

THE FARNE ISLANDS



"The crossing starts well, with a fairly close flyby Gannet, followed by Guillemot and Razorbill on the water. Then our first Puffins, some swimming around in the water right next to the boat. As we get closer to the sea cliffs there are literally 1000's of birds. The sight, sound and smell is an arrest to the senses."
Julian Sykes

Dates Sat 8 - Sat 15 Jul 2017
Price £1,695
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, the first 3 singles will stay in the hotel, any further single bookings will be accommodated in a nearby B&B, but all meals will be taken with the group

Group 7

Just some of what we hope to see:

Puffin	Tree Sparrow
Kittiwake	Yellowhammer
Arctic Tern	Stonechat
Common Tern	Osprey
Sandwich Tern	White-beaked Dolphin
Roseate Tern	Harbour Porpoise
Little Tern	Common Seal
Little Egret	Grey Seal
Avocet	Red Squirrel

Fabulous summer birdwatching, as we explore the wildlife, coastlines, forests and moorlands of this corner of historic North-east England around The Farne Islands.

- Full day visiting the Farne Islands for Puffins, Eiders and seabird colonies
- Day in the forest for crossbills and Red Squirrel
- Day on the moorland for grouse, Dipper and raptors
- Beautiful coastline hopscotch with long sandy beaches and inland pools
- Boat trip out in search of White-beaked Dolphins
- A trip out to Coquet Island to watch Roseate Terns and seals
- Comfortable hotel to return to each day

We are based in the picturesque coastal village of Embleton, which is perfectly placed to explore the wonderful scenery and wildlife of this historic north east county. The hotel is noted for its excellent, local and wholesome cuisine, with portions to satisfy the keenest of appetites.

Depending on time of arrival, a short walk out of Embleton to the golf course or quarry could produce our first Tree Sparrows, Yellowhammers, Stonechat, Sedge Warbler and Whitethroat of the week. Later that evening we have our first dinner, followed by a look at the planned itinerary, which will be weather and tide dependent.

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 walking distance of

Dunstanburgh Castle and a walk along the coastal path 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 Embleton 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 edge and



"The numbers of nesting Puffins, Guillemots, Razorbills, Kittiwakes and Shags is astonishing, with every ledge and crevice being taken by one of these seabirds, as we cruise around the small islands seeing more of this outrageous spectacle, along with 'hauled out' Grey Seals. There are also Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls looking for an easy meal, as they prey on the auk's eggs and hatchlings – harsh, but this is our natural world. Seabird cliffs and rookeries are an incredible experience, one we tend to take for granted in the UK - it is one of the world's great avian spectacles. The Farne Islands have it by the bucket load!" Julian Sykes



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 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 photographers 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 phragmites 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 Crossbills 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 Dunstanburgh Castle Hotel for a 7 night stay
- Days 2-7 Exploration of the coast, forest and moorland, including 3 boat trips for The Farne Islands, White-beaked Dolphins and Coquet Island
- Day 8 We say our farewells and depart after breakfast

Jane Hope: Guillemot, Puffin
Ray Burgess: White-beaked Dolphin
Sally Dowden: Arctic Terns
Mark Denman: Kittiwake and Sandwich Tern
Chrissie Nicholson: Lindesfarne Castle, Seal

