

# THE OUTER HEBRIDES



*"A slower pace of life, relaxed and friendly people, a sense of freedom and an escape from the 21st century without travelling out of the UK – that's the Outer Hebrides. It's a privilege to have islands like these in Britain."*  
Simon Pawsey

Dates Fri 4 - Sat 12 May 2018  
Fri 11 - Sat 19 May 2018

Price £1,995

Deposit £350 Single Supp £200

Leaders Two from our Speyside team

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, Machair, Corn Bunting, Short-eared Owl, White-tailed Eagle, Pomarine Skua  
Kevin Tappenden: 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

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.

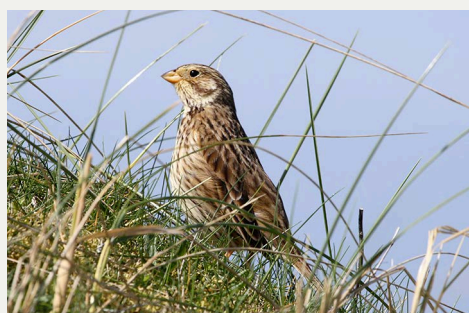
The crossing gives us a chance to do some sea-watching, with a great diversity of seabirds to be seen, as we make our way across the Minch, including Arctic Tern, Puffin, Guillemot, Razorbill, Kittiwake, Gannet, Great and Arctic Skuas, Manx Shearwaters and various cetaceans, even before we reach the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

**2-7** 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 evening the sunsets 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 Ardvue, 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





"The amount of birdlife is staggering. It's like winding the clock back thirty years, with birds and birdsong filling the air. Migrating flocks of waders, abundant wildfowl, a high density of raptors including Hen Harriers, the chance of rare and exciting vagrants and of course - Corncrakes! It's such a magical and exciting place." Simon Pawsey



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, 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

