

Go Slow on Sark

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive Guernsey, Sail Sark
-
- Day 2 – 7** Daily excursions in search of Sark's wonderful wildlife
-
- Day 8** Depart Sark, Arrive London via Guernsey
-

Departs

June to July

Focus

All-round Natural History

Grading

A. All walking will be at a slow pace but some coastal paths are narrow and naturally undulating

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code GBR312)

Highlights

- Beautifully peaceful island, with no cars
- Wonderful wildflowers
- Guillemots, breeding Razorbills and a chance for Puffins (spring and summer departures)
- Exciting butterflies possible in all seasons
- Enjoy the spectacular night sky on Sark, designated the World's First Dark Sky Island.
- Moth-trapping and bird ringing undertaken, with a chance to add to the island's natural history records!



From Top: Dark Green Fritillary, Razorbills and view from Sark



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Introduction

The beautiful island of Sark lies 9 miles to the southeast of Guernsey in the British Channel Islands. The island is 3 miles long by 1.5 miles wide and is described by the Daily Telegraph as one of the twenty most tranquil and most "desirable great escapes on the planet." In addition to this, Sark is one of the sunniest places in the British Isles and hosts a wonderful selection of wildlife. For all these reasons, those who visit Sark are left longing to return!

With no cars or tarmacked roads, streetlights nor airport on the island, a peaceful and relaxed pace of life still exists here – a weightlessness of life so seldom found in today's modern world.

In spring and summer, on Sark's beautiful untouched coastline we'll scan golden sandy coves and azure seas in search of its iconic seabirds – species such as Puffin, Razorbill, Gannet, Fulmar and Guillemot; the colony on Les Autelets (The Alters) is the biggest in the Channel Islands, numbering over 300 individuals and a chartered boat trip will enable us to get the best views of these wonderful birds. In autumn, we'll carefully search the tranquil waters for Common and Bottlenose Dolphins, along with shearwaters.

Although Guernsey has a long-established natural history society (La Société Guernesiaise) founded in 1882, the study of flora and fauna of Sark has not been as extensive as on Guernsey, as La Société Sercquaise was founded only in 1975, and thus on this trip we have a genuine opportunity to add to the natural history records of the island, with every chance of recording a species not previously seen here.

We'll stay in one of Sark's traditional farmhouses, set in extensive, beautiful, sheltered gardens with an indoor swimming pool.



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.

Itinerary

Day 1

Arrive St. Peter Port, Guernsey – ferry to Sark

Today we take a flight from London to Guernsey before taking a ten-minute vehicle journey to the harbour for our sailing over to Sark. We'll need to have our optics at the ready as on the crossing we'll have a great opportunity to find superb seabirds and additionally our first chance for dolphins.

On arrival in Sark, our luggage will be transferred to our accommodation allowing us to undertake our first walk, enjoying our first taste of Sark's wonderful tranquillity. The walk will take approximately 20-minutes, depending on what we see! As there are no cars on Sark, the walk will be on gravel vegetation-lined roads – part of the island's charm! We'll have time to settle into our rooms and refresh before enjoying a lovely evening meal in the Georgian hotel next-door together. After dinner we'll set the moth-trap. If the weather is clear, we can get our first glimpse of the masterpiece which is Sark's night sky!

Days 2 – 7

A wildlife exploration of Sark

Over the next six days we'll be making the most of the opportunity to explore the island and go in search of Sark's abundant wildlife, being rewarded each evening with a wonderful dinner, and the chance to enjoy the night sky in the most serene of surroundings.

One morning, we'll take a chartered boat trip out to sea to search for the birds and mammals which reside in these peaceful shores. In spring and summer, we'll be aiming for good views of Razorbill and Guillemot on water as well as watching them pass overhead on their foraging paths. With luck we can see Puffin here too. On the shoreline we'll be scanning for foraging waders. The boat trip will also give us a perspective of the island we are set to explore during our stay, and we can hope that one of the resident breeding Peregrine Falcon obscures our view with a stoop!



Queen of Spain Fritillary



Green Hairstreak

The whole of Sark is criss-crossed with beautiful walking paths and the walk around the southern section known as 'Little Sark' is particularly memorable. There are many interesting plants to be found and on the flowers in spring and summer we should come across Silver-studded Blue, Dark Green Fritillary, Green Hairstreak and Wall Brown butterflies. Later in the year there is the exciting possibility of Queen-of-Spain Fritillary! We will also look for day-flying moths such as the attractive

Silver-barred Sable (*Pyrausta cingulata*). Along the beaches we will search for the red data-listed Atlantic Scaly Cricket (*Pseudomogoplistes vicentae*).

Each evening we will run a moth-trap in the grounds of the hotel and each morning we can enjoy seeing what has been attracted overnight. We will go on a bat-walk one evening after dinner using a detector.

Bird ringing demonstrations will be conducted in the grounds of our lovely hotel, where mist nets will be erected in the woodland. Seeing birds close-up in the hand is an unforgettable experience and our tour leader will explain the methodology and the scientific benefits gained from the process. The information gathered can help us better understand the movements of birds and consequently aid with their protection.



For those who wish there will also be optional activities available such visits to the exhibition of the Occupation of Sark, to the island's handmade-chocolate producers, and the island's observatory.

Day 8

Depart Sark

This morning it will be sadly time to say farewell to the serenity of Sark as we depart on a sailing to the harbour in Guernsey, again with binoculars and cameras at the ready. After arriving in Guernsey, we'll take a short taxi journey to the airport before our homeward flight to London, fully refreshed after our time on the tranquil island of Sark.

Tour Grading & Focus

There will generally be easy walking on this holiday, covering three to six miles, though naturally on the island there will be some uphill walks on narrow coastal paths and therefore unfortunately the tour is not suitable for those with reduced mobility. A maximum of 6 hours will be spent in the field each day.

Weather, Clothing & Equipment

We can hope for fine weather at this time in the Channel Islands 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.

Travel Insurance

Following the introduction of a new reciprocal healthcare arrangement, UK residents can access emergency and necessary healthcare services for free in Guernsey. Please take your GHIC or EHIC card with you if you have one, as this is the main eligibility document used to access healthcare. We recommend that you have travel insurance in place for the duration of your holiday, as the arrangement may not provide cover for all events, like medical repatriation back to the UK or for any treatment in a private facility. For further information, please visit <https://gov.gg/rha>

What's Included

Bed and breakfast only is included in the cost of this holiday. The cost of lunches and dinners are not included to allow a choice of dining at one of the islands' many acclaimed restaurants and to allow the choice between a hearty lunch, or something much lighter for those who prefer. The food is a combination of modern and traditional gourmet cuisine and, where possible, uses Sark seasonal ingredients. Vegetarian and vegan options are available.



Le Grand Dixcart

Extending Your Holiday

We can happily book additional nights at the hotel for you or you may wish to extend in Guernsey at the end of the trip. 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.

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