

Northumberland & Farne Islands

Naturetrek Wildlife Photography Tour

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Meet Newcastle; transfer Bamburgh.
Day 2	Holy Island of Lindisfarne.
Day 3/4	Farne Islands.
Day 5	Northumberland Coast & Newcastle.
Day 6	Newcastle; depart.

Departs

June/July

Focus

Seabirds and coastal landscapes

Grading

A/B. Easy to moderate day walks

Dates and Prices

See www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code GBR54)

Highlights:

- Two-centre break based in a comfortable hotel in scenic Bamburgh and a single night in Newcastle
- Enormous scope for seabird photography, with colonies of Puffins, Guillemots, Razorbills, Kittiwakes, Shags, Common Eider and Arctic Terns
- Fully day visit to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne
- Two half day trips to Inner Farne and two half day trips around the Farne Islands
- Evening landscape photography along the stunning coastline
- Led by expert wildlife photographer, Oliver Smart



Images from top: Arctic Tern (Alison Steel), Atlantic Puffins (Oliver Smart), Dunstanburgh Castle (Alison Steel).



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Introduction

The Northumberland coast is truly photogenic — with mile upon mile of sandy beaches and big skies, its broad vistas and moody, changeable cloud formations are pleasing to the eye... and the photographer's lens!

During our four full days on and around the coast, two will be spent enjoying full-day visits to the Farne Islands, which will provide us with the opportunity to photograph a tantalising array of seabirds at close range, from the exquisite but feisty Arctic Terns bringing Sandeels to their chicks, to Guillemots, Razorbills, Kittiwakes and, of course, the ever-photogenic Puffins. A day exploring the Farne Islands is a truly magical experience and as well as the principal



Kittiwake (Oliver Smart)

performers there is also an impressive supporting cast including rafts of handsome Eiders and large numbers of Atlantic Grey Seals. On the third day, we will explore the historic island of Lindisfarne (Holy Island), which we will access via the paved causeway when the tide is out. The island is steeped in history and a place of pilgrimage for many, and also home to abundant wildlife. As well as sea birds and ducks, this is an excellent place to look for orchids, as well as moths and butterflies on a sunny day. Back on the mainland, there are plenty of further photographic opportunities as we continue our explorations of this scenic coastline, and we will head out again each day after an early dinner, making full use of the longer summer evenings. Finally, we end our tour back in Newcastle, where we will photograph the UK's most inland Kittiwake colony against a background of twinkling city lights.

Oliver Smart – Wildlife Photographer and Tour Leader

Following a childhood fascination with the natural world, Oliver went on to study ornithology at the University of Birmingham during his mid-twenties. Alongside an emerging interest in photography, learning the art of bird ringing and volunteering for the Avon Wildlife Trust, BTO and RSPB, Oliver has put time to good use. His main passion is birds and through photography he has built a diverse collection of imagery, which is represented by Alamy. Combined with a desire to travel, Oliver has explored many parts of the world; his favourite destinations usually including a seabird colony or two, where the sight, sound, smell and opportunities for a photographer are second to none. He lives in the quiet Blackdown Hills in west Somerset and enjoys the incredible diversity of wildlife visiting his garden. His claim to fame to date though is an image he took in the Seychelles which has been used on a bank note!

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. In particular, boat trips to the Farne Islands cannot operate if the weather and sea

conditions are deemed unsuitable for sailing. If the forecast suggests that this may be the case, we will re-order the itinerary to maximise our chances of visiting Inner Farne and Staple Island, and landing on both islands.

Day 1

Meet Newcastle

We meet in Newcastle in the early afternoon before transferring to our hotel for the holiday. Our expert photographer-leader will outline the plan for the coming days and offer advice on techniques for seabird photography that are sure to come in handy out on the Farne Islands. Then, after an early dinner, we will spend the evening on the coast around Bamburgh enjoying some coastal landscape photography. The evenings are long at this time of year in Northumberland, and we plan to use them to the full over the next three days.

Please note that we will keep the next three days of activities flexible, ensuring that we take our boat trips to the Farne Islands when the weather is at its best, as well as choosing the day with the most favourable tide times for our trip to Lindisfarne.

Days 2 – 4

Farne Islands & Lindisfarne



During two of the next three days we will enjoy four boat trips visiting Farne Islands, allowing us close views of the spectacular seabird cliffs from the sea, along with basking Grey Seals. Our embarkation point for the islands will be Seahouses and while we wait to board the boat, and on our return, we are likely to be entertained by the antics of Eiders in the harbour. Many of the seaducks here can be very confiding and it will be worth spending a bit of time in Seahouses itself to make the most of the photographic opportunities on offer.

On both days we will spend time landing on Inner Farne, where we will enjoy excellent views and outstanding photographic opportunities of the many thousands of Puffins, Guillemots, Shags, Kittiwakes and Arctic Terns that breed here during the spring and early summer months. The combination of colours, odours and noises is an amazing sensory experience, and a truly astonishing natural history



phenomenon! We can expect some close encounters, and plenty of opportunity to practice photographing birds in flight! The other two boat trips will give us morning excursions sailing around the 28 islands making up the archipelago. Here we will have time and great opportunities to photograph seabirds in flight, resting on the water and nesting on the superb cliffs.

On the other day, we will enjoy a visit to Lindisfarne (Holy Island). The island is only accessible at low tide, and so tide timings will dictate when we must arrive and depart. We will maximize our time on the island during low tide, exploring the castle, ruined abbey and harbour.

Lindisfarne is also an excellent place to look for orchids, with a number of those growing here having a very restricted range. During the early summer some areas of the island have a multi-hued carpet of flowers, creating a beautiful vista and making it a lovely place to spend some time on a sunny day. These attract in insects such as moths and butterflies and we may find Six-spot Burnet Moths, Dark Green Fritillary or Small Heath Butterflies.

6 Spot Burnet Moths on Orchid, Lindisfarne



During the evenings we will generally plan to eat early and then head out again after dinner in order to make the most of the long, light evenings at this time of year. We will spend time practicing our coastal landscape photography, with nearby Bamburgh Castle, and Dunstanburgh Castle to the south, both options that provide iconic focal points for our evening sessions.

On one evening, if time allows (and certainly in the event of poor weather), we can take time to review our photos together back at the hotel and discuss our techniques, enabling us to build the following day on what we have learnt so far.

Day 5 Northumberland Coast; evening photography in Newcastle

After breakfast this morning we will begin our return journey towards Newcastle, keeping our plans for the morning very flexible as we go. There are numerous options en route, including stretches of dunes and coastlines where we can look for more plunging Sandwich Terns and Gannets, Druridge Pools where we may find breeding waders including Black-tailed Godwit, and even ample opportunity for wildflower photography in amongst the dunes and marshes.

Another option, if the weather is looking kind, is to join a morning sailing around Coquet Island from Amble. Although it is not possible to land only the island itself, the hour-long boat trip can provide wonderful views of the large colonies of Puffins and Sandwich, Arctic and Common Terns, as well as the



Atlantic Puffin (Oliver Smart)

very rare Roseate Tern. Please note, however, that timings to Coquet Island vary depending on weather and tide times, and so this won't always be possible.



We will arrive back into Newcastle this afternoon, and will spend our final evening in the city on the banks of the River Tyne, allowing us time to explore the city's wildlife at night. The local buildings and bridges are home to hundreds of breeding pairs of Black-legged Kittiwakes, the most inland colony in the country. As the sun sets, we will experience these beautiful birds after dark and capture them with glimmering night-lights in the background. This will test our photographic skills with lighting and

composition and a great opportunity to see these birds in an urban setting.

Day 6

Newcastle; depart

This morning we will return to the Kittiwake colonies, this time photographing them in daylight, giving a wonderful contrast to the shots we took earlier in the week on cliffs and islands. After brunch we will checkout of our hotel before midday and return to the railway station for our respective homeward journeys.

Tour grading

Grade A/B – Easy to moderate day walks plus full day boat trips with landings on Inner Farne and Staple Island. We will be walking up to 5 km on Lindisfarne, though only minor elevation changes are involved. Staple Island is quite rocky and can be slippery when wet. Some of the beaches have loose boulders.

Focus

This is a specialist wildlife photography holiday, aimed at amateur photographers of all abilities, though particular beginners and improvers looking for some advice and guidance as they practice their techniques. We will focus on photographing a wide variety of wildlife, especially seabirds, as well as coastal scenery.

Arrival / departure details

We anticipate that the majority of the group will arrive into Newcastle Central Station and so this will be our first meeting point. We usually meet at 1300 hours at Newcastle Central Station, or if you prefer to make your way directly to the hotel, we expect to arrive there at around 1430 hours. At the end of the tour we expect to return to Newcastle Central Station by 1200 hours, though as we will be based in Newcastle this morning you are welcome to depart at any time. As train timings do vary from year to

year, we would ask you to contact the Naturetrek office before booking travel arrangements that are unlikely to fit in with the arrival timings mentioned above.

Food & accommodation included in the price

Breakfasts and dinners are included in the price of the holiday; lunches are not.

Weather

We hope for pleasant sunny days but like the rest of Britain, Northumberland is subject to unpredictable weather! We hope for settled warm conditions with little rain, but if a northerly air stream is established it can be much colder and we would always suggest checking the weather forecasts immediately before the holiday and packing accordingly. Regardless of the prevailing conditions it will feel cooler during the sea trips and warmer clothing will be needed for these. Waterproofs are recommended as rain is always possible, and good, waterproof footwear is also recommended. Equally, during the day the islands we are visiting can get hot in the sunshine, so a hat and sun cream are recommended.



'Is this close enough?' Farne Islands (by Susan Dillon)

Equipment to bring

- Digital single lens reflex, mirrorless or bridge camera
- Telephoto lenses (minimum 300mm focal length; ideally 400mm or 500mm, for seabird photography... however on the Farne Islands any lens will work as the birdlife is very close!)
- Standard and wide angle zoom lenses for coastal landscapes and close ups of the Arctic Terns!
- Macro lens for dune flowers & invertebrates
- Tripod (ideally for landscapes, however not necessary for the Farne Islands trips)
- Monopod (could be useful if handholding is difficult for you)
- Beanbag (useful for low level work)
- Cable or remote release for those long exposures
- Waterproof camera cover/lens – covers
- Skylight, graduated, neutral density and polarising filters – a multi-stop ND filter for landscape
- Enough batteries and memory cards to allow shooting several thousand images in a day.
- Hiking boots, waterproof trousers and a rain jacket
- Hat
- Kneeling pad - useful on the Farne Islands or Lindisfarne

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.

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Bamburgh Castle