

Itinerary in brief

You may wish to arrive in Aberdeen the day before in order to rest before the tour starts. Just let us know your flight plans and also whether you will need a hotel room.

Day 1 (Wednesday May 31st) Aberdeen

We will rendezvous at our airport hotel at around 1700-1800 this evening for dinner and a briefing about the upcoming tour. This will include a review of local weather conditions, our route, expected birds etc.

Night in Aberdeen

Day 2 (Thursday June 1st) Aberdeen and ferry to Orkney

As we're on the east coast in spring, we will dedicate time for a little urban birding in the green spaces in and around Aberdeen for returning migrants and vagrants. Nicknamed the 'granite city', Aberdeen is the third largest city in Scotland so is full of interesting wee places for lunch and we'll plan to eat in town before the early evening ferry to Orkney. Sea birding from the deck can be very productive, and with daylight throughout the crossing, we have plenty of opportunity to spot something interesting. We arrive by c.11PM and head straight to our accommodation in the nearby town. *Night in Kirkwall*

Day 3 (Friday June 2nd) Full day on Orkney, South Ronaldsay, Lamb Holm, & Burray

Birding in the south can be very productive with many of the target species found here that include Twite, Corncrake, Hen Harrier, Merlin, Short-eared Owl and White-tailed Eagle. At Scapa Flow, we'll learn about the area's importance during WW2, and visit the famous Italian Chapel, a former POW hut turned into a catholic church with ornate paintings inside. Built entirely by POW's and restored in the 1960's and 1990's the building has turned out to be one of the newer tourist attractions. The whole bay area is very atmospheric and photogenic with the Churchill Barrier and sunken ships blocking many of the openings to the open ocean. The Flow is also good for loons and ducks and shorebirds. *Night in Kirkwall*

Day 4 (Saturday June 3rd) Full day on Orkney. West Mainland

Evie, Redland and Woodwick area for corncrake first thing, then the historic sites of Skara Brae, Maeshowe, Standing Stones of Stenness and The Ring of Brodgar. Skara Brae, the Neolithic village uncovered unexpectedly in a storm back in 1850 is one of the island chain's most interesting archaeological highlights. Other target species we'll search for include Twite, Hen Harrier, Merlin, Short-eared Owl and White-tailed Eagle.

Night in Kirkwall

Day 5 (Sunday June 4th) Full Day on Orkney and ferry to Shetland

After some local birding around the harbor, we will visit St Magnus Cathedral and The Orkney Museum. The cathedral built in 1137, is the most northerly cathedral in the UK and is a fine example of Romanesque architecture built for the bishops of Orkney when the islands were ruled by the Norse. The nearby museum is a must, and houses an internationally important collection that tells the story of the islands from the Stone Age, to the Picts and Vikings right through to present day. We'll stay close to the city, as we leave Orkney on the evening ferry to Shetland and will have dinner aboard and some evening birding from the deck for seabirds and cetaceans. *Night onboard ferry MV Hamnavoe (private cabins provided).*

Day 6 (Monday June 5th) Full Day on Shetland

We arrive in Sumburgh around 7 AM and spend the whole day on Shetland. Mousa Broch evening visit and Sumburgh Head for seabirds and migrants around Grutness Gardens. It's a great place for a number of

reasons, but it's the area's reputation for migrants that draw the birders in the spring. The seabirds and cetaceans can be good here too, and we'll aim to spend time down by the lighthouse looking at the sea. After dinner we head out on the boat for Mousa Broch (an Iron Age fort) and the colony of European storm petrels that inhabit the stone walls. If you've never heard petrels at night when they come back to feed young, you're in for a treat. *Night in Sumburgh Head, Mainland*

Day 7 (Tuesday June 6th) Full Day on Shetland: Noss and Lerwick

Today we'll get the opportunity to journey right around the island of Bressay and around the cliffs of the famous Noss National Nature Reserve. We will be pretty close to this awe-inspiring sight and sound of thousands of seabirds that include over 25,000 Northern Gannets and thousands of Common Murre, Black Guillemots and Atlantic Puffin to name just a few. It's also a fantastic chance to photograph some beautiful species coupled with a stunning 600 feet cliff backdrop. Later in the afternoon, we get the chance for some leisurely exploration of Lerwick. Lunch and dinner in town. *Night in Lerwick*

Day 8 (Wednesday June 7th) Full Day on Shetland: Eshaness

We will drive north to the spectacular areas around Eshaness, a wild region of the islands. Here we hope to encounter seabirds, seals, otters and cetaceans. We also visit the Holes of Scraada, an interesting geological feature. *Night at Sella Ness Lodge, Mainland.*

Day 9 (Thursday June 8th) Full Day on Shetland. Fetlar

As we have two short ferry crossings, we set out early and aim to spend the majority of the day on Fetlar. And as the bird highlights here include Red-necked Phalarope, Whimbrel and Red-throated Loon, it really is a piece of the sub-arctic within Scotland, and we dedicate the day to getting good views of these northern specialties. We end the day with a short ferry crossing to Unst and birding from the deck. *Night in Belmont, Unst*

Day 10 (Friday June 9th) Full Day on Shetland- Unst

Highlights today will be a visit to Hermaness National Nature Reserve on the very northern tip of the UK. Great views of seabirds and views out towards Muckle Flugga Lighthouse. We'll focus on birds of prey, seabirds, migrants with searches around bird favored localities that includes Gunnister, Norwick, Burra Firth, Loch of Cliff, Harold's Wick, Balta Sound and Lamba Ness. *Night in Gutcher, Yell.*

Day 11 (Saturday June 10th) Full Day on Shetland. Yell, Mainland

Sadly as it's our last day on the islands, we have to meander back to Lerwick for our evening/night time ferry crossing back to Aberdeen. However, we do have all day so will continue to concentrate on exploring Yell for birds of prey, vagrants, otters and cetaceans. Highlights include Waters of Raga, Otterswick, Aywick, Loch of Littlester and Burravoe. Arrive in Lerwick late afternoon for c.1900 ferry departure. Evening birding from the ferry. Night aboard ferry MV Hamnavoe (Private berths)

Day 12 (Sunday June 11th) Arrive back into Aberdeen: onward travel_

Early morning birding from deck, arrival into Aberdeen c.0700. Goodbyes. Transit to Aberdeen rail or bus stations, hotels or airport.