

Cornwall: Beavers, Choughs and Cetaceans

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Itinerary

Day 1	Meet at our wonderful hotel near Falmouth
Days 2	The Lizard
Day 3	Woodland Valley Farm for Beavers
Day 4	Boat Trip
Day 5	Windmill Hill NR; then depart

Departs

Summer

Focus

Beavers, birds and cetaceans and other forms of natural History including butterflies and dragonflies

Grading

Grade A/B. Easy and gentle walks. One boat trip.

Dates and Prices

See www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code GBR 204)

Highlights

- Observing Beavers on a private reserve
- A Falmouth pelagic for seabirds & cetaceans by catamaran
- Choughs along gorgeous coastline



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Introduction

The beautiful county of Cornwall, with its majestic coastal cliffs, quaint seaside towns and rolling countryside delivers some of the finest wildlife sightings in the UK. During this holiday, we will have a wonderful opportunity to not only learn about, but hopefully, witness European Beavers on a private reserve near Ladock. Beavers were released on this site in June 2017, and after only two nights, had already started to build a dam. When on site, the owner will talk to us about the history of the site and the many advantages that the Beavers bring to the other wildlife on the reserve. He will also show us the fine work that the Beavers have created, and with some luck, we hope to view these mammals at dusk after a nearby pub dinner.

On top of this, a vessel will take us off the Cornish coastline searching for a variety of seabirds and cetaceans, with sightings perhaps comprising both Minke Whales and Ocean Sunfish (if weather permits a longer trip). Even if the weather isn't conducive for a lengthy outing, the skipper will still be able to show us much wildlife along the coastline from Falmouth, including nesting Peregrines, Grey Seals and Harbour Porpoise. In 2023, a brand-new catamaran will be used for these outings, making a wonderful sailing experience.

The impressive coastline of The Lizard is home to one of Cornwall's most sought-after species – the Chough! Choughs were re-introduced to this area some time ago and now have a very well sustained population. We will hope to not only see this charismatic bird, but hear them too as they give off their distinctive calls as we walk along the stunning coastal path close to Lizard Point.

Our hotel is situated nearby to Falmouth, but very much secluded, and will provide the perfect base for our holiday.

The gentle walks will enable us to view a number of birds, butterflies, rare dragonflies and wildflowers, making this the perfect wildlife getaway for the all-round naturalist.



Red-veined Darter

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 at Hotel

We will arrive at our beautiful country hotel on the outskirts of Falmouth during the late afternoon/early evening where your tour leader will greet you before dinner. The afternoon can be spent at your leisure, ready for the days ahead.

Day 2

The Lizard

The southern tip of The Lizard peninsular is a mere hour's drive away along scenic roads and beautiful countryside. We will search diligently for one of the area's most sought-after birds – the Chough. Although in the crow family, a great view of their red bill and legs is always a pleasurable sight, somewhat the opposite of their commoner congeners. Ravens should also be abundant in the area and offshore, Manx Shearwaters, Gannets and Shags should be regular sightings on our scans out to sea.

The wonderful coastal path, that bypasses several coves below, should provide sightings of Wheatears, Rock Pipits and Linnets as they go about busily finding food for their youngsters. The coves below are usually occupied by Grey Seals, and if we're really lucky, a Basking Shark may be patrolling these warm, rich waters.



Lunch will be had nearby before continuing along the various paths on The Lizard, before returning to the vehicle and driving back to the hotel in time for dinner.

The walk today will be slow-paced, in order to take in the views and wildlife on offer, but note the terrain can be difficult at times, with some steep sections and loose terrain.

Day 3

Woodland Valley Reserve

Today we will visit the very special Woodland Valley Farm. Set deep within beautiful Cornish countryside, surrounded by ancient woodland, ponds, streams and wetlands, this organic farm is run and managed in harmony with local wildlife by the very passionate Jones family. The farm is a haven for a wonderful array of birds, butterflies and other wildlife and, in recent years, has also become home to a family of beavers! Working in partnership with Cornwall Wildlife Trust, the farm is part of a rewilding initiative to reintroduce these delightful creatures into the countryside. Native to the UK, and once numerous across our countryside, they were hunted to extinction for their fur. Woodland Valley Farm now supports a healthy, breeding population, and their positive impacts upon the landscape can be clearly seen. Where once a small stream flowed, now a network of pools and wetland has been created, maintained by a range of impressively engineered dams, which will undoubtedly be of benefit to an array of wildlife as well as hopefully naturally reducing flood risk further down the watercourse.



European Beaver by Oliver Smart - June 2022 tour

We will spend time walking the farm in search of the array of wildlife present, guided by our extremely knowledgeable host. We will learn about wildlife-sensitive farming practices and their positive impacts upon reducing climate change, as well as the story of the farm and beaver project. After dinner at a local pub (**not included in tour cost**), we will return in the evening, when the beavers are most active, in search of these charismatic creatures!

Day 4

Falmouth Boat Trip

The wildlife-rich seas off Cornwall are of course best observed from a boat. Luckily, this is the plan for the day! After a leisurely start to the morning, we will aim to set sail at 10am, taking in the whole of Falmouth Bay and the wildlife that occupies this large bay: Gannets, Grey Seals and Great Skuas are usual suspects. If the weather is good to us, we will head out much further and hope to see feeding flocks of Manx and Balearic Shearwaters, more skuas, terns and a number of cetaceans. The latter should involve pods of Common Dolphins and smaller numbers of Harbour Porpoises, whilst if luck is on our side, Ocean Sunfish, Minke Whale and Basking Shark are all a possibility. The weather will decide our routing for this day, but wherever we sail to, there will be plenty of highlights and photographic opportunities.

This boat trip will start around 10am and end at around 6pm. Please note that the boat is a catamaran type and is equipped with a modern toilet!

Day 5

Windmill Farm NR

On our final day, we may head back down to Lizard Point in case we had missed the Choughs on our first visit. We will then head to Windmill Farm NR which is home to a superb diversity of wildlife and is now a regular site to see Red-veined Darter dragonflies! Other Odonata may include a number of damselflies with Emerald Damselflies, and perhaps, Lesser Emperor. A range of birds and insects will be on offer for us and will provide a welcome end to the tour.

We expect to end the day no later than 4pm to allow those time to travel back home. Extra nights are available at the hotel and are subject to availability.

Tour Grading & focus

For the most part, walking will be easy and slow-paced. Distances covered each day will not range any more than five miles. The coastal path on The Lizard may pose challenging in some places, so being sure-footed is ideal. Day 2 expect the grading to be that of Grade B, whereas the rest of the tour is Grade A.

This is a general natural history tour, aiming to find a vast array of the exciting wildlife that Cornwall has to offer.

The drives each day shall be between thirty and ninety minutes. Lunches, daytime snacks and drinks are not included in the cost of this tour, and we will stop at local pubs or cafes for lunch and comfort breaks each day.

On Day 3, it will be a late night as we will be searching for the beavers at dusk and the hotel is roughly a 45-minute drive away, so please be prepared for this scenario. The next morning there is no rush to leave the hotel so there will be plenty of time to rest.

Weather, clothing & equipment

We will hope for warm, sunny days, but do come prepared for all eventualities on this tour! Therefore, warm clothing and footwear, waterproofs and sun cream should all be packed. The temperature out at sea can reduce dramatically, therefore, we encourage you to provide warm and water proof clothing for the boat trip, as well as sunglasses, a sunhat and sun cream.

Food and accommodation included in the price

The hotel is the Penmorvah Hotel near Falmouth.

All breakfast and all but one evening meals are included in the holiday cost beginning with the evening meal on Day 1 and finishing with breakfast on Day 5. **Please note dinner on the Beaver evening is not included in the tour cost.** Accommodation will be in comfortable standard double rooms, all of which are ensuite.



Extending your holiday

We are more than happy to book additional nights at the hotel for you. These are subject to availability.

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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