

Guernsey in Spring

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive Guernsey
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- Days 2 - 4** Gentle excursions exploring the varied and picturesque wildlife habitats of Guernsey
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- Day 5** Depart Guernsey
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Departs

May

Focus

All-round Natural History

Grading

A/B. All walking will be at a slow pace, with some steep uphill walking on narrow coastal paths.

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code GBR280) or brochure

Highlights

- See wonderful species rarely, or not, found on the British Isles mainland.
- Led by a Guernsey resident expert naturalist.
- Bird-ringing and moth-trapping demonstrations undertaken.
- Visit beautiful habitats such as the Ramsar site at L'Eree Shingle Bank and Lihou Island.
- Stay at a wonderful hotel in the unspoiled Fermain Valley, with nearby secluded bays.



Glanville Fritillary, Puffins, Guernsey Coastline



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Introduction

The picturesque island of Guernsey is the second largest of the British Channel Islands and is packed with award-winning beaches, picture-postcard towns, world-class cuisine and, along with the other Channel Islands, is officially the sunniest place in the British Isles.

The islands come into their own during migration season when many birds stop off in Guernsey en route to their breeding grounds further north. Our holiday is timed to coincide with the peak of the avian spring migration and we can look forward to enjoying a great range of species from chats, warblers, buntings and larks and maybe even a shrike or Hoopoe with a chance of bumping into a much rarer long-distant vagrant too. Overhead we'll be looking out for raptors including Merlin, Sparrowhawk and Honey Buzzard and if there is a southerly or easterly breeze there is the mouthwatering prospect of something much rarer!

For the botanist, the holiday is timed to coincide with the flowering of the meadows at Les Vicheries, which are considered some of the best for orchids in the British Isles and is home to the Loose-flowered Orchid, a species not natively found on the British mainland. Exquisite flora such as Small Flowered Catchfly, Dwarf Pansy and Little Robin will also be keenly searched for during our stay.

The natural history of the Channel Islands has, until now, been a hidden treasure in the British Isles. A wildlife holiday to Guernsey in May will produce tantalizing wildlife with resident and migrating species abound, rare wildflowers and entomology, and much more. We shall leave no stone unturned in our quest to see some of the most exciting species that this quaint island offers, while also giving time to relax and soak in the beauty of this special, scenic island.



Petit Port Cave, Guernsey

Itinerary

NB. 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 Forest, Guernsey

After a 45-minute flight from London we will arrive at Guernsey Airport before taking a short 15-minute drive to our wonderful hotel on the east coast in Fermain Valley. For those who wish to travel by sea instead, there is a ferry option available, departing from Poole or Portsmouth.

After the short journey from the airport, we'll arrive at our hotel, where we will settle into our rooms. The hotel's elevated position means that throughout our stay we will enjoy stunning views out to sea encompassing the neighboring islands of Herm, Sark and Jersey, and even France on a clear day. The hotel is also located on Guernsey's network of famous cliff paths and some participants may wish to begin exploring these before we enjoy our first delicious meal together and a good night's rest in our hand-chosen hotel, ready for the exciting programme ahead.

Days 2 – 4

Daily Excursions

Guernsey's orchid meadows at Les Vicheries are considered some of the finest in the British Isles and on one of our exciting excursions we shall enjoy the meadow at its finest with hues from fantastic numbers of Loose-flowered (Jersey), Early Purple, Heath Spotted- and Southern Marsh-orchids. Other botanical specialties at the time of our visit will include such species as Small Flowered Catchfly, Bee Orchid, and Little Robin.



Loose-flowered Orchid © Andy Marquis

Guernsey cliffs are famously beautiful with a profusion of the wildflowers, and those on the south coast are particularly vibrant. Here we will search for the Glanville Fritillary, which will be emerging around the time of our visit and, with their freshness, will be at their most striking. Whilst searching for fritillaries and other butterflies we can also expect to find the Black-backed Meadow Ant, once rare on the British mainland and known only from two historic sites, it is now considered extinct on the mainland. Further afield the species is known from Portugal to central Asia, and from central Sweden to central Italy, and, with our expert leader, on Guernsey we will discover the species, and their fascinating nests, with relative ease.

The RAMSAR listed Lihou Island is reachable using a causeway and a trip here will be planned to coincide with the best tides. Here we can find the rare Atlantic Scaly Cricket. After reaching the islet we can hope to find huge numbers of Common Blue Butterflies and Five-spot Burnet, alongside breeding seabirds.

On one of the days, we shall utilize an experienced skipper to make a chartered boat trip to take in the seabird colonies known as "The Humps" where a good range of species can be seen including Puffin, Guillemot, Razorbill, Shag, Cormorant, Gannet and Fulmar, with a good chance to see Bottlenose Dolphin and Grey Seal too.

One afternoon will be set aside to enjoy an afternoon tea or to relax on the hotel's sunny terrace. For those who wish instead, this will be chance to make an attempt to find Short-toed Treecreeper, which is not found on the UK mainland, and is an elusive species in the Channel Islands. We'll search some of the best habitats and, whilst nothing can be guaranteed, we are sure to come across other fauna and flora of interest.



Short-toed Treecreeper

Our Guernsey resident tour leader has held a bird-ringing permit for over 40 years, and a highlight will be joining him in a bird-ringing demonstration. The activity can only be undertaken with an experienced licensed ornithologist and during fine weather – the flexibility in the programme will allow us to fit this in when conditions allow and will provide a fascinating insight into the ecology and biology of birds. It is a memorable experience to see birds up-close in the hand and it is a privilege which few get to experience. In addition to this, our tour leader first bought a moth-trap at the age of 19 and he has been running traps ever since. The low light-pollution in the Channel Islands and their key strategic position in the channel can make for spectacular catches with some breathtakingly beautiful species and we shall enjoy the thrill of seeing which species have been drawn to the trap's bright light overnight.

Guernsey holds a number of ponds, coastal areas, woodlands and other important wildlife habitats and we'll be using the very latest local information and knowledge of species movements to plan our other activities around these key excursions.

Day 5

Depart Guernsey

During our last morning we'll have time for a final use of the hotel's facilities or a beach walk before making the short drive back to the airport for our flight home after a most restful wildlife holiday in Guernsey.

Tour Grading & Focus

The walks on this holiday will generally be easy but some are taken on undulating narrow coastal paths so a reasonable level of fitness is required.

Weather, Clothing & Equipment

We hope for fine weather at this time in late May but the weather is of course unpredictable and we recommend bringing layers of clothing including a warm jumper/fleece for the boat journey and a waterproof jacket and waterproof walking boots. Binoculars will be very useful if you have them and will be required to see some of the more elusive bird species.

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 5. The tour price includes a 3-course meal on our four evenings. Vegetarian and vegan options are available on request. Lunches are not included in the tour price and will be taken at a pub or café, where light lunches, such as soups and sandwiches, are available, as well as more substantive plates of food.



Guernsey Hotel

We'll be using the upgraded Gold Balcony rooms as standard, all rooms are en suite with double and twin-bedded rooms available.

During our stay you'll have full use of the hotel's pool and sauna. In addition you can also purchase a range of treatments whilst at the hotel.

Extending Your Holiday

We can happily 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.

To travel to the Channel Islands from the UK all passengers are required to provide photographic ID (Passport, Photographic Driving Licence, National ID card, Citizen card, etc) at the check-in desk. Please note that for flights departing from the Channel Islands, UK (EU) 261/2004 which covers delays caused by things like extreme weather, air traffic control or airport employee strikes or other 'extraordinary circumstances' is not applicable and not eligible for compensation.



Honey Buzzard