

MULL AND SPEYSIDE EASTER



"Mull at Easter is a brilliant time of year to catch up with the island's most iconic wildlife. With Otters busy around the coast, mighty White-tailed and Golden Eagles soaring over their territories, along with 'skydancing' displaying Hen Harriers, there's no finer place to be in early spring!"
Craig Round

Dates Weds 12 - Sat 22 Apr 2017
Price £1,595
Deposit £300 Single Supp £150

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

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

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

Insects Biting insects are unlikely to be a problem

Accom Steading - double (ensuite), twin (ensuite) and single (ensuite and non ensuite) rooms
Isle of Mull Hotel - double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

White-tailed Eagle	Hen Harrier
Golden Eagle	Short-eared Owl
Capercaillie	Ptarmigan
Crested Tit	Snow Bunting
Scottish Crossbill	Otter
Black Grouse	Pine Marten

Photo credits:

White-tailed Eagle - Yves Gisseleire
Sound of Iona - Simon Eaves
Osprey - Mark Fisher
Otter - Louise Darby
Crested Tit, Snow Bunting - Mark Denman
Capercaillie - Mary Braddock

The best of Speyside's speciality birds and mammals, plus three days of 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
- Moray Firth spectacle with seaduck and divers galore
- Scarce gulls, skeins of geese and spring migrants
- An evening for Pine Marten and Badger
- Countless tours on Mull to our name - real expertise

Dinner together on Wednesday starts the holiday at the Steading, where we discuss the itinerary for the time ahead.

2-6 In the ancient pines of Abernethy Forest, shy and wary turkey-sized Capercaillie 'hiccup' and strut and in early spring we can watch these threatened birds from a viewing hide without fear of causing disturbance - in fact 'Caper Watch' was something we helped to set up in partnership with the RSPB. Crested Tit and parties of Scottish Parrot and Common Crossbill can also be found amongst the lichen festooned 'granny' Pines in the forest and also Black Grouse displaying at their forest edge leks.

At dusk we'll pay a visit to our purpose built mammal hide for Pine Marten and Badger.



The coast can be alive with activity at this time of year, with thousands of birds on the move as the spring migration gets underway in earnest and on the Moray Firth, Sandwich and Common Terns are already fishing and some of the winter's Greater Scaup, Common Eider, Long-tailed Duck and Common and Velvet Scoter can still be seen offshore. Purple Sandpiper and Turnstone busily pick around weedy rocks washed by the incoming tide and Red Kite and Common Buzzard circle above farmland, as noisy skeins of Pink-footed and Greylag Geese, bound for their northern breeding grounds in Iceland and beyond, add to the restless feel of the season.

Ospreys will be returning to their secret loch-side eyries, as the first Sand Martins, Swallows and House Martins sweep low over the lochs after



"Easter in Speyside is one of my favourite times of year for birding in the Highlands, with the first returning spring migrants such as Osprey, Ring Ouzel, Redstart, Tree Pipit, Willow Warbler and Linnet's arriving back in force. It's also a great time to catch up with some of the Speyside specialities such as Crested Tit, Scottish and Parrot Crossbill, Capercaillie, Black Grouse and Ptarmigan, whilst the coast is always a dynamic and exciting place to be at this time of year, with lingering winter birds and arriving summer migrants all adding to the mix"

Craig Round



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 around Insh, 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, will be on the sea, or just beginning their return to remote breeding lochs.

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.

7-10 We take the journey to Mull through stunning West Coast scenery, south-westwards to Fort William and onwards via Loch Linnhe to catch an afternoon ferry.

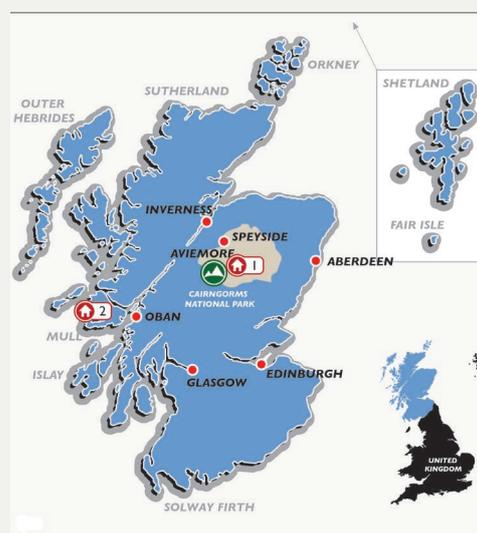
From our base on Mull we'll explore the weed-strewn shoreline, coast and dramatic mountainous glens around Loch Spelve, Loch Scridain and Loch na Keal for Eider, Great Northern Diver, Red-breasted Merganser, Merlin, Rock Dove, Raven, Hooded Crow, Twite,

Common Crossbill and Black Guillemot, with the chance of rarer seaduck and white-winged gulls such as Glaucous and Iceland Gulls. Hen Harrier and Short-eared Owl will be arriving back at their breeding sites, but most of all, we shall be watching for majestic White-tailed and Golden Eagles.

Early spring is a fantastic time to watch eagles soaring and displaying over their territories and the birds are often more visible at this time of year. With around 16 pairs of breeding White-tailed and Golden Eagles at their highest density in Europe, Mull is without doubt one of the best places to see eagles in the wild in Britain. We'll also spend time quietly seeking out some of the islands engaging Otters.

On the last day we'll bring you back to Speyside and the Steading for the last night.

After breakfast on Saturday we say our farewells.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Arrive in Glen Feshie
6 nights at the Steading
- Days 2-6 Wildlife and birdwatching exploration
around Abernethy Forest, the Moray Firth and the Cairngorms
- Day 7 Journey through stunning scenery,
before catching the ferry to Mull
3 nights at Isle of Mull Hotel
- Days 8-9 Wildlife exploration on Mull
- Day 10 Ferry back to mainland
then drive back to Speyside,
birdwatching enroute
1 night at the Steading
- Day 11 Depart after breakfast

