemic Gunnison Sage Grouse
- High altitude specialities and bright spring migrants
- Colorado National Monument
- Great Sand Dunes National Park

1 Fly London to Denver then drive to our first hotel, in Greeley. Our Colorado recce begins!

2 Pawnee National Grassland is a large remnant of the vast prairie that once extended throughout the American midwest. Appropriately, Prairie Falcons keep a sharp eye on the sweeping grasslands from eroded buttes. This dynamic empty quarter is home to several sought-after species such as Mountain Plover, Lark Bunting, Chestnut-collared and McCown's Longspur. Cute Prairie Dog colonies, or 'towns' also host adorable Burrowing Owls!

3 We have an early start to see one of the avian spectacles of the plains - the display rites of the Greater Prairie Chicken. Our chance to see some square-dancing in the first light. We then drive south via Bonny Lake checking for spring migrants and both Red-bellied and Red-headed Woodpeckers.



4-5 Continuing our crossing of the open grasslands, we venture south, stopping here and there with visits to lakes and oases, revealing birds such as White Pelicans or perhaps Mississippi Kites. We arrive at our next base at Springfield. Our final exploration of the prairie is around the Commanche National Grasslands, checking for Lesser Prairie Chicken and a host of raptors that are hunting across the plain - Red-tailed Hawks are joined by Ferruginous, Rough-legged and Swainson's Hawks.

6-7 We head west, birding all the way along the eastern base of the Rockies to Alamosa. The approach road to the stunning Great Sand Dunes National Park introduces us to the classic juniper and pinyon pine habitats of the west, perhaps some Juniper Titmouse and Pinyon Jays will perform or even a Lewis' Woodpecker. Yet birds will be small players on the vast stage of



"With a wide variety of habitats on offer, there is a rich spread of bird species and in spring especially, there are some star performers. Greater Prairie Chicken, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Greater Sage Grouse and endemic Gunnison Sage Grouse will be strutting their stuff on early morning display grounds, I can't wait!" Darren Rees



one of the highlights in the Colorado collection of beautiful panoramas, rimmed by the rugged peaks of the Sangre de Cristos, a sea of huge dunes seems stranded in the breath-taking wilderness.

8 We start our ascent into the high country, reaching the fir and spruce zone at scenic Monarch and Pondie Passes; time for birds such as Mountain Chickadee, Clark's Nutcracker and hopefully Three-toed Woodpecker, before the descent into Gunnison.

9-10 Another early start, to watch the spring display of the endemic Gunnison Sage Grouse that are gathered at lek sites throughout the high Gunnison Basin. At the dramatic Black Canyon National Park, the plateau is ruptured by a deep fracture, nearly 3000ft deep. We'll look for Rock Wren, Canyon Wren, Dusky Grouse and White-throated Swift amongst others, before heading to our next base at Grand Junction.

Our hotel is set deep in the arid canyonlands of the west, with a landscape recalling the grandeur of Arizona and Utah. Large mesas and buttes provide the impressive backdrop at the Colorado National Monument and we'll encounter Bewick's Wren, Black-tailed Hummingbird, Say's Phoebe, Ash-throated Flycatcher, cute Gambel's Quail and pretty Black-throated Gray Warblers.

11 We'll head back into the high Rockies and explore the passes at Vail and Loveland, looking for elusive inhabitants such as Horned Lark, American Pipit and hopefully White-tailed Ptarmigan. We'll stay at Silverthorne where bird-feeders give us the best chance of seeing more alpine



specialists - Rosy Finches. All three species occur here at this time of year.

12-13 Still in the splendour of the high Rockies, we'll explore further high-altitude environs at Rabbit Ears Pass. We'll search for Pine Grosbeak, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Spotted Sandpiper and Cassin's Finch, before dropping down to the resort at Steamboat Springs. In the early mornings around the town of Hayden, Greater Sage Grouse gather for their spring courtship, with groups of inflated males strutting and booming trying to woo the females. Elsewhere, high plains birds include Mountain Bluebird, Vesper Sparrow, Western Meadowlark and Northern Harriers.

14 Another dawn and another grouse species – this time Sharp-tailed Grouse will be quick-stepping around each other with a dance that inspired the local First Nation tribes.

15 With options for a last look at more Sage Grouse leks, we'll also bird the Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge for wildfowl such as Cinnamon Teal, American Wigeon and Redhead and Ruddy Duck, before crossing the Great Divide and our last hotel at Fort Collins.

16-17 There'll be plenty of time for some morning birding before our evening flight to the UK, arriving on Day 17.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Fly London to Denver then drive to Greeley - 1 night Doubletree Hilton
- Day 2 Explore Pawnee Grasslands on way to Wray - 1 night Cobblestone Inn
- Day 3 Early morning Prairie Chicken lek and on to Lamar - 1 night Holiday Inn
- Days 4-5 Birding enroute to Springfield. Explore Commanche Grasslands 2 nights motel in Springfield
- Days 6-7 Birding enroute to Alamosa. Birding and scenics at Great Sand Dunes NP 2 nights Best Western, Alamosa
- Day 8 Birding the high Monarch and Ponchie passes to Gunnison 1 night Inn at Tomichi, Gunnison
- Days 9-10 Early morning Sage Grouse, scenic Black Canyon and Colorado National Monuments 2 nights Hampton Inn, Grand Junction
- Day 11 High passes of Vail and Loveland 1 night Hampton Inn, Silverthorne
- Days 12-13 More mountain birding at Rabbit Ears Pass. Early morning Hayden for Sharp-tailed Grouse 2 nights Steamboat Grand, Steamboat
- Day 14 Birding Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge - 1 night inn in Walden
- Day 15 Early Greater Sage Grouse lek then over Rockies 1 night Best Western Kiva, Fort Collins
- Days 16-17 Final morning 'raptor alley' then travel to Denver for flight home, arrive UK on Day 17

THE DORDOGNE, FRANCE



"Black-winged Kite is a relative newcomer here, but it is now reliably found and what a bird!! We enjoyed breathtaking views of Hobby catching caddis flies over the river and other raptors including Short-toed Eagle and Honey Buzzard, while Black Kite were our constant companions!" Roy Atkins

Dates Sat 25 Apr - Sat 2 May 2020

Price £2,325

Deposit £450 Single Supp £350

Leaders Roy Atkins and David Simpson

Flights Flybe, scheduled
Outbound: Morning
Southampton-Bergerac
Inbound: Afternoon
Bergerac-Southampton
Other UK airports may be available,
train travel also possible, please ask
for details

Weather Can be sunny and warm (even hot)
but may be changeable, so best to wear
layers of outdoor clothing, 5°-20°C

Walking Easy, short walks generally less than
a mile and many shorter

Meals All included from lunch on Day 1
to lunch on Day 8
Lunches will be a mixture of picnics
and sit-in at local restaurants

Insects Unlikely to be a nuisance at this time
of year but bring repellent just in case

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Black-winged Kite	Rock Sparrow
Black Kite	Dartford Warbler
Hobby	Short-toed Treecreeper
Stone Curlew	Red-backed Shrike
Turtle Dove	orchids including
Golden Oriole	Lady Orchid
Hoopoe	Violet Limodore (if out)
Woodlark	Military Orchid
Bonelli's Warbler	Yellow Bee Orchid
Zitting Cisticola	butterflies including
Melodious Warbler	Scarce Swallowtail
Nightingale	Southern White Admiral
Firecrest	Berger's Clouded Yellow
Cirl Bunting	Red Underwing Skipper
Serin	Sooty Copper

A relaxed holiday enjoying the wildlife this delightful region has to offer - birds, lots of butterflies and perhaps twenty species of orchids, all in the beautiful limestone scenery.

- Relaxed birding - Firecrest, Cirl Bunting, Bonelli's Warbler, Golden Oriole and more
- Butterflies abound in this region, with many species possible
- Great diversity of orchids with 20 species likely, plus typically rich limestone flora
- Beautiful scenery, including limestone cliffs along the rivers and sandy plateaux
- Black-winged Kite, Hobby, Black Kite and maybe Short-toed Eagle and Honey Buzzard
- Astonishing prehistoric cave paintings and engravings at Rouffignac Cave
- Top local guide, David Simpson, with many years' experience of the area

We arrive in Bergerac and meet our local guide David before a relaxed start, perhaps with a boat ride on the River Dordogne where we may see Black Kites on their nests. Bergerac has a beautiful centre and we may enjoy a short walk amongst the old buildings and alleyways, before travelling to our hotel where we shall be based for the whole week. David's book, Crossbill Guide to the Wildlife of the Dordogne was recently published, so we are in good hands! Black Kites are constant companions, Nightingales will be singing and the local area has plenty of other wildlife to occupy us on our explorations.

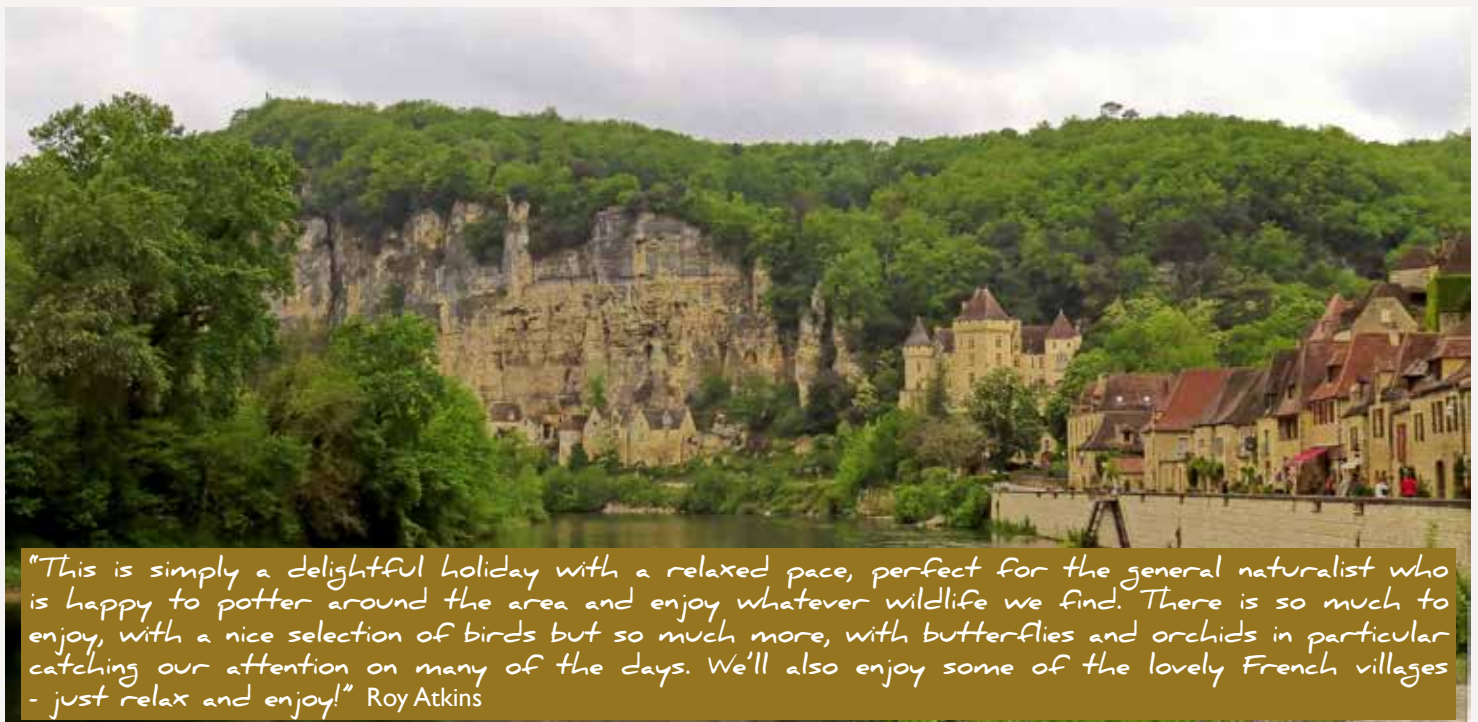
2-7 We shall spend the week exploring the area's beautiful scenery of well-wooded hills, with mixed farming and ancient villages and chateaux of honey-coloured stone that are scattered throughout the landscape. Dordogne's geology

is generally limestone, but with sandy plateaux providing a fascinating contrast. The majestic River Dordogne, with its cliffs and tributaries, is a major feature in a landscape that feels familiar to UK visitors, yet different too, with a fair sprinkling of exotic species due to the Mediterranean influence.

We'll start locally at Trémolat viewpoint, looking out over the River Dordogne, scanning the skies for Black Kite and other raptors. We may get wonderful close-up views of Hobby over the river. Fields and woodlands in this area produce a fine list of orchids such as Green-winged, Early Spider, Pyramidal, Burnt-tip, Fly, Woodcock and Lady Orchids everywhere!

We hope to find the first open flowers of the spectacular Violet Limodore along with a great selection of other flowers typical of the limestone





"This is simply a delightful holiday with a relaxed pace, perfect for the general naturalist who is happy to potter around the area and enjoy whatever wildlife we find. There is so much to enjoy, with a nice selection of birds but so much more, with butterflies and orchids in particular catching our attention on many of the days. We'll also enjoy some of the lovely French villages - just relax and enjoy!" Roy Atkins

slopes. We even have sites for Sombre Bee and Yellow Bee Orchids and two species of exotic looking Serapias or Tongue Orchids.

Other woodlands include Bessède Forest on a sandy plateau, where the purring of Turtle Doves may be our soundtrack and forestry activities have created heathland habitat suitable for Hen Harrier, Woodlark and Dartford Warbler. Crested Tit, Firecrest, Golden Oriole, Tree Pipit, Bonelli's Warbler and perhaps Black and Middle Spotted Woodpeckers are possible in the trees. We'll also visit Faux Plateau, where arable farmland can hold Crested Lark, Stone Curlew, Rock Sparrow, Hoopoe, Cirl and Corn Buntings, Melodious Warbler and shrikes.

There is one particular target bird here - Black-winged Kite - a wonderfully elegant raptor that has recently colonised this area. There are orchids here as well, with so many Lady Orchids and the chance of Military Orchid too, but the highlight may be the butterflies, as many species are found including Adonis Blue, Berger's Clouded Yellow, Map, Red Underwing Skipper, Glanville and Marsh Fritillaries, Common and Scarce Swallowtails and many more.

The many prehistoric sites in Dordogne give the area the nickname of the 'cradle of pre-history'. The famous Rouffignac Cave is well worth a visit and we shall take a tour via a small electric train into the cave system, stopping to make a short walk to view engravings and paintings dating back 14,000 years. Images are mainly of mammoth, but also bison, horse, ibex and woolly rhinoceros can be seen - beautiful works of art, the meaning of which we

can only guess at. We shall also see hibernating bear pits and bear scratching marks on the rock walls, all of which pre-date man's activities in the cave. The geological features seen in the cave system enroute to the paintings add even more interest to the visit. If time allows, we shall also visit a typical local market on our travels.

Peregrines, Ravens and Crag Martins nest on the cliffs along the Vézère valley, where Golden Oriole, Bonelli's Warbler, Short-toed Treecreeper and Firecrest are common in the adjacent woodlands. We'll visit the Causse de Daglan, an exceptional area for flora and fauna, as it lies on more ancient, white Jurassic limestone. Dry slopes here have a limestone flora rather different from the rest of the Dordogne and butterflies can be superb, with a good chance of Scarce Swallowtail, Provencal Short-tailed Blue, Red Underwing Skipper, Cleopatra, Sooty Copper, Duke-of-Burgundy, Glanville Fritillary and many more. Orchids can include Pyramidal, Lady, Man, Woodcock and Sword-leaved Helleborine.

There are wetlands to explore, with bird species including Great White Egret, Dipper and Fan-tailed Warbler. On one evening we'll also go out in search of Nightjars.

8 After taking our leave of this lovely area, we head to the airport and our flight back to the UK.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Fly to Bergerac and travel to our hotel overlooking the River Dordogne 7 nights at Les Magnolias with local restaurants
- Days 2-7 Exploration of the local area for birds, butterflies, orchids and other wildlife, with the opportunity to visit Rouffignac Cave to see prehistoric cave art
- Day 8 Travel to Bergerac for our flight back to the UK

David Simpson: Black-winged Kite, Queen of Spain Butterfly
Roy Atkins: River Dordogne, Rouffignac Cave Art, Lady Orchid
Kate McCusker: Melodious Warbler
Frank Jouandourdet: Golden Oriole



THE OUTER HEBRIDES



"There is nowhere quite like the Outer Hebrides in the UK. These stunning islands have a unique and breathtaking beauty all of their own. With miles of deserted shell sand beaches and incredible birdlife that has been lost from much of mainland Britain, it is like stepping back in time; on these islands on the edge. I can't wait to get back there again!" Craig Round

Dates Fri 1 - Sat 9 May 2020
Price £2,150
Deposit £400 Single Supp £250

Leaders Craig Round and Sally Nowell

Weather Though usually quite dry, these islands can experience all the seasons during one trip and can be windy (5°-20°C)

Walking Coastal walks on uneven terrain of up to 2 miles. Walking boots recommended with trainers suitable on some occasions. Collapsible/telescopic walking poles could be useful for this trip.

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 9

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:

Corncrake	Black Guillemot
Golden Eagle	Rock Dove
Hen Harrier	Eider
Merlin	Arctic Skua
Short-eared Owl	Great Skua
White-tailed Eagle	Pomarine Skua
Peregrine	Long-tailed Skua
Long-tailed Duck	Manx Shearwater
Great Northern Diver	Red-necked Phalarope
Red-throated Diver	Greylag Goose
Great Northern Diver	Greenshank
Whooper Swan	Golden Plover
Whimbrel	Otter
Purple Sandpiper	Grey Seal
Arctic Tern	Common Seal
Little Tern	Dolphins

Craig Round: Corncrake, Otter, Machair Flowers, Short-eared Owl

Kate Mennie: Balranald

James Glover: Red-throated Diver

Chris Brookings: Great Northern Diver

Corncrakes rasp from fields and Snipe drum overhead, in a watery landscape that the modern world has passed by, on these timeless low-lying islands at Britain's Atlantic edge.

- Successful Corncrake watching every time, on over 40 trips!
- Nesting waders in farmland that's vanished elsewhere
- Mile after mile of unspoilt white beaches and azure seas
- Wonderful for raptors, rare skuas and Short-eared Owl
- Summer plumage Great Northern and other divers
- White-tailed Eagle, Dotterel, Pomarine Skua and Otter
- With our own two expert guides to the Western Isles

1-2 We overnight on Friday in Inverness, to give us an early start for our journey down through the Great Glen and across the Isle of Skye to Uig, before catching a ferry to Lochmaddy on North Uist.

The crossing gives us a chance to do some sea-watching, with a great diversity of seabirds to be seen as we make our way across the Minch, including Arctic Tern, Puffin, Guillemot, Razorbill, Kittiwake, Gannet, Great and Arctic Skuas, Manx Shearwaters and various cetaceans, even before we reach the islands! Arriving on North Uist the bustle of modern life seems far away.

3-7 Our hotel on North Uist has glorious views out to the west and over Baile Sear 'machair' dunes and meadows - formed

by wind-blown shell sand and in the evenings the sunset from the hotel can be truly beautiful, with a backdrop chorus of 'drumming' displaying Snipe and calling Redshank overhead.

The Uists are one of the last strongholds for one of Britain's rarest breeding birds, the Corncrake and newly arrived territorial males can be seen before the vegetation grows tall, as they give their incredible rasping calls from open cover. Here too Twite feed, Skylark sing and Corn Bunting still give their jangling songs from rusty fences.

Cultivated 'machair' at Stilligarry and Rubha Ardvule, sown with oats and potatoes, is alive with waders in the spring, all vigorously displaying, including numerous Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Redshank, Ringed Plover and Dunlin. Beautiful freshwater





"Our visit is timed to catch spring migration at its peak, when huge numbers of birds are on the move and the beaches can be alive with thousands of restless waders, feeding up before the next leg of their epic migrations. If the winds are right, rare Long-tailed and Pomarine Skuas can be seen. Newly arrived Corncrakes 'crake' from nettle beds and iris patches and the islands are one of the best UK sites to see White-tailed and Golden Eagle, as well as Hen Harrier and Short-eared Owl. Last year we watched an adult White-tailed Eagle circling overhead, its tail glowing 'Daz-white' against the blue sky, as a Short-eared Owl 'wing-clapped' in display right above the enormous eagle!" Craig Round

lochs stud the landscape. All have beds of sedge and flowering bogbean and Flag Iris alive with nesting Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Wigeon, Curlew and Redshank. A few elusive Red-necked Phalaropes arrive in mid-May and birding is always full of surprises - perhaps a summering Whooper Swan, or displaying Ruff or Wood Sandpiper.

Around the beautiful, unspoilt shell sand beaches and tidal bays, Common, Arctic and Little Tern can be seen. They also hold large numbers of passage waders bound for the Arctic. Most are in stunning summer plumage at this time of year and include Whimbrel, Dunlin, Sanderling and Purple Sandpiper; whilst closer scrutiny may reveal a hidden gem such as Curlew Sandpiper or Little Stint!

On rocky headlands there are Black Guillemot, Shag and Rock Dove, with Red-breasted Merganser, Eider, Long-tailed Duck and Great Northern Diver offshore - the latter in breeding plumage. There's a healthy Otter population and we regularly see them, plus Grey and Common Seals and dolphin species.

Optional early morning sea-watching from Aird an Runair is renowned, but dependent on weather; for the passage of rare Pomarine and Long-tailed Skuas, plus Manx Shearwater, Gannet and Arctic and Great Skua. We have also recorded other unusual migrants including Snowy Owl, Great White Egret, Glaucous and Iceland Gull, Woodchat Shrike, Garganey, Golden Oriole,

Subalpine Warbler; Grey-headed Wagtail, Hoopoe and Dotterel - the latter almost annually.

Eastward, the land sweeps up from sea level to moors, peaty pools and soaring mountains. Red-throated Divers give their mournful wail and truly wild Greylag Geese nest at Loch Druidibeg, joined by Common Sandpipers and Greenshank.

The islanders stack peats to dry, where Dunlin and Golden Plover display alongside Red Grouse and Wheatear. Golden Eagle, Buzzard, Peregrine and Raven soar together over the dramatic hills. Hen Harrier, Merlin and Short-eared Owl commonly hunt the wild moors and we have a very good chance of seeing that most magnificent of predators, White-tailed Eagle.

8-9 Our last morning gives us a chance to once more experience the sights and sounds of the 'machair' and wonderful coastline, before catching a midday ferry back to Skye and making our way back to Inverness for our final overnight stay.

On Saturday morning, after breakfast, we say our goodbyes.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Meet in Inverness for overnight stay
1 night at Premier Inn
- Day 2** Travel down the Great Glen and across Skye before catching ferry to Lochmaddy and making the short journey to our hotel
6 nights at Temple View Hotel
- Days 3-7** Birdwatching and wildlife exploration around North and South Uist and Benbecula
- Day 8** After morning birdwatching, we catch a ferry from Lochmaddy to Uig, journey back across Skye and make our way back to Inverness
1 night at Premier Inn
- Day 9** After breakfast we say our goodbyes



AROUND THE CAIRNGORMS



"There is so much to explore in the Cairngorms National Park. The best wildlife in the country - raptors, Slavonian Grebe, grouse, Scottish Crossbill, Mountain Hare and some of the finest scenery in Europe. This will be a tour to remember."
Kate Mennie

Dates Wed 6 - Sat 16 May 2020
Price £2,350
Deposit £450 Single Supp £300

Leaders Kate Mennie and Adam Batty

Weather Varies from cold to warm and sunny (8°-20°C), with less rainfall than much of Scotland but snow possible in the mountains

Walking Most walks are 1-2 miles on wide sandy tracks, although there is the possibility of a forest walk of up to 4 miles

Our mountain walks are more steep and uneven, but low-level unguided alternatives are available.

Walking boots will be needed

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 11

Insects Biting insects may be encountered, so bring repellent

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite or private facilities

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see

Goldeneye	Cuckoo
Capercaillie	Short-eared Owl
Ptarmigan	Tree Pipit
Black Grouse	Grey Wagtail
Red-throated Diver	Dipper
Black-throated Diver	Redstart
Slavonian Grebe	Whinchat
Osprey	Ring Ouzel
White-tailed Eagle	Wood Warbler
Golden Eagle	Pied Flycatcher
Hen Harrier	Crested Tit
Peregrine	Raven
Merlin	Scottish Crossbill
Dotterel	Parrot Crossbill
Common Tern	Snow Bunting

This is the National Park at the best time of year - birds are singing and displaying, the landscape is shaking off its winter coat and the days are long

- Ancient pine forest for Crested Tit, crossbills and Capercaillie
- Golden and White-tailed Eagles, Peregrine and Osprey
- Otter, Beaver, Pine Marten and Badger all possible
- Famous Royal Deeside with Braemar, Ballater and Balmoral
- Mountain scenery for Dotterel, Ptarmigan, Ring Ouzel and Snow Bunting
- Divers and grebes in breeding finery
- Red and Black Grouse on the moors

1-4 We arrive at our country house hotel in time for dinner and a chance to go through the itinerary for the week ahead.

We'll explore the best habitats in the western part of the National Park for a range of species that make this area special. Osprey have returned from Africa; Goldeneye will be on lochs and Slavonian Grebe are newly returned in breeding finery. Red-throated and Black-throated Divers are here, while Common Sandpiper and Grey Wagtails are obvious around loch edges and riverbanks, where Dipper and Common Tern breed.

Red Deer and Feral Goats graze hillsides, above which we'll scan for Golden and White-tailed Eagles, Red Kite, Buzzard and Peregrine. If we are lucky a Goshawk or Hen Harrier may appear. Curlew and Oystercatcher are noisy and we'll



seek out Mountain Hare. We'll explore the upland landscapes for some of the hardest species in the UK. Ring Ouzel will be in their territory and Red Grouse should be obvious. Ptarmigan, Dotterel and Snow Bunting are all here in summer plumage.

In the pine forests of Strathspey a wealth of species make their home. Crested Tit, crossbills (including Scottish Crossbill), Redstart, Tree Pipit and Spotted Flycatcher are amongst the more common Siskins and Coal Tits. These forests are the last home of the Capercaillie, the world's largest grouse and we may get views of this, the 'horse of the woods'.

5-7 We leave Strathspey today and journey southeast over the mountains to Royal Deeside. Our journey takes us through expansive heather moorland and mixed forest. We'll stop along the way and scan for species such as Merlin,



"We shall be exploring each corner of the Cairngorms National Park - Speyside, Royal Deeside and Perthshire - each with their varied wildlife and stunning scenery; from the Caledonian Pine forest, Cairngorm mountains, moorlands of Deeside, the unexplored Angus Glens, to the lochs of Perthshire and a chance of Beaver!" Kate Mennie



Short-eared Owl, Raven and Skylark. The route takes us along the celebrated Snow Road as we travel to the eastern point of the National Park and our next hotel.

We'll have an exclusive visit for Black Grouse early in the morning and visit Loch Kinnord and the Burn o'Vat. The loch holds breeding Goldeneye and Great Crested Grebe, Reed Bunting and Sedge Warbler. Osprey fish and we could encounter Red Kite. The Burn o'Vat is a river-carved wonder; that will be a contender for place of the trip!

The River Dee rises high in the Cairngorms and we'll explore upstream, where Golden Plover and Redshank could be in riverside fields and we could encounter Parrot Crossbill. We'll explore the mountainous scenery to the south of Braemar leading to the ski area of Glen Shee. This is a good area for soaring raptors, with Buzzard, Golden Eagle, Goshawk and Peregrine all possible. The streams hold Dipper and Grey Wagtail, while Mountain Hare, Red Grouse and Ptarmigan rub shoulders on the higher slopes.

8-9 We travel south and east through spectacular Glen Clunie and Glen Shee and will stop at various sites on our way to Glen Isla, our base for the next two nights. We'll make an evening visit to a loch where Beavers have made their home. There is a chance of Otter and we'll look out for Great Crested Grebe, Goosander and Tufted Duck. Red Squirrels are common and along with regular woodland species there is a chance of Nuthatch.

Next day the dramatic Angus Glens will be our focus. This, the least visited area of the National Park, holds some fabulous wildlife. Common and Black-headed Gulls have noisy colonies, Golden Plover frequent the fields and the sound of Cuckoo is common. Woodlands hold Redstart, Tree Pipit, Lesser Redpoll and Common Crossbills.

Above us we'll look for Golden Eagle, Peregrine and Raven, while the wheezing of Twite may grab our attention. We'll look for a variety of birds including Marsh Harrier; a scarce species north of the Border. Shoveler, Reed Bunting, Sedge Warbler and Gadwall all breed here and we may hear the reeling of Grasshopper Warbler.

10-11 We leave the delights of Angus to complete our journey around the National Park. Our journey will take in some wonderful parts of Highland Perthshire; freshwater lochs where we'll scan for Red and Black-throated Divers and Ospreys may be searching for food; open moorland for the possibility of Merlin, Hen Harrier, Red Grouse and Stonechat; while around Schiehallion we may find Golden Eagle.

Back in Badenoch and Strathspey we'll have time to look out over Insh Marshes where Teal, Wigeon, Greylag Geese and possibly a late lingering Whooper Swan can be found. Hen Harrier hunt over the marsh and we'll hopefully find one before making our way back to our base for our final night. The next day we make our farewells after breakfast.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Arrive in the Cairngorms
4 nights Tigh na Sgiath
- Days 2-4 Exploration of the western National Park area
- Day 5 Travel over The Snow Road to the eastern Cairngorms
3 nights Loch Kinnord Hotel
- Days 6-7 Exploration of Royal Deeside
- Day 8 Travel south and east to Glenisla
2 nights Glenisla Hotel
- Day 9 Exploration of the Angus Glens
- Days 10-11 Travel back around the National Park to Strathspey

James Stevens: Dotterel
Simon Eaves: Scottish Crossbill
Mark Denman: Crested Tit
Duncan Macdonald: Beaver
Chris Piper: Black Grouse, **Mary Braddock:** Golden Eagle
Jane Hope: Cairngorms Landscape



CATALUNYA



"Catalunya is quite simply staggering for birds. We reached 199 species on our last tour, but there is so much more. Beautiful alpine flowers, butterflies galore and scenery that is spectacular."
Duncan Macdonald

Dates Sat 9 - Sat 16 May 2020
Price £1,995
Deposit £375 Single Supp £250

Leaders Duncan Macdonald and Ricard Gutiérrez
Flights EasyJet, scheduled, Speedy Boarding and extra legroom included
Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-Barcelona
Inbound: Afternoon, Barcelona-Gatwick
Weather It will be warm on the steppes and in the Ebro but we could encounter snow in the mountains, 0°-30°C
Walking Walks will be on good tracks and paths, with some steeper sections in the mountains
Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8
Insects Mosquitoes can be encountered in the Ebro Delta, especially in the evening, so bring repellent
Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite
Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Little Bittern	Iberian Green
Purple Heron	Woodpecker
Squacco Heron	Red-necked Nightjar
Lammergeier	Alpine Swift
Black Vulture	European Roller
Egyptian Vulture	Black Woodpecker
Short-toed Eagle	Thekla Lark
Lesser Kestrel	Lesser Short-toed Lark
Purple Swamphe	Red-rumped Swallow
Little Bustard	Black Wheatear
Black-winged Stilt	Black-eared Wheatear
Collared Pratincole	Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush
Audouin's Gull	Western Orphean Warbler
Whiskered Tern	Bearded Tit
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	Citril Finch
	"Witherby's" Reed Bunting

Catalunya is the richest region in Spain for birds. We take in the very best that this region has to offer, from the Pyrenees to the sea, in the company of Catalunya's leading ornithologist.

- The Pyrenees for Citril Finch, Lammergeier, Rock Thrush and spectacular scenery
- Steppes for six species of lark, Little Bustard and Stone Curlew
- The Ebro Delta for a mesmerising array of terns, ducks, herons, pratincoles and more
- Roller, Black Wheatear, Western Orphean Warbler and Eagle Owl
- Exclusive visit to a private vulture feeding site with all four species likely
- Fantastic Catalan hospitality and a trip to a pre-historic cave dwelling
- The expertise of Ricard Gutiérrez, creator of www.rarebirdspain.net

I We fly to Barcelona where we meet Ricard Gutiérrez, before journeying to the Pyrenees. Our base will be in the charming village of Llavorsí, surrounded by forest-clad mountains and straddling the beautiful river La Noguera Pallaresa. If time permits we shall explore the village for Crag Martin and Dipper.

2-3 This beautiful corner of the Pyrenees resembles the Swiss Alps and Llavorsí is perfectly located to explore the variety of habitats. We shall look for raptors here, with Lammergeier, Golden and Short-toed Eagles, Griffon Vulture and maybe Northern Goshawk. Honey Buzzards pass through, but also breed here.

Pine forests hold Black Woodpecker, Firecrest and Crested Tit, with Short-toed and Eurasian Treecreepers and this part of Catalunya has the



largest population of Tengmalm's Owl in Spain. Alpine meadows and rocky slopes are home to both Red-billed and Alpine Chough, Water Pipit, Citril Finch and Rock Bunting. The sunnier slopes hold Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Ring Ouzel and Red-backed Shrike. Broad-leafed woodlands hold Hawfinch and Bonelli's Warblers. Raptors overhead may include Egyptian Vulture, as we explore some of the more Mediterranean habitats for Rock Sparrow, Subalpine Warbler and Ortolan Bunting.

We shall visit a private vulture feeding station where hundreds of Griffon Vultures, along with Black and Egyptian Vultures and Lammergeier will astonish us.

4 Leaving the mountains we head south. We shall stop to look for raptors, Blue Rock Thrush and Alpine Swift at Collegats Gorge. The





"Hundreds of Griffon Vultures in the air with Lammergeiers and Black and Egyptian Vultures, is a sight that will never be forgotten. How about a soundscape of larks over the Lleida steppe, or the huge wealth of life in the Ebro Delta? I simply can't wait to return!" Duncan Macdonald

Pre-pyrenees mountains are dramatic and here we may find Woodlark, Cirl and Ortolan Buntings and Subalpine, Western Orphea and Dartford Warblers. This a great area for raptors, with Peregrine, Golden Eagle, Red Kite, Griffon Vulture and Lammergeier regularly seen.

Our destination is a rural village in the Garrigues county, set in between the oliveyards of the plains and the hilly mountains, home of Spotless Starlings, Short-toed Eagle, Cirl Buntings or Sardinian Warblers.

5-6 The steppes south and east of Lleida are the best areas in Catalunya for sought-after species such as Little Bustard and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Six species of lark are possible, with Montagu's Harrier and Stone Curlew, but the whole area is bird-rich with White Stork, Lesser Kestrel, Roller and Red-necked Nightjar. The last remaining Lesser Grey Shrikes in Spain breed here, but we shall need luck to find them.

The wetlands and lagoons of Utxesa and Ivars hold species such as Purple Heron, Little Bittern, Marsh Harrier, Water Rail, Great Reed Warbler, Bearded Tit and the odd Moustached Warbler. We shall look for the endemic sub-species of Reed Bunting - Witherby's Reed Bunting. At Ivars Lagoon, terns, herons, waders and species such as Penduline Tit and Melodious Warbler will keep us busy. The nearby cave of El Cogul with remarkable cave paintings, is likely to be a highlight, with Black Wheatear, Bee-eater, Blue Rock Thrush, Red-rumped Swallow and Tawny Pipit nearby.

We journey to the Ebro Delta on Day 6 where, if time allows, we shall visit a busy heronry.

7 The Ebro Delta is a birding paradise and internationally important. We shall make the most of our time here, looking for species such as Night Heron, Little Bittern, Glossy Ibis, Greater Flamingo and Squacco Heron. The delta holds one of the world's largest colonies of Audouin's Gull, as well as Yellow-legged and Slender-billed Gulls and terns including Gull-billed, Little, Common, Sandwich and the odd over-summering non-breeding Caspian.

Collared Pratincole breed and Great Reed, Reed and Savi's Warblers will serenade us from the reeds. Waders include local breeders such as Avocet, Black-winged Stilt and Kentish Plover and we may see the last northbound migrants, that could include Little Stint, plovers or shanks, but this is the time of year when anything could turn up and if it does, then we shall be perfectly placed to go for it!

8 We travel to Barcelona to catch our return flight to the UK, birding at Llobregat Delta if time allows.



Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-3** Fly to Barcelona, then a 3 hour transfer to Llavorsí. Birdwatching in the Pyrenees, taking in both National and Natural Parks of mountain, forest, lakes and meadows
3 nights Hotel Riberies
- Days 4-5** Transfer to Lleida. Birdwatching enroute in pre-Pyrenees mountains and gorges, plus steppe, grasslands and wetlands south of Lleida. Visit to cave with prehistoric paintings
2 nights La Garbinada Hotel
- Days 6-7** Birdwatching grasslands and wetlands to east of Lleida. Transfer to Ebro Delta for birdwatching to the north and south of the river
2 nights Delta Hotel
- Day 8** Birdwatching at Llobregat Delta if time allows. Transfer to Barcelona for flight to Gatwick

Steve Batt: Lammergeier, Red-necked Nightjar, Hoopoe, Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, Griffon Vulture, Black-winged Stilt



NORTH WALES



"Crossing the picturesque Menai Strait leads us to magical Anglesey and a change from the drama of Snowdonia. Busy with birds, the tern colonies of Cemlyn, the seabird cliffs of South Stack and the marshes and estuary of Malttraeth will keep us entertained!"
Simon Eaves

Dates Sat 9 - Sat 16 May 2020

Price £1,695

Deposit £300 Single Supp £250

Leaders Simon Eaves and Julian Sykes

Weather The weather will be mixed (10°-20°C). Expect sun and showers, with gusty wind on exposed headlands

Walking Varied, from wide forest tracks, to clifftop paths. Walking boots are recommended

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

Insects Not anticipated this early in the season

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Chough	Razorbill
Hen Harrier	Puffin
Peregrine	Great Egret
Red Kite	Avocet
Osprey	Black-tailed Godwit
Arctic Tern	Dipper
Black Grouse	Lesser Whitethroat
Redstart	Whinchat
Pied Flycatcher	Black Guillemot
Wood Warbler	Red Squirrel
Ring Ouzel	
Guillemot	

Come and explore the rugged mountains, wild moorlands, 'hanging oak' woods and busy seabird colonies of North Wales - all from our base in beautiful Snowdonia

- Anglesey for tern colonies, plus South Stack for Choughs, Puffins and seabirds
- Welsh 'hanging oaks' at Ynys-hir for Wood Warbler, Redstart and Pied Flycatcher
- Based in beautiful Snowdonia National Park
- Classic upland species: Dipper, Ring Ouzel, Peregrine, Wheatear
- Traditional stronghold of Red Kites - plus new kids on the block - Ospreys!
- Early start for some of UK's biggest Black Grouse leks
- Chance of sky-dancing Hen Harriers on the Ruabon Moors

We meet at our hotel in Betws-y-Coed, in the heart of Snowdonia National Park, where Dipper, Grey Wagtail, Goosander and Common Sandpiper can be seen on the river just over the road. The scenic woodland walks close by may yield Treecreeper, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Jay, Nuthatch and assorted tits. Snowdonia is an ancient land of wild mountains and wooded valleys; of rocky cwms and tumbling streams, with a bird list that spans woodland and montane species.

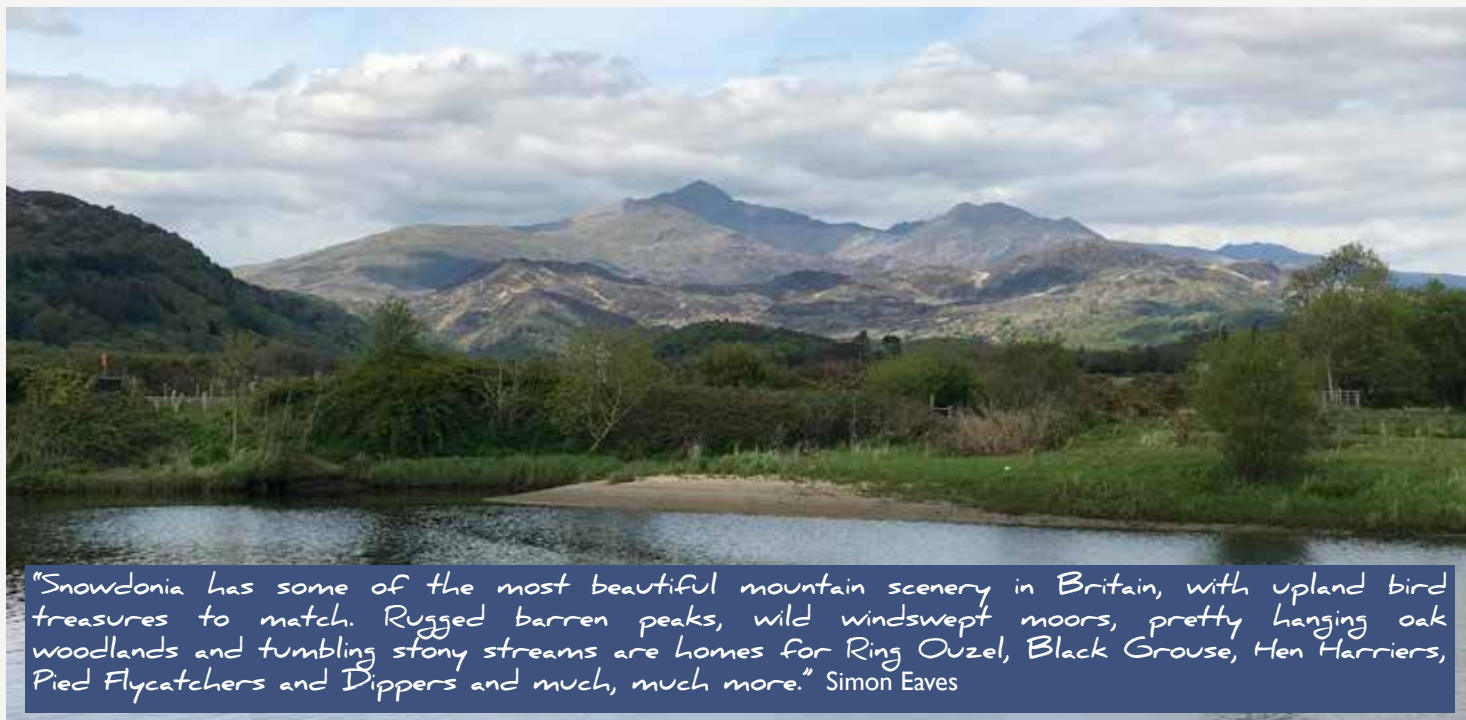
2-7 We may start our exploration of North Wales on Anglesey. The RSPB's South Stack Reserve offers spectacular cliff scenery and we'll get great views of the seabird colonies, with masses of Guillemots and Razorbills and a few delightful Puffins, as well as Fulmar, Peregrines,

Ravens and sought-after Chough. Adders are also a possibility here, as we enjoy the coastal flowers such as Thrift, Sea Campion and the lovely Spring Squill.

Elsewhere on Anglesey, at Cemlyn Bay we'll enjoy the comings and goings of the tern colonies, busy with Sandwich, Common and Arctic Terns - Roseate is a rare bird here now, but you never know your luck - we've also seen Mediterranean Gulls on our visits. We'll follow in the footsteps of famous artist Charles Tunnicliffe at the delightful Cefni estuary, looking for Whimbrel and Black-tailed Godwits and at nearby Newborough Warren we hope to see cheeky Red Squirrels.

One day will be spent on the Dee Estuary, one of the UK's premier birding locations for wetland and shorebirds and we'll spend time exploring its





"Snowdonia has some of the most beautiful mountain scenery in Britain, with upland bird treasures to match. Rugged barren peaks, wild windswept moors, pretty hanging oak woodlands and tumbling stony streams are homes for Ring Ouzel, Black Grouse, Hen Harriers, Pied Flycatchers and Dippers and much, much more." Simon Eaves

marshes, busy with Avocet, Lapwing and Redshank, plus wildfowl such as Shoveler, Teal and Gadwall. In May we've been lucky with Garganey, Spoonbill and Wood Sandpiper and Great Egrets seem to be making this their home these days. On our round-up of the north shore we'll also visit Gronant beach, the site of Wales' only Little Tern colony.

We'll need an early morning start when we drive to the Ruabon Moors to watch Black Grouse at their lek. The males will be vying with each other in the hope of attracting the females, at some of the biggest leks in the UK. These and other moors such as Migneint, also support populations of Red Grouse, Curlew, Skylark, Wheatear, Stonechat and Merlin. Perhaps our greatest prize though, will be a glimpse of Hen Harriers, that still cling on as a rare breeder in Wales and we shall spend time scanning hunting areas and if very lucky, may even see them performing their spectacular sky-dancing.

The rugged slopes of the Ogwen valley and Aber Falls are home to Ring Ouzels, as well as rare breeding Twite and at the Conwy estuary, there are more wetland birds to be found, so expect Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Shelduck and Red-breasted Merganser amongst many others. Nearby, the distinctive headland of the Great Orme is always worth a visit for its resident Choughs (and feral goats) and seabird ledges and there's always the possibility of an unusual migrant – maybe a Whinchat or Yellow Wagtail?

We'll have a long day to the southern perimeter of Snowdonia and the Dyfi estuary. The RSPB's Ynys-hir Reserve has a picturesque mix of woodland and saltmarsh, with birds such as Pied Flycatcher, Wood Warbler and Redstart, as well as waders and wildfowl including Little Egret, Lapwing, Snipe, Redshank and Teal.

Ospreys now breed nearby too, a wonderful addition to the list of birds of prey, that includes Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel and for many people the most Welsh of birds, the Red Kite. The Kite's tale is one of conservation success, with re-introduced birds now seen across the UK. However, we'll take time to look for some of the original population that have always called Mid-Wales their home. What better sight than this elegant red-tailed raptor soaring over the 'hanging oaks' of Wales.

8 After breakfast we bid our fond farewells to this delightful area.



Outline Itinerary

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Day 1 | Arrive Betws-y-Coed.
7 nights at The Royal Oak Hotel |
| Days 2-7 | An exploration of North Wales to include South Stack and Newbrough on Anglesey, the Dee Estuary and its marshes, Conwy valley and estuary, moors of north east Wales, plus the RSPB's Ynys-hir Reserve |
| Day 8 | Depart after breakfast |

Chris Piper: Black Grouse, Snowdonia
Mary Braddock: Hen Harrier
Julian Sykes: Pied Flycatcher
Kathy Sharman: Razorbill
Steve Cullum: Red Kite, Dipper
Sally Nowell: Redstart





"This is a relaxed paced trip with a few key birds, but plenty of time to find them - which allows more time to enjoy the wonderful scenery, the flowers, butterflies and anything else we happen to come across - it is a beautiful island, so we don't want to rush it!" Roy Atkins

Dates	Sun 10 - Sun 17 May 2020
Price	£2,765
Deposit	£535 Single Supp £450
Leaders	Roy and Jane Atkins
Flights	Air Corsica, scheduled Outbound: Afternoon, Gatwick-Bastia Inbound: Morning, Bastia-Gatwick
Weather	Unpredictable and though probably pleasant and sunny, showers are likely and these can be heavy or even prolonged. Strong winds are possible and it will be colder in the mountains, especially early morning and in the evening. Warmer lower down and on the coast, 5°- 25°C
Walking	Generally short distances on good level tracks, but we may have some longer walks up to a mile and in the hills these may be on slopes - all taken at a slow pace
Meals	All included from lunch on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8
Insects	There may be a few mosquitoes so bring repellent
Accom	Twin and single rooms all ensuite
Group	12

Just some of what we hope to see:	
Corsican Nuthatch	Alpine Swift
Corsican Finch	Crossbill (Corsican race)
Marmora's Warbler	Red-crested Pochard
Moltoni's Warbler	Squacco Heron
Mediterranean Flycatcher	Alpine Chough
Scopoli's Shearwater	Bee-eater
Yelkouan Shearwater	Crag Martin
Lammergeier	Sardinian Warbler
Golden Eagle	Firecrest
Hobby	Cirl Bunting
Honey Buzzard	Tawny Pipit
Audouin's Gull	Water Pipit
Blue Rock Thrush	Woodlark
Woodchat Shrike	orchids
(badius race)	migrants

We search for endemic Corsican Nuthatch, Corsican Finch and other island specialities as we enjoy the beautiful scenery - with the chance of migrants, endemic butterflies and beautiful flowers.

- Corsican Nuthatch and Corsican Finch in beautiful mountain valleys
- Stunning mountain scenery and beautiful coastline
- Marmora's and Moltoni's Warbler, Italian Sparrow and Mediterranean Flycatcher
- Orchids and other beautiful flowers, it's not known as the 'Scented Isle' for nothing!
- Scopoli's and Yelkouan Shearwaters from headlands
- Bee-eater, Woodlark, Hobby, Cirl Bunting, Audouin's Gull, Alpine Chough and more
- Chance of migrants including warblers, flycatchers, chats and shrikes

Our flight takes us to Bastia, from where we'll enjoy our first taste of the island as we travel to our hotel in the Restonica Valley. It is a beautiful, mountainous island with a short list of exciting birds including endemics, resident species and migrants. This is the perfect place to be based as we explore the more mountainous interior of the island, with stands of Corsican Pine nearby to search for Corsican Nuthatches and a rushing river with Dippers and Grey Wagtails beside the hotel.

2-4 From our base near the centre of the island we'll explore the rugged mountains and valleys, taking winding roads that weave through spectacular scenery with flowers everywhere! We'll travel into the Restonica and Asco Valleys - both great sites to start our search for the most sought-after species on the island - Corsican Nuthatch. Found in the higher Corsican Pines, they can be elusive, but we'll surely find one

eventually and can look out for plenty of other species whilst we explore. This area has Corsican Finch and a host of higher altitude species such as Alpine Chough, Alpine Swift, Crag Martin, Golden Eagle, Water Pipit, Blue Rock Thrush, Firecrest, Cirl Bunting, Red Kite and with luck even Lammergeier is possible - though much harder to find these days as numbers have declined dramatically. The roads are winding, but will be worth it for the birds and superb views.

If the weather is sunny we hope for butterflies and there are good chances of some endemic species such as Corsican Swallowtail, Corsican Wall Brown and Corsican Dappled White around the beautiful flowers. Delightful Tyrrhenian Wall Lizards with blue spots and tails scurry over the rocks and we'll keep an eye open for elusive Mouflon. Some of the more common birds also have endemic Corsican races - Jay, Coal Tit, Crossbill and Great Spotted Woodpecker and birds such as Long-tailed Tit and





"The species list is not big here but there are some very special birds. The cute little Corsican Nuthatch behaves more like a Coal Tit than a nuthatch and the Corsican Finches are gorgeous. I was amazed to get such close views of Scopoli's Shearwater you could see the diagnostic underwing marking from land!" Roy Atkins

Goldfinch look quite different to ours being local race birds too. We hope to find Woodchat Shrike of the race badius, with less white in the wings and a thicker bill, a potential future split and Tawny Pipit, Woodlark and Cirl Buntings are likely in the lower valleys, with the chance of migrants too.

5-7 We move on to our second hotel, down by the coast and closer to the best wetland sites and the Cap Corse Peninsula. Here we can explore different habitats, including the Etang de Biguglia, where we'll search for Red-crested Pochard, Audouin's Gull, herons and egrets including with luck, Squacco and Purple Heron and Great Egret. We may find Greater Flamingos on coastal lakes, migrant Hobbies and Red-footed Falcon. Scrubby areas around the coast hold Zitting Cisticola and may have migrants such as Whinchat and Wheatear. We'll be scolded by Sardinian Warblers and serenaded by Nightingales as we watch Bee-eaters and Red Kites.

There are flowers everywhere including various orchids, with two or more species of Tongue Orchid possible, including the spectacular Heart-flowered Tongue Orchid and perhaps flowering Violet Limodore.

Heading out to the end of Cap Corse we pass through little villages as we travel and may stop for coffee with Spotless Starling, masses of Swifts overhead and Italian Sparrows, now considered a true species in their own right. We'll also look out for Mediterranean Flycatcher - the new split from Spotted Flycatcher, with a less streaked plumage and if there are migrants passing through we may

be able to compare them with migrant Spotted Flycatchers.

As migrants work their way north before leaving the island, they can be funnelled down valleys towards the tip of Cap Corse and any suitable woodland or scrub can have interesting birds if the weather is right. Yellow Wagtails of various races, shrikes, chats and flycatchers are all possible, as well as scarcer warblers such as Icterine and Wood Warbler. There are also the two resident 'scrubby' warblers - the near endemic Marmora's and Moltoni's. The first is now split from the Balearic Warbler of Mallorca and Moltoni's is split from Subalpine Warbler, with a very limited range indeed.

From the end of the Cap we'll gaze out to sea, where amongst the many Yellow-legged Gulls we hope for passing shearwaters, with both Scopoli's and Yelkouan Shearwaters likely. Suitable weather may bring flocks of migrating Honey Buzzards or even waders and egrets.

8 We travel to the airport for our flight back to the UK.



Outline Itinerary

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Day 1 | Fly from London to Bastia then drive to our hotel in the Restonica Valley
4 nights Hotel Arena |
| Days 2-4 | Exploration of the mountainous centre of the island and if weather is poor perhaps some of the coast too |
| Days 5-7 | Move to our lovely hotel on Cap Corse, to explore the wetlands and northern peninsula
3 nights at Hotel Castel Brando |
| Day 8 | Flight back from Bastia to London |

Mary Braddock: Corsican Nuthatch
Roy Atkins: Asco Valley, Corsican Finch, Moltoni's Warbler, Heart-flowered Serapias, Audouin's Gull, Tyrrhenian Wall Lizard



SPRING BIRDS IN THE HIGHLANDS



"This is Speyside at its most alive! Crested Tits nesting, crossbills in family groups, Redstarts, Tree Pipits and Wood Warblers are all back and Ospreys are well on their way to producing the next generation. It is utterly fabulous."
Adam Batty

Dates Sat 23 - Sat 30 May 2020
Price £1,455
Deposit £275 Single Supp £175

Leader Adam Batty

Weather Varies from cold to warm and sunny (8°-20°C), with less rainfall than much of Scotland but snow possible in the mountains

Walking Most walks are 1-2 miles on wide sandy tracks, although there is the possibility of a forest walk of up to 4 miles

Our Cairngorm walk is more steep and uneven, but low-level unguided alternatives are available. Walking boots will be needed and walking poles may be helpful

Boat Trip Our boat trip to Handa is over sheltered waters and lasts about 15 minutes

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

Insects In May, biting midges occasionally occur on sheltered loch shores

Accom Double, twin and single ensuite rooms in a small hotel on the edge of the pine forest and close to the River Spey

Group 7

Just some of what we hope to see:

Black-throated Diver	Crested Tit
Slavonian Grebe	Scottish Crossbill
Fulmar	Dunlin
Golden Eagle	Snipe
Osprey	Curlew
Ptarmigan	Redshank
Black Grouse	Arctic Skua
Goldeneye	Great Skua
Red-breasted Merganser	Black Guillemot
Capercaillie	Pine Marten
Dotterel	Badger
Puffin	Common Seal

Our classic signature week, perfected over 25 years, with all Speyside's special birds at their most active, including Capercaillie and Black Grouse - and time for great mammals too.

- Bird specialties of the ancient Pine Forest of the Highlands of Scotland
- A west coast trip to fabulous Handa Island in north-west Sutherland
- The Moray Firth, alive with seaduck, terns and migrants
- Divers and grebes in spectacular breeding plumage
- A day for mountain birds in the splendour of the Cairngorms
- An evening for Pine Martens and Badgers too
- Come by train or plane and enjoy the wonders of the Cairngorms National Park

Dinner together on Saturday evening starts the holiday, with plenty of time to discuss the coming days.

2-7 We may start the week with walks in the local area, perhaps along the river, or around beautiful lochans surrounded by forest nearby. The RSPB have extensive Reserves here and we'll visit the ancient pines of Abernethy Forest, a remnant of the 'Great Wood of Caledon', in search of dainty Crested Tits and parties of Scottish Crossbill.

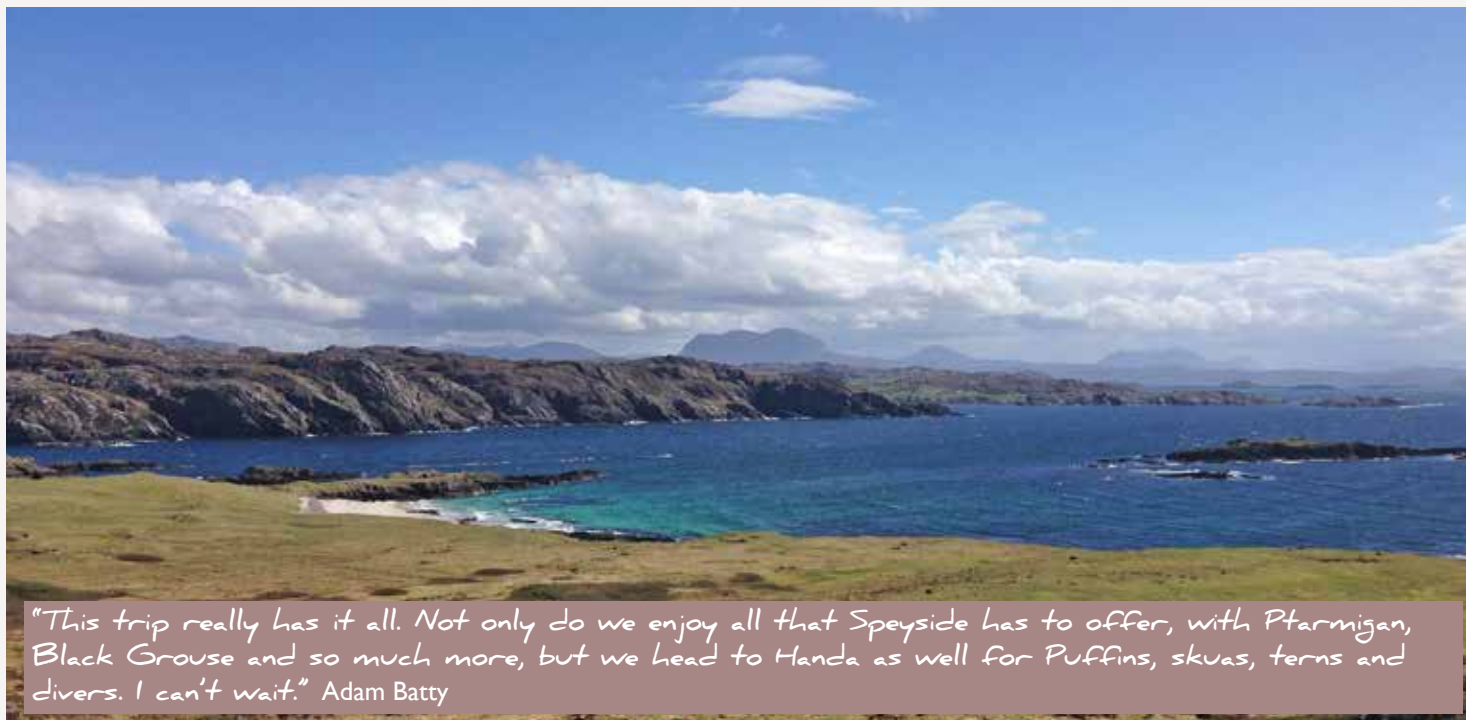
We'll need to check them carefully, as both Common and Parrot Crossbills have taken up residence in the area. We'll keep alert for wary Capercaillie feeding in the shadows - a clatter of wings often the first sign of their presence. Red Squirrels are still abundant in the forest with Redstart, Siskin, Tree Pipit and countless Willow

Warblers singing in the clearings. We'll also rise early to see Black Grouse as they 'bubble and coo' at dawn - a fabulous spectacle.

On one evening we'll look for Pine Marten and Badger, with Woodcock roding over the trees. Sparkling forest lochans hold exquisitely plumed Slavonian Grebe - a wonderful chance to see them in their breeding finery, whilst Ospreys will be nesting locally in forests and glens. Recently White-tailed Eagles have begun to nest and we'll look for these and Golden Eagles too.

The arctic-tundra plateau of the Cairngorms is unique in Britain and, weather permitting, we'll head into the hills to seek out camouflaged Ptarmigan as they feed quietly amongst the boulders. We may encounter beautiful Dotterel too and there is always a chance of Snow Bunting.





"This trip really has it all. Not only do we enjoy all that Speyside has to offer, with Ptarmigan, Black Grouse and so much more, but we head to Handa as well for Puffins, skuas, terns and divers. I can't wait." Adam Batty

The River Spey winds its way through the strath, with nesting Dipper, Grey Wagtail, Goosander and noisy Common Sandpiper, while Curlew, Redshank, Lapwing, Oystercatcher and Snipe display over marshes in river valleys and around Insh, Europe's largest inland fen and at Lochindorb, with its impressive castle rising on an island from the middle of the loch.

On tranquil waters beautiful Red-throated Divers give their haunting wail and we'll take you to remote glens where Golden Eagle hunt Mountain Hares. We'll search for Raven, Ring Ouzel and Peregrine, with Red Deer on the skyline and even Wild Goats. We may find Hen Harrier, Merlin or Short-eared Owl hunting the open moorland, where we'll hear cackling Red Grouse and the mournful piping of Golden Plover.

Along the coast and tidal bays of the Moray Firth a few Long-tailed Duck and Common or Velvet Scoter may linger with the local Eider. The shingle shores are busy with Arctic, Common and Sandwich Tern and we hope to see fishing Ospreys and perhaps even a Great Northern Diver offshore.

Red Kite circle lazily above the rolling farmland and we'll search out some of the farmland birds found there, such as Tree Sparrow, Corn Bunting and Yellowhammer. We shall look out for our resident Bottlenose Dolphins, which may come remarkably close to shore and harbour.

We'll enjoy a wonderful day travelling through stunning scenery on our way to the far north west of the Scottish Highlands on our day visit to Handa

Island. We'll pause to look for Black-throated Diver enroute and there is always the chance of Golden Eagle or perhaps a Greenshank, as a small number breed this far north.

Black Guillemots bob on the water close to the boat as we make our ten minute crossing, then we walk across the island, enjoying fantastic views of nesting Great and Arctic Skuas as we go - the Arctic Skuas often chasing each other in their exhilarating display.

Gannets pass by offshore and we'll look out for Rock Dove, Raven and Twite as well. On the far side of the island, towering cliffs and stacks host a seabird city, with thousands of Guillemots and smaller numbers of Razorbills, Kittiwakes and Fulmars. A few delightful Puffins nest on top of The Stack - but don't forget to look back towards the mainland where the scenery ... well it's simply breathtaking!

8 On Saturday after breakfast we say our farewells.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive in Granttown on Spey in time for dinner and a chat about our plans for the coming week.
7 nights at Kinross House Hotel
- Days 2-7** Wildlife and birdwatching exploration including Abernethy Forest, Dava Moor, the Cairngorms, the Moray Firth and West Coast
- Day 8** After breakfast we say our farewells

John Grierson: Osprey
Craig Round: View from Handa
Mary Braddock: Golden Eagle
Jane Hope: Black Grouse, Crested Tit
Mike Pearcey: Great Skua
Simon Eaves: Crossbill



WILD HEBRIDES



"The Western Isles are one of the nicest places for wildlife in Europe - on the very edge - a migration flyway that brings daily surprises! The pattern of land use, managed in a traditional way in harmony with nature, is rich in birds, wild flowers and rare bees."
Stuart Housden OBE

Dates Sat 23 May - Tue 2 Jun 2020

Price £2,845

Deposit £500 Single Supp £350

Leaders Stuart Housden OBE and Julian Sykes

Weather Though usually quite dry, these islands can experience all the seasons during one trip and can be windy (5°-20°C)

Walking Coastal walks on uneven terrain of up to three miles - walking boots recommended, but trainers or even sandals suitable on some occasions. Collapsible/telescopic walking poles could be useful for this trip

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 11

Insects Biting insects unlikely to be a problem

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 11

Just some of what we hope to see:

Corncrake	Arctic Tern
Red-necked Phalarope	Arctic Skua
Golden Eagle	Great Skua
Hen Harrier	Pomarine Skua
Merlin	Long-tailed Skua
Short-eared Owl	Manx Shearwater
White-tailed Eagle	Black Guillemot
Great Northern Diver	Puffin
Black-throated Diver	Twite
Red-throated Diver	Golden Plover
Whimbrel	Hebridean Orchid
Little Tern	Otter

This holiday has been designed by Stuart, who spent 23 years as Director of RSPB Scotland. His extensive knowledge of these islands and understanding of the conservation stories here, is exceptional.

- We visit North and South Uist, Benbecula, Harris, Lewis and the island of Vallay
- A chartered boat trip to the Shiant, Puffins galore affording very close viewing
- Corncrake and Red-necked Phalarope - excellent chance of these elusive birds
- Peak time for skua and wader migration with Long-tailed and Pomarine possible
- Otters, three species of diver, Hen Harrier and Golden and White-tailed Eagles
- Beautiful machair flora, including the endemic Hebridean Orchid
- Standing stones of Callanish, Dun Carloway Broch and Flora MacDonald's croft

1-2 We overnight in Inverness, to give us an early start for our journey through the Great Glen and across the Isle of Skye to Uig and the ferry to Lochmaddy on North Uist. Arctic Tern, Puffin, Guillemot, Razorbill, Kittiwake, Gannet, Great and Arctic Skuas, Manx Shearwater and with luck even cetaceans are possible from the ferry. Arriving on North Uist the bustle of modern life seems far behind us as we head to our hotel.

3-6 Stuart has visited these islands many times in his role with RSPB Scotland and we are thrilled to have him lead our Wild Hebrides trip - his expert knowledge and experience of the islands and their conservation issues adding enormously to the holiday. Our exploration will start in the south with

shallow lochs, rocky headlands, dunes and our first machair - a beautiful habitat with stunning flora including the endemic Hebridean Orchid, with purple flowers and heavily blotched purple leaves. The wealth of flowers may attract Moss Carder and Great Yellow Bumble Bee, a rare species confined to the very north and west of Scotland.

Migration is still in full swing and late parties of Whimbrel or Black-tailed Godwits enroute to Iceland can drop in anywhere, while tidal strands have summer plumaged Sanderling and Turnstones. At 'stinky bay', with rotting seaweed on the foreshore, many waders occur and divers and seaduck are sometimes just offshore. We shall scan for Red-necked Phalarope at a reliable site, while keeping an eye open for Hen Harrier and Golden Eagle, with Otter possible whenever





"We shall visit a moorland road where Short-eared Owls can be seen quartering the ground and sometimes perching on posts close by. Overhead we shall scan for eagles and other raptors. Add to that the history, stunning seabird colonies of The Shiant's and white sands and there is nowhere else in the UK that compares." Stuart Housden OBE

we are on the coast. Flora MacDonald was born on South Uist and we'll view her croft.

The RSPB Reserve at Balranald provides a chance of Corncrake calling from the iris beds and we'll work on getting good views. Twite feed, Skylark sing overhead, Corn Bunting still give their jangling song and summer plumage waders are on the beach. Sea-watching from Aird an Runair is renowned but weather dependent, so north-westerlies may bring passage skuas, including rare Pomarine and Long-tailed amongst the more common Arctic and Great Skuas. Breeding waders are everywhere including Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Snipe, Ringed Plover and Dunlin.

We shall visit the remote, uninhabited island of Vallay using a 4x4 vehicle to cross the dazzling 1km of white strand. This is a gem of a place and a rare opportunity not offered on other tours. Nesting Corncrake, waders and terns are here on the organic croft managed in partnership with the RSPB. Merlin and Peregrine are occasionally seen and wild Rock Doves frequent the ploughed fields. Impressive ruined houses show how profitable local farming and seaweed production was in the early 19th century.

7-9 We head, via Berneray, to the ferry across to Harris with its rugged and forbidding mountains. A healthy population of Golden Eagle means we'll keep our eyes peeled wherever we travel. We'll visit Rodal, and its beautiful 15th century church built for the chiefs of Clan Macleod. It is well preserved, with fine

statues and we'll check the area for migrants, while the machair at Northton can be alive with waders and has nesting Little Terns. This is one of the last areas for Corncrake on Harris and they often call from crofters' gardens!

We shall enjoy an exclusive boat trip to the Shiant Isles, eight miles off Harris in the middle of the Minch. This truly spectacular experience will be an adventure to remember! The islands support over 100,000 pairs of seabirds, including 10% of all the UK's Puffins! We won't land on these uninhabited islands but we'll get close views of the birds and may see Manx Shearwaters, seals and perhaps dolphins. There were two White-tailed Eagle present in 2019! We shall get stunningly close to rafts of Puffins and other auks allowing fantastic photography opportunities.

Harris is conjoined to Lewis, but the habitat is very different and we'll drive up through moorland to the Standing Stones of Callanish - world famous and a stunning example of a circle and cruciform arrangement, with almost 50 standing stones. If time permits we may also visit Dun Carloway, one of the best preserved iron age brochs in Scotland and Loch na Muilne RSPB Reserve nearby. On our final full day we shall explore the mountains in search of eagle, and more!

10-11 We say goodbye to these wonderful islands and make our way back across the Minch, then on to Inverness, birding as we go, for our last night together before going our separate ways.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Meet up in Inverness for overnight stay - 1 night Premier Inn
- Day 2** Travel down the Great Glen and across Skye, before catching ferry to Lochmaddy and making the short journey to our hotel. 5 nights at Templeview Hotel
- Days 3-6** Birdwatching, botany and wildlife exploration of North and South Uist, Benbecula and visit to the small island of Vallay, in search of Corncrake, waders, seabirds and raptors
- Days 7-9** Take ferry to Harris and Lewis birding these two very different islands. We shall also take a boat trip to the Shiant Isles and visit Callanish Standing Stones and Dun Carloway Broch 3 nights Hotel Hebrides in Tarbert
- Day 10** Travel back to Inverness 1 night Premier Inn
- Day 11** Depart after breakfast

Craig Round: Pomarine Skua, Whimbrel, Red-necked Phalarope
Kate Mennie: Berneray
James Glover: Puffin
Richard Stacey: Short-eared Owl
Jane Hope: White-tailed Eagle



SUTHERLAND AND SPEYSIDE



"Handa island is nearly always several people's favourite place on a Speyside trip, it is just a stunning place to visit and the 'bird cities' are a sight and sound to behold. All this, coupled with fabulous scenery, make this a day not to be forgotten."
Sally Nowell

Dates Sat 23 May - Tue 2 Jun 2020

Price £2,350

Deposit £450 Single Supp £150

Leaders Sally Nowell and Kate Mennie

Weather Mixture of sun and showers (10°-25°C) although it can be cooler in the mountains and on the boat crossing

Walking Most walks are 1-2 miles on wide, sandy tracks, although there is the possibility of a forest walk of up to 4 miles

Our Cairngorms walk is more steep and uneven but low-level unguided alternatives are available. Walking boots will be needed on the holiday and walking poles will be useful

Boat trip Our boat trip to Handa Island is over sheltered waters and lasts 15 mins

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 11

Insects Biting insects may be encountered, so bring repellent

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite or private facilities

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see

Great Northern Diver	Osprey
Red-throated Diver	Red Kite
Capercaillie	Merlin
Black Grouse	Peregrine
Slavonian Grebe	Guillemot
Golden Eagle	Razorbill
White-tailed Eagle	Fulmar
Puffin	Arctic Skua
Dotterel	Great Skua
Crested Tit	Black Guillemot
Scottish Crossbill	Pine Marten
Snow Bunting	Badger

To Handa Island and back - Speyside's speciality birds and mammals, plus spectacular seabird colonies in the north-west, all in Scotland's most incredible land and seascapes

- Fabulous long summer days when the sun barely sets
- Our favourite Speyside days, including the Scottish specialities
- Four days of stunning Sutherland birds and landscapes
- A full day on spectacular Handa Island in north-west Sutherland
- Durness and Balnakeil Bay on the northern edge of Scotland
- White-tailed Eagle, Greenshank and Rock Dove
- Black and Red Grouse, Ptarmigan and Dotterel

I We meet at our country house hotel in time for dinner and a chance to chat about the coming days.

2-5 We'll start with a visit to a local glen or to the beautiful Caledonian Pine Forest. Here, Crested Tit and Scottish Crossbill are amongst the breeding birds, Red Squirrels scamper through the branches and we'll look for elusive Capercaillie and go out early for Black Grouse.

Nearby lochans hold beautiful Slavonian Grebes and we'll visit nesting Osprey. We have our own places to find camouflaged Mountain Hare, with huge herds of Red Deer watching us from the skyline. Golden Eagle and Raven soar above the mountain slopes and Peregrine hunt in the valley, where Oystercatcher and Curlew have chicks and Common Gull nest on the shingle.



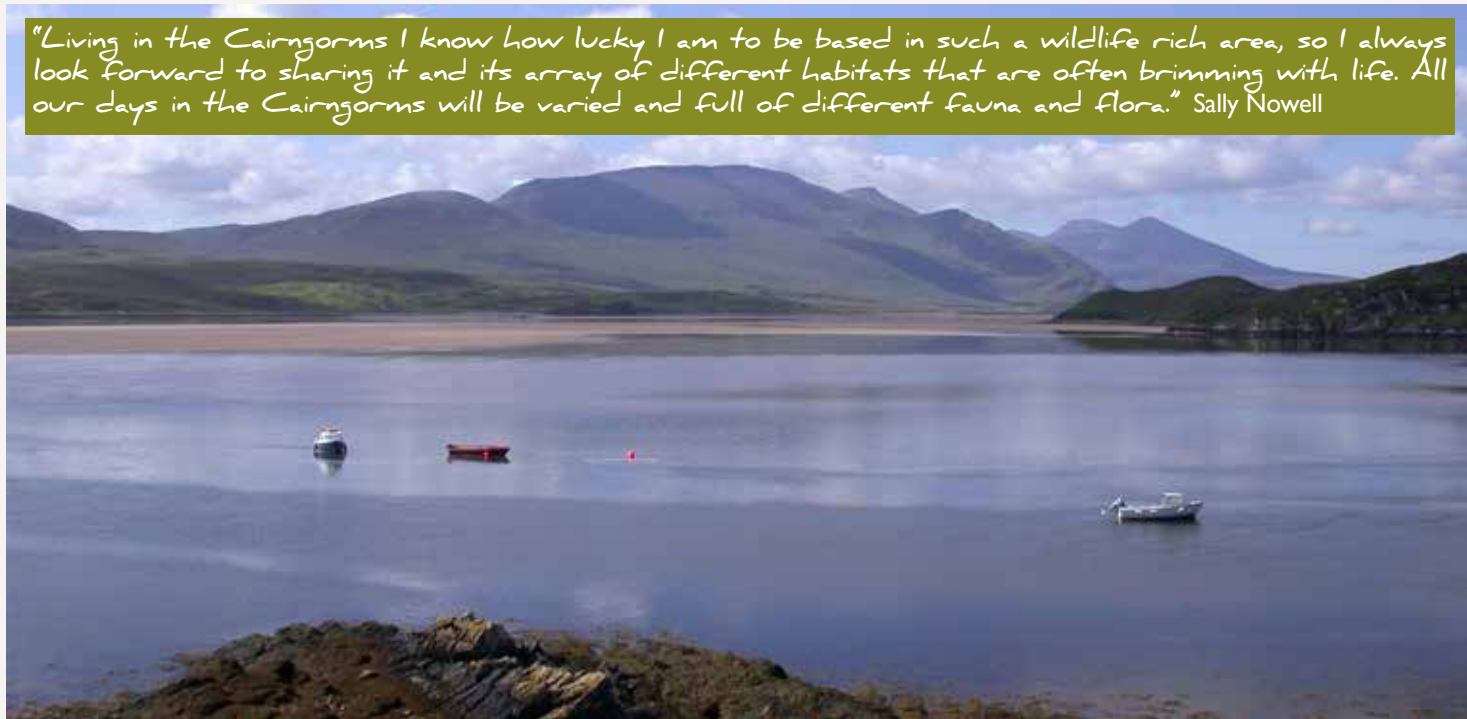
We'll also venture into the foothills of Cairngorm in search of Ptarmigan and Dotterel and with luck we may find Snow Bunting too. One evening we'll visit our hide for Pine Marten and Badger and the chance of a Tawny Owl or a roding Woodcock.

The meandering River Spey holds Dipper, Grey Wagtail and noisy Common Sandpiper, while waders display over marshes around Lochindorb and Insh. Goldeneye have delightful little black and white ducklings and 'proper' Scottish Greylag Geese are nesting. Red Kite circle above the rolling farmland of the Moray Firth, whilst tidal bays are busy with Eider and noisy Arctic, Common and Sandwich Tern. There may even be the odd non-breeding Scoter or Long-tailed Duck.

On the wild moors of Dava and the Monadhliaths, Merlin and Peregrine can be found and these are



"Living in the Cairngorms I know how lucky I am to be based in such a wildlife rich area, so I always look forward to sharing it and its array of different habitats that are often brimming with life. All our days in the Cairngorms will be varied and full of different fauna and flora." Sally Nowell



places where the plaintive notes of Ring Ouzel, the cackling of Red Grouse and the mournful piping of Golden Plover can be heard.

6-9 We journey past deep-indented sealochs and dramatic peaks via Gruinard Bay, where we'll search for White-tailed Eagle and perhaps see a Black-throated Diver in stunning breeding plumage.

There is always a chance of Otter here and perhaps Golden Eagle as well, before we head for our hotel farther north at Rhiconich. This is wild country, feeling as spectacular and 'foreign' as it's possible to get in this land. It is open, ice-scoured and wild - the soaring mountains of Suilven and Stac Pollaidh standing in splendid isolation, interspersed with numerous peaty lochs and small patches of native broadleaves, while the coastline is dotted with sandy bays and skerries - for many this is the most beautiful part of Britain.

The most renowned birding location here must be Handa Island and taking a small boat to get there, we'll spend a full day enjoying the circular route around the island. Thousands of Guillemot, Razorbill, Fulmar and Kittiwake nest on the towering cliffs of the stack on the north coast, with smaller numbers of Puffin right on top, whilst Shag hiss from hidden nests.

Black Guillemots breed in the boulders at the base of the cliffs and we often get close views from the boat. The colonies are patrolled by Great and Arctic Skuas looking for a meal. Both nest on the

island, allowing close up views of these spectacular birds and Great Skuas often gather to bathe in lochans where Red-throated Diver may be nesting.

Summering Great Northern Divers are frequently found on the sweeping azure seas of Balnakeil Bay, at the edge of Scotland, next stop the Arctic! This northern coast is a beautiful mix of rocky coastline and gorgeous white beaches sweeping up to grassy slopes and moorland dotted with orchids. We may find tiny Scottish Primroses in short turf on the cliff-tops - especially at Strathly Point where viewing out to sea can be spectacular! Gannets dive offshore, while Kittiwakes, auks and Fulmars are constantly streaming by. This is a premier sight to scan for dolphins or even whales if it is calm.

There are more Puffin colonies along the north coast, plus wild Rock Doves and Twite and just inland are lochs where Black-throated Divers breed. Merlin and Greenshank also breed on these remote moorlands. At nearby Durness Corncrakes can sometimes be heard, though they are difficult to see in the tall vegetation and we'll look out for Golden Eagle as we journey around Loch Eriboll and Loch Assynt - truly wonderful places.

10-11 On our last afternoon we enjoy more spectacular scenery as we take an inland route, birdwatching as we go, back to Speyside and our hotel for the last night. After breakfast the next morning we make our farewells.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive in the Cairngorms
5 nights Tigh na Sgiath Country Hotel
- Days 2-5** Wildlife and birdwatching exploration throughout Speyside including Abernethy Forest, Dava Moor, the Moray Firth coast and the Cairngorms
- Day 6** Travel north-west to Sutherland, via Gruinard Bay
4 nights The Rhiconich Hotel
- Days 7-9** Exploration of the north-west corner of Scotland including Handa
- Days 10-11** Travel back to the Cairngorms
1 night Tigh na Sgiath Country Hotel

Kevin Tappenden: Great Northern Diver
Ted Stevens: Kyle of Durness
Mark Denman: Dotterel
Simon Eaves: Scottish Crossbill, Slavonian Grebe
Jane Hope: Razorbills
Mary Braddock: Black Guillemots



YELLOWSTONE SPRING



"Spring is the time to see animals with young in Yellowstone - Moose tend their gangly youths, Bison protect their red calves, bears forage with cubs - we've also seen wolves with pups - come and join us."
Darren Rees

Dates Sat 23 May - Sat 6 June 2020

Price £6,395

Deposit £1,250 Single Supp £1,250

Leaders Darren Rees and Duncan Macdonald

Flights United Airlines, scheduled
Outbound: Morning, Heathrow-Jackson Hole (via US stop)
Inbound: Overnight, Jackson Hole-Heathrow (via US stop)

Weather It can be cool (even cold), but daytime temperatures rise to warm and sunny (0°-15°C), with a chance of showers, cold snaps and some snow

Walking There'll be some short, easy walks on wide paths with optional short, easy walks off tracks in the forest. Note that Yellowstone National Park is at high altitude. Most of the National Park is above 7,500 ft / 2,275 m and the Beartooth Highway ascends to nearly 11,000 ft / 3,353 m, where we shall take a very short walk

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 14

Insects Biting insects may occasionally be a nuisance, so bring repellent

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Gray Wolf	Bald Eagle
Black Bear	Sandhill Crane
Grizzly Bear	Harlequin Duck
Moose	Trumpeter Swan
Pronghorn	Mountain Bluebird
Bison	Great Horned Owl
Beaver	Gray Jay
Elk	Clark's Nutcracker
Coyote	Western Tanager
Yellow-bellied Marmot	American Dipper

Spring in the world's first and most famous National Park. A beautiful wilderness, with birds, flowers and fabulous mammals – the best place for big game in the Americas!

- Wolf, Bison, Moose, plus Grizzly and Black Bear
- Eagles, cranes, bluebirds and colourful migrants
- Cute critters! Chipmunks, Ground Squirrels, Pika and Beaver
- Exceptional photo opportunities for wildlife and landscapes
- Geo-thermal wonders, with erupting geysers and bubbling mud pools
- Great hotels and food, with friendly hospitality
- A five-centre tour, staying right in Yellowstone, with years' of experience

1-3 Arriving early evening there is a short transfer to our hotel in Jackson Hole. We begin our tour exploring the breath-taking Grand Teton National Park, a land of towering peaks, pine forests, sagebrush plain, jewel-like lakes and the meandering Snake River. Birds will include Mountain Chickadee, Yellow-rumped Warbler; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Mountain Bluebird and Broad-tailed Hummingbird and at nearby Flat Creek we'll see Trumpeter Swan, Cinnamon Teal and smart Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

The historic Mormon Row barns set amongst the sprawling Antelope Flats, will have you reaching for your camera and we'll probably see our first Bison, Pronghorn and irresistible Least Chipmunks and Uinta Ground Squirrels. The National Elk Refuge holds Sandhill Crane, Rock Wren, Horned Lark

and perhaps our first Coyote. We'll stop at famous Oxbow Bend beneath lofty Mount Moran looking for River Otters, Moose, Osprey and soaring Bald Eagles and we'll return for an evening along the river looking for crepuscular Beavers. Watching these animals swimming back and forth, tending to their dams and lodges is a tour highlight!

4-6 We travel north along scenic Jackson Lake, steadily climbing through endless pine forests to reach the world's first and most famous National Park - Yellowstone. We stay near the immense Yellowstone Lake at 7,700 feet. This is a place of untamed nature - the Greater Yellowstone wilderness area is the size of Scotland! The lake hosts Barrow's Goldeneye, Bufflehead and Common Loon, whilst the higher elevations at both Dunraven and Sylvan Passes have endearing



"My very favourite place for the perfect blend of amazing wildlife in an amazing landscape; forests, snow-capped peaks, lakes, tumbling waterfalls and unique geo-thermal features. Our Yellowstone tour is packed with natural wonders wherever we look." Darren Rees



Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel, Yellow-bellied Marmot and American Pika.

We'll visit the famous Hayden Valley (more than once!) where the wide open spaces are dotted with herds of Bison and American Elk and we've often seen charismatic Gray Wolf and Grizzly Bear. Flying raptors include Northern Harrier and Red-tailed and Swainson's Hawk and along the nearby Yellowstone River are splendid Harlequin Ducks and American Dippers. At Canyon, the river cuts a deep gorge appropriately named the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone - a stunning landscape of colourful eroded pillars and huge spectacular waterfalls. We'll also spend an early morning and evening at Pelican Creek and Fishing Bridge in search of River Otter, Beaver and Belted Kingfisher.

7-9 Travelling north we drive over Dunraven Pass and Mt Washburn before dropping into the open country of North Yellowstone and a wildlife haven. From our base at Cooke City we'll need some early morning excursions to the famous Lamar Valley if we want to see magnificent Gray Wolves. Re-introduced in 1995, these superb animals are an integral part of the restored ecosystem and we've had some amazing encounters: packs travelling the valley floor; chasing Elk and Bison; defending carcasses from Grizzlies. What might we see in America's Serengeti?

On the spectacular Beartooth Highway, listed as one of the most beautiful roads in America, we'll look for specialities of the high country such as Mountain Goat, Bighorn Sheep, Golden Eagle and Black Rosy Finch.

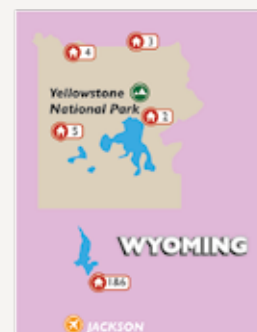


10-11 We move to Mammoth in the northwest of Yellowstone, where Elk graze the watered lawns near our hotel and the friendly ground squirrels will be on the lookout for the local Prairie Falcons. Nearby are the beautiful volcanic travertine terraces and an early morning visit is perfect for photos and birds such as Townsend's Solitaire, Hammond's Flycatcher and Western Tanager. Around the Blacktail Deer Plateau we'll look for Williamson's Sapsucker, Three-toed Woodpecker, MacGillivray's Warbler, along with Gray and Steller's Jay.

12-13 South of Mammoth is the centre of the geo-thermal wonders of Yellowstone - it's how the place got its name! Between Norris and Old Faithful basins are an incredible 70% of the world's geysers and we've a day-and-a-half to explore fully the bewildering collection of bubbling mud pools, erupting steam jets and multi-coloured pools. Our accommodation is near the famous Old Faithful and other predictable geysers such as Daisy, Riverside and Grand, so expect a fun morning geyser-gazing!

Reluctantly we leave Yellowstone, crossing the Continental Divide and return to Grand Teton National Park, watching for wildlife as we go. We're sure to stop at Jenny Lake and Signal Mountain for a last look at the stunning mountain scenery, before checking in at Jackson for our last night.

14-15 Leaving Jackson Hole, we fly home, arriving in the UK on the morning of Day 15.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Fly to Jackson Hole, via US stop, arriving in the evening - 3 nights 49er Inn
- Days 2-3** Two days exploring Grand Teton National Park, including Elk Refuge, Mormon Row and Ox Bow Bend
- Days 4-6** North, via Jackson Lake, to Lake Yellowstone. Explore Hayden Valley, north shore of Lake Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone 3 nights Lake Yellowstone
- Day 7** Relaxed day transfer, via Dunraven Pass, to Cooke City 3 nights Soda Butte Lodge
- Days 8-9** Two days to explore north-east section of Yellowstone, including Lamar Valley and Beartooth Highway
- Days 10-11** Drive through the northern section of the Park and Blacktail Plateau. Early morning at famous travertine terraces 2 nights Mammoth
- Day 12** Drive via geothermal features, including Grand Prismatic Pool - 1 night Old Faithful
- Day 13** Geyser gazing at Old Faithful then south for last night at Jackson Hole 1 night 49er Inn
- Days 14-15** Overnight flight back to the UK, via US stop, arriving on Day 15

Franky and David Perry: Black Bear
 Ian Tulloch: Yellowstone Grand Canyon
 Stephen Rowland: Bison, Coyote
 Mark Denman: Mountain Bluebird
 Steve Batt: Grand Prismatic Pool



Colin Scott

Osprey, Spring Birds. Holiday details page 50



Brooke Miller

Nightingale, Extremadura. Holiday details page 30

Just a few of the images
guests and guides have taken
on Speyside Wildlife trips



David and Franky Perry

Cairngorms, Spring Birds. Holiday details page 50



David Petts

Hen Harrier, Outer Hebrides. Holiday details page 42



Trish Auciello

Auk watching, Spitsbergen. Holiday details page 80



Diana Forder

Lochaline, Isle of Mull. Holiday details page 66



Steve Cullum

Whitethroat, North Wales. Holiday details page 48



Adam Moan

Puffin, The Shetland Isles. Holiday details page 70



Adam Moan

Red-rumped Swallow, Extremadura. Holiday pg 30



David and Franky Perry

White-tailed Eagle, Mull. Holiday details page 66



Norman De Ath

Great Skuas, Spring Birds in the Highlands. Holiday details page 50



Evelyn Moorkens

Grey-necked Woodrail, The Brazilian Pantanal. Holiday details page 82

MULL AND KINTYRE



"Last year was my first visit to Kintyre for many years and I was thrilled to be back. Julian knows this area well and took us to some very special places. Birdsong filled the air at Taynish and seabirds filled the air at Machrihanish. Just beautiful!"

Sally Nowell

Dates Sat 6 - Mon 15 June 2020
Price £2,350
Deposit £450 Single Supp £400

Leaders Julian Sykes and Sally Nowell

Weather Mixture of sun and showers, but cooler on boat trips and in the mountains (10°- 25°C)

Walking Most walks are 1-2 miles on wide sandy tracks, although there is the possibility of a forest walk of up to 4 miles. Walks on Lunga and Staffa, although approx only 1 mile long, are more challenging and only suitable for those with good mobility and balance. Walking boots will be needed.

Boat Trips Our boat trip to Lunga lasts 6 hours, including 3 hours onshore. Our trip to Iona is a short 10 min ferry ride.

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 10.

Insects Biting midges will be encountered.

Accom Grey Gull Hotel, Isle of Mull Hotel and The Inn on Loch Lomond - double, twin and single rooms all ensuite.

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Red-throated Diver	Short-eared Owl
Wood Warbler	Kestrel
Common Tree Pipit	Raven
Osprey	Peregrine
White-tailed Eagle	Great Skua
Golden Eagle	Manx Shearwater
Common Sandpiper	Storm Petrel
Wheatear	European Beaver
Oystercatcher	Common Seal
Sparrowhawk	Common Dolphin
Greenshank	Otter
Dunlin	Minke Whale
Hen Harrier	

Unknown Argyll, with hidden corners and the chance of Beaver, through the majesty of Mull with its high density of eagles, to the bonnie banks of Loch Lomond!

- See both Golden and White-tailed Eagles amongst stunning scenery
- Look for Otters along beautiful rocky shores
- Possibility of Red-throated, Black-throated and Great Northern Divers
- Explore wild remote areas in search of rich and varied wildlife
- Set sail for the amazing basalt columns of Staffa enroute to Lunga
- See Puffins closer than you can ever imagine
- Waterside hotels in three charming locations

We meet up in Glasgow and head off through Argyll to the west coast and our base for the next three nights in the lochside town of Lochgilphead, arriving in time for dinner.

2-3 Over the next two full days we shall enjoy some of the fantastic wildlife on offer in Argyll & Bute. One day we'll travel south to the wonderful Kintyre Peninsula visiting the Sound of Gigha, Campbeltown Loch and the famous Machrihanish Bird Observatory. On our journey we hope to find breeding seabirds along the coast, Red-throated and possibly Black-throated Divers, waders and wildfowl, plus we'll stop at the famous Mull of Kintyre.

The next day we shall head inland, stopping at Taynish NNR for classic woodland species such as Wood Warbler; Common Redstart

and Tree Pipit, plus a look at one of the many lochs in this area for Osprey, divers and wildfowl. After an early dinner we shall visit Knapdale and walk the Beaver Trail. We'll take our chances with sightings, but will experience this fantastic Reserve and who knows our luck!

4-8 We'll travel slowly up the west coast, stopping at inlets and coastal woodlands, then take the ferry from Oban to Craignure and our shoreside hotel base for the next five nights. From there, Gannets and Arctic Terns go by and nearby, meadows are sprinkled with orchids and play host to Snipe, Curlew, Whinchat and Redpoll.

The mighty White-tailed Eagle is a real highlight here, together with majestic Golden Eagle, both busy feeding young now. Mull is probably 'the' best place in Britain to see eagles.



"I get excited about Mull before I'm even on the ferry! It never fails to thrill, it never disappoints, but it always surprises. I love it!" Sally Nowell



With around 16 pairs of White-tailed Eagles and 24 pairs of Golden Eagles, the island's breeding birds are at their highest density anywhere in Europe.

Nearby, piping Common Sandpipers, fledged Wheatear and noisy 'leeping' Oystercatcher are on weedy shores, where Common Seals haul out, with mottled drake Eider and resting Red-throated Divers offshore. Birch and oak woodland can hold Redstart, Tree Pipit and Wood Warbler, as well as Sparrowhawk overhead. Here and in moorland glens, are some of our favourite places to see Golden Eagle, whilst Merlin nest in the boggy upland glens. Estuaries have waders such as Greenshank, Bar-tailed Godwit and Dunlin, whilst offshore the myriad skerries hold noisy Common Gull and Common and Arctic Terns. Peaty burns by freshwater lochs are home to Dipper and Grey Wagtail, whilst coniferous woodland has Siskin and sometimes Common Crossbill.

A short distance away on rugged shorelines, we have often been lucky with fine views of Otters; engaging animals, as easy to see here as anywhere in Scotland. As we watch, Hooded Crow pick along the shore. Red-breasted Merganser and the occasional Black-throated Diver occur, whilst Kestrel, Raven and Peregrine patrol the forbidding basalt cliffs. In the dramatic folds of inland glens, Hen Harrier and Short-eared Owl hunt over the moorland and young coniferous plantations, where Whitethroat give their scratchy song.

Journeying along the croft land on the Ross of Mull, Buzzards adorn every telegraph pole and we'll take the short passenger ferry to the beautiful white sandy beaches and azure blue seas of Iona. The white cottages and famous Abbey are surrounded by tall hay meadows, where good numbers of calling Corncrake reside, but can be difficult to see at this time of year, whilst Rock Dove and Twite are more obvious.

A trip highlight will be our boat journey to the seabird spectacle of the Treshnish Isles, alert to possible Minke Whales or Common Dolphins as we go. We'll watch for Black Guillemot and Great Skua, Manx Shearwater and Storm Petrel on the crossing. We take in the island of Staffa and the basalt columns of 'Fingal's Cave', before landing on the incredible island of Lunga. We have several hours to wander right amongst Puffins that greet us, whilst green-eyed Shag squawk their disapproval and an incredible throng of Guillemot and Razorbill roar in a cacophony. Fulmar cackle, Kittiwake cries echo up from narrow chasms and Arctic Skuas patrol offshore, amongst the flocks of wheeling seabirds ... it's a wonderful place!

9-10 Tearing ourselves away from Mull, we'll travel inland through Glencoe and over Rannoch Moor; to our final base on the banks of Loch Lomond for our last night. The next morning we'll return everyone to Glasgow where we say our farewells.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive in Glasgow, travel West to Lochgilphead
3 nights at Grey Gull Hotel
- Days 2-3** Wildlife and birdwatching exploration throughout Argyll & Bute
- Day 4** Journey through stunning scenery, before catching the ferry to Mull
5 nights at Isle of Mull Hotel
- Days 5-8** Wildlife and birdwatching exploration on Mull, including a boat trip to the Treshnish Isles
- Day 9** Ferry back to the mainland then drive to Loch Lomond
birdwatching enroute
1 night at the Inn on Loch Lomond
- Day 10** Leave Loch Lomond for Glasgow

Jane Hope: White-tailed Eagle,
Sunset Loch na Kael
Andrew Hoyne: Black-throated Diver
David Petts: Hen Harrier
Tim Drew: Otter, Puffin



A HEBRIDEAN ODYSSEY



"Travelling from top to bottom, you can take in the differences in landscape and wildlife of all the islands; miles of deserted shell sand beaches, moorland, towering mountains and the remote and rugged Atlantic coastline, with its dunes and flower-rich machair. With the wild calls of waders, sound of the sea and huge skies, you're transported to another world." Craig Round

Dates Sun 7 - Fri 19 June 2020

Price £2,895

Deposit £500 Single Supp £400

Leaders Craig Round and Simon Eaves

Walking Coastal walks on uneven terrain of up to two miles. Walking boots recommended with trainers suitable on some occasions. Collapsible or telescopic walking poles could be useful for this trip

Weather Though usually quite dry, these islands can experience all the seasons during one trip and can be windy (5°-20°C)

Insects Biting insects are not usually a problem but bring repellent just in case

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 13

Accom Double, twin, single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Corncrake	Rock Dove
Golden Eagle	Arctic Skua
White-tailed Eagle	Great Skua
Hen Harrier	Manx Shearwater
Merlin	Storm Petrel
Short-eared Owl	Red-necked Phalarope
Peregrine	Green Shank
Great Northern Diver	Golden Plover
Red-throated Diver	Red Grouse
Black-throated Diver	Corn Bunting
Eider	Twite
Whimbrel	Otter
Arctic Tern	Grey and common seals
Little Tern	Dolphins and whales
Black Guillemot	Basking Shark

Richard Stacey: Corncrake

Kate Mennie: Port na Long

Jane Hope: Black Guillemot, Otter

Simon Eaves: Red-necked Phalarope

James Glover: Red-throated Diver

Tim Drew: Twite

A journey through magical isles on the edge of the Atlantic. A diverse landscape of vast white beaches, rugged mountains, fertile machair and huge seascapes.

- Raptor watching with both eagles, Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Merlin and Peregrine
- Summer-plumaged divers, including Red-throated and Great Northern
- Unspoilt and deserted white sand beaches with shallow crystal clear waters
- Unique machair habitat in bloom, full of nesting waders and birds
- Excellent chance of Corncrake amidst lush vegetation
- Otters plus the chance of cetaceans and Basking Shark
- World famous Callanish Standing Stones and ancient Dun Carloway Broch

Our adventure begins with a meal together in Inverness and a run through the trip itinerary.

2-5 We head north west through dramatic mountain scenery to Ullapool and the ferry to Lewis. There's a sense of anticipation as we gather on deck for some sea-watching - auks, Gannets, skuas, shearwaters and divers are likely, plus a chance of Storm Petrel and cetaceans on the crossing.

We'll spend four days exploring the islands of Lewis and Harris - two very different islands with wide expanses of peat moor, wild coastlines and incredible bare-rock scenery. Some of our most iconic raptors hunt these vast landscapes and we shall follow the Hebridean Bird of Prey Trail for Golden and White-tailed Eagles, Hen Harrier,

Short-eared Owls, Merlin, Kestrel and Peregrine.

We shall explore the wild Atlantic edge along the north western coast of Lewis up to the Butt of Lewis. This windswept and spectacular place is one of the best locations in the UK for sea-watching for both birds and cetaceans.

Though not common, Minke Whale, Common or even Risso's Dolphin and other species are possible. The shallow lochs of the west coast are a refuge for wildfowl, waders and scarce migrants with the possibility of a vagrant American Wader if we're lucky. The sea lochs and beaches of the rugged south west coast of Lewis are a wild, remote and under-watched habitat for Otters, eagles and divers, including Red-throated and Great Northern and we should find Cuckoo and Twite here.



"This incredible island chain on Britain's remote and wild Atlantic edge is a place of breathtaking beauty, home to some of Britain's best wildlife such as Golden and White-tailed Eagle, Corncrake, Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Otter and thousands of breeding and passage waders. Last year we watched exquisite Red-necked Phalaropes, as a Golden and White-tailed Eagle sat on the ground next to each other! It is always a thrill to visit, surrounded by amazing wildlife. I can't wait to get back there!" Craig Round



The Standing Stones of Callanish are archaeologically world famous and a stunning example of a circle and cruciform arrangement with almost 50 still standing. Walking amongst them ignites the imagination. We shall also visit Dun Carloway, one of the best preserved iron age brochs in Scotland.

Harris is conjoined to Lewis, but the habitat and feel is very different. The north is a rugged mountainous moonscape, whereas the west coast has open machair and vast spectacular and deserted beaches. We shall walk on one of the world's great beaches at Luskentyre, which is simply stunning and a superb location for Golden Eagles. We shall visit North Harris Eagle observatory, with a good chance of Merlin too, which regularly nest close by.

6-9 We leave Harris and weave our way by ferry through an archipelago of skerries, a rich feeding area for divers, seaduck and White-tailed Eagles, to beautiful Berneray and the Uists. We shall explore North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist and Eriskay. Birds seem to be everywhere and we shall visit the unique machair, alive with waders, Corn Bunting, Skylark and Twite.

The RSPB Reserve at Balranald is a gem and gives us our best chance of Corncrake, calling from the iris beds. The Uists are wonderful for raptors and the chance of eagles is ever present, with Short-eared Owls and Hen Harriers quartering the peatlands.

The beaches and shallow bays of the west coast are fished by Common, Arctic and Little Terns, Great Northern Divers and a very healthy Otter population. Red-necked Phalaropes breed here and there is always the chance of finding a rarity. We've recorded Snowy Owl, Woodchat Shrike and Subalpine Warbler on previous trips - anything is possible!

10-11 We take the ferry from Eriskay across the Sound to Barra and Vatersay, both linked by a causeway. These are gentle, peaceful islands and a relaxing end to our Hebridean adventure. Basking Sharks are frequently seen from land and Golden Eagles and Merlin breed. We shall visit Traigh Mor, a beautiful beach and the spectacular site of Barra's amazing airport.

12 The ferry from Barra across the fertile waters of The Minch to Oban provides more chances of Minke Whale, Basking Shark and seabirds - then from Oban we head back to Inverness for our evening meal and to reflect on our adventure.

13 After breakfast on Friday we say our fond farewells.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Meet in Inverness for overnight stay
1 night at Premier Inn
- Day 2** Travel north west to Ullapool to catch the ferry to Stornoway on Lewis
4 nights at Cabarfeidh Hotel
- Days 3-5** Birding and wildlife exploration around Lewis and Harris
- Days 6-9** Ferry crossing from Harris to Berneray. Birding and wildlife exploration on Berneray, North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist and Eriskay
4 nights at Temple View Hotel
- Days 10-11** Ferry crossing from Eriskay to Barra. Birding and wildlife exploration of Barra and Vatersay
2 nights at Castlebay Hotel
- Day 12** Ferry crossing from Barra to Oban then journey north east to Inverness
1 night at Premier Inn
- Day 13** After breakfast we say our farewells



MULL IN SUMMER



"It doesn't get better than Mull in June. This is when wildlife is at its busiest. Eagles feeding chicks, the cacophony of seabird colonies, with a backdrop of beautiful scenery. Superb!"
Duncan Macdonald

Dates Sat 13 - Sat 20 June 2020

Price £2,095

Deposit £400 **Single Supp** £450

Leaders Duncan Macdonald and Kate Mennie

Weather The weather can be mixed, so expect sun and showers, with temperatures in the range of 7-18°C. It can be cooler on our boat trip, but you may wish to bring sunscreen

Walking Coastal walks on uneven terrain of 1-4 miles. Walking boots recommended. Collapsible/telescopic walking poles could be useful for this trip

Boat Trip Our trip to Lunga lasts approximately six hours, including three hours ashore

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

Insects Biting midges will be encountered

Accom The Inn on Loch Lomond and the Isle of Mull Hotel - double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

White-tailed Eagle	Common Sandpiper
Golden Eagle	Oystercatcher
Hen Harrier	Corncrake
Peregrine	Great Skua
Merlin	Storm Petrel
Short-eared Owl	Rock Dove
Manx Shearwater	Twite
Red-throated Diver	Shag
Great Northern Diver	Kittiwake
Puffin	Harbour Porpoise
Arctic Skua	Common Dolphin
Razorbill	Minke Whale
Black Guillemot	Common Seal
Gannet	Grey Seal
Raven	Otter
Greenshank	

Mull in summer - one of Britain's very best islands, with striking wildlife, including eagles, Otters and a boat trip for "up close and personal" views of Puffins and seabirds

- Amazing opportunities for White-tailed and Golden Eagle in spectacular habitat
- Otter spotting around the coast wherever we go
- Short-eared Owl, Hen Harrier and divers
- A trip to Iona with a chance to hear and maybe see the elusive Corncrake
- Treshnish Isles boat trip for close-up Puffins, auks and loads more
- Shoreline hotel with views across the Sound of Mull
- Travel up and back through Loch Lomond, Rannoch Moor and Glencoe

1-2 We shall meet up in Glasgow and travel the short distance to our overnight base on the shores of Loch Lomond.

In the morning we'll drive the length of Loch Lomond, over Rannoch Moor and through Glencoe, with time to birdwatch and marvel at the spectacular scenery, before catching a mid-morning ferry from Oban to the Isle of Mull.

We may see Black Guillemots in Oban Harbour and as we journey across the Firth Of Lorne, Common and Arctic Terns may be loafing and fishing off the island of Lismore. These are rich waters and there is always a chance of seeing Harbour Porpoise, Common Dolphin or even something larger. We'll be able to birdwatch immediately we arrive, as our hotel is on the shore, overlooking the Sound of Mull.



3-6 Here, Gannets fly by, whilst just offshore Red-throated and Great Northern Diver linger and we'll watch for majestic White-tailed and Golden Eagles, now busy feeding young.

The White-tailed Eagle is the UK's largest land-based predator and the fourth largest eagle on Earth. They have recolonised Mull since the early 1980's and the breeding population is now more than 15 pairs, so we can encounter these enormous birds just about anywhere.

Mull's Golden Eagle population is one of the densest anywhere in Europe and after year's of experience watching them, we know the best places on the island to look for them. It is not unusual to see both species soaring together over the mountains and sea lochs of "Eagle Island".



"Sitting face to face with a Puffin will be a highlight for many on this tour. It is an extraordinary experience, but Mull is like that; full of magical moments." Duncan Macdonald



Although the island is rightly famous for its eagles, we shall be looking for other upland raptors as well. Hen Harrier, Merlin and Short-eared Owl frequent the moors, hillsides and estuaries, as they too have young to feed. Peregrine patrol the sea cliffs around Gribun, while family parties of Raven fill the air with their cronking calls. There are moments on this fabulous island when the sky can seem to be filled with raptors, especially eagles, so along with owls, we may come close to a double digit tally of species by the end of the trip!

Around the coast, Common Seals haul out on the offshore rocky islets and skerries, whilst the larger Grey Seals swim menacingly through the water; however much of our time will also be spent quietly seeking out some of the island's plentiful Otters. The rich rocky coastline provides a bountiful supply of food for these engaging animals and, with patience, we should be rewarded with great views, whilst Greenshank, Common Sandpiper and noisy 'kleeping' Oystercatcher, will keep us company on weedy rocks.

On one day we'll drive down the Ross of Mull, an area of surprising contrast for this small island and take the short ferry crossing to visit the stunning white shell-sand beaches and famous Abbey on Iona, where the ancient kings of Scotland were buried; the grave slabs a reminder of the island's rich history.

Here Corncrakes call from hay meadows full of wildflowers and from iris beds and gardens. With luck and some patience, we may see these

remarkable birds alongside a clear azure blue sea, but even if we only hear them, their rasping call is unmistakable.

A highlight of the holiday will be our day out on the Treshnish Isles. On the boat trip over to the islands, we'll be alert for Minke Whales and also watch out for Black Guillemot and the odd Great Skua, Manx Shearwater and Storm Petrel. Long-tailed Skua is a possibility. We'll take in the island of Staffa and the astonishingly shaped basalt columns of 'Fingal's Cave', whilst listening to Mendelssohn's overture, before landing on the rocky shores of Lunga Island with its fantastic, approachable, seabird colony.

Rock Dove and Twite are here and we'll wander amongst hundreds of Puffins, green-eyed Shags, Guillemots and Razorbills on the Harp Rock. Fulmar cackle, Kittiwake cries echo up from narrow chasms and Arctic Skuas patrol offshore, amongst the flocks of wheeling seabirds ... it's a wonderful place! Unlike some other seabird colonies, we shall be right in amongst the action and not just looking at cliffs from afar.

7-8 On the penultimate day, we'll catch a morning ferry to Lochaline and travel inland through the majestic strath of Glencoe and over Rannoch Moor, before arriving on the bonnie banks of Loch Lomond, for our last night.

In the morning we'll return you to Glasgow where we bid farewell.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Meet in Glasgow and make our way to our base for one night on the shores of Loch Lomond.
- Days 2-6** Birdwatching and wildlife exploration of Mull, including a trip to Iona and a boat trip to the Treshnish Isles via Staffa, for Fingal's Cave and then time to explore the island of Lunga.
- Day 7** Catch the ferry to Lochaline and make our way back to Loch Lomond for 1 night.
- Day 8** Leave Loch Lomond for Glasgow

Tim Drew: Otter
Craig Round: Landscape with divers, Hen Harrier
Simon Eaves: Arctic Skua
Jane Hope: Black Guillemots, Rock Dove, White-tailed Eagle



HUNGARY SUMMER



"Hungary is a naturalist's dream with so much to see - we include a dormouse nest box scheme, mist-netting for bats, fabulous butterflies and the highlight of the trip - the photography hides allowing incredibly close views of exciting species such as Red-footed Falcon, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Hawfinch and Roller!" Roy Atkins

Dates Mon 15 - Wed 24 Jun 2020

Price £2,995

Deposit £575 **Single Supp** £200

Leaders Roy Atkins and Ecotours guide

Flights British Airways, scheduled
Outbound: Morning, Heathrow-Budapest
Inbound: Afternoon, Budapest-Heathrow

Weather Can be quite hot in the middle of the day, but pleasant in the morning and evenings 15°-28°C

Walking Short easy walks on level, wide paths

Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 10

Insects Mosquitos can be a nuisance at dusk around wetlands, so bring repellent

Activities Dinner within the old wine cellars of the Thümmerner family. Special access to photographic hides. Tour of Budapest and evening dinner on a boat on the Danube

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Red-footed Falcon (from hide)	Collared Flycatcher Wryneck
Roller (from hide)	Lesser Spotted Eagle
Bee-eater (from hide)	Lesser Grey Shrike
Hawfinch (from hide)	Golden Oriole
Eastern Imperial Eagle	Penduline Tit
Saker Falcon	Eastern Olivaceous Warbler
Collared Pratincole	Marsh Warbler
Black Stork	Edible Dormouse
Middle Spotted Woodpecker	Forest Dormouse
Grey-headed Woodpecker	European Souselik
Syrian Woodpecker	Barbastelle Bat
Black Woodpecker	Leisler's Bat
Great Bustard	Whiskered Bat
	Fabulous butterflies

A host of eastern birds, butterflies and even bats – plus a visit to photo hides for incredibly close views of some very special birds, also wine tasting and a tour of Budapest.

- Three centre holiday around Bükk Hills, Lakitelek and Kiskunság National Park
- Photo hides for Red-footed Falcon, Roller, Bee-eater and woodland birds
- Eastern Imperial Eagle, Saker, Montagu's Harrier and Honey Buzzard
- Opportunity to see bats in the hand at mist-netting session
- Savi's, Icterine and Barred Warblers, Golden Oriole and Lesser Grey Shrike
- Butterflies including Common Glider, Great-banded Grayling and many more
- Day sightseeing in Budapest plus a boat-ride and dinner on the Danube

1-3 After arriving at Budapest Airport we shall drive to the Bükk Hills and our delightful hotel with great food and tasty regional wine. Morning walks may produce up to six species of woodpecker, including Syrian, Middle Spotted, Black and Wryneck. We'll explore the attractive Hór Valley, where old beech woodland is home to elusive White-backed Woodpecker, plus Hawfinch, Wood Warbler and Collared Flycatcher.

Many butterflies can be found here, including Common Glider, Great-banded Grayling, Large Copper, Eastern Short-tailed Blue and many fritillaries and blues. Beautiful pasture woodland, where Hungarian Grey Cattle graze, is the hunting ground of Honey Buzzard, along with both Short-toed and Lesser Spotted Eagles. Barred Warbler lurk in dense shrubs and we hope for Golden Oriole, Short-toed Treecreeper, Red-backed Shrike and Woodlark.

We visit a nest box project for dormice nearby,



where Edible, Forest and Hazel Dormouse are all possible and one evening we'll join a local expert monitoring bat populations with mist nets and hope to catch several species. Common British species such as Common Pipistrelle and Daubenton may be joined by scarcer Leisler's, Barbastelle, Bechstein's or one of the horseshoe bats - a great opportunity to see them in the hand.

One evening we'll enjoy an evening meal in the old wine cellars of the Thümmerner family, famous for a variety of wines, but especially the so called 'Bull's Blood'. We'll try a taste of this delicious wine, along with other fabulous reds and whites.

4-6 Pausing enroute to scan for Eastern Imperial Eagle and Saker Falcon, we move on to a wonderful area of wetlands in the Lakitelek area, where we can find nesting Pygmy Cormorant and Squacco, Purple and Night Herons, with a good chance of Spoonbill and Ferruginous



"We have added an extra day to the trip to enjoy the sights and sounds of Budapest, with a tour of the city on both sides of the river by day and an evening meal onboard a boat cruising the Danube, with views of the city as we eat! There is a wine tasting evening too." Roy Atkins



Duck. In good years all three marsh terns are possible here, while Black Stork and White-tailed Eagle nest in the gallery forests, White Storks in nearby villages and we hope for scarce Long-legged Buzzard and Eastern Olivaceous Warbler.

Now for a real highlight of the trip - we have special access to several photo hides to gain super-close views that are impossible on normal birding tours. Hides beside breeding Hoopoe, Roller, Bee-eater and Red-footed Falcon allow fabulous views, plus the chance of Hawfinch and woodland birds at a drinking pool hide - all from just a few metres! These hides are normally reserved for photographers and only take three or so people at a time, so we'll swap around so everyone gets a chance to try each hide. Most have easy access, though one is accessed via a ladder, with a hand-rail - don't forget your camera!

7-9 The Kiskunság National Park lies between the Danube and Tisza Rivers and has the largest population of Great Bustard in Hungary. Wet meadows and fishponds hold breeding Savi's Warbler, Bearded and Penduline Tits. Red-crested Pochard and Ferruginous Duck are possible amongst the reed-fringed pools and we shall carefully check a colony of Collared Pratincoles as, in some years, Black-winged Pratincole have also occurred.

A nearby alkaline lake is home to waders, including Avocet, Black-winged Stilt and Ruff - perhaps in breeding plumage. Stone Curlew inhabit the stony ridges, Nightingales sing from the bushes and we'll look out for Icterine and Barred Warblers, Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrike, Golden

Oriole and raptors such as Saker, Red-footed Falcon and Montagu's Harrier.

On the final day we become tourists for a day and enjoy a sightseeing tour of Budapest. The city spans both banks of the mighty Danube River with Buda, on the western side, featuring the Gellért Hill Citadel with its commanding city views, narrow cobbled streets lined with old houses, the grandiose St. Matthias Church, Fisherman's Bastion in Buda Castle and the Royal Palace.

The eastern side, called Pest, showcases Baroque and Classicistic architecture in the city's many houses, cathedrals, and plazas. Highlights here are the Széchenyi Bath House, Basilica of St. Stevens, Hungarian State Opera House and the Chain Bridge. We'll go through the Jewish quarter, with beautiful orthodox synagogues and the "Silver Willow" a sculpture honouring Hungarian Jews who perished in the Holocaust. We'll enjoy our evening meal cruising the Danube on a boat with views of the city!

10 We transfer to Budapest airport for our flight home.



Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-3** Fly to Budapest airport then transfer to the Bükk Hills National Park area for woodland birding, dormice projects, bat mist-netting and a wine tasting evening
3 nights at Nomad Hotel
- Days 4-6** Birdwatching as we go, we transfer to Lakitelek. Birdwatching on the Reserve plus visits to bird hides for close-up views of some exciting species
3 nights at Hotel Club Tisza
- Days 7-9** Transfer to hotel near Kiskunság National Park then a full day birdwatching here and a full day sightseeing in Budapest, with our final dinner onboard a boat on the Danube enjoying views of the city
3 nights at Forster Hunting Lodge
- Day 10** Transfer to Budapest airport for flight to UK

Roy Atkins: Red-footed Falcon, Lesser Grey Shrike, Forest Dormouse
Mary Braddock: Rollers
Balazs Szigeti: Saker Falcon, Eastern Imperial Eagle



THE SHETLAND ISLES



"Last year, on a beautiful warm and still Shetland evening, we found two female Red-necked Phalaropes feeding on a pool only a few feet away from the road and watched as they flew up vertically to snatch insects in mid-air, amazing Phalarope behaviour I have never seen before!" Craig Round

Dates Sat 27 Jun - Sat 04 Jul 2020

Price £2,295

Deposit £450 Single Supp £250

Leaders Craig Round and Tim Drew

Flights Loganair, scheduled
Outbound: Morning, Aberdeen-Sumburgh
Inbound: Afternoon, Sumburgh-Aberdeen

Weather During a typical week we expect mixed sun and showers, with temperatures in the range 10-20°C

Walking Walking is generally very relaxed and easy, but on at least two of the days we may take walks of up to 3-4 miles on rough grassland and small coastal paths

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

Insects Biting insects are not a problem

Accom Saxa Vord, Unst - double, twin ensuite, single non-ensuite rooms in individual houses. Please note that single rooms will be sharing a bathroom with one other guest unless a further supplement is paid

Busta House Hotel - double, twin and single ensuite rooms

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Red-necked Phalarope	Dunlin
Whimbrel	Golden Plover
Storm Petrel	Twite
Red-throated Diver	Rock Dove
Great Northern Diver	Raven
Long-tailed Duck	Twite
Whooper Swan	Otter
Great Skua	Minke Whale
Arctic Skua	White-beaked Dolphin
Gannet	White-sided Dolphin
Puffin	Orca
Black Guillemot	Harbour Porpoise
Common Tern	Harbour Seal
Arctic Tern	Grey Seal

Just 6° south of the Arctic Circle - far northern isles and world-class wildlife, huge seabird colonies and delightful Red-necked Phalaropes, at the Simmer Dim.

- Islands at the 'Simmer Dim' when the sun barely sets
- Easy flight to Shetland rather than the 14-hour ferry
- Mousa's Storm Petrels, Fetlar's Red-necked Phalaropes
- The spectacular seabird cities of Noss, Hermaness and Sumburgh
- Otters and offshore whales and dolphins
- Regular rarities and summering scarce breeders
- Closer to Norway than to mainland Scotland

Flying from Aberdeen, we arrive in Shetland and drive north over Mainland. Crossing by ferries to the low-lying island of Yell, we go on to our base on Unst, the northernmost inhabited island of the British Isles. Great Skuas pass overhead and the surrounding meadows echo to the wild calls of Curlew and Whimbrel. It really does feel like a different world.

2-3 On our walk across the moorland to the wild and dramatic cliffs of Hermaness, the skies are full of soaring and displaying Great Skuas (in Shetland called Bonxies, meaning 'dumpy bird'). Breeding Snipe, Dunlin and Meadow Pipit display overhead and the plaintive call of Golden Plover can be heard. Unst also supports Wheatear, Twite and Whimbrel. As we reach the vast seabird cliffs and gannetry at Saito, the sight that greets you really does take your breath away! A blizzard of Gannets rides the

updrafts and swirl in vast flocks, as Fulmars and Great Skuas glide past. Puffins emerge from their burrows and scurry around our feet, as we look out to the remote Muckle Flugga lighthouse and the small rocky island of 'Oootsta' or Out Stack – after which there is no more Britain!

On our regular short ferry crossings between islands, Gannets can be seen diving for fish in synchronised teams and the small harbours are a favourite haunt of Otters. Marauding Arctic Skuas harry passing Arctic Terns, as Puffins, Guillemots and Razorbills stream through the narrow sounds on feeding flights between the islands. We shall be alert to the sight of any fins breaking the surface, betraying a Porpoise close inshore, or maybe even Orcas!

Another inter-island boat journey takes us to Fetlar, so named from the Viking for 'fat or fertile





"Shetland in mid-summer, a brilliant time to visit these wild and beautiful northern isles and see some of the finest wildlife spectacles and rarest birdlife that Britain has to offer. The vast seabird colonies are at their busiest at this time of year, with blizzards of Gannets at Hermaness and Noss, swirling against a backdrop of breathtaking scenery, with huge cliffs plunging hundreds of feet to the wild sea below. A trip out to the island of Mousa in the 'simmer dim', as tiny Storm Petrels flick in low over the sea and swirl like bats around the walls of the ancient broch, is a simply magical experience you never forget!" Craig Round

land' and the fourth largest island in the Shetland Isles. It is a stronghold for stunning and rare Red-necked Phalaropes, as they delicately spin on small lochans, picking tiny insects from the waterside stones. Fetlar is also a great place to see and hear the weird wailing courtship cries of Red-throated Divers, which at this time of year may have young.

Arctic Skua, Golden Plover; Dunlin, Ringed Plover and Whimbrel, or 'peerie whap' in Shetland meaning small Curlew, can also be seen on the tundra-like heath of Fetlar and their 'rippling' calls can be heard across the island, whilst the colourful flower-filled meadows support Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Snipe and Redshank.

North Shetland, renowned for Otters, is one of the UK's premier locations for this elusive mammal and we have been lucky with fine views. Along the shores we see Red-breasted Merganser and Eider or (Dunter) and further inland, coastal species nest everywhere, including Arctic Skuas (Skootie Alan) and Fulmar (Maalies) – we shall really be learning our Shetland bird names!

4-7 Leaving the north and its many islands and skerries behind us, we venture south to explore Mainland Shetland.

Great Northern Diver and Long-tailed Duck all over-summer; here along with a few pairs of Whooper Swans that now breed. We'll also see Rock Dove, Raven and perhaps Peregrine. Sumburgh Head, close to the dramatic Viking settlement of Jarlshof, can be a great place to look

for passing cetaceans and over the years we've seen White-beaked and White-sided Dolphins and watched Humpback, Minke and predatory Orcas!

A trip highlight for many is our dusk visit to the island of Mousa. Once inside the tower of the 2,000-year-old Iron Age Broch, we are enveloped in silence, until the rhythmic 'churring' of Storm Petrels amongst the stones brings these ancient walls alive, a moment of real 'Shetland magic'! It's a real privilege to watch these tiny ocean-going seabirds flying in low over the sea, to return to their nest sites in the walls of the Broch and as the last fiery glow of the 'simmer dim' lights up the horizon, they swirl like bats around our heads in ever greater numbers, before fluttering in to land.

The island of Noss is one of the finest seabird islands in Europe. On our boat trip around the island, we'll cruise right under the sheer seabird cliffs of the Noup, dwarfing our boat and towering some 590ft above us, it's a truly awesome sight and sound! These are the largest cliffs on Shetland's east coast and home to almost 9,000 pairs of Gannet alone! The great seabird city also holds Guillemot, Razorbill, Kittiwake, Fulmar, Shag and we'll see the delightful Black Guillemot (Tystie).

8 We should have some time to birdwatch on the final morning, before taking an afternoon flight back to Aberdeen.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Fly into Sumburgh and travel north to our base at Saxa Vord on Unst
- Days 2-3** Exploration of Unst, including the wild cliffs of Hermaness and the small island of Fetlar
- Day 4** Travel south on the ferry to our base on the Mainland
- Days 5-7** Birdwatching and wildlife exploration of south Mainland, including a visit to Noss, the Viking settlement of Jarlshof and a night visit to Mousa
- Day 8** Depart in the afternoon, after a morning spent bird and wildlife watching, on a flight back to Aberdeen

Craig Round: Red-necked Phalarope, Great Skua, Minke Whale, Storm Petrel
Sally Dowden: Guillemots
Tim Drew: Great Northern Diver
Adam Moan: Puffin



YORKSHIRE IN SUMMER



"I have been truly amazed and completely thrilled with what my home county offered us in 2019. The birds were amazing, but the plants and butterflies just excelled themselves!"
Sally Nowell

Dates Sat 27 Jun - Sat 4 Jul 2020
Price £1,795
Deposit £350 Single Supp £250

Leaders Sally Nowell and Julian Sykes

Weather The weather can be changeable, but in the main the temperature should not be below 15 °C and it can be warm or even hot. Please be prepared however for wet and windy weather as well.

Walking Mostly easy walking on level paths up to 3 miles, with perhaps a little more if rarities require it!

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 rooms all ensuite

A transfer can be arranged from York train station

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Gannet	Curlew
Fulmar	Golden Plover
Puffin	Lapwing
Guillemot	Red Grouse
Razorbill	Yellowhammer
Red Kite	Skylark
Honey Buzzard	Corn Bunting
Peregrine Falcon	Tree Sparrow
Hobby	Bearded Tit
Turtle Dove	Cetti's Warbler
Avocet	Water Rail
Barn Owl	Bittern
Tawny Owl	Spoonbill
Little Owl	

Many folk don't quite know what wildlife diversity Yorkshire has to offer, so we'll take you into its hidden forests, along the magnificent coastline and into the heart of the Yorkshire Wolds.

- Just being in Yorkshire!
- Varied habitats, coast, grassland, forest and moorland
- Comfortable accommodation and great food
- Possibility of Honey Buzzard, Turtle Dove, Bittern, Bearded Tit
- Visit Bampton RSPB seabird cliffs from above and below at the peak of activity
- Experience wildlife through the eyes of artist Robert Fuller
- A relaxed holiday exploring the Yorkshire Nature Triangle

I We arrive at our comfortable hotel in time for dinner and meet up with those who have arrived by train at York station.

Yorkshire is fast becoming one of the best wildlife watching destinations in the country, with the focus on a 'Nature Triangle', which offers some of the best of British wildlife in particular birding. We shall be exploring a wide variety of habitats in the week ahead, from wetlands with extensive reedbeds, through coastal cliffs and estuaries and inland to some superb woodlands and the famous Yorkshire Dales.

2-3 We shall visit RSPB Blacktoft Sands Reserve, a premier wetland with lagoons where Avocet nest on the islands and we'll look out for waders passing through. There are large reedbeds with nesting Reed and Sedge Warblers and which Marsh Harriers, once a rarity, have really made their home, so we hope

to get some great views of these fabulous birds, both here and at other sites elsewhere in the area. We may catch sight of Bearded Tit or Water Rail along the edges and Bitterns now breed here, though we would need to be lucky to see one. This is a favoured hunting ground for Barn Owl.

North Cave Wetlands is just one of 97 Reserves managed by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and was developed out of a sand and gravel quarry. With some fantastic and innovative hides, it now hosts a large population of delightful breeding Avocets, but it also provides some varied habitats for warblers, ducks and grassland species. With luck we might catch sight of a Hobby feeding on the plentiful dragonfly population, or Water Vole feeding quietly in the waterways.

We shall explore the town of Beverley and its magnificent Minster, an amazing feat of construction dating back to 1250 AD.





"We travelled from East Yorkshire to North Yorkshire, across the Wolds and into the North Yorkshire moors. From chalk streams, to magnificent cliffs and forested paths, the scenery was ever-changing as was the wonderful Yorkshire wildlife." Sally Nowell

Along the quiet country lanes and disused railway tracks now reclaimed by nature, we shall be looking out for farmland bird species and butterflies such as Marbled White, flitting amongst the native plants typical of chalky soils.

We shall make our way a little further north towards Malton, stopping enroute in the Yorkshire Wolds, where a highlight is our visit to Robert Fuller's famous art gallery and fantastic wildlife garden. Robert appears on various TV programmes and happily shares his boundless enthusiasm, knowledge and commitment to his local area and its mammals, some of whom we may well get to observe.

The Wolds are an exceptionally beautiful area and home to soaring Red Kites, Peregrine, Corn Bunting and other grassland birds. Barn Owls frequent some of these valleys too, so as we enjoy the gentle rolling landscape captured in David Hockney's recent paintings of this area, we shall be scanning the hillsides and hedgerows for these silent and efficient hunters.

4-7 We transfer to our hotel near Malton, known as Yorkshire's food capital. Our stunning country hotel is our base for the next four nights, from where we shall visit the delightful tapestry landscape of the North Yorkshire Moors.

This area is often over-shadowed by the better known Yorkshire Dales, but in this gentle landscape we shall be looking for Red Grouse, Golden Plover, Curlew and Lapwing.

We shall also be accessing forested areas looking for Nightjar in the late evening, along with Honey

Buzzard and Turtle Dove during the day, all tricky species to catch up with, but in scenery such as this the hunt can be part of the pleasure. If time allows, we may also take a trip to charming Robin Hood's Bay to take in some sea air and perhaps look for fossils and even do a bit of rock-pooling!

This is a great time of year to visit the soaring cliffs of the East Yorkshire coast and a highlight of this holiday will undoubtedly be our visit to Bempton, viewing it from above on the cliff tops, but then we hope to get up close and personal below as we take a boat trip along the coast, weather permitting. The cliffs are host to Europe's largest mainland population of Gannets, which can number over 20,000 in spring and summer, so be prepared to be amazed! As well as Gannets we expect to see significant numbers of Razorbills, Guillemots, Fulmar, Kittiwake and Puffin and on the grasslands Whitethroats and Tree Sparrows are often also present.

8 After our farewells we shall transfer back to York for trains, or back to our original hotel to collect cars.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive at our hotel. Transfers from York Station can be arranged.
3 nights Ferguson Fawsitt Arms, Beverley
- Days 2-3** Explore East Yorkshire area, visiting Blacktoft Sands and North Cave Wetlands as well as the Yorkshire Wolds and the historic town of Beverley
- Days 4-7** Transfer to our stunning hotel near Malton. Visit Bempton Cliffs and the North Yorkshire Moors, Dalby and Cropton Forest.
4 nights Burythorpe House, Malton
- Day 8** After breakfast we say our farewells.
We shall travel back to our first hotel for those who have left cars.
A transfer to York Station can also be arranged or extend your holiday with a weekend in this beautiful city.

Chris Piper: Gannet, Wildflower Meadow, Little Owl, Marbled White Butterfly, Marsh Harrier
Frank Moffat: Honey Buzzard



VIENNA, THE ALPS AND HUNGARY



"I have always wanted to get to the Alps to enjoy the spectacular scenery and fabulous alpine flowers, while it is always great to see the birds and other wildlife in high places – I don't think I am ever happier than when up high pottering around in the mountains!" Roy Atkins

Dates Sun 28 Jun - Sun 05 Jul 2020

Price £2,825

Deposit £550 Single Supp £200

Leaders Roy Atkins and Ecotours guide

Flights British Airways, scheduled
Outbound: Morning, Heathrow-Vienna
Inbound: Afternoon, Vienna-Heathrow

Weather Likely to be warm and sunny in the lowlands of Hungary and in Vienna, but much cooler in the high mountains with temperatures ranging from 10°-25°C. There is always the chance of rain however and it can be windy

Walking Mainly easy trails on fairly level ground but quite a lot of walking on our city tour and some of the paths in the mountains can be on steeper incline and rougher terrain

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

Insects There may be a few mosquitoes or other biting insects around the marshes so bring repellent

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

White-tailed Eagle	Black Woodpecker
Eastern Imperial Eagle	Temminck's Stint
Golden Eagle	Kentish Plover
Saker Falcon	Avocet
Montagu's Harrier	Black Woodpecker
Alpine Chough	Grey-headed
Snow Finch	Woodpecker
Alpine Accentor	Syrian Woodpecker
Pygmy Cormorant	Golden Oriole
Ferruginous Duck	Moustached Warbler
Red-crested Pochard	Alpine Chamois
Great Bustard	Apollo
Black Stork	

Wonderful Hungarian birding in the lowlands, plus high-level birds and beautiful flowers in the Alpine Mountains, with a guided tour of Vienna and two classical concerts.

- Alpine Accentor, Snow Finch, Alpine Chough, Golden Eagle and Alpine Chamois
- Stunning alpine flowers in beautiful mountain scenery high in the Alps
- Guided tour of the beautiful city of Vienna
- Classical music concerts during our stay in Vienna
- Birding in lowland Hungary for Great Bustard, woodpeckers and Golden Oriole
- Wetlands with Pygmy Cormorant, River Warbler, Penduline Tit and Ferruginous Duck
- Great raptors - Saker, Eastern Imperial, White-tailed and Golden Eagles

I We arrive in Vienna and head to our hotel, then if there is time we may go out to explore the rich birdlife of the city or nearby areas, getting back with time to get ready for our evening classical music concert in one of Vienna's music halls.

2 Today we are tourists! We have a guided sightseeing tour of the city, walking in the footsteps of the Habsburgs, getting a sense of the lustre and glory of the old empire, by visiting the splendid baroque Schönbrunn and Belvedere Palaces.

We'll take a look at the heart of the former vast Habsburg Empire, the Imperial Palace and the Schönbrunn Palace, the former summer residence of the imperial family - one of Europe's most impressive Baroque palace complexes. St. Stephen's Cathedral is the symbol of Vienna and one of the most important Gothic structures in Austria.



The Hundertwasserhaus is a residential block of flats bearing all the wacky creative hallmarks of Hundertwasser; Vienna's radical architect and lover of uneven surfaces, with its curvy lines, crayon-bright colours and mosaic detail. In the evening we'll enjoy another classical music concert in one of Vienna's music halls.

3-4 Weather permitting, we shall take the cable car to explore the beautiful alpine plateaus of Mount Rax and Mount Schneeberg, where wonderful alpine flowers attract exciting butterflies such as the sought-after Apollo.

On the higher ground we shall search for the iconic wildlife of this habitat – Snow Finch, Alpine Accentor, Alpine Chough, Ptarmigan, Golden Eagle and Alpine Chamois, all in the stunning surroundings of the Alps.

Lower down on these mountains slopes there are mixed beech and spruce forests, where Crested



"With classical concerts, a city tour, wonderful wetlands, high mountain birds and flowers and great birding in lowland Hungary – this will feel like three holidays in one! Such a great variety of things to see and do, makes this a special holiday indeed." Roy Atkins



and Willow Tit, Dipper, Grey Wagtail, crossbill and Black and Grey-headed Woodpecker occur, along with the more common forest birds - and a chance of Nutcracker too!

5 Passing through delightful little villages, we drive down into Hungary and the area around Lake Neusiedl. Europe's western-most salt-lake preserves the biggest reedbed of central Europe, protected by Ferto-Hansag National Park - a Unesco World Heritage site. White-tailed Eagle occur here, along with plenty of waders and wildfowl including Garganey, Red-crested Pochard, Ferruginous Duck, Avocet, Black-winged Stilt and Mediterranean Gull. Yellow Wagtail breeds in good numbers and Red-backed Shrikes are common.

Pygmy Cormorants are fairly recent breeders and we expect to see them in their dozens, as well as herons and egrets, Whiskered Tern and Caspian Gull, with a soundtrack of Great Reed, Common Reed and Savi's Warbler song. Elusive Moustached Warbler and Bluethroat are more difficult to see, but we hope for flocks of Bearded Tit and tiny Penduline Tit which are fairly common.

6 Raptors are our target this morning, as we explore more open habitat with scattered trees and woodland, where there are chances of Saker Falcon, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Red Kite and Honey Buzzard and with luck Montagu's Harrier too. Close to the border of Austria and Slovakia we shall search for the magnificent Great Bustard, which has a small but solid population here. Hansag-Bosarkany wetland is another important area managed by the National Park, with a similar

selection of birds. River Warbler, Bluethroat, Marsh Warbler, Spoonbill, Pygmy Cormorant, Purple Heron and Night Heron are all here, with Marsh and Montagu's Harrier and White-tailed Eagle also possible.

7 Back over the Austrian border, we shall visit shallow alkaline pools with a great selection of birds, including more Pygmy Cormorant, Red-crested and Ferruginous Duck, Purple Heron and Black and White Storks. Although not the ideal time for waders, there are still chances of late birds passing through and these sites frequently hold Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Kentish, Ringed and Little Ringed Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Ruff, Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, Wood, Green, Common and Curlew Sandpiper, Dunlin and Temminck's and Little Stints, with Common, Whiskered and Caspian Terns also here.

Scenic villages are also worth exploring, as small orchards hold Syrian Woodpecker, Black Redstart, Tree Sparrow and Serin, with parkland adding the chance of Wryneck and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. Golden Orioles favour stands of Poplar trees and Turtle Dove, Hoopoe, Crested Lark, Barred Warbler and Red-backed Shrike are also possible, as are colourful Bee-eaters.

8 After a morning walk we travel to Vienna airport for our flight home.



Outline Itinerary

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Day 1 | Arrive in Vienna and if time permits start our birding before an evening classical concert in one of Vienna's music halls
4 nights Krainershütte Hotel, Baden bei Wien |
| Day 2 | Full day exploring beautiful Vienna with a guided walk and visits to iconic sites in the city – followed in the evening with another classical concert |
| Days 3-4 | We explore the fabulous alpine scenery and wildlife of Mounts Rax and Schneeberg, with high level birds and wonderful alpine flowers |
| Days 5-7 | We drop down into Hungary for some wonderful birding around the grasslands, lakes, wetlands and woodlands close to the border, plus alkaline lakes on the Austrian side
3 nights Tornácós Ház Hotel, Hegyko |
| Day 8 | After a morning walk we head to Vienna Airport and our flight home |

Roy Atkins: Alpine Chough,
Attila Steiner: Vienna
Stephen Batt: Pygmy Cormorant, Alpine Accentor
Julian Sykes: Great Bustard
Balazs Szigeti: Saker Falcon



SUMMER WILDLIFE BONANZA



"If you want more than birds from a tour to the Highlands then this is for you. Rare butterflies, dragonflies and spectacular flowers such as Twinflower and One-flowered Wintergreen. This tour has it all."
Duncan Macdonald

Dates Sat 4 - Sat 11 Jul 2020
Price £1,775
Deposit £350 **Single Supp** £115

Leaders Duncan Macdonald and James Stevens
Weather The weather can vary enormously. During a typical week in this season we would expect mixed sun and showers with temperatures in the range of 10-25°C.
Walking There'll be some short easy strolls on wide paths but also two longer more strenuous but unrushed walks, including an "at-your-pace" 3 mile round trip walk into the Cairngorms and a walk around the 'yellow route' to Coire Lochan in Glen Affric. Walking boots are recommended and walking poles may be useful.
Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8
Insects Biting midges can occasionally be a nuisance by lochs and shores, especially in the west.
Accom Double, twin and single rooms ensuite or with private facilities at a country house hotel.
Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Northern Emerald	Frog Orchid
White-faced Darter	Lesser Twayblade
Northern Damselfly	Globe Flower
Northern Brown Argus	Starry Saxifrage
Large Heath	Dwarf Cornel
Brilliant Emerald	Pine Marten
Azure Hawker	Red Squirrel
Dark-green Fritillary	Golden Eagle
Twinflower	White-tailed Eagle
Common Wintergreen	Black-throated Diver
Serrated-leaved Wintergreen	Crested Tit
Lesser Butterfly Orchid	Scottish Crossbill
Heath Fragrant Orchid	Slavonian Grebe
Small White Orchid	Osprey

The special northern dragonflies, butterflies and wild flowers are our focus, with the chance of some Highland birds and mammals too, on our much requested Highland Full Monty!

- Special and scarce Highland butterflies and dragonflies
- Walk in Glen Affric to beautiful, dragonfly rich Coire Lochan
- A dozen species of orchid likely, including Small White and Lesser Twayblade
- Relaxed Cairngorm walk for alpine flowers as well as Frog Orchid
- A great list of Scottish birds and mammals too
- Based at a small country house hotel on the edge of the pine forest
- The perfect holiday for the 'all-round' naturalist

Our action-packed week starts with dinner together on Saturday evening, with a chance to discuss the coming days ahead.

On this week, more than any other, our itinerary is dictated by the weather! If the sun is shining we shall head to lochans and streams for dragonflies and flowery meadows or moorland for butterflies. Some of these species need sunshine to be on the wing, so we may need to grab these times if the forecast is not so good. If it is raining - well the flowers will look fabulous whatever the weather!

2-7 Our focus this week is on the special Highland species of flowers, dragonflies and butterflies, so we may start locally, visiting ancient Caledonian Pines where delicate Twinflower spread in patches on the forest floor - their tiny paired flowers are exquisite and surely one of the most beautiful

of the flowers we shall see this week. Common, Intermediate and Serrated-leaved Wintergreen are here too, while boggy pools hold Common Hawker and Four-spotted Chaser, plus rare Northern Damselfly and White-faced Darter. Orchid meadows host Small White, Greater and Lesser Butterflies, Northern Marsh and Heath Fragrant Orchids and we'll search for Lesser Twayblade, always tricky with its habit of growing under the heather!

On slopes dotted with Rockrose, we'll hunt for Northern Brown Argus in its full Scottish form - with white dots on the forewings. Large Heath and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary are on the wing and we'll also run a moth trap whenever we can.

The forests provide the chance of Red Squirrel, Crested Tit and Scottish Crossbill, though we shall need to check these carefully as both





"I love this trip for the variety of species that we look for. This quest takes us to some of the most beautiful locations in the Highlands, such as sitting next to flowering Alpine Speedwell with Ptarmigan croaking from the surrounding rocks. Pure magic." Duncan Macdonald

Common and Parrot Crossbill now breed here. We'll also make an evening hide visit, with fingers crossed for close up views of Badger and delightful Pine Martens!

The Findhorn Valley provides a chance of Golden Eagle and Mountain Hare, plus Red Deer, Dipper and Peregrine. Mountain Pansy, Stagshorn Clubmoss, Alpine Bistort and Bearberry are likely as we cross the moorland to Loch Ruthven, the stronghold of beautiful Slavonian Grebe, here in colourful breeding plumage. There is always a chance of fishing Osprey and we may find Water Lobelia – a beautiful plant with submerged leaves and white flowers. If the sun is out we'll make a dash to beautiful Loch Bran, where the rare, metallic green Brilliant Emerald and other dragonflies such as Highland Darter may be on the wing.

We'll spend a whole day walking in beautiful Glen Affric, following a trail that will lead us to a lily-studded lochan where Downy Emerald, Golden-ringed Dragonfly and White-faced Darter can be found, along with some of the more common damselflies. Our walk includes some steeper sections, but we can take it slowly - and one section of wide track holds Common Hawker and sometimes the 'holy grail' of northern dragonflies - Azure Hawker - with slim chances of Highland Darter and Dark-green Fritillary too.

Further west, we'll visit sea lochs where Rock Dove, White-tailed Eagle, Golden Eagle, Black Guillemot and Red-throated and Black-throated

Divers are possible. Common Seals haul out on the rocks, Great Skua cruise over the islands and Arctic Terns breed, but the real focus is Loch Maree, in the heart of Torridon, where we have our best chance to find Azure Hawker and Northern Emerald Dragonflies - two real Highland specialities. Great and Round-leaved Sundews trap midges here, as does Butterwort and we'll see other typical moorland species like Bog Asphodel, Lousewort and Bog Myrtle.

Our route up into the alpine world of the Cairngorms Corries is not too steep and we can stop for rests to enjoy the flowers on the way. We can compare up to six berry-bearing bushes as we walk, including Bog Bilberry, Crowberry, Bearberry and Cloudberry. The beautiful alpine flowers include Starry Saxifrage, Dwarf Cornel, Globe Flower and Trailing Azalea as we gain height.

We'll get excited about club-mosses with Fir, Interrupted and Alpine, then as we get higher, we hope to find more alpine flowers, including Alpine Ladies Mantle, Alpine Sawwort, Alpine Meadow Rue, Roseroot and perhaps the rare Alpine Speedwell - with tiny deep blue flowers. We have found patches of Frog Orchid in the past and if we have time to get beyond the large boulders in the corrie, we may even add Moss Campion and Arctic Mouse-ear.

8

We say our farewells after breakfast on Saturday.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive at our country house hotel in time for dinner and a chat about our plans for the coming week. 7 nights at Tigh-na-Sgiath Hotel.
- Days 2-7** Wildlife and birdwatching exploration including Abernethy Forest, the Cairngorms, Loch Maree, Glen Affric and West Coast.
- Day 8** After breakfast we say our farewells.

Roy Atkins: Northern Brown Argus, Twinflower, Small White Orchid, **Jane Hope:** Crested Tit
Duncan Macdonald: Above Loch Maree
Steve Dudley: Azure Hawker
James Stevens: Black-throated Diver



THE FARNE ISLANDS



"Northumberland is one of my 'Top 10' counties in the UK - it's a cliché but it 'ticks every box'. It boasts one of the most beautiful, historic and rugged coastlines, offshore islands stacked with seabirds, rolling hills covered in forest and moorland and fantastic coastal nature reserves. Couple this with Northumbrian hospitality, a cracking hotel and great local cuisine and we have a holiday to be very proud of!" Julian Sykes

Dates Sat 4 - Sat 11 Jul 2020
Price £1,925
Deposit £300 Single Supp £200

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 6 hrs, including 2 hrs onshore on both Staple and Inner Farne. Trip to Coquet Island lasts 1 hr. Our evening White-beaked Dolphin trip lasts 4 hrs

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

Insects Could be a problem, especially on the inland day

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 7

Just some of what we hope to see:

Eider	auks
Manx Shearwater	Little Owl
Little Egret	Northern Wheatear
Osprey	Stonechat
Red Grouse	Tree Sparrow
Avocet	Common Crossbill
skuas	Yellowhammer
Kittiwake	Red Squirrel
Little Gull	White-beaked Dolphin
Arctic Tern	Bottlenose Dolphin
Roseate Tern	Common Seal
Little Tern	Grey Seal

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

- Full day on Staple and Inner Farne, experiencing a seabird spectacle - not to be missed!
- Day in the famous Kielder Forest for Red Squirrel, Osprey and Common Crossbill
- South of Newcastle for Common Seal, waders and wildfowl
- Beautiful coastline with long sandy beaches, jagged rocks and migrant waders
- Superb trip deep into the North Sea for seabirds and cetaceans
- A trip out to Coquet Island to see breeding Roseate Terns and Grey Seals
- A chance to 'hang out' at the superb 'Winter's Gibbet' in the Cheviots

We are based in the beautiful, historic town of Alnwick, 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 walk along the disused railway, finding some of the commoner woodland species such as Whitethroat, Blackcap, Chiffchaff and possibly Garden Warbler.

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. North of Alnwick is Newton by the Sea, where a stop overlooking the North Sea can produce a Little Tern fishing in the shallows. There are some 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 into the adjacent county of Teeside (bring your passport!), to a couple of their flagship Reserves along the River Tees – Seal Sands NR and Saltholme RSPB Reserve. Both are excellent and both very different, with the former being notable for Common Seals hauled out on the river's edge and the latter for its breeding Avocets, along with plenty of other wildfowl and waders. This is also an area that can produce an avian surprise or two, especially





"Seeing Puffins, Guillemots, Razorbills, Kittiwakes, Shags and aggressive terns is astonishing, with every ledge and crevice being taken by one of these seabirds. We shall wander these small islands experiencing this arrest to the senses from sight, sound and smell. All around, large gulls look for an easy meal, as they prey on the auks, their eggs and hatchlings –this is nature. Seabird cities are special in the UK - one of our great avian spectacles. Staple and Inner Farne have them in spades!"
Julian Sykes

since waders such as Black-tailed Godwit and Greenshank are moving south from their breeding grounds.

Thousands of seabirds breed in Northumberland and we'll enjoy special boat trips to see them astonishingly close up. A visit to the Farne Islands needs no introduction and will be one of the highlights of the week. Our day here includes landings on both Inner Farne and Staple and we shall see birds at incredibly close range - expect Kittiwakes, Guillemots, Razorbills, Puffins, Shags and Eider at your feet - a photographer's dream! Arctic Terns nest beside the paths and dive-bomb you as you walk - a good hat or a stick held aloft will keep us safe from their sharp bills!

Colonies of Sandwich and Common Terns are here too and inquisitive Grey Seals lift their heads from the water as we pass. A second boat trip takes us to RSPB Coquet Island (no landing) 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 tour takes us out into deeper water and as a consequence we have a chance to see Gannets fishing, Red-throated Diver and possibly Manx Shearwater.

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 phragmite beds, 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 Whimbrel 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 in 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 or The White Swan Hotel, Alnwick for a 7 night stay
- Days 2-7 Exploration of the coast, forest and moorland, including 3 boat trips for The Farne Islands, the Farnes Deepes and Coquet Island
- Day 8 We say our farewells and depart after breakfast

James Glover: Puffin, Bamburgh Castle, Roseate Tern
Simon Eaves: Black-tailed Godwits
Jane Hope: Bottle-nosed Dolphin, Red Squirrel
Chrissie Nicholson: Lindisfarne Castle



SPITSBERGEN



"The pack ice is such an extreme environment - whiteness in all directions, with just the noise of the ship crunching its way forwards and the occasional Kittiwake... then out in all this nothingness are Polar Bears - huge predators that somehow survive in this extreme place!" Darren Rees

Dates Sat 18 - Tue 28 Jul 2020

Standard cabin £7,595 SS £3,850
Superior cabin £8,645 SS £4,600

Deposit £1,500

Prices for sharing a Standard or Superior Cabin

Leader Darren Rees

Flights Scandinavian Airlines, scheduled
Outbound: (via Oslo)
Morning, Heathrow-Longyearbyen
Inbound: (via Oslo)
Morning, Longyearbyen-Heathrow

Weather Generally settled with little rain and light winds. A mixture of sun and showers (-5°-+15°C)

Unlikely to be rough on the water

Walking Generally easy, ½-1 ½ miles, occasionally boggy terrain and rocks. Wellingtons essential for landings, available to hire onboard. Lightweight shoes are suitable whilst onboard

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 11

Insects No biting insects

Accom Radisson Blu Polar Hotel
- double, twin and single rooms
MV Plancius - double, twin and single cabins
All rooms and cabins are ensuite

Fees Gratuities on board are extra, approx EUR 5-10pp per day

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Polar Bear	Barnacle Goose
Arctic Fox	Pink-footed Goose
Walrus	King Eider
Bearded Seal	Long-tailed Duck
Ringed Seal	Little Auk
Harp Seal	Brünnich's Guillemot
Beluga Whale	Puffin
Minke Whale	Pomarine Skua
Fin Whale	Grey Phalarope
Svalbard Reindeer	Sanderling
Ivory Gull	Turnstone
Sabine's Gull	Purple Sandpiper
Glaucous Gull	Snow Bunting

Polar Bears (seen every time), Walrus, Beluga, Ivory Gull and millions of Little Auks in the Arctic wilderness - join us on this unforgettable cruise around the Svalbard archipelago.

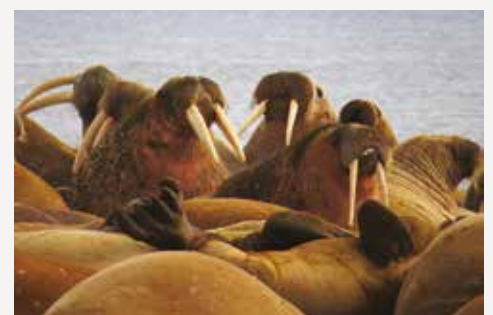
- Get just 600 miles from the North Pole
- Aboard the ice-reinforced, small-group, MV Plancius
- Cruise right round the island of Spitsbergen
- Ivory Gull, Grey Phalarope and millions of Little Auks
- Arctic Fox, Reindeer and big white bears
- Ice-floes with Walrus, seals and Belugas
- Generally mild and settled weather and the sun doesn't set

Flying to Longyearbyen, via Oslo, we'll stay overnight in a hotel, ready to board our vessel the next day. The following itinerary includes many of the likely places we shall visit, but will be influenced by weather and pack-ice conditions. Every trip is different; every trip is astonishing.

2-10 We shall have most of the day to explore Longyearbyen, the archipelago's tiny capital. There's plenty of time to visit museums, galleries and start the bird list: Purple Sandpiper, Snow Bunting, Glaucous Gull and Arctic Tern are all commonplace and we may see short-legged Svalbard Reindeer, while Arctic flowers are abundant here! Late afternoon we'll board our ship MV Plancius, an excellent, ice-reinforced modern vessel, 89 metres long, that can carry up to 116 passengers. Most days, using

the ship's fleet of tough Zodiacs, we'll make safe, easy, shore landings and, in case we encounter a Polar Bear on land, which is a real possibility, we'll always be in the close company of our armed guides!

First stop may be Ny Ålesund, the world's northern-most permanently inhabited settlement, from where Amundsen and Nobile, in the airship Norge, made their flight to the North Pole. Local pools host Long-tailed Ducks, Barnacle Geese, Red-throated Divers and Arctic Terns. At the Husky pound we may encounter our first Ivory Gull! In Kongsfjorden there are dramatic glaciers, walls of ice where sections calve off and blue 'bergs' bob in the water. Grassy slopes, enriched with bird droppings, are full of fabulous arctic-alpine plants and seabirds include Razorbill, Brünnich's Guillemot and Puffin.



"It is so hard to put into words what makes this trip so incredible - the sheer beauty of the surroundings, the feeling of being so privileged to see such special wildlife, the remoteness - this is a real adventure into a place so wild, it feels different to almost anywhere else. You have to be there!"
Darren Rees



Sailing into Liefdefjorden - great for Minke Whales and porpoising Harp Seals - we'll explore tundra islands at Andøya, where Common and King Eider breed, with maybe Pomarine Skua overhead. We'll cruise near the impressive Monaco Glacier, a favourite feeding spot for thousands of Kittiwakes, 'blue' Fulmars and Glaucous Gulls - and occasionally Polar Bears.

We'll head north to our first areas of pack ice, spending a day immersed in a wonderful white world like no other, reaching our northernmost point at around 81 degrees north, just 540 miles from the North Pole. Remote areas north of Hinlopen and around Nordaustlandet, may be locked in shifting pack ice, where Ringed and Bearded Seals haul out and there are great chances of seeing Polar Bears in their endless ice wanderings, often with Ivory Gulls in attendance. We may sit for several hours in the pack ice, taking in our spectacular surroundings.

We visit islands where herds of Walrus may congregate, getting close up to these huge animals as they 'sunbathe', grunting to each other. Sabine's Gulls have nested on these islands, as well as delightful Grey Phalaropes and we'll look out for delicate alpine flowers such as Tufted and Drooping Saxifrage, White Arctic Bell-heather and Mountain Avenas.

Sailing into Hinlopen Strait, we'll keep our eyes peeled for whales. Fin Whales can be here in small numbers and we've also seen Blue and Humpback Whale. We'll explore the magnificent bird cliffs of

Alkefjellet, with tens of thousands of Brünnich's Guillemots and we'll scan for Arctic Fox - looking for a dislodged chick or egg.

Continuing south, we pass the islands of Barentsøya and Edgeøya, denning spots for Polar Bears. Our southern-most stop is the hauntingly beautiful fjord of Hornsund, where towering peaks show why Dutch explorers gave Spitsbergen its name - 'pointed mountains'. Here, the glaciers and shore-fast ice are great for bear encounters and Beluga Whales are a scarce but regular possibility too.

At Bellsund we should visit the spectacular cliffs at Ingerborgfjellet, where incredible numbers of Little Auk nest amongst the boulder fields, allowing close approach, their laughing cries filling the air. The tundra here is particularly lush, great for botanising and a favoured haunt for curious Svalbard Reindeer, as well as delightful Arctic Foxes.

|| We return to Longyearbyen and make our sad farewells to our ship, before our flights take us back home.

Standard cabin, with window - two beds.
Superior cabin, with window - double bed plus single sofa bed.
Other cabin types are available; twin with porthole view, or twin deluxe with window. Please contact us for discounts/supplements on these.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Fly to Longyearbyen, via Oslo
1 night at Radisson Blu Polar Hotel
- Day 2** Day around Longyearbyen boarding the MV Plancius in the afternoon
- Days 3-10** The itinerary is dependent on the weather and where the pack ice is to be found. We hope to circumnavigate Spitsbergen Island, heading out of Isfjorden and then north to Kongssjorden and Ny Ålesund before exploring the north coast perhaps visiting Liefdefjorden and Andøya. We may head into the pack ice north of the islands before passing through the Hinlopen Strait between the islands of Spitsbergen and Nordaustlandet. We are likely to visit Alkefjellet, Hornsund and Bellsund on our way back to Longyearbyen
- Day 11** Disembark in Longyearbyen before catching our flights home

Roy Atkins: Polar Bear, Grey Phalarope, Walrus, 14th July Glacier, Brünnich's Guillemot, Arctic Fox



WRANGEL ISLAND



"The cliches just keep coming 'trip of a lifetime', 'ultimate Arctic expedition cruise', 'boundless possibilities', but the astonishing reality is that we have an excellent chance of seeing lots of Polar Bears. The thought sends a tingle down my spine!"
Julian Sykes

Dates Sun 19 Jul - Mon 3 Aug 2020
Price £12,295
Deposit £2,450 Single Supp £7,350
Price is for sharing a Superior Plus Twin cabin

Leader Julian Sykes
Flights Aeroflot, scheduled
Outbound: Morning, Heathrow-Moscow
Inbound: Evening, Moscow-Heathrow
Internal flights, Utair airlines
Overnight, Moscow-Anadyr
Afternoon, Anadyr-Moscow
Weather Variable, may be mild and dry but also cool with showers (1°-15°C)
Walking Easy to moderate walking on good tracks, some of reasonable length, but none too strenuous
Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to dinner on Day 16
Insects Biting insects should not be a problem
Accom Well appointed and spacious cabins on the ice-strengthened ship Kapitan Khlebnikov. Holiday price is based on sharing a Superior Plus Twin cabin. Other cabin types available, please ask for details
Visa/Fees Russia Tourist Visa required, approx £100. Must be obtained before travel in person at local visa centre. Gratuities on board are extra, approx \$15pp per day
Group 10

Just some of what we hope to see:

Polar Bear	Snowy Owl
Pacific Walrus	Snow Goose
Musk Ox	Harlequin Duck
Arctic Fox	Rough-legged Buzzard
Arctic Ground Squirrel	Sandhill Crane
Northern Pika	Tufted Puffin
Bowhead Whale	Pigeon Guillemot
Humpback Whale	Sabine's Gull
Grey Whale	Ross's Gull
Beluga Whale	Snow Bunting
Fin Whale	

A unique opportunity to join an expedition that crosses the Arctic Circle, visiting the pristine Wrangel and Herald Islands, along with the wild North East Siberian coastline.

- Polar Bears! – lots of them with a good chance of cubs
- Beluga, Humpback and possibly Bowhead Whales
- Snowy Owls on their breeding grounds
- Incredible, desolate landscape at the top of the world
- Musk Ox, Reindeer, Arctic Fox, Pacific Walrus
- Fantastic island cliffs full of breeding seabirds
- The ultimate in expedition cruising!

1-2 We shall fly London to Moscow, change airports and then take an overnight flight to Anadyr; where we join our ship. However, before boarding we shall check the bay, where it's possible to find Beluga Whales close inshore, making a good start to the expedition.

3-6 As we sail across Anadyrskiy Bay towards the Bering Strait, there will be introductory lectures and a series of compulsory briefings and drills, but we can relax and enjoy some birding and cetacean watching and settle into ship's life.

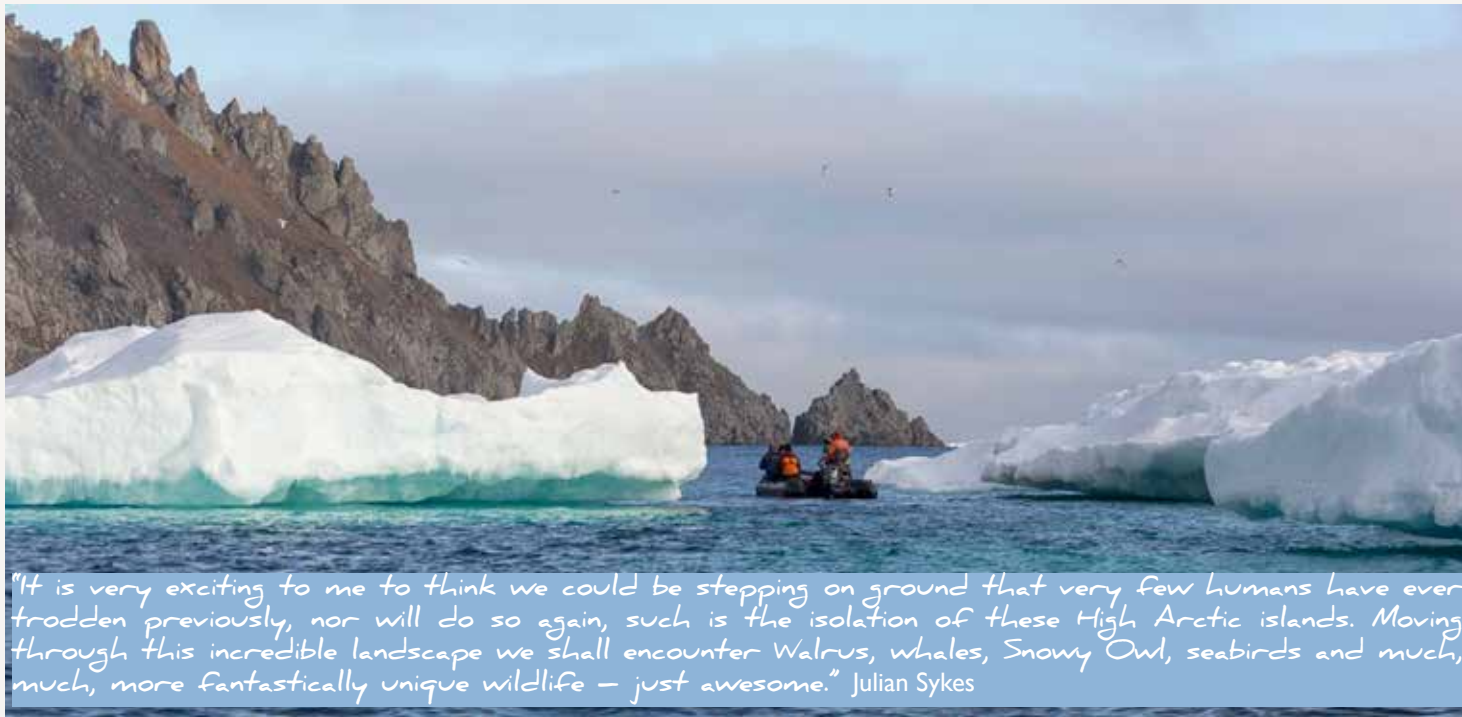
We arrive in Lavrentiya Bay the next morning and will explore the township and local museum, giving an insight into Yupik and Chukchi cultures. Sea conditions permitting, we shall land at Cape Dezhnev in the afternoon. This is the north eastern-most point of the Eurasian continent, where it is sometimes possible to see the coast

of America. It is also a historic landmark named after the Siberian Cossack, Semyon Dezhnev, who in 1648 became the first European to sail from the Arctic to the Pacific.

We head onwards to Kolyuchin Inlet, so huge it is visible from satellite photos! It contains vast numbers of waterfowl and migratory waders and we'll concentrate our visit on Belaka Spit near the mouth of the inlet. It is a wild, desolate landscape that is strangely beautiful. We'll search the dunes and tidal areas for rare species including Emperor Goose and Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Gray Whales frequent the area and are sometimes spotted feeding only metres offshore, with Bowheads and Humpbacks also possible, the latter sometimes in large groupings.

Later, we arrive at Kolyuchin Island; once an important Russian Polar Research Station, one of a number dotted across the Arctic. Near the





"It is very exciting to me to think we could be stepping on ground that very few humans have ever trodden previously, nor will do so again, such is the isolation of these High Arctic islands. Moving through this incredible landscape we shall encounter Walrus, whales, Snowy Owl, seabirds and much, much, more fantastically unique wildlife – just awesome." Julian Sykes

derelict buildings are some of the most spectacular bird cliffs in the Arctic, where Horned and Tufted Puffins, Brunnich's Guillemots and Glaucous Gulls nest. We then continue across the Chukchi Sea, with the possibility of sea ice to negotiate as we get closer to Wrangel Island. This could very well offer us our first opportunities to see Polar Bears, Larga Seals and Pacific Walrus.

7-11 Ice and weather conditions permitting, we shall spend the next few days on Wrangel Island and will also attempt to include a visit to nearby Herald Island. There are many landings that can be made as we search out the wildlife, wild flowers and Arctic landscapes. Polar Bears will be high on our list and with a little patience we should be rewarded with several encounters, hopefully with cubs!

Musk Ox and Reindeer have been introduced to the island, though reindeer numbers remain low. Wrangel Island is a Russian Federal Nature Reserve of international significance, particularly as it is a major Polar Bear denning area. Also, each summer, thousands of birds migrate here to breed, including Snowy Owls, Snow Geese and Pomerine and Long-tailed Skuas, plus large groups of Walrus haul out on rocky inlets.

12-15 As we sail back through the Bering Strait we shall pass the Diomed Islands, sometimes called Tomorrow Island and Yesterday Isle, because they straddle the International Date Line. Here Russia and America are separated by only 2.3 nautical miles of ocean. We continue south, hugging the North Siberian Coast. Bounded by narrow sand ridges

with numerous lagoons and inlets, this area offers plenty of places to land and explore the extensive coastline. One afternoon we may visit Masik Village, an archaeological site at Mechigmen Bay which is part of Beringia National Park. This site consists of subterranean dwellings, food caches and possible ceremonial structures, where materials used in construction were whale skulls, ribs and jawbones.

Yttygran Island is home to the monumental ancient aboriginal site known as Whale Bone Alley. Whalebones stretch along the beach for nearly half a kilometre. Gray Whales are frequently seen around the island. We shall also cruise by Nuneangan and Arakamchechen Islands where seabirds nest and Walrus can be found.

On our last full day at sea, we shall be near Preobrazheniya Bay, with its outstanding 'bird cliffs' which we can cruise past by zodiac. The rock faces, ridgelines and soaring granite spires, are home to an abundance of bird life. Species that can be seen include Common and Brunnich's Guillemots, Least and Crested Auklets, Vega Gulls and Arctic Tern. Horned and Tufted Puffins are normally here in vast numbers, completing this seabird spectacle.

16 After breakfast, back in Anadyr; it will be time to say farewell to the ship and board our flight back to Moscow, transferring airports again for the final leg back to the UK.

Other cabin types are available; Superior Plus Triple, Mini Suite and Heritage Suite. Please contact us for details if these are of interest.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Fly Heathrow to Moscow, transfer to Moscow VKO airport for an overnight flight to Anadyr
- Days 2-6** Arrive Anadyr; with maybe time to explore the town before we transfer to the ship. Sail across Anadyrskiy Bay towards the Bering Strait. Visit the Chukchi Region's administrative centre Lavrentiya. Possible landing at Cape Dezhnev. Spend time at Kolyuchin Inlet. View the spectacular bird cliffs of Kolyuchin Island. Sail across Chukchi Sea
- Days 7-11** We spend the next few days on and around Wrangel Island, with a visit to Herald Island. Polar Bears are high on the list and there should be many viewings
- Days 12-15** Visit Dragi Harbour then sail through the Bering Strait, pass the Diomed Islands, continue along the North Siberian Coast, with landings to explore the coastline. Visit Masik Village then on to Yttygran, Nuneangan and Arakamchechen Islands. Zodiac cruise past bird cliffs at Preobrazheniya Bay. Sail across Anadyrskiy Bay to Anadyr
- Day 16** Disembark in Anadyr for flight to Moscow, transfer between airports for flight to the UK, arriving late evening

A Terauds: Polar Bear, Arctic Fox
Agnes Breniere: Wrangel Island
K Ovsyanikova: Walrus, Horned Puffin, Snowy Owl





Christine Maughan

Great Blue Heron, British Columbia. Details page 98



John Osborne

Eider, Autumn Wildlife in the Cairngorms. Holiday details page 106

Just a few of the images
guests and guides have taken
on Speyside Wildlife trips



James Glover

Little Owl, The Farne Islands. Details page 78



John Sawyer

Iguazu Falls, The Brazilian Pantanal. Holiday details page 88



Roy Cowley

Great White Egret, East Yorkshire. Holiday details page 108



Christine Maughan

Humpback Whale, British Columbia. Holiday details page 98



John Osborne

Red Squirrel, Autumn Wildlife in the Cairngorms. Holiday details page 106



Christine Maughan

Song Sparrow, British Columbia. Details pg 98



John Osborne

Gannet, Autumn Wildlife. Holiday details page 106



Steve Batt

Lesser Spotted Eagle, Romania. Holiday details page 92



Steve Batt

Wood Duck, British Columbia. Holiday details page 98



Lesley Gadsden

Guests on Orkney. Holiday details page 90



"The north western mountains of Spain, incredibly beautiful and scenic, are also home to the rare and endangered Cantabrian Brown Bear. These rugged peaks are their stronghold and we have a good chance of spotting them amongst the karst limestone rocks and lush broom vegetation."
Julian Sykes

Dates Sat 15 - Mon 24 Aug 2020
Tue 25 Aug - Thu 3 Sep 2020

Price £3,295

Deposit £645 Single Supp £250

Leader Julian Sykes

Flights British Airways, scheduled,
Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-Bilbao
Inbound: Evening, Bilbao-Gatwick
Second group will meet Julian in Bilbao

Weather Probably a mixture of sun and showers
(15°-30°C), warmer in lowland areas
and on coast, but will be cooler in the
mountains and on the boat trip

Walking There will be some short easy walks
on level paths, but also possibly some
rough terrain and uphill, depending
on mammal sites

Meals All included from lunch on Day 1
to lunch on Day 10

Insects Biting insects are not usually a problem
but repellent may be useful

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 7

Just some of what we hope to see:

Cantabrian Brown Bear	Golden Eagle
Iberian Wolf	Short-toed Eagle
Wildcat	Little Bustard
Wild Boar	Great Skua
Southern Chamois	Sabine's Gull
Snow Vole	Black Woodpecker
Red Squirrel	Calandra Lark
Spoonbill	Snowfinch
Balearic Shearwater	Alpine Chough
Cory's Shearwater	Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush
Lammergeier	Iberian Chiffchaff
Egyptian Vulture	Western Bonelli's Warbler
Honey Buzzard	Wallcreeper
Montagu's Harrier	Alpine Accentor

Julian Sykes: Cantabrian Brown Bear, landscape,
Wildcat, Iberian Wolf, Rebeco
Tim Drew: Wallcreeper
Mary and Dave Braddock: Sooty Shearwater

A wonderful opportunity to combine the fantastic wildlife and scenery of the Cantabrian Mountains and the coastline of the Asturias Costa Verde.

- Rare mammals of Europe - Iberian Wolf and Cantabrian Brown Bear
- Good chance of European Wildcat in the meadows
- High mountains for Wallcreeper, Snowfinch and Alpine Accentor
- Breathtaking scenery in the Cantabrian Mountains
- Full day at sea chumming for seabirds from Gijón
- Spanish Ibex, Southern Chamois, Snow Vole, Red Deer
- Lots of wonderful reptiles, amphibians, butterflies and flora

Julian has been interested in Cantabria for a while, so we have put a recce visit together and we thought you'd like to join him. He knows exactly where he wants to go and what he expects to see, but he'll be exploring other unknown areas, so some days will be kept flexible. We know the scenery is beautiful, the birds are great and, given we've exclusive access to off-road sites with local experts who know their habits well, we hope the mammals will be spectacular too!

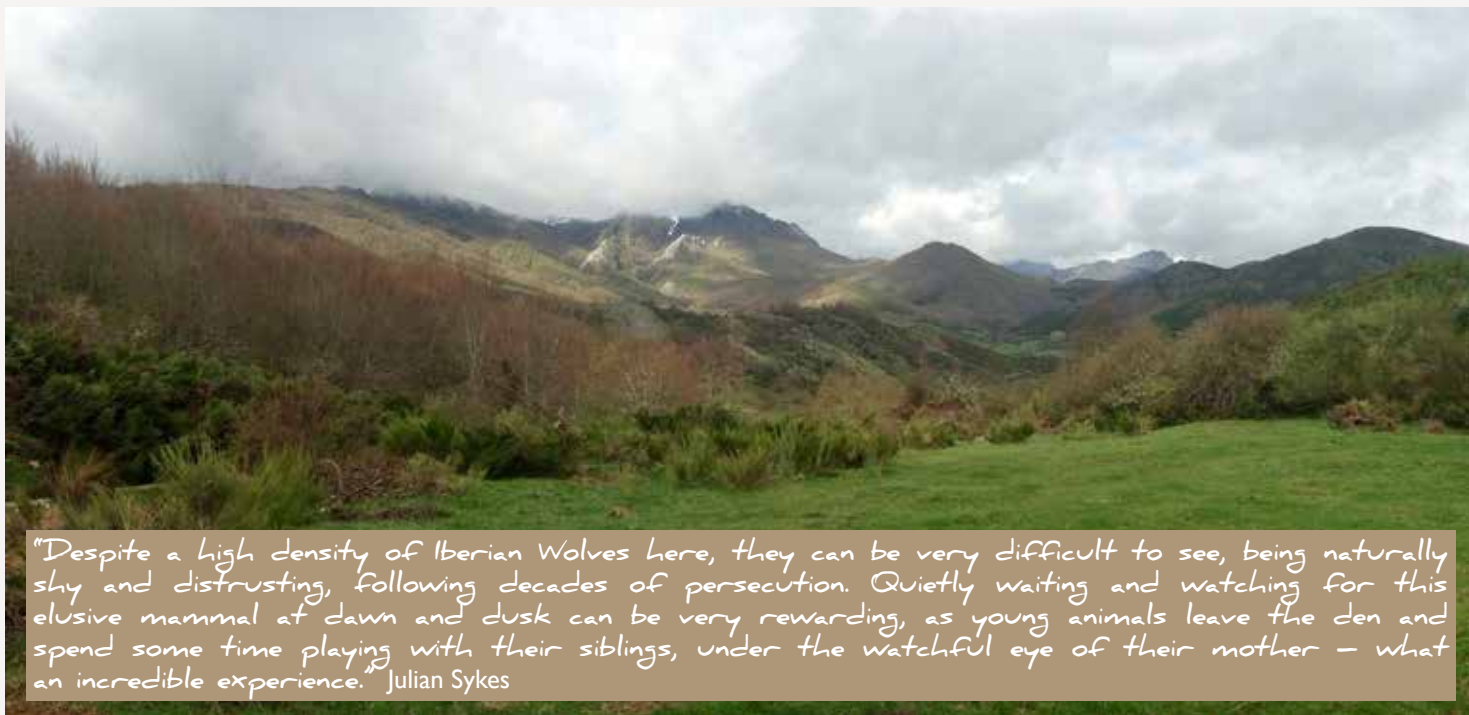
I Fly to Bilbao and drive straight along the coast, stopping off at the excellent Santana Marshes briefly to kick off the tour checklist with Little Egret, Western Yellow-legged Gull, Curlew and Common Redshank. With a bit of luck we might even find Spoonbill, Whimbrel, Ruff and Spotted Redshank, which should be making their way back south.



After lunch we'll continue to our accommodation in Riano, the heart of the Cantabrian mountains. Towards the end of the day we shall make our first (of many) visits to find the Iberian Wolf, which in reality takes a lot of patience and luck, however we shall be in one of the best positions to encounter one, due to our hosts local and invaluable knowledge. During our time watching and waiting we should also see other mammals including Fox, Wild Boar and Red and Roe Deer, some of the Wolf's known prey.

2-4 The next three days will be spent primarily searching for the Iberian Wolves at dawn and dusk, as this is the time when they are most active during daylight hours. The Sierra de Riano forms part of the Cordillera Cantábrica, which holds most of Spain's 3000+ wolves, a marked and welcome increase since the estimated lows of the 1970's.





Off-road vehicles will be used to access the remote areas and local knowledge of their dens will be invaluable. Although seeing these beautiful canines will be our main priority, we shall also utilise the main daylight hours for other wildlife excursions, looking for Southern Chamois, Spanish Ibex and rare Broom Hare, found only in these mountains.

One day we shall drive back into the Picos de Europa National Park, where we shall take the 600m cable car ascent up to Fuente De, looking for scarce montane breeding wildlife such as Wallcreeper, Snowfinch, Alpine Accentor and Snow Vole. If we are really lucky a Lammergeier might be seen amongst the much commoner Griffon Vultures.

5-7 After another pre-breakfast visit to one of the watchpoints for Iberian Wolf, we shall return to the accommodation, collect our luggage and head off west through the mountains of Cantabria. Enroute we stop at an area of specifically developed, low-intensity agricultural land, which could yield some excellent steppe species such as Little Bustard, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Montagu's Harrier, Rock Sparrow, Lesser Kestrel, plus good numbers of larks and finches.

In the heat of the day we shall then make the transfer to Pola de Somiedo, where we shall spend our remaining three nights at a rural hotel, local to the major Cantabrian Brown Bear watchpoints.

The next two full days we shall drive and walk through this incredibly scenic mountain range

in search of Cantabrian Brown Bears. This is a sub-species of the much wider-spread Brown Bear; that occurs in Northern Europe, Russia and, North America. Unfortunately through hunting and habitat destruction, they have been reduced to the edge of extinction in Spain. These mountains are the last great stronghold for the species and we have a good chance of spotting one amongst the karst limestone rocks and lush vegetation, along with Rebeco (Cantabrian form of Southern Chamois) and Red Squirrel. We shall try and find all these species and hopefully get very good views of the bears during our time here. Even if we don't, this very special place will have you in awe of its wonderful natural beauty.

8-9 After a final look for Cantabrian Brown Bear, we leave the mountains and drive north back to the 'Costa Verde', where we shall make our way to the beautiful harbour-town of Gijón. We are now in the perfect position for our final full day in north west Spain on a boat in the North Atlantic. Specialist charters have been sailing out into these waters for several years now, with excellent results attracting seabirds. This pelagic will offer fantastic photographic opportunities, with shearwaters, petrels, skuas and other seabirds feeding at the back of the boat – making for a day to remember and a fantastic finale to the holiday.

10 Depending on the time of the return flight, we may have a chance for a stop at one of the coastal wetland sites enroute to Bilbao Airport. A great way to end the holiday.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Fly from Gatwick to Bilbao and transfer to our hotel in Riano
4 nights Hotel Presa
- Days 2-4** Three full days in the Cantabrian Mountains searching for Iberian Wolf and European Wildcat
- Day 5** Transfer to Pola de Somiedo for 3 nights Hotel Castillo de Alba
- Days 6-7** Two full days searching for Cantabrian Brown Bear near Villablino
- Day 8** Transfer to our hotel in Gijón
2 nights Hotel Asturias
- Day 9** Full day pelagic trip on board our boat from Gijón
- Day 10** Transfer to Bilbao for our evening flight home, stopping enroute if time allows



THE BRAZILIAN PANTANAL



"Iguazú Falls is surely the most spectacular waterfall in the world. Not as many people come for the superb birding – yet the trails nearby can hold a fabulous array of species, from toucans and tanagers to hummingbirds and manakins – it is a wonderful place!"
Roy Atkins

Dates Sat 15 - Sat 29 Aug 2020

Price £7,250

Deposit £1,400 Single Supp £700

Leaders Roy Atkins and local guides

Flights British Airways, scheduled
Outbound: Overnight, Heathrow-Sao Paulo
Inbound: Overnight, Sao Paulo-Heathrow
Internal, local airlines: Sao Paulo
-Cuiabá-Foz do Iguaçu-Sao Paulo

Weather In the Pantanal it is the dry season, but there could still be showers. Temperatures should be around 25°C but are not entirely predictable and can sometimes be very chilly in the early morning and very hot at midday (12°C at night to max of 34°C during day). Iguazú is in an area of rainforest, so showers can be expected, with temps around 17°C, (12°C at night to max 26°C during the day) but again unpredictable

Walking Pantanal walks will be on easy forest trails with some birding and evening drives from open vehicle and Jaguar watching from boat trips on the river. In Iguazú, the walkways at the waterfalls are wide and elevated, built on metal grid plates with solid handrails and some steps. We shall also be on wide forest trails that, depending on rains, might be muddy

Meals All included from lunch on Day 2 to lunch on Day 14

Insects There will be biting insects in some of the areas visited, so repellent is essential

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Jaguar	Red-legged Seriema
Giant Otter	Toco Toucan
Brazilian Tapir	Plush-crested Jay
Giant Anteater	Sungrebe
Hyacinth Macaw	Greater Rhea
Jabiru	Black-collared Hawk

Good chance of Jaguar in this famous seasonal wetland, plus Giant Otters, Brazilian Tapir and with luck, Giant Anteaters too - and Hyacinth Macaw - the biggest parrot in the world!

- Jaguars! Your best chance of seeing this stunningly beautiful big cat
- The incomparable Iguazú Falls with fabulous views - we spend two days here
- Around 300 species of birds likely, plus many mammals
- Watch Great Dusky Swifts as they come to roost behind a curtain of water
- Hyacinth Macaws - the biggest and perhaps most beautiful parrot in the world
- Brazilian Tapir, Giant Otter, Capybara and with luck - Giant Anteater
- Toco Toucan, Red-legged Seriema, Jabiru, Southern Screamer and lots more

1-2 After an overnight flight we arrive at Sao Paulo early in the morning. We then take an onward flight to Cuiabá, arriving in time for lunch. Well fed, we drive to our delightful lodge in the Chapada dos Guimaraes, looking out for parrots, macaws and toucans along the way. We should have time to sample the excellent birding around the lodge before sunset.

3 The dry savannah, with gnarled trees of the Chapada dos Guimaraes National Park, provides a complete contrast to the coming Pantanal - and a completely different selection of birds. Amongst many species special to this area we hope to find Peach-fronted Parakeet, Red-shouldered Macaw, Curl-crested Jay, Cliff Flycatcher, Guira Cuckoo, Black-faced Saltator, Shrike-like Tanager and with luck Horned Sungem! Red-legged Seriema, South America's answer to the Secretary Bird,

is possible here, as are gorgeous Campo Flickers, various macaws and there is always the chance of an Armadillo!

4-6 After more birding in the Chapada, we drive towards the famous Pantanal - a vast area of seasonal wetland covering roughly 142,500 sq. kilometres - bigger than England!! As the flood waters dry up, the huge flocks of birds are concentrated around the remaining water and we'll pause to enjoy spectacular mixed flocks of herons, egrets and ibis, plus Roseate Spoonbill, Maguari and Wood Storks, Rufescent Tiger Herons, Limpkin and enormous Jabiru. Snail Kites, Savannah Hawks and Black-collared Hawks are common and we'll look out for Whistling and Capped Herons and Sunbittern. Large-billed Terns and Black Skimmer fish in the channels, White-headed Marsh-Tyrants perch on wires, rare





"The masses of birds around some of the shrinking pools as we travel the Transpantaneira have to be seen to be believed – you have never seen so many Jabiru in your life – along with hundreds of egrets, Roseate Spoonbills, Limpkins and Wood Storks, with Snail Kites and Black-collared Hawks and dozens of Yacare Caiman on the banks - it is truly spectacular!" Roy Atkins

Marsh Deer are possible and there'll be astonishing numbers of Yacare Caiman.

This whole area is worth exploring, with an impressive bird list including Nanday Parakeets, Chestnut-eared Araçari, Golden-collared Macaw, Bare-faced Curassow and stately Greater Rheas among many others. Dryer areas covered in termite mounds provide our best chance for Giant Anteater and we hope to see Brazilian Tapir and other mammals such as Crab-eating Fox or Collared Peccary.

7-9 We move on to the end of the road and Porto Jofre, where raucous Hyacinth Macaws feed around our lodge, but our big target here is that most mythical and enigmatic of cats - the Jaguar! During the dry season, this beautiful cat can frequently be found along the scrubby river banks and it will be with baited breath and crossed fingers that we take four boat trips along the Cuiabá River, where chances are high, especially now that the boats are all in radio contact. Keep your cameras at hand, as even if no Jaguars appear, there is plenty of other wildlife to keep us happy - Giant Otters, Capybara and plenty of birds including Sungrebe, Pied and Collared Plovers, Great Black Hawk, White Woodpecker, Orange-backed Troupial, Vermillion Flycatcher and enormous Southern Screamers! At dusk, spectacular Greater Bulldog Bats and Band-tailed Nighthawks skim the water.

10 We bid farewell to the Pantanal and drive back to Cuiabá, birding enroute.



11-13 Our early flight takes us to Foz do Iguaçu (Brazil), where we cross the border into Argentina. We'll visit a fabulous hummingbird garden, where feeders attract Black Jacobin, Guilded Sapphire, Purple-crowned Woodnymph, Versicolored Emerald and Planalto Hermit, amongst others. Over the next two days we'll enjoy myriad colourful birds in Iguazú's rainforests - trogons, manakins, noisy flocks of parrots and parakeets, antwrens, antshrikes, toucans, woodpeckers and tanagers just for starters!

Iguazú Falls are 1.7 miles long and considered by many the most spectacular collection of waterfalls in the world!! Numerous islands divide it into between 150 and 300 separate waterfalls depending on the flow - with half the river's flow falling into a single long, narrow chasm called the Devil's Throat. This spectacle can be enjoyed from different walkways reached by road and a narrow-gauge railway and we shall have plenty of time to take it all in. Plush-crested Jay are tame here and around picnic sites we may be very close to Southern Coati and Tufted Capuchin Monkeys - hold onto your sandwich! At sunset, we hope to witness Great Dusky Swifts dive through the foaming water to roost behind the falls - an incredible sight.

14-15 We take a morning flight to Sao Paulo to connect with the flight back to London, arriving in the morning of Day 15.



Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-3** Overnight flight to Sao Paulo, then onward flight to Cuiabá and transfer to Chapada dos Guimarães
2 nights Pousada Quinta dos Quintais
- Days 4-6** Transfer to Transpantaneira.
Two full days wildlife watching in this excellent area - great birding plus perhaps Tapir and Giant Anteater
3 nights Pousa Alegre
- Days 7-9** Transfer to Porto Jofre.
Boat trips on the river in search of the big cat, Giant Otter and birds
3 nights Hotel Porto Jofre
- Day 10** Transfer to Cuiabá
1 night Hotel Taina
- Days 11-13** Morning flight to Foz do Iguaçu.
Visit Iguazú Falls. Two full days in the area with superb birding
3 nights La Cantera Jungle Lodge
- Days 14-15** Morning flight to Sao Paulo then flight back to UK, arriving Day 15

Roy Atkins: Jaguar, Transpantaneira Wetlands, Sungrebe
Evelyn Moorkens: Toco Toucan
Jean & Chris Parrott: Giant Otter, Hyacinth Macaws

AN ORKNEY ODYSSEY



"We watched in awe as the setting sun create glowing colours over the great cliffs of Hoy amongst the Gannets and Bonxies and then as it sank below the waves, we saw the mythical 'green flash'. It was all so fleeting, but that moment has stayed with me and gives me a great big smile inside."
Tim Drew

Dates Thu 27 Aug - Sat 5 Sep 2020

Price £2,375

Deposit £450 Single Supp £350

Leaders Tim Drew and Craig Round

Weather The weather can vary enormously. During a typical week in this season we would expect mixed sun and showers with temperatures of 10-20°C. It may be cooler round the coast and though we could see unbroken sunshine and settled weather, Orkney can also be wet and windy. Bring layers and waterproofs and sunscreen too!

Walking Walking will generally be very relaxed and easy. On one of the days there is the option of walking to the Old Man of Hoy, which is a 5½ mile fairly easy return walk along a well maintained footpath. On some days walking will be minimal.

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 10

Insects Biting insects should not be a problem

Accom Double, twin and single ensuite rooms

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Hen Harrier	Black-tailed Godwit
White-tailed Eagle	Bar-tailed Godwit
Short-eared Owl	Ruff
Merlin	Gannet
Great Skua	Rock Dove
Arctic Skua	Twite
Manx Shearwater	common and maybe
Sooty Shearwater	rarer autumn migrants
Red-throated Diver	Otters
Black Guillemot	dolphins
Eider	Minke Whale
Golden Plover	Harbour Porpoise
Sanderling	seals

We have added to our classic Orkney, trip with extra days and the extra islands of Hoy and Westray adding to the wonderful selection of birding and archaeological sites we'll visit.

- Skara Brae, Tomb of the Eagles, Ring of Brodgar, Maes Howe
- The Island of Hoy and its oldest resident - plus Scapa Flow Museum
- Visit to Westray where Gannets may still be present on spectacular Noup Head
- Broch of Gurness - Iron Age broch village
- Autumn migration - perhaps a Wryneck, Red-backed Shrike or something rarer!
- Short-eared Owl, Hen Harrier, Red-throated Divers and skuas - and maybe Otters
- The Loons RSPB Reserve, Yesnaby Cliffs and, if time permits, the Brough of Birsay

1 We meet in Inverness in time for dinner in our overnight hotel, giving us time to chat about the coming exciting trip.

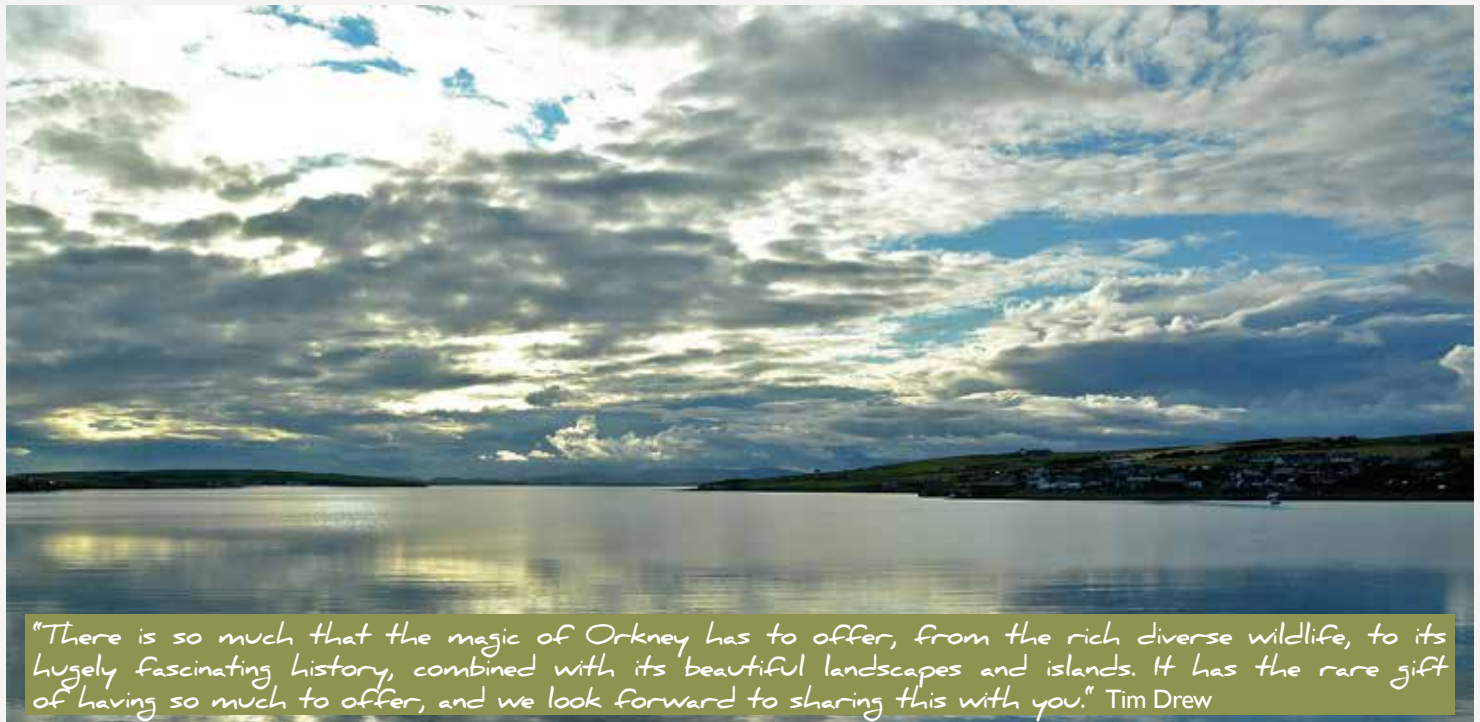
2 From Inverness, we follow the coast road north to our ferry from Scrabster to Orkney. Pausing at historic Golspie for a picnic lunch, we'll look out for Sandwich and Arctic Terns fishing offshore, plus colourful Eiders and with luck Long-tailed Ducks or scoters. We may be lucky enough to see Red Kite circling above the rich farmland of Easter Ross.

The crossing, on a large modern, fully equipped ferry, takes us across The Pentland Firth, famous for its tidal race and its wildlife and we'll look out for cetaceans, Storm Petrel, Manx Shearwater, skuas and dolphins with Sooty Shearwater and

Grey Phalarope possible at this time of year. The ferry passes the impressive cliffs of Hoy and we shall get a sneak preview of the Old Man of Hoy, prior to visiting it later in the week. We land at the picturesque harbour of Stromness, where the great author George Mackay-Brown lived.

3-8 The landscape of Orkney has broad coastal vistas, interspersed with ancient archaeological wonders set amidst the genteel farmland, which characterises inland Orkney. The pastures are home to Brown Hare, Hen Harrier and Short-eared Owl, which quarter the moors and meadows looking for Orkney Vole. Autumn migration is just beginning, so there's a good chance of migrants, especially waders and seabirds, but anything is possible!





"There is so much that the magic of Orkney has to offer, from the rich diverse wildlife, to its hugely fascinating history, combined with its beautiful landscapes and islands. It has the rare gift of having so much to offer, and we look forward to sharing this with you." Tim Drew

Any visit to Orkney would not be complete without including the many astonishing archaeological treasures the islands are so famous for. Several are exceptional, including Maes Howe - a Neolithic chambered cairn and passage grave built around 2800BC and still in excellent condition. Perhaps the most famous is Skara Brae - Europe's most complete Neolithic village, consisting of eight clustered houses, occupied around 3180 to 2500BC.

We shall also visit the Ring of Brodgar, Stones of Stenness and the astonishing Tomb of the Eagles and the lesser known Broch of Gurness, an Iron Age broch village situated in the north of mainland Orkney. The farmland around these sites is ideal hunting ground for Hen Harrier, Merlin and Short-eared Owl and the Loch of Stenness is often home to Otters and Red-throated Divers.

We may go sightseeing in the UK's most northerly city - Kirkwall and its smaller neighbour Stromness and visit the museum and Cathedral with time to wander round the shops. For whisky aficionados there is the chance to take a tour round the northern island's only distillery.

On another day we shall take the ferry over to the island of Westray, where we'll spend time enjoying lovely scenery and search for migrants. At the northern tip is Noup Head, which in summer has a spectacular Gannet colony on the impressive cliffs and there are likely to still be some birds here, though perhaps not in the big numbers of summer.

Like our Westray trip, our visit to Hoy is also a first for Speyside Wildlife. There is a half hour ferry crossing to Orkney's most 'mountainous' island and we shall cross with the minibus - with eyes to the skies for the possibility of Great Skua, or gigantic White-tailed Eagle which now breeds on Hoy.

The newly refurbished Scapa Flow Museum, dedicated to the history of Scapa Flow during the two world wars, is worth visiting and we'll make the half mile walk out to the Dwarfie Stone, a megalithic chambered tomb carved from a titanic block of old red sandstone. There is also the optional walk to the Old Man of Hoy, who needs no introduction!

Time permitting, there is plenty more to show you - and we hope to include the impressive Yesnaby Cliffs, The Loons RSPB Reserve, where birding can be excellent, the last unrestored 'firehouse' in northern Europe at Kirkbuster Museum and head out over the causeway to the Brough of Birsay - a fascinating island, with so much to see, with both wildlife and archaeology.

9 As our time on the islands comes to an end, we scan for birds and dolphins once again as we take the ferry back to Scrabster, then drive to Inverness for an evening meal together at the Premier Inn.

10 After breakfast we say our farewells.



Outline Itinerary

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Day 1 | Gather in Inverness for dinner
1 night Premier Inn |
| Day 2 | Travel from Inverness to Scrabster for the ferry to Orkney through Easter Ross, pausing at Golspie. Settle in to our hotel at Harray. 7 nights at Merkister Hotel |
| Days 3-8 | Exploration of the islands of this exciting archipelago - including mainland Orkney, Hoy and Westray for excellent birding and visits to a wide selection of archaeological sites |
| Day 9 | Ferry back to Scrabster across the Pentland Firth, then drive back to Inverness
1 Night Premier Inn |
| Day 10 | After breakfast we say farewell |

Craig Round: Great Skua, Short-eared Owl
Chris Brookings: Scapa Flow
Jane Hope: Black Guillemots
Tim Drew: Golden Plover, Sanderling





"You will love our hotel in the Carpathians. Beautiful views, great birds and delicious food. The forests nearby hold Brown Bears and our experience with these awesome animals will be a magic moment."
Duncan Macdonald

Dates	Sat 29 Aug - Sun 6 Sep 2020
Price	£3,345
Deposit	£625 Single Supp £250
Leaders	Duncan Macdonald and Ecotours guide
Flights	British Airways, scheduled Outbound: Afternoon, Heathrow - Bucharest Inbound: Afternoon, Bucharest - Heathrow
Weather	Should be very pleasant temperatures around 14°-24°C with a chance of showers, will be cooler in the mountains
Walking	Easy walking up to two miles on good tracks. The walk in Zarnesti Gorge is steadily uphill and rough in places
Meals	All included from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 9
Insects	Mosquitos can be a nuisance, especially in the Delta so bring repellent
Accom	Twin and single ensuite rooms
Group	12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Brown Bear	Levant Sparrowhawk
Dalmatian Pelican	Long-legged Buzzard
White Pelican	Grey-headed Woodpecker
Pygmy Cormorant	Syrian Woodpecker
Black Stork	Black Woodpecker
Great White Egret	Alpine Swift
Purple Heron	Nutcracker
Squacco Heron	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Little Bittern	Sombre Tit
Ruddy Shelduck	Golden Oriole
Ferruginous Duck	Pied Wheatear
Whiskered Tern	Black-eared Wheatear
White-winged Tern	Isabelline Wheatear
Marsh Sandpiper	Caspian Tern
White-tailed Eagle	Pallas's Gull
Lesser Spotted Eagle	Red-necked Grebe
Red-footed Falcon	European Sopslik
Hobby	

Enjoy autumn migration in the Carpathian Mountains and the Black Sea Coast. Stay on a 'floating hotel' in the Danube Delta, plus an exciting visit to a Brown Bear hide!

- Stunning location in the Carpathian Mountains near Zarnesti Gorge
- Raptors including Lesser Spotted Eagle, Red-footed Falcon, Levant Sparrowhawk
- Impressive Brown Bears from a comfortable, forest hide
- Visit to area of Dracula's spectacular cliff-top castle
- Chance of surprise migrants: Pallid Harrier, Marsh and Broad-billed Sandpipers
- Spectacular numbers of birds while exploring the mighty Danube Delta
- Pelicans, Pygmy Cormorant, Squacco Heron, Glossy Ibis and marsh terns

We meet our guide at Bucharest Airport, then drive to our scenically located hotel in the southern Carpathian Mountains. Although arriving in the dark, we should make out the surrounding area dominated by stunning views of the 8,000ft high Omul Peak.

2-3 A short walk from the hotel may produce migrant warblers, shrikes, Black Redstart and perhaps breeding Fieldfare. The towering rock walls of nearby Zarnesti Gorge make for a special walk, with Alpine Swift, Marsh Tits and Nuthatch and maybe Nutcracker possible. We'll visit the beautiful wooded Stramba Valley, where Lesser Spotted Eagle is likely, plus woodpeckers, with Grey-headed, Black, Middle Spotted and even White-backed possible. Golden Oriole and Nutcracker are here, plus Honey Buzzard, Hawfinch and Red-backed Shrike.

As dusk falls we'll make an excursion for the real highlight of the trip - our visit to the bear hide. The Brown Bears come to feed on bait put out to attract them and we should get exceptional views. Ravens and Red Fox are also attracted, as are Wolf occasionally.

The surrounding countryside is still farmed largely with horses and by hand. Red-backed Shrikes are everywhere and Bee-eaters swoop over the hedgerows, while wildflowers attract butterflies such as Silver-washed Fritillary and Cardinal. This is the homeland of the bloody figure of Vlad Tepes, better known as "Count Dracula". The "Dracula Castle" was built in 1378 atop a cliff and had a strategic role in protecting the pass. We shall make a short stop in the village below the castle and perhaps taste some of the local products.



"The Danube Delta is a vast expanse of channels, lakes and woodland absolutely stuffed with birds. From our blissfull floating hotel we shall be amazed by the number of pelicans, herons, Marsh Terns, Glossy Ibis, White-tailed Eagles, Hobbys and so much more." Duncan Macdonald



4-5 We travel down to the Black Sea coast, stopping on the way. The wetlands of Histria and Vadu offer fabulous birding with muddy pools, ponds, extensive reedbeds, steppe and sandy scrub attracting many species. Both White and Dalmatian Pelicans are often seen, plus a host of waders, including a chance of Broad-billed and Marsh Sandpiper. We shall search out the impressive Pallas's Gull here. Lesser Grey Shrike, Roller, Golden Oriole and Bee-eaters are likely and migrants may include Red-breasted Flycatcher, chats, warblers, wagtails and maybe a late Paddyfield Warbler.

Butterflies abound and we'll look out for European Souslik, a very cute ground squirrel. The extensive salt marshes of Vadu may hold a fine selection of waders, gulls and terns and orchards in the small villages are perfect for Syrian Woodpecker. We have had great views of Red-footed Falcons here and other possible raptors include Short-toed and Booted Eagles, Long-legged Buzzard, Levant Sparrowhawk and with luck even Pallid Harrier!

6-8 We move on to the Danube Delta - a huge area of divided river channels, reedbeds, lakes and woodlands, where we are welcomed aboard our delightful floating hotel. This is relaxed birdwatching, with two full days on rich waterways in the heart of the Danube Delta!

Breakfast is served on board and we shall leave our floating hotel on a small motor boat to explore the narrow channels and smaller lakes, or take a walk along the river bank. We shall seek

Black-necked and Red-necked Grebes, Spoonbill, Great White Egrets and Purple Herons, Dalmatian and White Pelicans, Pygmy Cormorant, Squacco Heron, Glossy Ibis, Ferruginous Duck, Red-crested Pochard, Caspian Tern, Kingfisher and more. In the reedbeds Bearded and Penduline Tits call and our journey along the river is accompanied by flocks of Whiskered Terns, with smaller numbers of White-winged and Black Terns possible.

The forests in the delta are good for Black Stork, White-tailed Eagle, Red-footed Falcon and woodpeckers, with Grey-headed the most common, but Lesser Spotted and Black Woodpecker also likely. Red-footed Falcons are migrating through, Golden Oriole should still be around and plenty of Hobbies, as we spend some relaxing hours birding from the observation platform of our "hotel", enjoying the beauty of this huge wetland, with no roads and traffic. Dinner will be served on board, while enjoying a tranquil sunset. Bliss!

9 After breakfast we leave the boat and head towards Bucharest Airport for our flight back to London.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Flight from London to Bucharest. Travel to our scenically located hotel in the Southern Carpathian Mountains 3 nights Villa Hermani
- Days 2-3** Birding in the Southern Carpathian Mountains and gorges including the beautiful Stramba valley, plus an evening visit to a bear watching hide
- Days 4-5** Travel down to the Black Sea Coast birding on the way. Spend time at Histria and Vadu wetlands, where extensive reedbeds, steppe and sandy scrub attract many species 2 nights Grindul Lupilor Pension
- Days 6-8** Travel to the Danube Delta for wonderfully relaxed birding from our floating hotel amongst divided river channels, reedbeds, lake and woodlands 3 nights Floating Hotel
- Day 9** Return to Bucharest for our flight to the UK

Stephen Batt: Brown Bears, Booted Eagle, Squacco Heron, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Bran Castle
Attila Steiner: White Pelicans



RAPTORS OF THE HIGHLANDS



"Raptors quicken the pulse with their power, grace and precision. From the diminutive Merlin to the massive White-tailed Eagle, we shall go in search of them all."
Kate Mennie

Dates	Sat 5 - Sat 12 Sep 2020
Price	£1,995
Deposit	£350 Single Supp £250
Leaders	Kate Mennie and James Stevens
Weather	Mixture of sunshine and showers (15°-25°C). It could be cooler on the boat trip
Walking	Walks will be up to five miles on relatively flat gravel and forest tracks
Meals	All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8
Insects	It is coming to the end of midge season but it can still be warm, so they may be a nuisance. Bring repellent
Accom	Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite or with private facilities
Boat trip	The boat trip off Mull will be in relatively sheltered waters
Group	12
Just some of what we hope to see:	
Golden Eagle	Great Northern Diver
White-tailed Eagle	Red-throated Diver
Goshawk	Black-throated Diver
Sparrowhawk	Black Guillemot
Peregrine	Razorbill
Merlin	Guillemot
Kestrel	Gannet
Osprey	Twite
Red Kite	Dipper
Hen Harrier	Hooded Crow
Short-eared Owl	Rock Dove
Long-eared Owl	Mountain Hare
Barn Owl	Otter
Tawny Owl	Red and Roe Deer
Crossbill	Grey Seal
Crested Tit	cetaceans

The Cairngorms National Park and the Isle of Mull provide fabulous opportunities to see iconic raptors against a backdrop of mountains, moorland and ancient forest.

- Golden and White-tailed Eagles in stunning mountain and island locations
- A boat trip to see White-tailed Eagles up close
- Secretive Goshawks in ancient Caledonian Pine Forests
- Ospreys breeding on our doorstep and fishing in local lochs
- Hen Harriers and Short-eared Owls quartering open moorlands
- Peregrine and Merlin hunting and dashing after their prey
- Evening trips to look for Long-eared, Tawny and Barn Owls

Dinner together on Saturday evening is followed by coffee and a run through of the week's itinerary.

2-3 The Cairngorms National Park is a spectacular land of mountains, bleak windswept moorlands and ancient forests, one of the best places in the UK to watch our iconic raptors.

We may start with a full day in Strathdearn, which follows the River Findhorn deep into the Monadhliath Mountains. Here, a wealth of different habitats from woodlands to moorland and exposed mountains, provide habitat for up to twelve species of raptor, including Golden and White-tailed Eagle, Goshawk, Peregrine, Merlin, Osprey, Hen Harrier and Red Kite.



Weather permitting, we shall walk into the mountains on flat gravel tracks and explore the upper reaches of the glen on foot, which can be outstanding for Golden and White-tailed Eagles.

Merlin and Peregrine also hunt here and it's not unusual to watch fierce little Merlins mobbing massive eagles. Goshawk and Red Kite are possible and Ospreys regularly fish the river. The scenery in the upper reaches is spectacular and it is a truly wild place.

The RSPB's Reserve at Abernethy consists of ancient pine forest, open moorland and high mountain plateau. This is our best opportunity to find the elusive 'ghost of the forest' - the Northern Goshawk. We shall keep our eyes peeled for this secretive and elusive raptor during our full day spent in Abernethy Forest, exploring remote areas,



"What a tour! The best of the Cairngorms National Park as well as beautiful Mull, with its numerous eagles. If you have a passion for raptors then this is for you." Kate Mennie



where there are also chances for Capercaillie, as well as crossbills and Crested Tit.

The area is also good for eagles with Golden and White-tailed hunting over the Reserve. Abernethy is an exceptional habitat and if we explore the quieter areas of the forest it just might reveal its secrets to us.

In the evening, we shall venture out in search of owls. Long-eared, Tawny and Barn Owls are all possible and Short-eared Owls can be found quartering the moors. The days are long at this time of the year giving us a good chance of finding owls as the sun sets.

4-6 After breakfast we shall leave for the Island of Mull. Our journey will take us past Loch Laggan, before passing beneath the towering bulk of Ben Nevis to Fort William. We continue south, along Loch Linnhe to the harbour town of Oban from where we shall catch our ferry. We should encounter both Common and Arctic Terns from the ferry and there is always the chance of Harbour Porpoise or Common Dolphin.

Once on Mull we shall explore the best the island has to offer. The scenery on Mull is spectacular, with high mountains, sea cliffs, rocky shore and estuary. Mull is famous for raptors, particularly both species of eagle, with one of the highest breeding densities of eagles anywhere in Europe.

Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles could turn up anywhere, but we know some great locations and have enjoyed remarkably close views regularly. We shall explore the dramatic cliffs at Gribun for

Peregrine and Raven while through the moorlands and estuary edge we hope to encounter Hen Harrier, Merlin and Short-eared Owl. As well as raptors, Mull has a large population of Otters and we shall scan the sea lochs for these endearing mammals, where Common and Grey Seals haul themselves out onto the rocks.

One of the highlights of our stay on Mull will be an exclusive trip on a comfortable boat to look for White-tailed Eagles. They can be seen very close from the boat and we may see the birds gliding in to pick fish off the surface, potentially giving great photo opportunities. We may also encounter dolphins and other marine animals and birds.

7 On our return from Mull we take a smaller ferry to the Morvern peninsula. This is a little visited part of the Highlands and we could easily encounter more eagles as we make our way through rugged country to Loch Sunart and the Corran Ferry.

We shall arrive back in Speyside in time for our evening meal, followed by coffee and a look back over the week.

8 After breakfast on Saturday we say our farewells.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive in the Cairngorms National Park
3 nights at Tigh-na-Sgiath Hotel
- Days 2-3** Search for raptors and other wildlife in Speyside, including Strathdearn and Abernethy Forest
- Day 4** Travel to Mull via Fort William and the ferry from Oban, birding and looking for raptors enroute
3 nights at The Tobermory Hotel
- Days 5-6** Search for raptors and wildlife amidst stunning scenery on Mull, including the Gribun Cliffs and a boat trip for White-tailed Eagle
- Day 7** Travel back to the Cairngorms, via Ardnamurchan and the Corran Ferry
1 night at Tigh-na-Sgiath Hotel
- Day 8** Depart after breakfast

Colin Scott: White-tailed Eagle, Osprey
Jane Hope: Strathdearn, Goshawk
Chris Brookings: Great Northern Diver
Craig Round: Otter



ORKNEY & NORTH RONALDSAY



"I love birding on a small island, so North Ronaldsay is definitely a new favourite of mine in the Orkney archipelago. Combined with mainland Orkney, the diverse and unpredictable birdlife at this time of year makes for a really memorable experience."
Simon Eaves

Dates Sun 6 - Wed 16 Sep 2020

Price £2,395

Deposit £450 **Single Supp** £300

Leaders Simon Eaves and Adam Batty

Weather During a typical week in this season we would expect to experience mixed sun and showers, with temperatures in the range 10-20°C. Around the coastline of Orkney and the island of North Ronaldsay, we may expect cooler temperatures, though it is possible that we shall see unbroken sunshine and settled weather, Orkney can receive wet and windy squalls and occasionally fog, however, it can be warm and sunny so you may want to bring sunscreen

Walking On Orkney and North Ronaldsay walking is generally very relaxed and easy, but on at least two of the days we may take walks of up to 3-4 miles on rough grassland and small coastal paths.

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 11

Insects Biting insects should not be a problem

Accom Premier Inn, Inverness;
Bird Observatory, North Ronaldsay;
Standing Stones Hotel, Orkney

Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite. The Observatory has simpler accommodation than the hotels on Orkney

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Great Northern Diver	Golden Plover
Red-throated Diver	Grey Plover
Hen Harrier	Black-tailed Godwit
Short-eared Owl	Wryneck
Merlin	Lesser Whitethroat
Great Skua	Yellow-browed Warbler
Arctic Skua	Common Rosefinch
Sooty Shearwater	

A wonderful archipelago awaits – combining fantastic autumn migrants, worldclass archaeological sites and three nights at the North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory.

- Autumn Migration on Orkney - you never know what might turn up.
- Three nights on North Ronaldsay - a migrant hot-spot
- Possibility of migrants such as Yellow-browed Warbler, Bluethroat and Wryneck
- Maeshowe, Skara Brae and the Ring of Brodgar
- Short-eared Owl, Hen Harrier, divers and skuas
- Italian Chapel, Churchill Barriers and the Southern Isles
- Chance of cetaceans and skuas in the Pentland Firth

I We meet in Inverness in time for dinner in our overnight hotel, giving us time to discuss the days ahead.

2-3 From Inverness, we follow the coast road through the eastern seaboard of Sutherland and Caithness, to catch our ferry from Scrabster to Orkney. Along the route, the last Sandwich and Arctic Terns fish on their way south and some of the autumn's Eider and Common and Velvet Scoter can be seen. Buzzards are common and we may also see Red Kite circling above the rich farmland of Easter Ross.

The crossing on a large modern, fully equipped ferry, takes us across The Pentland Firth, rightly famous for the strength of its tidal race. These waters provide rich pickings for wildlife, cetaceans in particular and we shall be vigilant for Storm Petrel, Manx Shearwater;

skuas and dolphins. We shall be travelling during the peak of migration and species such as Sooty Shearwater and Grey Phalarope could be seen. The ferry takes us past the impressive cliffs of Hoy and the great sea stack of the Old Man of Hoy, to the wonderful harbour of Stromness, where the great author George Mackay-Brown lived. We are only a short distance from our hotel, where we shall spend our first night on these remarkable islands.

From the main town of Kirkwall we board our ferry to the island of North Ronaldsay, the island time forgot. Our journey takes us north, past islands such as Shapinsay, Eday and Sanday. We shall have over two hours to look for both Great and Arctic Skua, Black Guillemot and cetaceans. North Ronaldsay is the most northerly island of Orkney and lies further north than the southern tip of Norway. Its location is perfect for migrating birds at this time of year.





"The famous autumn bird migration on the northern islands of Scotland sees numerous seabirds, waders and passerines on the move. The varied scenery of farmland, coastlines, lochs and marshes create many habitats to explore, so the excitement of finding birds is made even more special with this dramatic landscape backdrop." Simon Eaves

Our accommodation is in the Bird Observatory that was established on the island in 1987. We shall have time to explore after checking in. The island is small and low-lying with grazing land, freshwater lochs and shingle foreshore. It is also famous for the seaweed eating sheep that inhabit the foreshore.

4-5 Our next two days are spent exploring. We shall work all the main habitats looking for migrants, as well as enjoying the ambience of this remote island. Regular migrants include Yellow-browed Warbler, Red-backed Shrike, Bluethroat, Wryneck, Common Rosefinch, Lesser Whitethroat and Pied Flycatcher; to name a few of the large number of song birds that pass through now. The freshwater lochs and surrounding fields attract waders in good numbers, including Golden Plover, Curlew and Whimbrel. American waders are annual visitors, so we shall scan the flocks for Pectoral Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper or even White-rumped Sandpiper. From headlands we'll scan for seabirds, as this is peak passage, with species such as Sooty Shearwater in good numbers given the right conditions. We may not know which way to look first!

6-9 We take a lunchtime ferry back to Mainland Orkney and back to our hotel. We'll birdwatch around Scapa Bay, where Bar-tailed Godwit, Sanderling, Turnstone and Dunlin may be feeding, with Great Northern Diver offshore amongst the plunging Gannets. The archaeological sites of Orkney cannot be missed. Skara Brae is an absolute must - an entire prehistoric settlement with rooms, beds, dressers and pottery, all exposed by a storm some 5000 years after it was

built. The Standing Stones of Stenness and the Ring of Brodgar; where 36 of the original circle of 60 stones still stand, are both impressive, however it's the magnificent Maeshowe that steals the show, one of the most impressive tombs in the world.

We'll explore these sites, as well as taking in north and east mainland and the southern isles down to South Ronaldsay, now linked via the Churchill Barriers. Created in WWII, they were built by prisoners of war; who have left behind one of the most beautiful sites on the islands - The Italian Chapel. We'll visit this remarkable place whilst exploring freshwater lochs, sandy bays, moors and farmland for flocks of waders, ducks, Stonechat, Wheatear and more. Pastures are home to Brown Hare, with Hen Harrier and Short-eared Owl quartering the moors and meadows. There is always the chance of migrants, so we shall check through the flocks for any rarities, such as Pectoral Sandpiper. Over the years many exciting birds have been found on these northern isles, including Red-breasted Flycatcher, Wryneck and Common Rosefinch.

10 We take the morning ferry back to the Scottish mainland. There are some good wildlife locations nearby and we shall explore Dunnet Head, the most northerly point on mainland UK. We could encounter Twite and Red Grouse on the way. There is a freshwater loch nearby with a hide, where Tufted Duck, Little Grebe, Coot and Moorhen could fill in the gaps of our list. We then return to Inverness in time for dinner on our final evening.

After breakfast on our last day we say our farewells.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Arrive in Inverness
1 night at the Premier Inn
- Day 2 Travel up the north east coast of Caithness and Sutherland and take the ferry to Orkney
1 night at Standing Stones Hotel
- Day 3 Take the ferry to North Ronaldsay
3 nights North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory
- Days 4-5 Exploration of North Ronaldsay
- Day 6 Ferry back to Mainland Orkney
4 nights at Standing Stones Hotel
- Days 7-9 Wildlife and archaeological exploration of the mainland
- Day 10 Take early morning ferry from Orkney and travel back down the coast to Inverness
1 night at the Premier Inn
- Day 11 Depart after breakfast

Richard Stacey: Short-eared Owl
Tim Drew: North Ronaldsay Lighthouse, Otter,
Duncan Macdonald: Grey Seal
Ian Smith: Lapland Bunting
Craig Round: Whimbrel



BRITISH COLUMBIA



"Does it get any better than this? Watching three species of whale, two species of bear, plus Sea Otters and lots of other fabulous mammals and birds, in some of the most beautiful scenery – this is a joy of a trip that is, in my opinion, on a par with Yellowstone for excitement."
Roy Atkins

Dates Wed 9 - Wed 23 Sept 2020

Price £5,750

Deposit £1,000 Single Supp £1,000

Leaders Roy Atkins and Julian Sykes

Flights Air Canada, scheduled
Outbound: Morning, Heathrow-Vancouver
Inbound: Overnight, Vancouver-Heathrow

Weather It varies across the island, with wetter conditions in the west around Tofino and Zeballos, drier on the east coast. Expect some rain (we sometimes have rain for a whole day or more) and fog is possible in the west, but generally warm and sunny with mild conditions (14°-22°C)

Walking There'll be some short easy walks on wide tracks in the forest, in some places with lots of steps. Nothing steep or strenuous, but a reasonable degree of fitness is required

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 14

Insects Biting insects are generally not a problem on Vancouver Island, but repellent is a good idea just in case

Boat trips Boats vary from larger boats with indoor seating areas that can hold over 50 people, to smaller uncovered boats with no facilities. Sometimes the groups may be split between two boats each with a guide. All boats are excellent

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Grizzly Bear	Humpback Whale
Dall's Porpoise	Heermann's Gull
Black Bear	Orca
Black Oystercatcher	Rhinoceros Auklet
Sea Otter	Gray Whale
Black Turnstone	Marbled Murrelet

On Canada's rugged west coast, Vancouver Island awaits – brimming with bears, birds, whales and more, as they seize the autumn bounty before the winter closes in.

- Boat trips in search of Orcas, Humpbacks and Gray Whales
- Grizzly Bears hunting salmon on spawning grounds
- Dall's Porpoise, Steller's Sea Lions plus, with luck, Pacific White-sided Dolphin
- Black Bear, Beaver, Sea Otter and chance of Raccoon
- West Coast special birds including shorebirds, seabirds, divers and scoters
- Beautiful Pacific Rim Rainforest and famous Long Beach
- Stunning scenery of lakes, fjords and forests, amidst towering mountains

1-2 Arriving in Vancouver we transfer to our hotel in Delta. The following day we enjoy a full day at George C. Reifel Bird Sanctuary, where Sandhill Crane, Wood Duck, dowitchers and yellowlegs, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Harrier and Lincoln's Sparrow are all possible. It is a fabulous and very productive place alive with fabulous birds. We may take a walk along Boundary Bay, looking for more shorebirds in an area that can be great for birding - this may prove to be the most bird-rich day of the trip!

3-5 After checking the bays enroute to the Nanaimo ferry, we board the ferry and check the jetties for Black Turnstone and perhaps Surf-bird. We then have a long drive north to our ocean front lodge overlooking Johnstone Strait. The grounds are a haven for wildlife and we have watched Black Bears turning rocks on the

shore here and, with luck, even River Otter and Raccoons. We can relax, or wander in search of White-crowned and Fox Sparrows, warblers and woodpeckers in the surrounding woodland.

We shall be picked up from the jetty for a boat ride into rich waters covered in gulls, Common and Pigeon Guillemots, Rhinoceros Auklets and dainty Red-necked Phalaropes. Watched by tree top Bald Eagles, this is our best chance for Orcas and we hope to encounter resident groups at close quarters! Dall's Porpoise and Steller's Sea Lions are here too and, with luck, Pacific White-sided Dolphins. Even if we don't see Orcas, we'll be thrilled by great sightings of Humpback Whales! Another day will be spent locally in search of more wildlife and visiting Telegraph Cove - a picturesque village on the seafront nearby, with some nice shops and a wildlife museum, with the chance of Black-tailed Deer or perhaps even Elk enroute.



"Looking back at the wonderful sightings I have had on this trip - from Orcas right under the boat to breaching Humpback and Grey Whales, hundreds of Pacific White-sided Dolphins, some exceptional birding, thousands of Sooty Shearwaters and Red-necked Phalaropes and of course those exceptional close up Grizzly and Black Bears - I can't wait to be back!" Roy Atkins



6-7 We move on to Zeballos on a scenic west coast inlet, an old Gold-rush village where Cedar Waxwing, Steller's Jays and migrant warblers such as Wilson's and Yellow-rumped are possible and we hope to find Beavers on a nearby pond. Sea Otters have a good population here and we'll explore the beautiful inlets and rocky shorelines by boat to enjoy great views, as they lie on their backs perhaps smashing shellfish on a stone on their belly! Black Bears are also possible along the shoreline, turning over boulders as they search for crabs.

8-10 After breakfast we head for Campbell River; a great area for birding, with shorebirds, Harlequin Duck, Bonaparte's Gull, grebes and divers, plus Red-breasted Sapsucker in the trees. We'll also visit the sub-alpine forest of Mount Washington in search of tame Gray Jay, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, woodpeckers and more.

There is lots to see, but we'll tear ourselves away because there's the lure of Grizzly Bears! We'll have a full-day, heading across by boat to a picturesque inlet, where guides will take us to purpose-built viewing platforms. We hope for great close-up views as the bears walk the banks, or down the middle of the river; scanning the water for any hint of a fish to chase - then it's a mad dash, with the occasional bear even being successful!

11-12 It is a long and spectacular drive to Tofino on the west coast and we'll break the journey to enjoy the astonishing trees of Cathedral Grove and visit a beautiful

river to watch Chinook Salmon migrate upstream and leap the falls! From our hotel in Tofino we'll visit Pacific Rim National Park - lush temperate rainforest, with cushions of moss on branches of towering Hemlocks, vast beaches and the ocean stretching off as far as the eye can see.

The forest can be quiet, with Pacific Wren, Steller's Jay and Chestnut-backed Chickadees often the only birds, but it is beautiful and well worth the visit! Beaches may hold flocks of Western Sandpipers, while offshore are Red-necked Grebes, Surf Scoter, Pacific Loons and Marbled Murrelet.

We'll go whale-watching too, heading into Clayoquot Sound for Gray Whales, or Humpbacks if the last Gray Whales have left. Amidst the maze of rocky islets, there'll be Harbour Seals and huge Steller's Sea Lions, plus Brandt's and Pelagic Cormorants, Heermann's Gull, Rhinoceros Auklet and Pigeon Guillemots and we'll check rocky islands for Wandering Tattler and Black Oystercatcher.

13-15 We head back to Vancouver, where we overnight in Delta again. On the following day we visit a different part of Boundary Bay, before dragging ourselves away for our flight home in the afternoon, arriving in London on Day 15.



Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-2** Fly to Vancouver. Full day birding local area and George C. Reifel Bird Sanctuary
2 nights Tsawwassen Inn
- Days 3-5** Ferry to Vancouver Island, then drive towards Port McNeill and our hotel overlooking Johnstone Strait.
Boat trip to look for Orcas
3 nights Hidden Cove Lodge
- Days 6-7** Drive to Zeballos on west coast to explore the coastal forest and inlets from our Sea Otter boat trip
2 nights Cedars Inn
- Days 8-10** Drive to Campbell River, then birding local area and a full-day boat trip to Grizzly Bear fishing grounds
3 nights Painter's Lodge
- Days 11-12** Transfer to Tofino on the west coast, with boat trip for Humpback/Gray Whales and walk in Pacific Rim Rainforest
2 nights Tofino Resort
- Day 13** Return to Vancouver
1 night Tsawwassen Inn
- Days 14-15** Birding Boundary Bay before flight back to London in afternoon, arriving in London on Day 15

Roy Atkins: Grizzly Bear, Heermann's Gull
Christine Maughan: Humpback Whale, Sea Otters
Julian Sykes: Orcas
Stephen Batt: Rhinoceros Auklet



CALIFORNIA



"Mighty whales and cute critters, including adorable Sea Otters; huge-winged California Condors, whacky woodpeckers and dainty hummingbirds. Lots of my favourite things on one tour!"
Darren Rees

Dates Sat 12 - Sun 27 Sep 2020
Price £6,450
Deposit £1,250 Single Supp £1,500

Leaders Darren Rees and David Wimpfheimer

Flights British Airways, scheduled
Outbound: Morning
Heathrow-San Francisco
Inbound: Overnight
San Francisco-Heathrow

Weather Warm (20°- 30°C) but can be cooler at sea and in the mountains

Walking Maximum of 2-3 miles on easy trails. Walks from our bases at Yosemite and Mono Lake may involve some at altitudes above 8000ft. These will be on well maintained paths at an easy pace but please consult with your GP if you think this may be an issue

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 15

Insects Occasional, but not a nuisance

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Blue Whale	Burrowing Owl
Humpback Whale	California Quail
Risso's Dolphin	Black Oystercatcher
Sea Otter	Black Turnstone
Northern Elephant Seal	Wandering Tattler
Black Bear	Surfbird
Black-footed Albatross	Nuttall's Woodpecker
Buller's Shearwater	Acorn Woodpecker
Pink-footed Shearwater	White-headed Woodpecker
Black Storm Petrel	Yellow-billed Magpie
Rhinoceros Auklet	Chestnut-backed
California Condor	Chickadee
Bald Eagle	Wrentit
White-tailed Kite	California Thrasher
Prairie Falcon	California Towhee
Great Gray Owl	

Spectacular California, the most varied state in America, with wildlife to match! Includes the Monterey coast, Yosemite National Park, boat trips and hawk-watching at the Golden Gate.

- Monterey Bay for whales and dolphins
- Shearwaters, Storm Petrels, albatrosses and pelagic species
- Condors and Sea Otters along the Big Sur coastline
- Yosemite National Park's granite cliffs and giant Sequoias
- Phalaropes, grebes and desert birds at scenic Mono Lake
- Migrant shorebirds at Point Reyes Seashore
- Hawk-watching at the Golden Gate, San Francisco

1-5 In September, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary has fantastic numbers of whales, dolphins and birds and we've two boat trips lined up: our first day-long voyage will focus on the huge variety of seabirds in the area – these include Red Phalarope, Pomarine Jaeger, Cassin's and Rhinoceros Auklets, plus Ashy, Black and Fork-tailed Storm Petrels to name a few. Amongst the thousands of Sooty Shearwaters we shall look for Buller's and Pink-footed Shearwater and, with luck, a Black-footed Albatross may sail across our wake. The boat operator has pioneered pelagic birding tours from Monterey, with over 30 years' experience, so they'll make sure we won't miss a thing!

Our second half-day whalewatch may include Humpback Whale, Orca, Dall's and Risso's Dolphins, or even mighty Blue Whales.



Elsewhere, fantastic California Condors are now back and soaring over Pinnacles National Monument. We'll look for these, the largest bird in North America, in this inspiring landscape of volcanic spires and chaparral. Golden Eagle, Canyon Wren and Phainopepla are also present and west coast specialities include Yellow-billed Magpie, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Oak Titmouse, Wrentit, California Thrasher and Lawrence's Goldfinch.

Birding the beautiful Big Sur coastline south of Monterey, we'll look for species found along the rocky shores, such as Black Oystercatcher, Black Turnstone, Surfbird and Wandering Tattler. Stars of the show are sure to be the delightful California Sea Otters, that frequent the tangle of kelp beds in the coves and bays.





"A land of superlatives and such variety, with the wild coastline of Big Sur and Point Reyes; the desert beauty of Mono Lake and the eastern Sierras; and the grandeur of Yosemite National Park. California has the lot." Darren Rees

6-8 We visit famous Yosemite National Park after the Labor Day crowds and we've two full days to enjoy this stunning landscape. We'll search for Red-breasted and Williamson's Sapsucker and Black-backed, White-headed and Acorn Woodpeckers, amongst many others. If we're lucky, we may encounter Coyote, Black Bear or Great Gray Owl, but perhaps the natural landscape will be the highlight – the giant Sequoia trees have to be seen to be believed and then there are the spectacular waterfalls and the mighty granite peaks of Half Dome and El Capitan.

9-11 Beyond Yosemite we climb from the Merced River at 2500ft to almost 10,000ft at Tioga Pass, where birds of the high mountain include Mountain Chickadee, Blue Grouse, Townsend Solitaire, Clark's Nutcracker and Steller's Jay; arriving at Lee Vining, next to Mono Lake, for the next three nights.

Mono Lake may be referred to as the Dead Sea of California, but it's anything but – this rich ecosystem is a vital staging post for huge numbers of migrant birds: tens of thousands of grebes and phalaropes share the water with a billion brine flies! The setting is remarkable, with the dramatic Sierra Nevada as backdrop, rising abruptly from the arid sagebrush of the Great Basin. A different avifauna awaits here, with Pinyon Jay, Sage Thrasher, Lewis's Woodpecker, Green-tailed Towhee and Mountain Bluebird. At Bridgeport Lake, there are big numbers of wildfowl, that attract Bald Eagles as well as Prairie Falcons and we're sure to visit

the historic deserted town of Bodie – the miners and townfolk have long gone, but the Sage Grouse remain!

12-14 Our final base is the wild Point Reyes National Seashore, a renowned migration hotspot. We'll explore the estuaries, windswept beaches, coastal grasslands and thickets, that have made this a world famous preserve. There is a large staging of Western and Least Sandpipers and coastal scrub should hold Chestnut-backed Chickadees, California Quail, California Towhee and migrant passerines such as Hutton's Vireos and Hermit and Townsend Warblers.

Our last full day will be at the Marin Peninsula, north of San Francisco and the aptly named Hawk Hill. Raptor migration is at a peak and, given favourable weather conditions, large numbers of accipiters, buteos, harriers and falcons pass south over Golden Gate Park. Amongst the Merlins and Red-tailed, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, we may encounter Swainson's or Ferruginous Hawk. If the winds are wrong, we'll still have the view over the iconic Golden Gate Bridge and San Francisco!

15-16 On our last morning, we'll have a half-day tour of San Francisco – the city by the bay, before we return to the airport for our late afternoon flight, arriving in the UK on Day 16.



Outline Itinerary

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Day 1 | Fly to San Francisco, transfer to Monterey
5 nights Best Western Monterey Inn |
| Days 2-5 | Wildlife exploration in and around Monterey and Big Sur coast with two boat trips |
| Day 6 | Transfer to Yosemite National Park
3 nights Yosemite Valley Lodge |
| Days 7-8 | Wildlife exploration around Yosemite National Park |
| Days 9-11 | Transfer to Mono Lake
3 nights Lakeview Lodge |
| Day 12 | Transfer to Point Reyes
birdwatching enroute
3 nights Tomales Bay Resort |
| Days 13-14 | Wildlife exploration around Point Reyes |
| Days 15-16 | Half-day visit to San Francisco, then flight to UK, arriving back in morning of Day 16 |

Mary Braddock: Sea Otter
Mark Denman: California Condor, Acorn Woodpecker
Darren Rees: California Quail, Mono Lake
Roy Atkins: Humpback Whale





Roy Cowley

Marsh Harrier, E Yorkshire. Holiday details page 108



Chris Brookings

Greylag Geese at Sunset, Orkney. Holiday details page 90

*Just a few of the images
guests and guides have taken
on Speyside Wildlife trips*



Lesley Gadsden

Standing Stones, Orkney. Details page 90



Steve Batt

Turkey Vultures, British Columbia. Holiday details page 98



Christine Maughan

Hidden Cove, British Columbia. Holiday details page 98



Trish Auciello

Arctic Fox, Spitsbergen. Details page 80



Steve Batt

Sunset over Danube Delta, Romania. Holiday details page 92



John Osborne

Roe Deer, Autumn Wildlife. Holiday details page 106



Lyn Gregory

Cedar Waxwing, Yellowstone. Details page 58



John Osborne

Curlew and Teal, Autumn Wildlife in the Cairngorms. Holiday details page 106



Steve Batt

Hydaspe Fritillary, British Columbia. Holiday details page 98



Christine Maughan

Pacific White-sided Dolphins, British Columbia. Holiday details page 98

PORTUGAL



"Migration is in full swing in autumn in southern Portugal, with raptors, storks and a myriad of songbirds pouring south to get to Africa. Anything could turn up. I have had species such as Rüppell's Vulture and Western Reef Egret previously."
Duncan Macdonald

Dates Sun 27 Sep - Sun 4 Oct 2020

Price £2,750

Deposit £525 Single Supp £450

Leaders Duncan Macdonald and Julian Sykes

Flights EasyJet, scheduled, Speedy Boarding and extra legroom included
Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-Faro
Inbound: Afternoon, Faro-Gatwick

Weather A little rain could be encountered but generally warm and dry. Cooler in the evenings and early mornings. A sunhat is essential (10°-25°C)

Walking Most will be on flat tracks and paths with lots of stopping and scanning. In the mountains, tracks to summits are steep but short. 2-4km per day

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

Insects Mosquitos may be encountered, unlikely to be a nuisance but bring repellent

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Red-crested Pochard	Bonelli's Eagle
Black-necked Grebe	Honey Buzzard
Cory's Shearwater	Black-winged Kite
Great Shearwater	Purple Swamphen
Balearic Shearwater	Great Bustard
European Storm Petrel	Little Bustard
Wilson's Storm Petrel	Black-winged Stilt
Little Bittern	Audouin's Gull
White Stork	Black-bellied Sandgrouse
Black Stork	Thekla Lark
Spoonbill	Calandra Lark
Greater Flamingo	Bluethroat
Egyptian Vulture	Blue Rock Thrush
Spanish Imperial Eagle	Iberian Grey Shrike
Short-toed Eagle	Azure-winged Magpie

The very best of southern Portugal at the height of autumn migration with raptors, storks, seabirds, sunshine and a whole lot more.

- Wonderful warm autumn sunshine in the Algarve
- Fantastic wetlands of the Rio Formosa for herons, flamingos, spoonbills and more
- Raptors including Black-winged Kite, Bonelli's Eagle and Spanish Imperial Eagle
- Migration hotspots for raptors, passerines and shorebirds
- Boat trip for shearwaters, petrels, other seabirds and cetaceans
- The Alentejo steppe for Great and Little Bustards
- Chance of Two-tailed Pasha – what a butterfly!

Our flight from London takes us to Faro. From here it is a short journey to our hotel near Tavira. The hotel is situated in the heart of the Rio Formosa Natural Park and if time allows, we shall do some initial birding around the hotel.

2-3 The Algarve in autumn is warm and welcoming and provides some of the best birding in Europe. The Rio Formosa Natural Park stretches over 50km east to west and protects the Formosa estuary. Here the lagoons, marshes, channels and salt workings provide superb habitat for Greater Flamingo, Spoonbill, Cattle and Little Egrets, Black-winged Stilt and Kentish Plovers. At Quinto do Lago Purple Swamphen skulk through the reeds and sometimes out on to the golf course! Among the more common Shoveler we could find Red-crested Pochard or Ferruginous Duck.



The Rio Formosa's mixture of scrub, sand dune and water provides lots of opportunities of cover for migrating songbirds. Bluethroat can be found here if we are lucky and more common species such as Whinchat, Pied Flycatcher and Common Redstart can be more obvious. Audouin's and Slender-billed Gulls are found among the Yellow-legged Gulls. At this time of year noisy groups of the endemic Iberian (Azure-winged) Magpie are obvious and will be a real highlight for many.

The rolling steppe grasslands of the Alentejo, to the north of the Algarve, are an extension of the Spanish province of Extremadura. The sky here is huge and we shall explore this wonderful area for both Great and Little Bustards that are here in good numbers. Here we shall also hope to find Calandra and Thekla Lark and Iberian Grey Shrike. We shall be keeping a close eye on the sky for





"There will be so many highlights it will be hard to choose our favourites. The boat trip from Sagres will score highly, I am sure, especially if the Great and Cory's Shearwaters, as well as Wilson's Storm Petrels perform! Add to this the warmth of the Portuguese and the relaxed pace, we just won't want to come home." Duncan Macdonald

raptors in the hope of Black-winged Kite, Spanish Imperial Eagle and Red Kite that all hunt over the plains. Griffon Vultures can drift over and if we are really lucky maybe a Black Vulture from the Extremadura population just across the border in Spain.

4-7 We leave the eastern Algarve and head west towards the port of Sagres, our base for the rest of the tour. Sagres sits in the southwestern corner of Portugal and is the perfect location from which to explore the surroundings at this time of peak migration.

We shall spend a day inland around the village of Monchique. Here the hills rise to the summit of Fóia, the highest mountain in the Algarve at 902m. We shall explore the surrounding mixed forest for species such as Firecrest, Short-toed Treecreeper, Dartford Warbler and, if we are lucky, Rock Bunting. Above we could find soaring Goshawk and Hobby and Honey Buzzards heading south. Roads lead to the summits of both Fóia and nearby Picotta, from which the views over the Algarve to the sea are to be savoured. On a warm day these summits can be good places to find both Swallowtail and the rare Two-tailed Pasha.

The southwestern tip of Europe finishes at Cabo de São Vicente. This headland is a great migration hotspot and we shall look out to sea for passing shearwaters and other seabirds. The point also acts as a beacon for migrating raptors and passerines that are heading south to Africa.

We shall look for migrating raptors and just about anything is possible, but Booted Eagle, Griffon Vulture, Honey Buzzard and Short-toed Eagle are all likely, with Hen and Montagu's Harrier, Sparrowhawk and Kestrel all possible. We have had Eleonora's Falcon and Spanish Imperial Eagle here in the past. Watching visible migration is a fantastic experience. Given the right conditions the passerines can fill the surrounding scrub. Crested Tit are to be found in the conifer stands, Sardinian Warblers scold from bushes and Hoopoes pick around the field edges.

Around the cape itself Blue Rock Thrush, Black Redstart and Red-billed Chough are resident, but headlands at migration times can drag in just about anything. If we haven't seen Little Bustard in the western Algarve, the area here is another opportunity. We could find species such as Tawny Pipit, Red-backed Shrike, Short-toed Lark and raptors are not the only large-winged birds to be migrating. Black Stork is possible and Portugal is the best place in Europe to see White Stork.

One of the highlights will be the half day boat trip from Sagres. With luck on our side we could encounter Cory's, Great, Sooty and Balearic Shearwaters, along with European Storm Petrel, Gannets and other seabirds. We shall hope for maybe Common or Bottlenose Dolphins and if luck is shining on us then perhaps even Wilson's Storm Petrel.

8 If time permits we shall enjoy some final birding on our way to Faro to catch our flight.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Fly London to Faro and transfer to eastern Algarve
3 nights at Hotel Vila Gale Alacora
- Days 2-3** Exploration of the wetlands of the eastern Algarve, including Castro Marim and a day in the southern Alentejo
- Days 4-7** Transfer west to Sagres and exploration of wetlands, coast and Cabo de São Vicente of eastern Algarve including half day boat trip from Sagres
4 nights at Memmo Baleeira Hotel
- Day 8** Return to Faro for our flight back to London

John Hamilton: Azure-winged Magpie
Stephen Batt: White Stork
Booke A Miller: Little Bustard
Duncan Macdonald: Blue Rock Thrush, Quinta do Lago
Adam Moan: Great Bustard



AUTUMN WILDLIFE IN THE CAIRNGORMS



"The Highlands are at their most picturesque in autumn, with fresh snow on the mountains and the birch leaves golden. What a great backdrop for Red Deer, Golden Eagles, migrating geese and us."
Craig Round

Dates Sat 3 - Sat 10 Oct 2020
Price £1,725
Deposit £345 Single Supp £115

Leaders Craig Round and Kate Mennie

Weather The weather can vary enormously. Snow can occur in the mountains at any season with sunny warm weather also possible. During a typical week in autumn we would expect to experience mixed sun and showers with temperatures in the range 8-18°C. You may want to bring sunscreen

Walking Most walks are 1-2 miles on wide sandy tracks, although there is the possibility of a forest walk of up to 4 miles

We take groups in to the Cairngorms to see Ptarmigan, therefore it will be necessary to take a walk on paths over uneven and occasionally undulating rocky terrain. Low-level unguided alternatives are available. Walking boots will be needed on the holiday and walking poles helpful

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

Insects Biting midges are rare at this time of year

Accom Double, twin and single rooms ensuite or with private facilities at a country house hotel

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Golden Eagle	Rock Dove
White-tailed Eagle	Crested Tit
Ptarmigan	Scottish Crossbill
Black Grouse	Snow Bunting
Capercaillie	Red Squirrel
Pink-footed Geese	Pine Marten
Long-tailed Duck	
Scaup	
Common Scoter	
Velvet Scoter	

The season of golden colours, roaring stags, hunting eagles, seaduck and rarities - this is a wonderful time to be in glorious Speyside, within the Cairngorms National Park.

- Capercaillie, Black Grouse and Speyside specialties
- Includes a West Coast 'White-tailed Eagle' trip
- Seaduck, geese and thrushes arriving from the north
- Regular rare skuas, ducks and white-winged gulls
- Young Golden Eagles above roaring Red Deer stags
- Ptarmigan parties in the Cairngorms
- An evening for Pine Marten, Badger and more

Dinner together on Saturday evening to start the holiday, is followed by coffee and a run through the coming week.

2-7 As colder weather grips northern Scandinavia, thousands of birds stream south to warmer waters, many spending the winter off our shores. Like grains from a pepperpot, seaduck, grebes and divers are scattered across the sea like nowhere else in Britain. Rafts of Common and Velvet Scoter can be found in Findhorn Bay and we'll search through them for rare Surf Scoter which are annual here - lost birds from North America. Long-tailed Duck are in beautiful winter plumage and we'll check through flocks of Eider just in case a rare King Eider is amongst them. There will be Slavonian Grebe, Red-throated and Black-throated Divers, Scaup and the chance of Great and Arctic Skuas - even Red-necked Grebe is possible.



Purple Sandpiper, Ringed Plover and Turnstone pick around sea-weedy rocks and we'll visit estuaries alive with waders, Knot, Dunlin, Oystercatcher and Bar-tailed Godwit, which may hide something more unusual and we'll find big flocks of Wigeon plus Teal and Pintail. Skeins of Pink-footed and Greylag Geese are constantly on the move and may be arriving in their thousands.

If winds come from the north we'll check through the flocks of gulls, as there is always the chance of stray Glaucous or Iceland Gulls. Red Kite drift over farmland on the Black Isle and we'll visit a spot where Bottlenose Dolphins frequently come surprisingly close to the shore and hope for some acrobatics as they chase salmon coming in on the rising tide!

At Insh Marshes, Icelandic Whooper Swans quietly feed and Goosander and Goldeneye dive in small pools, where furtive Teal skulk in the margins.





"This tour is all about spectacle. The roaring of stags echoing through a valley, thousands of returning Pink-footed Geese, Golden Eagles honing their skills, Fieldfares and Redwings pouring in from Scandinavia. It is my favourite time of year, anything can happen!" Craig Round

Towards dusk, Hen Harriers fly buoyantly in from the moors to roost in the long grasses here, sometimes Merlin too. Golden Eagle and Peregrine hunt the higher glens and we'll search for Mountain Hares - now moulting into their winter coat and starting to go white in patches. A real highlight can be watching the Red Deer. This is the time when they are rutting and the roar of rutting stags echoes across the valley. Occasionally we see a real confrontation, as stags meet head to head, or we may see males that have adorned their antlers with grass and heather!

Open moorland holds parties of Red Grouse and, weather permitting, we'll explore the Cairngorms for cryptically camouflaged Ptarmigan - a walk into the foothills will bring us in to their domain

In the ancient pines of Abernethy Forest, Crested Tit and Scottish Crossbill are found and flocks of Siskin, Goldcrest, Coal Tit and Treecreeper weave through trees that flank the mountains. There is always the chance of Common and Parrot Crossbill too and we'll keep alert for elusive Capercaillie and Black Grouse - though neither species are easy at this time of year. Golden Eagle are possible and there is now a resident pair of White-tailed Eagles here, so keep your fingers crossed!

Flocks of winter thrushes, Redwing and Fieldfare, or even scarce Waxwing may appear on berry bushes. One night we'll go out for the chance of close up views of delightful Pine Martens and Badgers!

We shall also venture to the remote west coast through the dramatic peaks and sea lochs of wildest Wester Ross. The scenery gets more and more spectacular as you head west and the coastal beaches around Laide and Mellon Udrigle are beautiful too, with stunning mountain views towards Sutherland.

Wild Rock Dove may be found here along with Raven, Twite, Stonechat and Golden Eagle, but it's imposing White-tailed Eagle that may steal the show. We'll search for Red-throated and Great Northern Divers amongst more numerous Black-throated Divers that winter here, along with Black Guillemots, Eider and Shags.

Common Seals may be hauled out on the rocks and we'll scan the water and rocky shore for Otters. These wonderful animals are more linked to tide than time of day here, allowing the chance of animals out in daylight. We have enjoyed some wonderful views of them - especially when they catch something they need to bring to shore to deal with!

8 After breakfast on Saturday we say our farewells.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive in time for dinner and a chat about our plans for the coming week.
7 nights at Tigh-na-Sgiath Hotel
- Days 2-7** Wildlife and birdwatching exploration including Abernethy Forest, Dava Moor, the Cairngorms, the Moray Firth and West Coast
- Day 8** After breakfast we say our farewells and depart

Dave Braddock: Red Deer Stag
Roy Atkins: Loch Garten
Sue & Bill Gill: Ptarmigan
James Stevens: Snow Bunting
Craig Round: Whooper Swans
Jane Hope: Red Grouse
Mary Braddock: Crested Tit



EAST YORKSHIRE



"Yorkshire is fast becoming one of the best wildlife watching counties in the UK! With Reserves such as Blacktoft, Spurn and Bempton Cliffs, there's great birding throughout the year."
Sally Nowell

Dates Sat 10 - Sat 17 Oct 2020
Price £1,850
Deposit £350 Single Supp £200

Leaders Sally Nowell and Julian Sykes

Weather Can be extremely variable at this time of year, so come prepared for everything from rain and wind, to calm autumnal sunshine!

Walking Mostly easy walking on level paths up to 3 miles, with perhaps a little more if rarities require it!

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 rooms all ensuite
A lovely rural venue in the heart of East Yorkshire in a stunning location. A transfer can be arranged from York train station

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Brambling	Water Rail
Winter thrushes	Red-throated Diver
Redstart	Pink-footed Goose
Bearded Tit	Velvet Scoter
Marsh Harrier	Scarce migrants such as..
Sooty Shearwater	Yellow-browed Warbler
Pomarine Skua	Red-Backed Shrike
Little Gull	Ring Ouzel
Jack Snipe	Rose-coloured Starling
Spotted Redshank	Firecrest
Black Redstart	Wryneck
Barn Owl	Lapland Bunting
Little Owl	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Short-eared Owl	
Woodcock	

An excellent chance to visit birding hotspots and witness the autumn migration. Thousands of birds on the move - from waders and warblers, to pipits, thrushes and seabirds - and rarities too!

- Visit Yorkshire's autumn migration hotspots - Spurn, Flamborough and Filey
- Visit key Yorkshire birding sites such as Blacktoft Sands and Bempton Cliffs
- Yellow-browed Warbler, Red-Backed Shrike, Red-Breasted Flycatcher and Wryneck
- Visit Wildlife Artist Robert Fuller's gallery in the stunning Yorkshire Wolds
- See ringing first hand at a Spurn Bird Observatory demonstration
- Take a 4x4 trip to the end of famous Spurn Point
- Great accommodation and Yorkshire hospitality with birding on the doorstep!

We meet up at our hotel in time for dinner and a chance to discuss the coming week. Our 'well placed' accommodation means that most of the sites we shall visit are an hour or less away.

2-7 The Yorkshire coast at this time of year is a thrilling place!! Thousands of birds are on the move and to witness this mass migration as birds head south along the coast is a wonderful experience. We have timed this trip to enjoy migration in action, with common migrants still passing through in good numbers, but also the chance of something a bit rarer - or with luck - very rare indeed!!

East Yorkshire has become renowned as the place to witness autumn migration and has several sites from which to experience this massive annual movement of birds. Spurn Point is perhaps the most famous - its unusual shape acting as a funnel,

which concentrates birds as they move towards the point. Whilst this can be weather dependent, the birding here can be astonishing, with large numbers of common migrants such as pipits, thrushes, finches, Robins and Goldcrests and often plenty of scarcer species too, with double figure numbers of Yellow-browed Warblers and the chance of species such as Richard's Pipit, Firecrest, Wryneck, Shorelark, Lapland Bunting and more. What is more, we shall get an insight into how research on migration is carried out and see birds in the hand, with a ringing demonstration at Spurn Bird Observatory.

We shall also cast our eyes seawards as, at this time of year, Filey Brigg and Flamborough Head provide excellent seawatching opportunities. We'll look out for Manx and Sooty Shearwaters, Arctic, Long-tailed and Pomarine Skuas, divers and flocks of seaduck and geese. Like Spurn, these



"Autumn is a great time of year to visit East Yorkshire. We shall be slap bang in the middle of some of the UK's migration hotspots, so will have everything crossed for some exciting birding!" Sally Nowell



sites can also be the first landfall for high numbers of birds, with thrushes and Bramblings coming in off the sea and all three sites have had more than their fair share of national rarities.

Each day we shall be keeping an eye on 'what's about' and will be in touch with local birders, so plans may alter rapidly if something very special is found. Anything can turn up, but some years are incredible, such as 2016 when Siberian Accentor, White's Thrush, Eastern Crowned Warbler, Isabelline Wheatear and Black-browed Albatross were exceptional finds. We can't promise the same rarities necessarily, but we can promise an exciting time searching for the unexpected, with the opportunity to polish our skills when it comes to our less familiar warblers, whilst looking out for gems including Pallas's and Dusky Warbler.

Yorkshire has some fabulous Reserves and habitats, wetlands, cliffs, forest, coast and estuarine marsh. We'll visit Blacktoft Sands, where the wetlands and reedbeds are superb at this time of year. Wader passage will include common species such as Dunlin, but should also include Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, Black-tailed Godwit and Ruff. Marsh Harriers hunt over the reeds, where 'pinging' flocks of Bearded Tits can be seen and if we are very lucky, perhaps a Water Rail or Bittern will appear.

At Bempton Cliffs, the huge seabird colonies will have departed, but some of the thousands of Gannets that nest here will still be present at this time of year. This spectacular place can also

provide the chance to see migration and amongst the common migrants, we'll be on the lookout for shrikes, flycatchers, or scarcer warblers. We shall also introduce you to some newer and less well known, but equally impressive, birding hot spots on our daily outings.

East Yorkshire is a varied county, with rich agricultural land providing ideal feeding grounds for large numbers of Lapwing and Golden Plover. The subtly rolling hills of the Yorkshire Wolds, providing habitat for Barn Owls, Skylarks, Red Kite and Brown Hare, feature in a lot of David Hockney's recent work.

We plan to visit Robert Fuller's wildlife art gallery and get a 'behind the scenes' tour of some of the ingenious ways he spies on his local wildlife. His paintings sell all over the world and his trademark, highly-detailed images, have been adopted by the RSPB and the National Trust.

8 After breakfast on our final day we say our farewells. You may wish to extend your holiday by spending time in one of Yorkshire's historic towns such as York or Beverley, or explore further up Yorkshire's east coast, to places such as Whitby and Robin Hood's Bay.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Meet at our hotel in time for our evening meal
7 nights at Tickton Grange, Beverley
- Days 2-7** Exploration of the migration hotspots of Spurn Point, Flamborough Head, Filey Brigg and Bempton Cliffs. We'll also seawatch from headlands and visit Blacktoft Sands for wetland and reedbed birds, plus visit the Yorkshire Wolds and the Robert Fuller Art Gallery
- Day 8** After breakfast we say our farewells

Chris Piper: Marsh Harrier
Julian Sykes: Spurn Point, Hobby
Roy Cowley: Gannet
Mark Denman: Red-backed Shrike
Roy Atkins: Spotted Redshank
Tim Drew: Yellow-browed Warbler



KOMODO DRAGONS



"I am thrilled to have the chance to visit this amazing area, the world's largest archipelago, as we cruise amongst the islands and coral reefs; and hope you can join me on this wonderful adventure, to see Asiatic seabirds, rare cetaceans and dragons, from Bali to Komodo NP and beyond!!" Roy Atkins

Dates Thu 15 - Tue 27 Oct 2020

Price £6,995

Deposit £950 Single Supp £50
(for single at hotel only)

Leaders Roy Atkins and Chas Anderson

Flights Singapore Airlines, scheduled
Outbound: Overnight, Heathrow-Denpasar
Inbound: Overnight, Denpasar-Heathrow
(outbound and inbound via Singapore)
Internal flight with local airline:
Denpasar to Maumere

Weather Tropical climate, usually calm and sunny but wind and showers also possible.
Daytime temperatures 29-33°C,
evening 25-27°C, the sea breeze keeps it feeling cooler, hot when no breeze.
Pleasant sea temperatures for snorkelling

Walking Some short walks during island visits, inflatable tenders used to get ashore

Meals All included from lunch on Day 2 to dinner on Day 12

Insects Biting insects can occasionally be a nuisance, insect repellent is recommended

Accom Mercure Bali Sanur Resort - double, twin and single rooms, all ensuite.
MV *Mermaid* - double/twin standard cabin, double/twin superior cabin (supplement applicable), double no window cabin (reduction applicable).
All cabins ensuite and air-conditioned

Group 13

Just some of what we hope to see:

Komodo Dragon	Blue Whale
Manta Ray	Bryde's Whale
Melon-headed Whale	Sperm Whale
Pilot Whale	Dwarf Sperm Whale
Spinner Dolphin	Yellow-crested Cockatoo
Spotted Dolphin	Red-footed Booby
Risso's Dolphin	White-tailed Tropicbird
Bottlenose Dolphin	Brown Booby
Indo-Pacific Bottlenose	Streaked Shearwater
Fraser's Dolphin	Bulwer's Petrel

These islands become more lush the further west we go, crossing the famous Wallace's Line, where Australasian wildlife gives way to Asian, making for a very diverse selection

- Flores, Komodo National Park and on to Sumbawa and Bali
- Melon-headed, Sperm, Blue and False Killer Whales
- Spinner, Spotted, Fraser's and Rough-toothed Dolphins
- Brown, Red-footed and perhaps Abbott's Boobies
- Lesser, Great and possibly Christmas Island Frigatebirds
- White-tailed Tropicbirds, Bulwer's Petrel and Streaked Shearwaters
- The largest lizard in the world - the famous Komodo Dragon!

1-2 After our overnight flight we transfer to our hotel, with a chance to relax and perhaps enjoy some birding in the grounds.

3-4 We take a domestic flight to the island of Flores, flying over the dramatic Lesser Sunda Islands and the colourful crater lakes of Keli Mutu volcano. At the port city of Maumere we board our exclusively chartered 28m liveaboard safari vessel, M.V. *Mermaid*.

We cruise slowly westwards, along the north coast of Flores, looking for cetaceans, including Sperm and Melon-headed Whales and Fraser's Dolphins, plus flying fish and seabirds. There will be opportunities for snorkelling on the coral reefs and for island visits.

Our exact itinerary will stay flexible and depends on species that we encounter. We may anchor next to the classic cone-shaped volcanic island of Pulau Raja (aka Puloe) and enjoy a gentle first

snorkel, where the black sand beach gives way to boulders and a fine rocky reef.

We continue westward, exploring the north coast of Flores, in search of more cetaceans, including Spinner, Spotted and Bottlenose Dolphins and possible Blue Whale and seabirds, including Brown Noddy and Short-tailed and Streaked Shearwaters.

5-8 Cruising through the night will bring us to the edge of Komodo National Park at dawn, which will give us plenty of time for an island visit and snorkel, perhaps at Gililawa Darat, home to Ospreys and White-bellied Sea Eagles, before continuing on to Rinca Island. This is one of the two big islands (the other being Komodo itself) which are home to the emblematic Komodo Dragon.

Landing on Rinca Island, we shall be met by Rangers from the Island Station, who will accompany us throughout our walk, firstly up the appropriately named Look-out Hill, for a view over



"This will be a thrilling yet relaxing trip, being looked after by the friendly crew of our 28m vessel M.V. Mermaid, as we cruise through the Indonesian Archipelago, including the famous Komodo National Park, home to the largest lizard in the world - the iconic Komodo Dragon! Seabirds can include Christmas Island Frigatebirds, White-tailed Tropicbirds, Wedge-tailed and Streaked Shearwaters, Bulwer's Petrels and Swinhoe's and Wilson's Storm-petrels." Roy Atkins



to Komodo, then down into the scrubby woodland. Komodo Dragons nest here, with maybe a large female slumbering nearby, guarding her eggs and sharing the site with Orange-footed Scrubfowls, a species of Megapode. On this walk, land birds that we haven't yet encountered could include Helmeted Friarbird, Yellow-crested Cockatoo and Blue-tailed Bee-eater.

Our next day within the National Park gives us another opportunity to cruise for seabirds and cetaceans. We can also snorkel around Komodo Island where the coral reefs are home to Octopus, Hawksbill Turtles and Blue-spotted Rays.

Back on Mermaid we'll cruise into the Linta Strait, between Rinca and Komodo, where family groups of Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins reside. Birds here can include hundreds if not thousands of Red-necked Phalaropes, Bulwer's Petrels on their southward migration, plus Great Crested, Lesser Crested, Bridled, Black-naped, Common and White-winged Terns. At the very southern of Komodo Island we have the chance to snorkel with Manta Rays.

After this we may continue south, out into deeper waters of the Indian Ocean, on the lookout for more cetaceans, before heading back to Rinca Island for more encounters with Komodo Dragons, as they patrol the beach at Horseshoe Bay.

9-11 When we finally leave Komodo National Park we shall pass Sangeang, a large volcanic island, offering more wonderful snorkelling. Among the cetaceans to encounter are Spinner, Spotted, Rough-toothed and Fraser's Dolphins, plus Melon-headed Whales.

Brown Boobies become commoner as we head further west, and other seabirds could include Bulwer's Petrels, Wilson's Storm-petrels, Bridled Terns, Arctic Skuas, Pomarine Skuas, Great Crested Terns and Frigatebirds.

One of our last nights should be spent at Satonda. This classic cone-shaped volcanic island has a central crater lake. After anchoring we head ashore for a walk to the lake. Among the birds here can be Little Grebe, Wallacean Drongo, Collared Kingfisher, Brown-capped Woodpecker and Sooty-headed Bulbul, as well as Bronze Skinks and Macaques. Fruit Bats roost here, often in their thousands, commuting nightly to Sumbawa, right over our anchorage.

Satonda is also a wonderful snorkelling site and we shall enjoy one or two more coral reef snorkels as we press further westward. All the time we shall be looking out for whales, dolphins and seabirds.

At the very end of our cruise we sail along the Wallace's Line back to Bali. During our final evening on board, we shall enjoy a chance to relive our exciting encounters during a farewell dinner. Our exact docking time at Benoa port will depend on tides, but may happen during the night.

12-13 After our final breakfast onboard and sad farewells to the Mermaid crew, we shall transfer to the international airport in good time for our evening flight back to the UK.

**Superior cabin supplement: £800 per person.
Lower cabin discount: £400 per person.**

Outline Itinerary

Days 1-2 After an overnight flight to Denpasar, we stay in a nearby hotel
1 night at Mercure Bali Sanur Resort

Days 3-11 We take a domestic flight from Bali to Maumere on the island of Flores, where we board our comfortable boat, for nine nights.

We slowly work our way westwards, past the island of Flores, looking out for whales and dolphins, flying fish and seabirds, heading towards Komodo National Park.

There will be opportunities for snorkelling on the coral reefs and for island visits.

We plan to have three full days within the Komodo National Park. There will be time within Komodo National Park to see the impressive Komodo Dragons and other wildlife. We shall snorkel on some of the superb coral reefs and hope to encounter Manta Rays.

We then travel on along the coast of Sumbawa, with plenty more time for whale and dolphin watching and snorkelling, arriving back in Bali during our last night aboard.

Days 12-13 We disembark at Benoa port, Bali and transfer to the international airport, ready for our overnight flight back to the UK

Chas Anderson: Komodo Dragon, Manta Ray, Melon-headed Whales, landscape, Red-footed Booby, Spotted Dolphins, Short-tailed Shearwater



FORTH 'N' FIFE



"From migration at Fife Ness, waders on the lagoons at Musselburgh, raptors on the mountains and moors, to Beaver in Perthshire, this holiday has a mix of everything – just superb!"
Julian Sykes

Dates Sun 18 - Sun 25 Oct 2020

Price £1,750

Deposit £350 Single Supp £250

Leader Julian Sykes

Weather Can be extremely variable at this time of year, so come prepared for everything from cold, rain and wind to calm autumnal sunshine!

Walking Mostly easy walking on level paths up to 2 miles, or perhaps a little more if rarities require it! We may be on our feet for a lot of the day even if not walking far

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 rooms

Group 7

Just some of what we hope to see:

Red-throated Diver	Whimbrel
Great Northern Diver	Great Skua
Slavonian Grebe	Pomarine Skua
Red-necked Grebe	Mediterranean Gull
Manx Shearwater	Little Gull
Sooty Shearwater	Short-eared Owl
Whooper Swan	Water Pipit
Taiga Bean Goose	Common Redstart
Brent Goose	Yellow-browed Warbler
Velvet Scoter	Barred Warbler
Surf Scoter	Firecrest
Long-tailed Duck	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Marsh Harrier	Twite
Golden Eagle	Corn Bunting
Red Kite	Lapland Bunting
Peregrine	European Beaver
Purple Sandpiper	European Otter
Curlew Sandpiper	Red Squirrel
Little Stint	
Spotted Redshank	

Late autumn in the Kingdom of Fife can be incredibly rewarding, with wintering wildfowl, seabirds moving out of the North Sea and a good chance of something scarce turning up amongst them.

- Visit the famous Fife Ness headland and St Andrews coastline
- Cross the new Forth Road Bridge to Musselburgh Lagoons
- Divers, grebes, shearwaters, skuas and terns offshore
- European Beaver at the excellent Loch of the Lowes SWT Reserve
- Skeins of Pink-footed Geese from the hotel, plus Taiga Bean Geese
- Yellow-browed Warbler, Lapland Bunting and Ring Ouzel
- The rolling mountains of Perthshire for raptors

We meet in Edinburgh and head to our comfortable accommodation in Kinross, situated on the edge of Loch Leven. Vane Farm RSPB Reserve is part of this huge inland water and every winter it hosts 15,000+ Pink-footed Geese, which is wonderful to see each day flying out to the nearby fields.

2-7 Like the rest of the British east coast at this time of year, this is a thrilling and unpredictable experience, which can be very weather and wind dependent!!

Thousands of birds are on the move and to witness this mass migration as birds head south along the coast is a wonderful sight.

We have timed this trip to enjoy migration in action, with common migrants still passing through in good

numbers, but also the chance of something a bit rarer making landfall. Pipits, thrushes and finches are sometimes joined by scarcer birds, with a good probability of Yellow-browed or Barred Warbler; along with the chance of Red-breasted Flycatcher; Firecrest, Lapland Bunting and more. We could literally see (and hear) birds dropping out of the sky, making landfall on Scotland's east coast.

We shall cast our eyes seawards from the comfort of a hide at Fife Ness and nearby car park, as both provide excellent opportunities for passage seabirds; looking out for seaduck, Sooty Shearwater and Arctic, Great and Pomarine Skuas.

There will be passage gulls and terns, with Little and hopefully Sabine's Gull amongst the 100's of Kittiwakes moving south. Red-throated Divers should now be making their regular passage,



"In 2018 we were rewarded with an American White-winged Scoter amongst Velvet Scoters, Red-necked and Slavonian Grebes, Little Gulls offshore and an unexpected drake Ferruginous Duck, but one of the real highlights was our impromptu visit to The Kelpies – fantastic 30m high heads of water horses on the edge of the Falkirk canal." Julian Sykes



sometimes in impressive numbers, with a possibility of a Great Northern Diver as well.

The historic home of golf – St Andrews, needs no introduction and can be very productive, as a walk along the rocky shoreline could produce Purple Sandpiper and possibly Water Pipit amongst the much commoner Rock Pipits. Nearby is the Eden Estuary and at the large comfortable hide it is possible to see groups of regular wintering waders, along with the possibility of a Curlew Sandpiper or Little Stint.

We cross the Forth Road Bridge to East Lothian, where we visit the wonderful Musselburgh Lagoons, which can be excellent at this time of year. Waders will include Bar-tailed Godwit, Dunlin, Redshank and Curlew, but there's always a chance of a Jack Snipe or Spotted Redshank. From the sea wall we shall scan for Common and Velvet Scoter, hoping to find a Surf Scoter that can winter here annually, along with possibly Red-necked and Slavonian Grebes.

One day will be spent searching the Carron Valley for the wintering flock of Taiga Bean Geese, which is not always easy and local information is always useful. This will be combined with the Forth high tide roosts at Kinneil and Skinflats, where it's possible to see 1000's of waders such as Black-tailed Godwit, Common Redshank, Golden Plover and Dunlin. In 2018 we were lucky enough to find a drake Ferruginous Duck at this latter site, so you never know your luck.

No trip to this part of the Central Belt would be complete without calling in on one of Scotland's newest landmarks – The Kelpies, which could actually be one of the unexpected highlights of this tour.

In contrast one afternoon we'll cross the Tay River and head for Perthshire, where we shall spend some time between Dunkeld and Crieff looking for raptors. With a bit of good luck and some decent weather conditions, we have a possibility of finding Golden Eagle, Red Kite, Goshawk and Peregrine, which would be some foursome!

Late afternoon we shall move on to the Loch of the Lowes SWT Reserve, where we'll stay until dusk, in the hope of seeing one of the European Beavers that grace this wonderful site, along with possibly Red Squirrel and good numbers of wildfowl.

8 There may be the chance for some final birding before we head back to Edinburgh and say our fond farewells to the Kingdom of Fife.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Meet in Edinburgh and transfer to our hotel
7 nights at Kirklands Hotel, Kinross
- Days 2-7** From our base in Kinross we shall cover the migration hotspot of Fife Ness, the historic town of St Andrews and the adjacent Eden Estuary. We'll explore the Tay River reedbed and visit Perthshire for European Beaver. We shall cross the Forth River to Musselburgh Lagoons Reserve and possibly Torness
- Day 8** Travel back to Edinburgh

Mark Denman: Long-tailed Duck
Morag Rea: Mixed Wader Flocks, Kelpies
Julian Sykes: Taiga Bean Geese, Pink-footed Geese, Velvet Scoter
Duncan Macdonald: European Beaver



BERLIN AND BEYOND



"A small population of Great Bustards resides in the Brandenburg Region, being one of the most northerly in Europe and we hope to find them. Coupled with this is the spectacle of 1000's of Common Cranes roosting on the myriad of lakes, alongside masses of wildfowl and flocks of geese." Julian Sykes

Dates Sun 1 - Sun 8 Nov 2020
Price £2,650
Deposit £500 Single Supp £300

Leaders Julian Sykes and Duncan Macdonald
Flights British Airways, scheduled
Outbound: Morning, Heathrow-Berlin
Inbound: Afternoon, Berlin-Heathrow
Weather It may be cold and possibly wet, but we hope for sunshine, pack for all situations (2-15°C)
Walking There will be some walking through woodland and lake edges of up to 2 miles on decent tracks, without any big climbs
Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8
Insects Unlikely to be a problem at this time of year
Accom Twin and single ensuite rooms
Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Great White Egret	Golden Plover
Whooper Swan	Kingfisher
White-fronted Geese	Black Woodpecker
Tundra Bean Geese	Middle Spotted Woodpecker
Taiga Bean Geese	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
Barnacle Geese	Pintail
Red-crested Pochard	Fieldfare
Smew	Waxwing
White-tailed Eagle	Tree Sparrow
Hen Harrier	Brambling
Rough-legged Buzzard	Twite
Goshawk	Hawfinch
Merlin	Red Squirrel
Great Bustard	

A fabulous late autumn visit to the historic Brandenburg region of Germany, home of its capital – Berlin and some wonderful wildlife including Great Bustard, plus lots of wildfowl and raptors.

- Full day in Germany's most iconic city - Berlin
- Great Bustard – Europe's most northern population
- Huge flocks of geese with White-fronted, Taiga and Tundra Bean
- Visit Brandenburg Gate, Reichstag and Checkpoint Charlie
- 1000's of Common Cranes heading to Spain for the winter
- Stroll round Berlin's most beautiful city park - Tiergarten
- Rough-legged Buzzard, Northern Grey Shrike, Merlin all possible

We arrive at Berlin airport and drive west from the German capital towards Brandenburg, heading to our hotel in Rathenow, where we spend the next five days nights. Enroute we could possibly see our first Common Cranes and geese flying over these extensive agricultural lands. We expect to find wildfowl, Tree Sparrows and Siskins.

2-5 We have four full days to explore the varied countryside from our base and as we traverse this low-lying area, we can expect to come across flocks of geese of varying species. Great Bustards have disappeared from most of Northern Europe, but here in this region, east of Semlin is one of their few remaining areas. We shall visit tower hides as well as the local fields, looking for these bustards and also hoping to

see a few raptors such as Hen Harrier, Common Buzzard and possibly Rough-legged Buzzard.

This is a good area for Great Grey Shrike, plus flocks of Lapwing and Golden Plover and in the adjacent woodland we have the chance of Black and Middle Spotted Woodpeckers.

Further east, the fishponds at Linum hold a good variety of waterfowl, including Red-crested Pochard and maybe Smew. Common Crane reside here and we shall spend time walking around these reed-fringed ponds. Our timing here will coincide with the cranes coming in to roost in the early evening.

To the west is a large area of flooded meadows, where there is another good tower hide beside a water channel, where we can see Whooper



"The mention of Berlin conjures up a multitude of historic references, many of which have left a rich cultural legacy in the form of fantastic monuments, from the Reichstag and the Brandenburg Gate, to (of course) Checkpoint Charlie. However, it's not all cultural, as there are wonderful parks that offer incredible woodland wildlife, including Goshawk - doesn't really get any better!" Julian Sykes



Swans, geese and large numbers of dabbling ducks such as Pintail and Wigeon. There may be flocks of Common Cranes and also huge White-tailed Eagles are often seen.

The Gülper See is a large lake and one of the best birding sites in Brandenburg, which hold large numbers of wildfowl. Mixed flocks of Geese can be seen and heard, with both Taiga and Tundra Bean, Russian White-fronted and Greylag Geese possible. Great White Egrets are resident here and the woodland can be productive for woodpeckers and other forest-dwelling species.

Depending on water levels, a walk along the edge of the lake may reveal some waders, with finches and buntings to look for in the surrounding fields. We may see signs of European Beaver activity and several beaver lodges, but sightings of these fascinating mammals, which are largely crepuscular, may prove elusive.

A short journey from here carries us into the neighbouring German state of Saxony-Anhalt and on towards the old Hanseatic hill town of Havelberg. Along the way, we'll stop at a hide overlooking the Havel River and surrounding meadows, for dabbling ducks, raptors and perhaps a Great Grey Shrike.

There will be the opportunity to walk around historic Havelburg itself and along the river.

6-7 We leave our hotel in Rathenow today, stopping at more sites on our journey



back to Berlin. We aim to get to our hotel in plenty of time to ready ourselves for our night out in this vibrant city.

In the morning we shall make our way to the wonderful city centre park of Tiergarten, where we shall walk the network of paths that dissect this area. The extensive deciduous woodland is home to a healthy population of Northern Goshawk, being in fact commoner than its smaller cousin! We also hope to add another mammal to our list, as we search out one of the Red Squirrels that reside here.

After lunch we shall embark on some sightseeing, as we make our way around some of the Capital's historic landmarks such as the Brandenburg Gate, The Reichstag and Checkpoint Charlie.

8 If we have time, we shall take another stroll through the city park before we head to the airport for our flight back to the UK.



Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-5** Fly London to Berlin and drive to our hotel in Rathenow. We spend the next four full days looking for Great Bustard, Common Crane, flocks of geese, plus raptors and wintering passerines
5 nights Hotel Fürstenhof
- Days 6-7** Drive to Berlin, where we spend our next full day visiting its most iconic landmarks – Reichstag, Brandenburg Gate and the lovely Tiergarten Park
2 nights Novotel Berlin Am Tiergarten
- Day 8** Flight back from Berlin to London

Roy Atkins: Common Cranes, White-fronted Geese, Rough-legged Buzzard

Julian Sykes: Reichstag, Great Bustard, Tiergarten Park

Mary Braddock: Great Grey Shrike



THAILAND



"Just the words Spoon-billed Sandpiper evokes a thrill of anticipation and desire to see one in the wild and we have a great chance. This incredible, globally-endangered wader, feeds alongside other equally mouthwatering species such as Nordmann's Greenshank, Asiatic Dowitcher and Great Knot!" Julian Sykes

Dates Sun 15 Nov - Sat 5 Dec 2020

Price £5,995

Deposit £1,195 **Single Supp** £900

Leaders Julian Sykes and Nick Upton

Flights British Airways, scheduled
Outbound: Overnight, Heathrow-Bangkok
Inbound: Morning, Bangkok-Heathrow
Local airline: Bangkok-Chang Mai-Bangkok

Weather This is the dry season, but there is always a chance of some rain in the mountains. Days can be hot, but cooler nights are common, especially at higher altitudes, with temperatures ranging from 10°-30°C

Walking Easy to moderate walking on good tracks and roads, some of reasonable length, but none too strenuous. Our visit to Doi Inthanon will involve some walks at altitudes above 8000ft. These will be at an easy pace but please consult with your GP if you think this may be an issue

Meals All included from lunch on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 21.
Mostly local cuisine throughout

Insects Biting insects can be a nuisance in some areas, so bring repellent

Accom Twin and single ensuite rooms
Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Asian Elephant	Black-headed Woodpecker
White-handed Gibbon	Orange-breasted Trogon
Black Giant Squirrel	Blue Pitta
Spoon-billed Sandpiper	Great Eared Nightjar
Nordmann's Greenshank	Collared Falconet
Asian Dowitcher	Spot-breasted Parrotbill
Malaysian Plover	Black-and-Red Broadbill
Silver Pheasant	Ratchet-tailed Treepie
Siamese Fireback	Giant Nuthatch
Mrs Hume's Pheasant	
Great Hornbill	

Nick Upton: Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Asian Dowitcher, Scarlet-faced Liocichla

Julian Sykes: Khao Yai NP, Asian Elephant

Dick Daniels: Siamese Fireback

Our Thailand tour targets one of the most sought-after bird species on earth - Spoon-billed Sandpiper, however that is just the tip of the wildlife iceberg here!

- Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Nordmann's Greenshank, Great Knot
- Doi Inthanon – the highest peak in Thailand
- Gibbons, macaques and Asian Elephant at Khao Yai National Park
- Blue Pitta, Great Hornbill, several broadbills, all possible
- See some of the most beautiful pagodas, shrines and temples
- Giant Nuthatch – need I say more!
- Fantastic cuisine within a colourful and vibrant culture

1-2 We have an overnight flight to Bangkok, where we stay for one night.

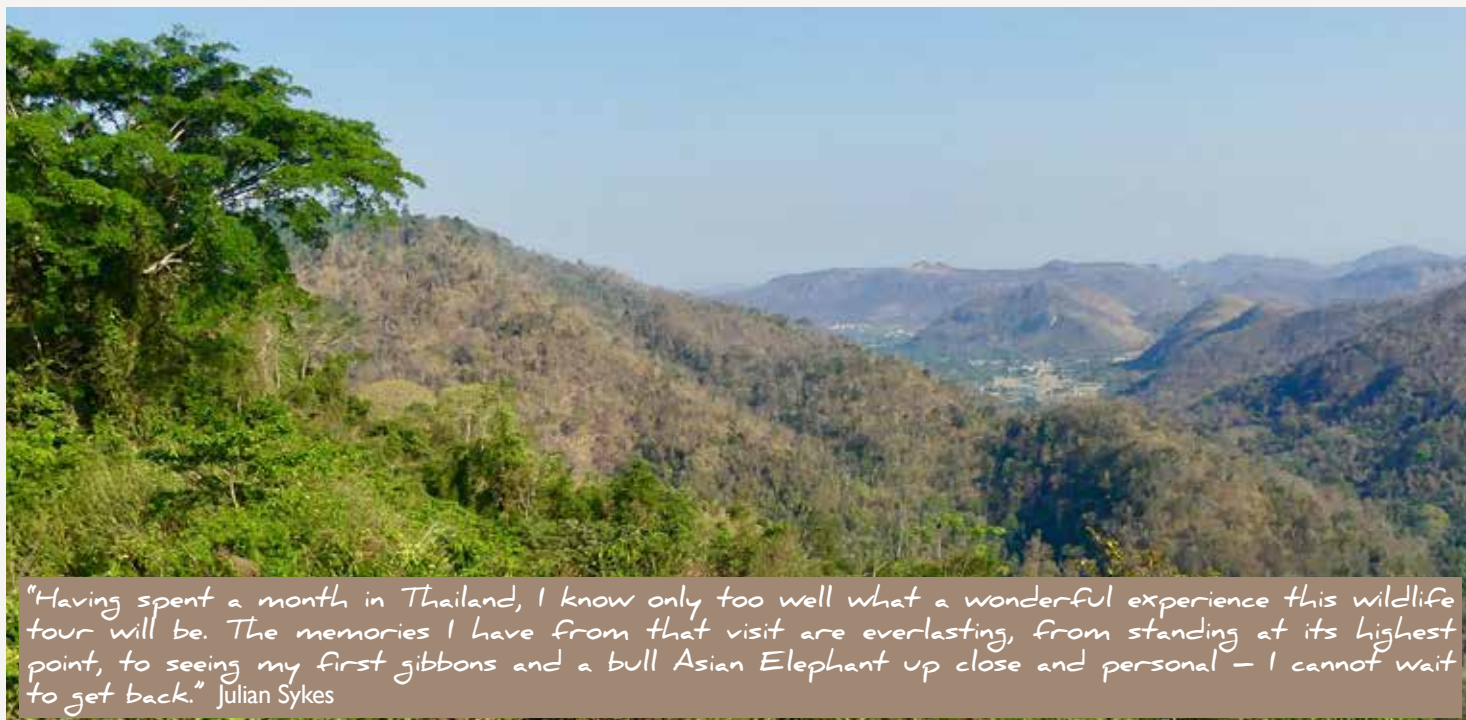
3-5 We take an early morning drive to Wat Pra Phuttabaht Noi to find the range-restricted and difficult Limestone Wren Babbler around these lovely temple grounds. On then to the fabulous Khao Yai NP with lots of possibilities, including Laced Woodpecker, White-crested Laughing-thrush, Orange-breasted Trogon and the gorgeous Siamese Fireback, which emerge in the late afternoon. Then at dusk we shall wait for the magnificent Great Eared Nightjar. Next day will be spent searching the key areas for Silver Pheasant, Great Hornbill, Banded Broadbill, Red-headed Trogon and with a little luck the shy Blue Pitta. It's not just about birds as we shall also look for White-handed Gibbon, Pig-tailed Macaque and maybe Asian Elephant.



6-7 We leave early and head south to the famous Pak Thale, home to one of the most enigmatic and globally endangered birds in the world – Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Other waders we also hope to find here are Nordmann's Greenshank, Asian Dowitcher, Great Knot, Far Eastern Curlew and Long-toed Stint to name a few. We shall make a short boat trip out to a peninsular for Malaysian Plover, Chinese Egret and Great Crested Tern. We shall also spend time in nearby rice fields where a wide variety of birds can be found, including Yellow Bittern, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Pink-necked Green Pigeon, plus much more.

8-10 We now leave Pak Thale and make our way to arguably one of the best Reserves in Thailand – Kaeng Krachen.





"Having spent a month in Thailand, I know only too well what a wonderful experience this wildlife tour will be. The memories I have from that visit are everlasting, from standing at its highest point, to seeing my first gibbons and a bull Asian Elephant up close and personal – I cannot wait to get back." Julian Sykes

Great birding here starts at our hotel, where Brown Boobook can roost in the garden. Two full days will be spent searching this fabulous site, where we hope to find Kalij Pheasant, Bar-backed Partridge, Large Scimitar Babbler, Orange-breasted Trogon, Black-thighed Falconet, Thick-billed Green Pigeon, Blue-bearded Barbet, Black and Yellow Broadbill, Black and Tickell's Brown Hornbill and a good chance of Black Giant Squirrel. This is just scratching the surface of possibilities and you will be overwhelmed by the beauty and diversity of this incredible place.

11 Today is for travelling and after one final excursion into the Park we head off for Bangkok and our flight north to Chiang Mai.

12-15 After breakfast we first go to Muang Sam Ma lotus swamp, where we look for reedbed warblers including Pallas's Grasshopper, Dusky, Oriental and Black-browed Reed Warblers, plus Grey-headed Swampphen and Pheasant-tailed Jacana.

We next drive north towards Fang, heading up Doi Lang West. This is one of Thailand's best and remotest birding sites. Our local guide has some regular stakeouts for Spot-breasted Parrotbill, White-gorgetted Flycatcher and the wonderful Siberian Rubythroat. Returning down we have our first chance at Mrs Hume's Pheasant.

Over the next three full days we shall spend lots of time birding at Doi Lang West and Doi Lang East. The major specialities of these ranges

are Giant Nuthatch, Maroon and Slender-billed Orioles, Spectacled Barwing, Black-throated Sunbird, Scarlet-faced Liocichla, White-tailed Robin, Himalayan Bluetail, Orange-bellied Leafbird and many others. Our local guide knows all the best places.

16-18 Today we leave for Thailand's highest peak – Doi Inthanon. Two full days will be spent birding at a variety of altitudes, all of which have their own key birds. At the summit there are Rufous-throated Partridge, Himalayan Shortwing, Pygmy Wren Babbler, as well as winter flocks that should include Green-tailed and Mrs Gould's Sunbird and Rufous-winged Fulvetta, some which are fairly tame. Lower down the mountain, flocks of birds usually include colourful Clicking Shrike Babbler, Rufous-backed Sibia, Golden-throated Barbet and Hume's Treecreeper. The cute Collared Falconet can be found on the lower slopes, but there will be lots to look for at all altitudes.

19-20 On our final morning here we shall check the waterfalls for Plumbeous and White-capped Redstarts. After lunch we shall drive to Mae Ping NP. Our main targets here will be Black-headed and White-bellied Woodpeckers, with chances of Black Baza, Collared Falconet, Rufous-winged Buzzard and Burmese Nuthatch. On our second afternoon we drive back to Chiang Mai for our late afternoon flight to Bangkok.

21 We take a flight back to the UK, arriving in the evening.



Outline Itinerary

Days 1-2	Overnight flight to Bangkok for an overnight stay here 1 night Mariya Boutique Residence
Days 3-4	Early start to drive to Khao Yai NP, visiting Wat Pra Phuttabaht 2 nights Juldiss J2 Khao Yai Hotel
Day 5	Morning at NP then return to Bangkok 1 night Mariya Boutique Residence
Days 6-7	Early transfer to the famous Pak Thale for Spoon-billed Sandpiper 2 nights Sun Hotel, Petchaburi
Days 8-10	Transfer to Kaeng Krachan NP 3 nights Baan Maka Nature Lodge
Day 11	Travel back to Bangkok for flight to Chiang Mai, for an overnight stay 1 night Imperial Mae Ping
Days 12-13	Transfer to the mountains of Doi Lang and Doi Ang Kaeng 2 nights Tangerine Ville Hotel, Fang
Days 14-15	Leave for the other side of Doi Lang. Full day on the east side by all-terrain vehicle - 2 nights Garden Home, Thatorn
Days 16-18	Drive to Doi Inthanon for two full days at various altitudes 3 nights Inthanon Highland Resort
Day 19	Transfer to Mae Ping NP 1 night Ing Fa Resort, Li
Day 20	Flight to Bangkok for final night 1 night Mariya Boutique Residence
Day 21	Flight back to UK



OUR TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Please take a few minutes to read the following, that often gets overlooked. We pride ourselves on safeguarding not only you on your holidays, but also your payments made to us. In return, we have to comply with certain legal requirements, that means we need some information from you. All this is designed to take the worry and hassle out of your holidays with us.

1. A reservation is made once a booking form, together with deposit, has been received from you and confirmed in writing by us or; when booking through our website, you receive your booking confirmation by email. Provisional reservations may be made by telephone or email, as long as a completed booking form follows within 10 days. For reservations within 10 weeks prior to the commencement of the holiday a completed booking form and full payment must follow within 48 hours of a provisional booking.

2. The balance must be paid not less than 10 weeks prior to the commencement of the holiday. For some holidays the balance due date may be more than 10 weeks before commencement, if we are obliged to confirm final details prior to that point with our agents. The date the balance is payable will be advised by Speyside Wildlife when we confirm your booking. Unless notice of cancellation is received from you prior to the balance payment date, balance monies will remain due and payable.

3. If you book a place in a twin ensuite we shall endeavour to find you a fellow guest to take the other place. If we fail to do so, we shall contact you before the balance is due on the holiday, to let you know how much the single supplement would be to have the room to yourself and keep the booking. If you don't want to pay the supplement, you may cancel your booking and your deposit will be returned.

4. No increase will be made to the prices in respect of these holidays. The price you see is the maximum price you will pay. Speyside Wildlife holidays are fully inclusive of meals, accommodation, transport and entrance fees as detailed. Not included are travel insurance and items of a personal nature. Where guests incur expenditure for telephone calls, drinks etc, this bill must be settled by you, prior to departure. Last minute discounts may be available through the office. Any change in price in respect of these will be detailed on an individual basis, prior to your booking being made.

5. If you cancel a booking the deposit is non-refundable. If you cancel any holiday after the balance due date, all balance monies will be forfeit. Once balance monies have been paid, rather than cancelling, you are at liberty to transfer your booking to another person, provided sufficient notice is given to us and it is possible for us to make the substitution. In this event any transfer costs arising must be borne by you. In addition, you are at liberty to transfer an existing booking to another holiday within the same year; any time up to four weeks prior to the balance monies being due on your existing booking. Again any transfer costs must be borne by you. An administration charge of £50 will be levied on each and any transfer.

6. Speyside Wildlife will do everything possible to ensure that your holiday runs as described. In the unlikely event this is not possible we shall advise you at the earliest opportunity of any significant alterations. Any alterations so made will be of a similar quality to those described. No responsibility can be held by Speyside Wildlife for any holiday altered or cancelled due to reasons beyond our control, under circumstances which could not be avoided and where alternative arrangements cannot be made. In the event of cancellation all monies will be returned promptly to you in full. We do, however, reserve the right to cancel any holiday up to 10 weeks prior to departure, should insufficient reservations have been made. In this instance again all monies paid will be refunded in full.

7. Speyside Wildlife cannot be responsible for any loss or damage to personal items, or for personal accident or injury. Guests are therefore strongly recommended to take out personal insurance against cancellation charges and other loss or injury. To this end, we have arranged suitable cover. If you wish this to apply, please contact Arthur J Gallagher of Fort William on 01397 705 858.

Clients booked on flight-based holidays must have sufficient personal cover prior to travel. If you do not wish to use our insurer, then a copy of the policy you take out must be provided to us. We shall take responsibility should the services detailed in the holiday descriptions not be of a suitable standard. We shall also take responsibility for any acts or omissions by ourselves which result in any loss or injury to you. We cannot however take responsibility for any loss or injury resulting from any act or omission by persons over whom we have no control.

8. If you have a complaint, would you please notify us as soon as possible in order that the matter can be dealt with promptly.

9. Speyside Wildlife complies with GDPR May 2018. All personal details on our mailing list are held securely on computer. These are automatically deleted after 3 years if no booking is made. Guest information is kept on the following basis: Standing data such as address/email/passport details/dietary/health/annual insurance information etc. will be held on an ongoing basis, unless you ask us to delete any or all of this. Transitory information, such as holiday emergency contacts/single trip insurance details etc. will be deleted once your holiday/experience has finished. No information will be passed to a third party, except our Ground Agents (as applicable). If you object to your details being stored, please inform us and we shall remove them.

10. All clients booked on a non-UK holiday must be in possession of a valid passport. Full details of requirements for a specific holiday will be sent when we confirm your booking.

11. Speyside Wildlife complies with the requirements set out in Statutory Instrument 1992 No 3288 'The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tour Regulations 1992'. All non-ATOL holiday deposit and balance payments made, are secured by way of a Trust Account administered by Masson Cairns & Co, 36 High Street, Grantown-on-Spey, Cairngorms National Park, PH26 3EQ.

12. Speyside Wildlife also holds an ATOL (Air Travel Organisers Licence) No 4259, issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in the name of Suzanne Dowden trading as Speyside Wildlife. All our flight-inclusive holidays are financially protected by the ATOL scheme. When you pay you will be supplied with an ATOL Certificate. Please ask for it and check to ensure that everything you booked (flights, hotels and other services) is listed on it. If flight timings are not yet confirmable with the airline, the flights section will state TBC. For more information about financial protection and the ATOL Certificate go to: www.atol.org.uk/ATOLcertificate. (Civil Aviation Authority ATOL Standard Term 1.1).

CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY ATOL STANDARD TERMS

When you buy an ATOL protected flight or flight inclusive holiday from us you will receive an ATOL Certificate. This lists what is financially protected, where you can get information on what this means for you and who to contact if things go wrong. (Civil Aviation Authority ATOL Standard Term 1.5)

We, or the suppliers identified on your ATOL Certificate, will provide you with the services listed on the ATOL Certificate (or a suitable alternative). In some cases, where neither we nor the supplier are able to do so for reasons of insolvency, an alternative ATOL holder may provide you with the services you have bought, or a suitable alternative (at no extra cost to you). You agree to accept that in those circumstances the alternative ATOL holder will perform those obligations and you agree to pay any money outstanding to be paid by you under your contract to that alternative ATOL holder. However you also agree that in some cases it will not be possible to appoint an alternative ATOL holder; in which case you will be entitled to make a claim under the ATOL scheme (or your credit card issuer where applicable). (Civil Aviation Authority ATOL Standard Term 1.7A)

If we, or the suppliers identified on your ATOL certificate, are unable to provide the services listed (or a suitable alternative, through an alternative ATOL holder or otherwise) for reasons of insolvency, the Trustees of the Air Travel Trust may make a payment to (or confer a benefit on) you under the ATOL scheme. You agree that in return for such a payment or benefit, you assign absolutely to those Trustees any claims which you have or may have arising out of or relating to the non-provision of the services, including any claims against us (CAA), the travel agent (tour operator), or your credit card issuer where applicable. You also agree that any such claims may be re-assigned to another body, if that other body has paid sums you have claimed under the ATOL scheme. (Civil Aviation Authority Standard Term 1.7B)





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Front Cover Jane Hope: Puffin at sunset
Inside Covers Julian Sykes: Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs
Back cover: James Glover: Ringed Plover, Common Seal
Steve Batt: White-crowned Sparrow
Steve Kourik: Bald Eagle
Melanie Parker: Gannets