

Norfolk in Winter

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1 Meet at the hotel. An afternoon excursion possible. Outline the plan for the weekend

Day 2 & 3 Exploring the north Norfolk coast between Snettisham & Cley.

Dates

November – March

Focus

A birdwatching short-break in north Norfolk.

Grading

Grade A – easy day walks.

Dates & Prices

Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code GBR04)

Highlights:

- Explore the Norfolk coastline, one of the UK's premier birdwatching counties
- Pink-footed Geese, Brent Geese, Pintail & numerous other wintering wildfowl
- Scan for wintering seaduck, divers & grebes
- Wintering raptors such as Hen & Marsh Harriers, Merlin & Short-eared Owl
- Look for rare wintering passerines including Shore Lark, Twite & Snow Bunting
- Chance of something unusual such as Waxwing or Rough-legged Buzzard
- Led by an expert Naturetrek naturalist



From the top: Pink-footed Geese, Hen Harrier & Shore Lark



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Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather and other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Your tour leader will meet you at our hotel base in Hunstanton, the Le Strange Arms. To make the most of the daylight hours available, we shall arrange an afternoon excursion on the first day. Although official check in is not until 3pm, the hotel reception can look after your luggage if your rooms are not ready when you arrive. Please be prepared to arrive at the hotel in time for this excursion. Confirmation of this and start time will follow nearer departure. Once you return to the hotel, you can settle in, enjoy your first dinner of the holiday and your tour leader will outline the plans for the next couple of days and some of the birds we will hope to see.

Day 2

The itinerary will be kept flexible over the next two days to take account of such factors as the weather, tides and recent bird sightings. If the tides are high enough and the times of high tide suitable, we will make an early start this morning to enjoy a high tide wader roost at the RSPB's Snettisham Reserve. Snettisham lies on the south-eastern edge of The Wash at a point where wading birds such as Knot, Dunlin, Oystercatchers and others are concentrated on a high tide. The sight of thousands of waders twisting and turning over the mudflats is one of the finest in the UK. Other species to look out for include Bar-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Ringed Plover and Sanderling, plus flocks of Pink-footed Geese.

We will spend the afternoon exploring the north Norfolk coastline between Snettisham and Burnham Overy. The RSPB's flagship reserve at Titchwell is well worth a visit. The reedbeds, fresh and brackish water lagoons and saltmarsh here hold large numbers of wintering waders and wildfowl. A walk from the reserve entrance out along the raised bank to the sea is sure to yield a wide variety of birds. Bearded Tits are frequently observed close to the path, whilst on the freshwater scrape flocks of Golden Plover, Avocet, Dunlin and Lapwing often congregate. Mixed in amongst these commoner species we hope to find a variety of others such as Spotted Redshank or Ruff. Snow Buntings and Shore Larks are often to be found on the sandy beach, whilst a scan of the sea may yield Long-tailed Ducks, Common Scoters, Red-throated and Great Northern Divers and perhaps a passing skua, Gannet or Little Gull.

We will end the day at a raptor roost, but leave the choice of site to our tour leader as the locations of the roosts and numbers of birds attending vary from year to year and month to month. Marsh and Hen Harriers are likely, whilst other species to look out for include Merlin, Peregrine and Short-eared Owl. Norfolk is home to a bumper population of Barn Owls and we should always keep our eyes open for this beautiful bird when travelling around at dusk and dawn.

Day 3

This morning we will make the 50 minute drive along the coast to the Norfolk Wildlife Trust reserve at Cley. At this time of year the grazing meadows and saltmarshes between the villages of Wells-next-the-Sea and Cley-next-the-Sea hold huge numbers of wintering wildfowl, including thousands of Brent Geese, Wigeon and Pintail. This is also a good area for a range of waterbirds, including seaduck, divers and grebes, as well as some scarce

wintering passerines such as Shore Lark, Twite, Snow and Lapland Buntings. In a strong northerly wind Little Auks are sometimes blown close to shore, whilst all the berry trees along the whole north Norfolk coastline need to be checked for parties of 'tinkling' Waxwings. The number of Waxwings that reach our shores vary greatly from winter to winter, but Norfolk is one of the best places to stumble across a flock of these beautiful birds.

After lunch we may choose to visit the Holkham Estate and the Holkham Nature Reserve. To the south of the A149 lies Holkham Park, an extensive area of parkland, ponds and woodland which surrounds the 18th Century Holkham Hall. As well as numerous Fallow and Red Deer, the park is a winter haunt of mixed finch flocks which usually include both Hawfinch and Brambling. The coast of the Holkham Estate is lined with a strip of mixed forest and wet meadows and edged with sandy dunes. The woodlands can hold winter finches and thrushes, whilst the beach may give us, if needed, another chance to find Snow Buntings and Shore Lark.

We are likely to end the day watching the spectacle of the Pink-footed Geese flying into their night-time roosts out in the saltmarshes. We will take the advice of our guide on exactly where to stand, but hope for a close flypast. Almost half of the world's population of Pink-footed Geese winter along the north Norfolk coastline and the sight – and sound – of thousands of 'Pink-feet' passing overhead should be a fitting finale to our tour.

Tour grading

Grade A. Walks will be on mostly flat terrain on good footpaths. There are some times where you will be walking along the beach for a short time on the shingle. You can expect to walk around 6-8 miles per day in total. The walk at Snettisham alone will be 3.5 miles in total. This will be at a slow pace as you will be stopping frequently to look at the wildlife. The days will be quite long with optional pre-breakfast and evening walks.

Clothing and Equipment

Plenty of warm clothing will be essential as the weather in north Norfolk in the winter can be very cold. Do bring with you some boots, waterproof trousers and binoculars. A telescope, if you have one will also be very useful.

Food & accommodation included in the price

Accommodation, breakfasts and dinners are included in the cost. Lunches (either in the form of a pub lunch or a picnic) and drinks are not included.

We stay at the Le Strange Arms in Old Hunstanton. Standard and Superior Sea-view rooms are available at an additional supplement. Please get in touch if you would like a quote for these room upgrades.

Reserve Entry

Unless you are members, you may need to purchase permits to enter any RSPB or Norfolk Naturalist Trust reserves that we visit. Please see www.rspb.org.uk and www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk.

Transport

We use 9-seat minibuses for this tour. Please assist our tour leaders in ensuring that there is a rotation of seats around the tour vehicle to allow each tour member to enjoy approximately equal time in the front. In order to

be fair to all participants, we regret that we are unable to guarantee a permanent front seat to those who might suffer from motion sickness or other concerns.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website.

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