Norfolk in Autumn

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Meet at the hotel. An afternoon excursion possible. Outline the plan for the weekend.
Day 2	Holme & Titchwell Reserves.
Day 3	Cley Reserve & Holkham Woods.

Departs
September & October

Focus
A birdwatching short break in Norfolk.

Grading
Grade A – easy day walks.

Dates and Prices
Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code GBR109)

Highlights:

- Visit North Norfolk's iconic reserves such as Titchwell and Cley
- Waders such as Knot, Golden Plover, Curlew Sandpiper & Little Stint
- Migrating chats, thrushes, warblers & finches
- Chance of something rarer such as Yellow-browed Warbler or Wryneck
- Look for migrants in Holkham Woods
- Enjoy movements of seaduck, skuas & other birds







From the top: Marsh Harrier, Yellow-browed Warbler & Curlew Sandpiper

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Introduction

Norfolk is often touted as the UK's premier birding county. The marshes, wet meadows, dunes and woodlands that line its northern coastline are justly famous for the sheer variety and number of birds they attract throughout the year. In the autumn, especially if the wind is from the east, an exciting range of waders, waterfowl and passerines – including regular rarities – stop to rest and feed here, while, in the winter months, vast flocks of geese, ducks and wild swans may be seen. On this 3-day break we will take in the best of Norfolk's autumnal birding highlights, including visits to such iconic reserves as Cley, Titchwell and Holme Dunes.

Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & 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. To make the most of the daylight hours available, we shall arrange an afternoon excursion on the first day likely starting at 3pm. 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

We shall visit NWT Holme Dunes where we can first walk along some of the Norfolk Coastal Path which skirts the north of the reserve. We shall keep an eye on the scrub that runs along the path for species such as Goldcrest, Stonechat and Reed Bunting. On the nearby marsh we shall look out for waders such as Curlew, Little Egret and Little Grebe. Transferring by vehicle to the visitor centre, we shall then scan the sea where we may see Gannet fishing. On the sea, Red-throated Diver is possible, Great-crested Grebe or if we are very lucky, even the chance of Common Scoter or Grey Phalarope.
Moving on to the scrapes, we shall take advantage of the hides and scanning for wildfowl such as Teal, Shoveller and Pintail. Geese numbers should be building at this time of year. Many thousands of Pink-footed geese migrate to the UK from Iceland and Greenland to spend the winter here we will aim to have great views of this special species during the tour while other species may include Brent, Greylag and Canada.. We shall keep an eye out skywards as well as raptors will be patrolling their territories. Marsh Harrier, Red Kite, Kestrel and Peregrine will all be possible.

We will spend the afternoon exploring the RSPB reserve at Titchwell. The reedbeds, fresh and brackish water lagoons and saltmarsh hold large numbers of migrant and 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 other species such as Spotted Redshank, Ruff, Curlew Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper and Little Stint. The variety of wader species is likely to be higher in September, but from October onwards sea duck numbers start to increase. A

scan of the sea from the beach may yield Long-tailed Ducks, Common Scoters, Red-throated and Great Northern Divers and perhaps a passing skua or Little Gull.

Your tour leader will keep an eye on the local bird news and if anything of particular interest is found on route then we may decide to take a look. Autumn in Norfolk is a very exciting time and – especially if the winds are from the east – almost anything can turn up!

We will return to the hotel for dinner and those interested in venturing out once again can join the tour leader for a pre or post-dinner (depending on time of sunset) excursion looking for Barn Owls.

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, scrapes, reedbeds and saltmarshes between the villages of Wells-next-the-Sea and Cley-next-the-Sea attract a wonderful variety of birds with many stopping over to rest on their way south and others arriving to spend the winter. The grassy fields often hold Wheatear and Yellow Wagtails, whilst Whinchats dot the fence lines. In October huge numbers of winter thrushes drop in to feed and rest (especially if the wind is from the east) and these flocks frequently contain the occasional Ring Ouzel. Duck and geese numbers will be building throughout the autumn, whilst residents to look out for include Marsh Harrier, Peregrine, Avocet, Water Rail and 'pinging' parties of Bearded Tits. Spoonbill are an increasingly frequent sight here, whilst seawatching from the Cley's famous shingle beach could produce skuas, divers and numerous flocks of waterfowl moving south.

We will also visit the coastal woods at Holkham and Wells over the course of the weekend. This thin strip of mixed woodland is the first landfall for weary migrants having made the long overnight crossing of the North Sea. The list of rare birds that have been found here over the years is mouthwatering, everything from the UK's first and only Red-breasted Nuthatch to annual Pallas's Warblers and other eastern gems. In September we will be looking for migrants such as Common Redstart, Whinchat, Pied and Spotted Flycatchers, a variety of warblers and even, perhaps, a Wryneck, Scarlet Rosefinch or Barred Warbler! Yellow-browed Warblers occur almost daily in October, along with Firecrest, numerous Redwing and Fieldfare and the possibility of something rarer such as Red-breasted Flycatcher or Pallas's Warbler. The marram-covered dunes that edge the trees sometimes provide cover of Short-eared or Long-eared Owls and the sea is, as always, worth scanning too. Indeed, all these birds, and more, could turn up anywhere along the North Norfolk coastline given the right conditions!

Our time in Norfolk will end late afternoon (approximately 4.30pm – 5pm) back in Hunstanton from where we will all head our own separate ways home.

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 4-6 miles per day 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 possibly evening walks near the hotel.

Reserve entry

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

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 Caley Hall Hotel, Old Hunstanton. There is free parking at the hotel.

Clothing and Equipment

Binoculars are essential. Bring a telescope if you have one, since it will be useful for scanning the wetlands. Since it can be muddy and wet underfoot we would suggest you bring waterproof walking boots. Please check the forecast before travel and dress accordingly.

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.