

RAPTORS OF THE HIGHLANDS



"September is a fabulous time of year to look for raptors. All the young birds have fledged and adults are freed of their parenting duties, so lots of chances to see some truly magnificent birds."
Sally Nowell

Dates	Sat 31 Aug - Sat 7 Sep 2024
Price	£2,650
Deposit	£500 Single Supp £500
Leader	Sally Nowell
Weather	Mixture of sunshine and showers (5°-20°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
Boat trip	The boat trip off Mull will be in relatively sheltered waters
Group	6

Just some of what we hope to see:	
Golden Eagle	Red-throated Diver
White-tailed Eagle	Black-throated Diver
Goshawk	Black Guillemot
Sparrowhawk	Razorbill
Peregrine	Guillemot
Merlin	Gannet
Kestrel	Twite
Osprey	Dipper
Red Kite	Hooded Crow
Hen Harrier	Rock Dove
Short-eared Owl	Mountain Hare
Barn Owl	Otter
Tawny Owl	Red and Roe Deer
Crossbill	Grey Seal
Crested Tit	Bottlenose Dolphin
Great Northern Diver	Common Dolphin

The Cairngorms National Park and the Isle of Mull provide fabulous opportunities to see iconic raptors against the stunning scenery of wild 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
- Local Ospreys are busy feeding up before their long migratory journeys
- Hen Harriers and Short-eared Owls quartering open moorlands
- Peregrine and maybe even the elusive Merlin on their hunting grounds
- Evening drive to look for Tawny and Barn Owls

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'll meet together at our hotel and over the course of the evening discuss the week ahead

2-3 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 12 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 sometimes they can be seen mobbing massive eagles that soar above the skylines. Goshawk and Red Kite are also possible and Ospreys can be seen fishing the river. The scenery in the upper reaches is spectacular and it is a truly wild place.

We shall take you to other parts of the Cairngorms National Park, known to be good areas for raptor watching, to maximise our chances of getting great views of these splendid birds, but we shall also be looking for our other resident wildlife including the delightful Red Squirrel.

We shall visit the RSPB's Reserve at Abernethy which consists of ancient pine forest, open moorland and high mountain plateau. Here we





"I know this holiday is about raptors but there is so much more besides, glorious scenery in some of my favourite locations, hunting for Otters on Mull, hoping for cetaceans at sea and watching for Cresties in the fabulous Abernethy Forest." Sally Nowell

shall keep our eyes peeled for Crested Tit and Crossbill as well as scouring the skylines for raptors including Goshawk and Golden Eagles. We shall also see some of the extensive habitat restoration work that is being done, some of which will hopefully contribute to the recovery of the spectacular Capercaillie, once numerous in this magnificent and atmospheric forest.

Abernethy forest is a magical place at this time of year, as the autumn colours begin to be revealed and where we often find a wealth of fungi and late flowering plants.

One evening we shall venture out in search of owls. Tawny and Barn Owls are both possible. 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 shall be watching the sea for passing seabirds, hopefully Gannets and if we are lucky this crossing often produces some cetaceans, so 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 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 Country House
- 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 Isle of Mull 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 Country House
- Day 8** Depart after breakfast

Rob Martin: White-tailed Eagle
Jane Hope: Evening at Loch na Keal, Goshawk
Kate Mennie: Merlin
Steve Batt: Short-eared Owl
Ian Callender: Tawny Owl

