

# Norfolk's Winter Highlights

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

---

### Outline itinerary

**Day 1/2** North Norfolk.

**Day 3** Transfer to the Norfolk Broads.

**Day 4/5** Norfolk Broads.

### Departs

November to March.

### Focus

Birds and other wildlife.

### Grading

Grade A – easy day walks.

### Dates and Prices

Visit [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk) (tour code GBR274).

### Highlights:

- Explore Norfolk's north coast & visit some of the region's most iconic reserves
- Swirling flocks of Knot & other waders at Snettisham
- Visit the wetlands of the Norfolk Broads
- Common Crane, Marsh Harrier, Bearded Tit, Bittern & Barn Owl all possible
- Huge flocks of wintering Pink-footed Geese & other wildfowl
- Wintering Snow Bunting, Shore Lark, Twite & other passerines with chance of Waxwing
- Led by expert Naturetrek naturalist



From the top: Waders over the Wash, Common Crane & Waxwing



Naturetrek    Mingleddown Barn    Wolf's Lane    Chawton    Alton    Hampshire    GU34 3HJ    UK

**T:** +44 (0)1962 733051

**E:** [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

**W:** [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)

## Introduction

Norfolk's reputation as one of the UK's premier wildlife destinations is well-founded and there is no better place to enjoy a winter birdwatching break than along its famous coastline! On this 5-day, 2-centre birdwatching tour, we will work our way through this scenic region, beginning in the west at Hunstanton then moving east around the coast to the reed-fringed wetlands of the Norfolk Broads. We hope to find a wonderful array of wintering waterfowl, waders, passerines and seabirds as we go, from vast flocks of waders and geese to parties of hardy Snow Buntings, all rubbing shoulders with resident specialties such as Common Crane, Marsh Harrier, Bittern and Bearded Tit.

By splitting our time between two hotels (one on the north Norfolk coast and one in the Norfolk Broads), we will be based closer to the wildlife and will need to spend less time travelling to our chosen destinations each day.



## 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 2pm at our hotel base in the town of Hunstanton on the north Norfolk coastline. Once settled in, we will head out for a short excursion and begin our exploration of the region's wetlands, dunes, woodlands and meadows before returning to the hotel for an evening meal and a chat with your leader about the days ahead. We will be based in Hunstanton for two nights.

### Day 2

We will make a very early start this morning to enjoy a high tide 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 rising tide. The sight of thousands of waders twisting and turning over the receding mudflats is one of the finest in the UK. Other species to look out for include Bar-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Greenshank and Whimbrel, 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 a wintering 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 lingering skua.

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 visit, 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 day.

### Day 3

During the course of Day 3 we will slowly transfer in our own cars to the Norfolk Broads and our base for the next two nights near the village of Hickling. En route we will spend some time exploring the saltmarshes, dunes and grazing meadows around the Holkham estate.



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, Twite and Shore Lark. 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.

Your tour leader will keep an eye on the local bird news throughout the tour and if anything of particular interest is found on route then we may decide to take a look. Norfolk attracts plenty of unusual birds throughout the year ... especially if the wind is from the east!

We will aim to arrive at our delightful guesthouse deep in the heart of the Norfolk Broads (between the villages of Hickling and Sea Palling) mid to late afternoon. This will be our base for the final two nights of the tour as we explore the surrounding wetlands and the adjacent North Sea coast.

## Day 4

## The Norfolk Broads

We will spend today exploring the freshwater lakes and wetlands of the Norfolk Broads. The Broads form one of the most important wetlands in the whole of the British Isles and in the winter attract huge numbers of wildfowl, waders and other birds. We will see plenty more Marsh Harriers quartering this vast, windpump-dotted landscape and will have another opportunity to look for parties of 'pinging' Bearded Tits in the reedbeds. Bittern and Great Egret are possible, too and we will make a special effort to look for parties of Common Cranes, especially in the evening when they fly into roost.

The Broads region is justly famous for its large gatherings of wintering wildfowl and this is a truly international meeting place, as Pink-footed Geese from Greenland and Iceland rub shoulders with Wigeon, Shoveler and Teal from Scandinavia and Russia. With



them come many other wetland species – including large flocks of Lapwing and Golden Plover – whilst Redwings and Fieldfares feed on berries in the hedgerows. There are plenty of areas to enjoy such as Hickling Broad, Buckenham Marshes and Horsey Mere and your guide will decide where to go subject to the weather and recent sightings.

Towards the end of the day, we will head to a local viewpoint that will give us an opportunity to watch birds of prey coming into a communal roost site. Marsh Harriers are by far the commonest species to be seen, but a few Hen Harriers and Merlins are likely too and there's always a good chance of both Barn Owl and Short-eared Owl too. Common Cranes and Chinese Water Deer are now a familiar sight in this area and usually grace us with their presence as the sun draws down in the western sky.

## Day 5

## Winterton Dunes & depart for home

This morning we will make the short drive to the coast and will spend the morning exploring the dunes, scrub and coastline between Winterton-on-Sea and Horsey. This section of the Norfolk coastline faces out into the North Sea and is the first landfall for tired migrants after their long sea crossing from mainland Europe. There is movement between the continent and the UK throughout the winter, especially if there is a cold snap in Europe and many birds stop to rest and feed here before continuing on their way. The marram-covered dunes sometimes provide cover for resting Short-eared Owls (plus wintering Snow Buntings) and the sea is, as always, worth scanning too divers, grebes and flocks of seaduck.

The coastline here is also a favoured haunt of Grey Seals which come ashore near Winterton and Horsey between November and February to pup.

We will keep the afternoon flexible to take account of such factors as the weather, recent bird sightings and the advice of our tour leader. We may head back into the Broads or perhaps explore another section of the coastline if there's something of particular interest to see.

Our tour will conclude around 4pm at which point we must say our goodbyes to the tour leader and then begin our own journeys home.



---

## Tour grading

There will be no serious or strenuous walking on this tour, with each walk covering no more than a couple of miles on mostly gentle terrain.

## 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 will be staying at 'Le Strange Arms' hotel in Hunstanton for our two nights on the north Norfolk coast ...



... and then for two nights at the delightful Dairy Barns guesthouse close to the Calthorpe Broad National Nature Reserve between the villages of Hickling and Sea Palling. Rooms have private facilities.



The guesthouse also features several deluxe or 'extra special' rooms (see photos below) that are all unique in design and set over two levels with large mezzanines. Each room has its own private courtyard garden, separate spacious lounge and sizeable en suite bathroom. These rooms – of which we only have one or two available per tour – are available at an additional cost of £50 per person.



## Clothing and Equipment

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

## Transport & Train Station Pickup

Our group will be transported in a 9-seater minibus for the majority of the tour, although for the transfer between Hunstanton and Hickling on Day 3 we would ask group members to use their own cars. Your tour leader will provide directions.

For those wishing to travel to Norfolk on public transport your tour leader would be very happy to arrange and pick-up before the tour and a drop-off after the tour at Norwich Railway Station.

## 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](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk).