

England & Scotland

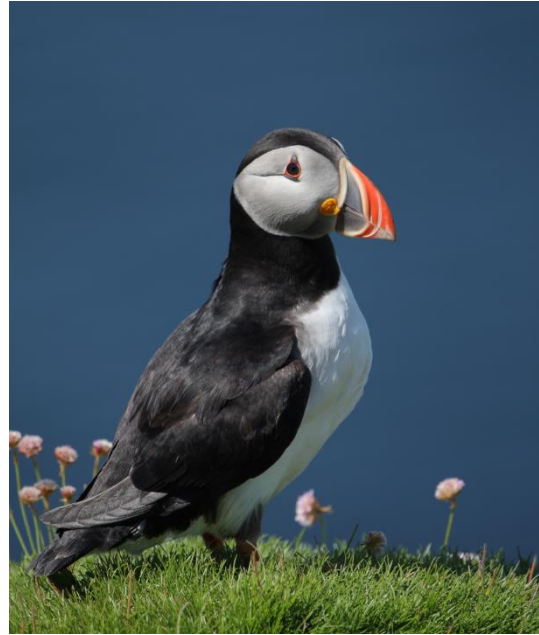
A Grand Tour

April 24 – May 10, 2019

17 Days / 16 Nights

\$4595

Single Supplement \$600



Puffin

From the bird rich coast of Suffolk to the spectacular highlands of Scotland, we travel steadily north visiting all the top birding sites along the way including Minsmere, Cavenham Heath, Lakenheath Fen, Cley Marsh, Titchwell Marsh, Snettisham, Rutland Water, Potteric Carr, Bempton Cliffs, The Forest of Bowland, Leighton Moss, Upper Teesdale, Mull, Iona and the Treshnish Isles, and finally the Cairngorms National Park. This exciting tour, at the very peak of the breeding season, with the birdsong in full flow, will produce a fabulous list of top quality sightings with the added bonus of possible rare migrants!

Day 1, April 24: Our guide will meet us at Heathrow Airport, from where we drive by people carrier northeast to our first accommodation in Saxmundham, not far from the Suffolk coast. Along the way, depending on flight times, we could visit Sutton Hoo, the seventh century burial site of an Anglo-Saxon king. There may also be time to look for the rare Black Redstart near Sizewell beach.

O/N The Bell Hotel in Saxmundham (D)

Day 2, April 25: Today we bird the Minsmere area. Minsmere is a 'flagship' RSPB reserve with a variety of habitats including meadows, woodland, heathland, reedbeds, lagoons and shingle beach, where breeding specialities include Avocet, Bittern, Marsh Harrier, Hobby, Water Rail, Kingfisher, Little Tern, Cuckoo, Nightingale, Woodlark, Bearded Tit and Reed, Sedge, Grasshopper, Cetti's and Dartford Warblers. In spring a variety of migrants can also occur such as Spoonbill, Little Stint, Whimbrel, Black-tailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank and Green Sandpiper.

O/N The Bell Hotel in Saxmundham (BD)

Day 3, April 26: We begin at Lackford Lakes Nature Reserve in the hope of finding Nightingale and the very rare Turtle Dove, followed by Cavenham Heath National Nature Reserve, which is a good site for Stone Curlew, Woodlark and Green Woodpecker. Later we move on to Lakenheath Fen, an RSPB reserve with a Poplar plantation, river, pools and reedbeds where breeding specialities include Bittern, Marsh Harrier, Hobby, Water Rail, Kingfisher, Cuckoo, Bearded Tit, Reed and Sedge Warblers, Reed Bunting and the rare Common Crane.

O/N Wensum Lodge Hotel in Fakenham (BD)



Bearded Tit

Day 4, April 27: We begin at Cley Marsh, which is a very famous reserve with reedbeds, lagoons and shingle beach, owned by Norfolk Wildlife Trust. Breeding specialities include Avocet, Marsh Harrier, Bearded Tit and Reed and Sedge Warblers. In spring a variety of migrants can also occur such as Spoonbill, Garganey, Temminck's Stint, Whimbrel, Black-tailed Godwit, Ruff, Little Gull and Black Tern. Next we travel to Titchwell Marsh, another 'flagship' RSPB reserve with lagoons, reedbeds, saltmarsh and sandy beach where breeding specialities include Avocet, Bittern, Marsh Harrier, Water Rail, Bearded Tit, Reed, Sedge and Grasshopper Warblers, and Reed Bunting. In spring a variety of migrants can also occur such as Spoonbill, Garganey, Little Stint, Whimbrel, Black-tailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank, Green Sandpiper, Little Gull and Black Tern.

O/N Wensum Lodge Hotel (BD)



Red Kite

Day 5, April 28: Nearby Snettisham is another RSPB reserve with farmland, coastal lagoons, saltmarsh, mud flats and shingle beach where breeding specialities include Avocet, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Redshank, Red-legged Partridge, Common Tern, Mediterranean Gull and Barn Owl. Late winter visitors could include Brant and Pink-footed Goose, Knot and Grey Plover. We should also have time to visit Sandringham House, the Christmas retreat of Her Majesty the Queen, where the pinewoods and heathland on this royal estate are inhabited by Golden Pheasant, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch, Treecreeper and sometimes Crossbill.

O/N The Old Pheasant near Uppingham (BD)

Day 6, April 29: We begin with a visit to the village of Lyddington, with its quaint golden stone thatched cottages clustered around the village green and ancient church dedicated to Saint Andrew, with Red Kite soaring over. Nearby Rutland Water is a large reservoir with adjacent lagoons, farmland and woodland where breeding specialities include Great Crested and Little Grebes, Osprey, Shelduck, Avocet, Little Ringed Plover, Common Tern, Grasshopper, Reed and Sedge Warblers, Tree Sparrow, Yellowhammer and Reed Bunting. In spring a variety of migrants can also occur such as Black-necked Grebe, Garganey, Little Stint, Whimbrel, Black-tailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank, Greenshank and Green Sandpiper.

O/N The Grange Hotel in Newark-on-Trent (BD)

Day 7, April 30: Nearby Whisby Nature Park offers another chance to enjoy the song of, and hopefully see the shy Nightingale. Another possibility is Mediterranean Gull. Further north is Potteric Carr, a Yorkshire Wildlife Trust reserve with lagoons, reedbeds and woodland. The rare Black-necked Grebe occasionally breeds here along with Great Crested and Little Grebes, Little Ringed Plover, Kingfisher, Grasshopper, Reed and Sedge Warblers, Willow Tit and Reed Bunting, and in spring, a variety of migrants can also occur such as Shelduck, Garganey, Greenshank and Green Sandpiper.

O/N The Parsonage Country House Hotel near York (BD)

Day 8, May 1: We will drive east to Bempton Cliffs, an RSPB reserve with high limestone cliffs which attract the largest colony of Gannets in mainland Britain, along with thousands of Guillemots and Kittiwakes, amongst which we can also find Fulmars, Razorbills and Puffins. The adjacent farmland attracts Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Linnet, Tree Sparrow and the increasingly rare Corn Bunting. This afternoon there should be time to visit the ancient city of York, or visit nearby Wheldrake Ings, a wetland nature reserve.

O/N The Parsonage Country House Hotel (BD)



Gannet

Day 9, May 2: We will drive west across the Pennines into Lancashire, where we can either climb Pendle Hill, or visit the Forest of Bowland. Pendle Hill is a regular spring staging post for Dotterel, while breeding birds can include Golden Plover, Grey Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Redstart, Wheatear and Dipper. Apart from Dotterel and Golden Plover, the nearby Forest of Bowland also has these birds as well as Red Grouse, Common Sandpiper, Ring Ouzel and sometimes Short-eared Owl, so it's a tough choice!

O/N The Mill at Conder Green, near Lancaster (BD)

Day 10, May 3: Nearby Leighton Moss is another 'flagship' RSPB reserve with farmland, reedbeds and pools. Breeding specialities include Avocet, Bittern, Marsh Harrier, Water Rail, Cuckoo, Marsh and Bearded Tits, Reed, Sedge and Grasshopper Warblers and Reed Bunting. In spring a variety of migrants can also occur such as Spoonbill, Garganey, Black-tailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, Green Sandpiper, Little Gull and Black Tern. From here we take a scenic drive north into County Durham, where our hotel is very near to the River Tees and the High Force waterfall.

O/N The High Force Hotel near Middleton-Teesdale (BD)



Red Grouse

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Day 11, May 4: The moorland, woods and streams of this upland area are inhabited by Black Grouse, Golden Plover, Grey Wagtail, Redstart, Ring Ouzel, Wheatear, Dipper and Pied Flycatcher. An undoubted highlight of the trip will be a pre-breakfast sortie to witness a spectacular Black Grouse courtship lek. After breakfast we head north via the RSPB Geltsdale reserve where the rare Hen Harrier sometimes breeds. Continuing north of the border, we catch the evening ferry from Oban, across the Firth of Lorn to 'Marvellous Mull'.

O/N The Isle of Mull Hotel (BD)

Days 12 & 13, May 5 – 6: This spectacular island has mountains, moorland, woodland, farmland, estuaries and rocky shores. Breeding specialities include Red-throated Diver, Golden and White-tailed Eagles, Hen Harrier, Merlin, Peregrine, Short-eared Owl, Eider, Red-breasted Merganser, Black Guillemot, Meadow and Tree Pipits, Stonechat, Whinchat, Redstart, Lesser Redpoll, Hooded Crow and Raven. Offshore we may also find Great Northern Diver and Otter. We have a day trip to the Treshnish Isles where the seabird colonies provide close encounters with Shags, Razorbills, Guillemots, and of course Puffins at arm's length! Other breeders include Rock Pipit, Wheatear and Twite. During this fabulous cruise we also visit Fingal's Cave the isle of Staffa, and maybe we will be lucky enough to see Great Skua. From Mull, we also visit the small island of Iona, with its early Christian abbey founded by Saint Columba, where we may see the rare and elusive Corncrake!

O/N The Isle of Mull Hotel (BD)



Corncrake

on
a

Day 14, May 7: We will return to Oban and drive north through the majestic Scottish highlands to Granttown-on-Spey in the Cairngorms. On one of our three evenings here we can visit a nearby hide where we should enjoy face to face views of Badgers and rare Pine Martens!

O/N The Grant Arms Hotel in Granttown-on-Spey (BD)



Badger



Pine Marten

Days 15 & 16, May 8 – 9: We will have two full days to explore the Loch Garten area and Cairngorm, where the native Caledonian Pine forest, mountains and moorland have breeding specialities like Black and Red-throated Divers, Slavonian Grebe, Golden Eagle, Red and Black Grouse, Ptarmigan, Dotterel, Goldeneye, Redstart, Crested Tit, Siskin, Scottish Crossbill and the very rare Capercaillie, which we can try to see early one morning.

O/N The Grant Arms Hotel (BD)

Day 17, May 10: Our guide will transfer us to Inverness airport for our domestic flight back to Heathrow. Some participants will catch their international flights home that evening, while others will stage for the Spain tour that begins in 4 days. Depending on flight schedules, you may need to schedule an extra night in London before flying home, and we will be happy to help with those reservations.



Capercaillie

PRICE INCLUDES:

- ~ Ground transportation by “people carrier” from Heathrow airport to Inverness
- ~ Sixteen nights half board (breakfast and dinner) en-suite accommodation
- ~ Return ferry to Mull
- ~ All excursions on Mull, including ferry to Iona, day trip to the Treshnish Isles, Badger and Pine Marten Watch
- ~ Customized bird checklist
- ~ Services of an expert native British guide, Chris Hall
- ~ Services of two **Cheepers!** tour leaders (Jim and Cindy Beckman)
- ~ Pre-trip gift box
- ~ Post-trip electronic copy of final checklist
- ~ Post-trip photo collection of best shots contributed by participants

PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- ~ Lunches (all days of the tour)
- ~ International airfare
- ~ Domestic airfare Inverness – Heathrow
- ~ Gratuities
- ~ Items of a personal nature such as souvenirs, laundry, phone calls, etc.
- ~ Travel insurance (highly recommended)