

East Yorkshire: The Magic of Migration

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive at Dunedin House Hotel
- Days 2-4** Explore the most famous East Coast migration sites. Spurn and Flamborough Head.

Departs

September/October/November

Focus

Birds & other Wildlife

Grading

A. All walking will be at a slow birdwatching pace over mostly flat ground.

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code GBR112) or brochure

Highlights

- Enjoy visible migration, sea watching and possible rarities. Anything could turn up here!
- Sights and sounds of autumn migration – ticking Robins, calling Yellow-browed Warbler, Bramblings wheezing and Siskin piping overhead.
- Opportunity to visit Spurn Peninsula and Flamborough Head - both iconic landscapes
- Large range of species possible from waders and warblers to wildfowl and raptors
- Moth trapping at the observatory
- Join a private ringing session with the Spurn wardens.
- Excellent food from superbly located manor.



Spurn Point, Yellow-browed Warbler, migrating Whooper Swans



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Introduction

The long-distance migration of birds is a truly remarkable feat and is certainly one of the true wonders of the natural world and one of the most fascinating areas of ornithology. On this short wildlife break we will explore some of East Yorkshire's very best nature reserves with a focus on the wonderful migratory birds that pass through here. We will enjoy its beautiful coastline and countryside from the perfect base, a delightful early 19th century Victorian manor hotel in the quaint village of Patrington.

The east coast of Yorkshire is legendary in the birding world for watching and studying bird migration. For this break, we will be based just a very short, 15-minute drive from the wonderful Spurn Bird Observatory and we shall spend our time on foot walking the various different sites of the area enjoying a very wide range of species. We will enjoy visits to Spurn which will include a private ringing demonstration on at least one of our days here. We will also head north for around an hour to Flamborough Head and Bempton Cliffs RSPB reserve. Two wonderfully scenic and exciting locations. The birding throughout will be varied and exciting with such a wide range of species possible. Waders, warblers, chats, crests, buntings, divers, shearwaters and rarities such as Red-breasted Flycatcher, Red-backed Shrike and Yellow-browed Warblers are all possible. In fact, the possibilities are endless! All this exciting birding will be coupled with some excellent hospitality and delicious meals.



Flamborough Head

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

Arrive Dunedin Country House Hotel

Your tour leader will meet you at the lovely Dunedin Country House Hotel in the early evening. For those traveling by train, we are able to pick you up from Hull train station if you wish to coordinate with us - please let us know at the time of booking. We would pick you up at 16:00pm. We will enjoy dinner with a short introductory chat outlining the programme for the coming three days, information about the area and some of the wildlife that we will hope to see.

Day 2

Exploring Spurn

Today we will drive a short distance to Spurn and spend the day exploring this superb area.

Today will be spent exploring Spurn and the various different sites here. There are lots of areas to visit and we will be up to date on the recent sightings which may well affect our route. Almost anything is possible today with finches, thrushes, warblers, wagtails, chats, raptors, seabirds and waders. These are just some of the families we hope to enjoy and even watch migrating! At the time of our visit rarities may well be found including Pallas's, Yellow-browed and Arctic Warbler, Little Bunting, Olive-backed Pipit... the list goes on!



Migrating Waders

The Spurn Peninsula is an iconic National Nature Reserve, famous for bird migration due to its geography, with the North Sea on one side and River Humber on the other. With full-time wardens and a team of observers, the birds are studied here year-round with daily bird counts and migration watches with the ringing of birds carried out to learn about their movements around the world. We will call in for a ringing demonstration at least once during our stay here.

Stretching for three and a half miles across the Humber Estuary, this curving spit is only around 40 meters wide in places. Being so narrow, in December 2013 the combination of a winter storm and very high tide meant the North Sea smashed through the Peninsula leaving it as an island and meaning it is now no longer possible to reach the point by car. Depending on tides and the weather, we may walk to the end of the peninsular, known as "the point". This will be an exciting and

fascinating journey as we learn about the ever-changing landscape. It is a lengthy walk however and now across quite a wide sand section so it may be that we just walk some of the way.

Spurn is made up of a series of sand and shingle banks held together largely by Marram grass and Sea-buckthorn. Of course, birds are the most visible migrants here and we shall be focusing predominantly on the birdlife, but impressive movements of dragonflies, butterflies and other invertebrates can occur too. The peninsula is a wildlife-rich mosaic of mudflats, saltmarsh, beach, grassland, dunes and open water, with saline lagoons and native Sea-buckthorn scrub which is why we have a fantastic opportunity to see such a wide range of species here.

Due to its prominent position, huge numbers of birds pass through Spurn during the year on migration. The species and numbers vary throughout the year and the movement of birds and the chances of birds being grounded here is influenced by the weather conditions. The numbers of birds moving overhead, down the peninsula can be hugely impressive whether it be thousands of swifts, meadow pipits, thrushes coming off the North Sea, Goldcrests arriving. There is always something exciting to be seen! The adjacent Humber Estuary is of international importance for its huge numbers of wildfowl and wading birds, which can be seen on passage in spring and autumn and during the winter.

In autumn, birds will be arriving into the UK to spend the winter, and birds will be migrating further south to their wintering grounds in Europe and Africa. If the wind is blowing from the East, birds can be pushed across the North Sea to find themselves reaching Spurn as their first landfall and because of this, the area has an incredible track record with rarities. Birds that breed in Eastern Europe and Asia often turn up here, including Yellow-browed Warbler, Pallas's Warbler and Red-breasted Flycatcher among many others. We will look out for the rarities of course, but it can be the commoner species that provide the real excitement as we may be able to watch them arriving and flying overhead. Redwing, Fieldfare and Blackbirds may be arriving in big numbers, Ring Ouzels passing through, Bramblings and parties of Tree Sparrows and Siskins too. In the vegetation we may find Pied Flycatchers, Redstarts and Whinchat with Goldcrests flitting in the buckthorn, tired from their North Sea crossing. At sea, Red-throated and Great Northern Divers may be seen, Common and Velvet Scoter, an Arctic Skua maybe. On the mudflats we can enjoy waders galore with huge flocks of Golden Plover, Grey Plover too, Knot and Dunlin. Pink-footed Geese may be arriving and Brent Geese too on the saltmarshes.



Pink-footed Geese

After a bird-filled, exciting day we will drive the short distance back to our hotel to relax and enjoy a delicious dinner and recap on our sightings.

Day 3

Flamborough Head and Bempton Cliffs

Today we will head north of our base for around an hour to explore the area of Flamborough Head and Bempton Cliffs RSPB reserve to enjoy more spectacular views and exciting birding. Flamborough Head lies between the bays of Filey and Bridlington and is an 8-mile promontory that projects out into the North Sea. With sheer white chalk cliffs, it allows for some wonderful views out to sea and the surrounding fields and hedgerows can be a magnet for migrant birds here.

We will enjoy exploring this area, walking some easy trails and spending some time watching birds migrating at sea. There is an excellent sea watching hide at Flamborough Head and we shall look out to sea for divers, grebes, auks, shearwaters and skuas.



Short-eared Owl

Around the headland, we may find Black Redstart, Snow and Lapland Buntings if we are lucky and again the possibilities are huge. A Short-eared Owl maybe or Whooper Swans passing south.

We will explore the area and then head the short distance to Bempton Cliffs. The towering chalk cliffs here provide a breeding ground for seabirds and while the auks will have headed out to sea by the time of our visit, we should still have close views of Gannets and enjoy the varied habitat here and wonderful views.

After another exciting day we will head back to the hotel to relax before another delicious meal and to recap our sightings.

Day 4

Exploring Spurn and attend ringing session

We will spend our final day exploring the wonderful Spurn area once more. There are many sites here to visit, and we will enjoy the area with relaxed walks searching for birds and other wildlife. We will visit Sammy's Point with superb views of the Humber, and a site where many rare birds have been found. Kilnsea Wetlands is another site we shall visit along with, Beacon Ponds and the fields and habitat around the observatory. There are many areas to explore.

Should conditions allow, we will join a ringing session today with one of the Spurn Wardens. We will learn about how the birds are safely caught, quickly recorded and ringed and then released. It is fascinating to see birds in the hand, and study them up close. Anything may turn up in the nets and common species may include Blackbird, Redwing, Starling, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Goldcrest, Great Tit and Robin with Brambling and Tree Sparrow quite regular too.

We will continue to enjoy the area and its varied birdlife and react to anything that is around. Maybe a Great Grey Shrike or Jack Snipe arriving for the winter. Snow Bunting, Twite, Shore Lark Redstart, Whinchat or Firecrest can be seen. If we are very lucky, maybe an Olive-backed Pipit or Little Bunting. After an exciting and fascinating day, we will aim to be back at the hotel at around 16:30pm to allow time for onward travel. Our superbly located hotel means we will not need to travel far throughout the day.



Firecrest

Tour Grading & Focus

There will be easy walking on this holiday, covering between three and five miles per day, at a slow birdwatching pace, on largely flat ground. The tracks can sometimes be muddy and slippery at this time of year. We will spend the majority of our time during the day birdwatching and as we do so we will be on the lookout for any interesting wildlife along with appreciating the wonderful views and beauty of the area.

Weather, Clothing & Equipment

It is always advisable to take layers and prepare for cold or mild weather. Waterproof clothing and sturdy – preferably waterproof or water-resistant – footwear is recommended in case of showers, as we could get caught in rain away from shelter. Binoculars are very much advised for the tour. A telescope will be very useful if you have one.

What's Included

Breakfasts and evening meals are included in the holiday cost, beginning with the evening meal on Day 1 and finishing with breakfast on Day 4. Accommodation will be at the Dunedin Country House Hotel in twin, double or single rooms, all en-suite with tea/coffee facilities and hairdryers.

The tour price includes a 3-course meal on each night, and the food is a combination of modern and traditional British cooking and, where possible, uses locally sourced seasonal ingredients. Vegetarian options are available.

Lunches are not included in the cost of this tour. We will stop at a pub or cafe for lunch. Snacks, drinks and items of a personal nature are not included in the price of the tour, so please make sure you have what you need during each day's programme.



Great Grey Shrike

Joining The Tour

As standard, we will meet at the hotel. You are able to arrive at the Dunedin Country House Hotel at any time from 2pm and your leader will meet you at 6pm in the bar area for an introduction followed by dinner at 7pm. If you wish to join the tour by train, we can pick you up at Hull train station at 4pm and would look to drop you there again at no later than 6pm on the final day. So please book return train times leaving after 6pm at the earliest to be safe. Please let us know if you are intending to arrive by train. We may be able to collect you earlier than 4pm on day 1 and please let us know before booking trains. The hotel can be reached by public transport, again taking the train to Hull and taking the 76 or 77 bus service to Patrington.



The elegant Dunedin Country House Hotel

Transport

We will travel in a 9-seater minibus during the tour and depending on the group size there will be one or two vehicles. If you would prefer to drive in your own vehicle and follow the Naturetrek vehicle this is an option. There is very little driving on this tour.

Extending Your Holiday

We are more than happy to book additional nights at the hotel for you. Please request this at the time of booking.

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. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests, at the time of booking.

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