

Norfolk's Spring Highlights

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1/2 North Norfolk.

Day 3 Transfer to the Norfolk Broads.

Day 4/5 Norfolk Broads.

Departs

May.

Focus

Birds and other wildlife.

Grading

Grade A – easy day walks.

Dates and Prices

Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code GBR306).

Highlights:

- Explore Norfolk's north coast & visit some of the region's most iconic reserves
- Look for a variety of migrant waders, chats, warblers & seabirds
- Visit the wetlands of the Norfolk Broads
- Common Crane, Marsh Harrier, Bearded Tit, Bittern & Barn Owl all possible
- Breeding Avocets
- Chance of a rarity or two!
- Led by expert Naturetrek naturalist



From the top: Bearded Tit, Spotted Redshank & Common Crane.



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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 spring birdwatching break than along its famous coastline! On this 5-day birdwatching tour we will split our time between the marshes, woodlands and dunes of the county's north coast and the reed-fringed wetlands of the Norfolk Broads. Spring in Norfolk is an exciting time to visit. During April and May numerous migrant waders, seabirds and passerines pass through on their way north, whilst the region's summer visitors will be arriving and setting up territory. Common waders including Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Ruff and Greenshank often share the scrapes with something a little more unusual such as parties of Black Terns and Little Gulls, or perhaps a pair of Garganey. Marsh Harriers quarter the reedbeds from which Reed Warblers incessantly chatter and during our time in the Broads we will look for Common Cranes, arguably the most iconic bird of the region. Based at the comfortable Le Strange Arms hotel in Hunstanton and the Dairy Barns Guesthouse near Hickling, this tour is sure to offer some of the finest spring birdwatching in the UK.

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

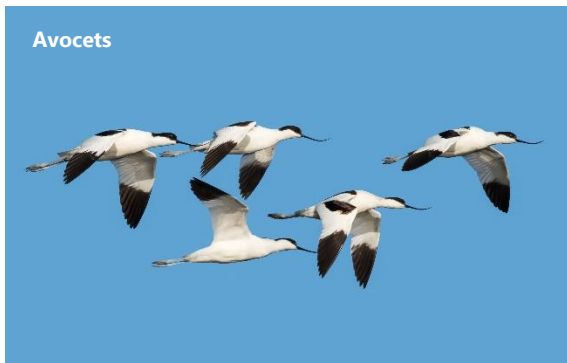
Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Your tour leader will meet you at 3pm 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

West Norfolk offers some impressive, sweeping landscapes of saltmarshes, lagoons and coastal sand dunes, all of which can look particularly alluring to a wide variety of birds during the spring. We will choose where we go today according to the weather and recent sightings, with Holme, Titchwell and



Avocets

Burnham Overy all offering wonderful places to enjoy an exciting suite of waders, waterfowl and passerines. We should see plenty of Marsh Harriers quartering the reedbeds – also home to chatting Reed Warblers, skulking Water Rails and those ever-elusive Bearded Tits – and will take time to enjoy parties of graceful Avocets and a variety of other waders in the wetlands. Mixed in amongst the commoner species such as

Black-tailed Godwit, Knot, Dunlin, Greenshank and others, we hope to find a few of more unusual ones such as Spotted Redshank, Whimbrel, Ruff and perhaps Wood Sandpiper. A scan of the sea may yield a flock of Common Scoters, a Red-throated Diver or perhaps a passing skua, Black Tern or Little Gull.

We will also explore the coastal woods at Holkham or Wells over the course of our stay. This thin strip of mixed woodland often holds an interesting variety of migrants, especially if the wind is from the east. Common Redstart, Spotted and Pied Flycatchers and Northern Wheatear are possible, along with Yellow Wagtail, Willow Warbler, Tree Pipit and others. The marram-covered dunes that edge the trees also offer cover for migrants and the sea is, as always, worth scanning too.

We will head back to our hotel in the evening for an evening meal and if time (and energy levels) permit there may be the opportunity for a post-dinner drive or walk. We can perhaps visit Dersingham Bog at dusk for Nightjar and Woodcock or go in search of the local Barn Owls, a species that is doing particularly well in north Norfolk.



Barn Owl

Day 3

During the course of Day 3 we will slowly transfer in our own cars (or the group minibus if you have travelled up by public transport) to the Norfolk Broads and our base for the next two nights in the delightful Dairy Barns Guesthouse near the village of Hickling. En route we will spend some time exploring the wetlands, dunes and grazing meadows around Blakeney, Cley and Salthouse.

At this time of year, the mixed habitats along this stretch of coastline attract a wonderful variety of birds with many stopping over to rest on their way north and others arriving to spend the summer. The grassy fields often hold Northern Wheatear and Yellow Wagtails, whilst Hobbies chase mixed flocks of hirundines overhead. Spoonbills and Garganey are regular on Cley's freshwater scrapes, along with a variety of waders including Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwits, Ruff, Avocet and Little Ringed Plover. Other species to look out for include Little, Sandwich, Arctic and Common Terns and seaduck offshore.



Spoonbill

We will aim to arrive at our 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.

Days 4 & 5

The Norfolk Broads

We will spend the next two days exploring the freshwater lakes and marshes of the Norfolk Broads. The Broads form one of the most important wetlands in the whole of the British Isles and in the spring and summer they are temporary home to a wonderful variety of migrant and breeding species. We will see plenty more Marsh Harriers quartering this vast, windpump-dotted landscape and will have another opportunity to look for groups of Bearded Tits in the reedbeds. Bittern and Great Egret are possible too, and we will make a special effort to look for parties of stately Common Cranes, arguably the most sought-after and iconic bird of the region.



Reed, Sedge and Cetti's Warblers will be busily proclaiming territory, whilst early in the morning, and later in the evening, we may hear the bizarre insect-like reeling of the elusive Grasshopper Warbler. We will also enjoy newly-emerged dragonflies and damselflies zipping over the pools and reed-fringed ditches. If we were unable to find Barn Owls along the north Norfolk coastline then we have a good chance – weather permitting – of finding one of these beautiful birds during our time in the Broads.

There are plenty of areas to enjoy today such as Hickling Broad, Buckenham Marshes and Horsey Mere and your guide will decide where to go subject to the weather and recent sightings. If time permits, we will also visit the coastal dune system between Winterton-on-Sea and Horsey. The scrub and marram grass-covered dunes here offer shelter for weary migrants, whilst a scan of the sea offers the chance of a loafing Grey Seal and parties of ducks, waders, auks, terns or skuas tracking north.

Our tour will conclude around 4pm on Day 5 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 Dairy Barns 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.

Reserve entry

Please note that we do not include reserve entrance fees in the tour cost. Please therefore bring any RSPB, Norfolk Wildlife Trust or any other similar membership cards with you.

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.
