

# The Best of North Devon

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

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### Outline itinerary

**Day 1** Meet at Woolacombe Bay Hotel

**Day 2 - 4** Wildlife Excursions

**Day 5** Depart

### Highlights

- Visit the spectacular coastline of North Devon, and enjoy its varied flora & fauna.
- Orchids including Bee Orchid, Early Marsh Orchid & Marsh Helleborine.
- High Brown Fritillary, Pied Flycatcher & Redstart in Exmoor's wooded valleys.
- Breeding seabirds on Lundy, including Puffin, Guillemot & Manx Shearwater.
- Marine mammals such as Common Dolphins, Harbour Porpoise & Grey Seal.
- Led by local naturalist Martin Batt, & guided by a variety of top North Devon wildlife experts.

### Departs

June.

### Dates and prices

Visit [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk) (tour code GBR70).

### Focus

The flora, fauna & beautiful coastal landscapes of North Devon.

### Grading

Grade A. Mostly easy walking on well-maintained paths.



*From top: Lundy Island, Dark Green Fritillary & Bee Orchid.  
Images courtesy of Shutterstock Images and Martin Batt.*



Naturetrek    Mingledown 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

North Devon combines stunning coastal scenery with some of the UK's most varied and fascinating wildlife. On this new and exciting tour, we'll explore the region's nature reserves and wild landscapes in search of their diverse flora and fauna, from abundant summer orchids and rare butterflies to marine mammals and spectacular seabird colonies. Our experience in North Devon will be enhanced by the support of a wide variety of renowned local wildlife specialists, as well as the unmatched expertise of Martin Batt, our tour leader, who knows this area intimately. All of this will be coupled with the superb hospitality of our delightful seaside hotel.

We will be based for four nights at the wonderful Woolacombe Bay Hotel, a 4-star hotel with a swimming pool and spa, overlooking the beach and adjacent to the remarkable Woolacombe Warren dune system. We'll meet here, or at the nearest train station, in the afternoon, and after an early dinner we'll enjoy our first excursion out into the dunes, looking out for Pyramidal & Bee Orchids and Wild Strawberry, Common Blue butterfly and Bloody-nosed Beetle, common coastal birds and a variety of other wildlife.

During our stay at the hotel, we will ensure that there is ample time to enjoy the excellent facilities.

Over the next three full days we'll explore the surrounding coast and inland areas in depth. The dunes and marshes at Braunton Burrows could produce up to seven species of orchid, including Bee Orchid, Early Marsh Orchid and the gorgeous Marsh Helleborine, as well as butterflies such as Marbled White and Dark Green Fritillary, and reptiles like Adder or even the rare Sand Lizard. Coastal birds could include Shelduck, Little Egret and Peregrine, while at dusk we'll hope for Barn Owls, Common and Soprano Pipistrelles and Greater Horseshoe Bat. Rich with Sessile Oak and Whitebeam, the nearby wooded valleys of Exmoor are the haunt of the threatened High Brown Fritillary, alongside typical birds such as Redstart, Pied Flycatcher, Wood Warbler and Dipper.

A day trip to the famous isle of Lundy will take us to the seabirds such as Puffin, Guillemot, Razorbill and Manx Shearwaters, as well as other breeding species like Wheatear, Rock Pipit and Peregrine. Soay Sheep, Sea Campion and the endemic Lundy Cabbage thrive amidst the rocky cliffs and grasslands, while the crossing itself could produce sightings of Common & Bottlenose Dolphins, Harbour Porpoise, Grey Seal or even Minke Whale and Basking Shark. No aspect of natural history will be neglected on this fantastically varied tour!



## 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

### Meet at Woolacombe Bay Hotel

We will meet in the afternoon at the delightful Woolacombe Bay Hotel, a four star hotel with a pool and spa, overlooking the beach and adjacent to the Woolacombe Warren dune system. During our 4-night stay here, we will ensure there is plenty of time to make the most of the excellent facilities. For those travelling to North Devon by rail, we would recommend alighting at Barnstaple, which is on the delightfully scenic branch line that links up to the Paddington-Exeter main line. Your tour leaders will be happy to pick you up from Barnstaple station and transport you to the hotel and the meeting time for this service is 1630hrs.

After an early dinner, we'll enjoy an introductory evening walk in the Woolacombe Warren and on to the nearby downs. The well-maintained coast path leads directly from the hotel, and takes us straight into superb wildlife habitat. Some of the plants we'll hope to find on this first excursion include Pyramidal & Bee Orchids, Wild Strawberry, Burnet Rose and Broomrape, alongside insects such as Common Blue butterfly, Six-spot Burnet moth and Bloody-nosed Beetle. We'll also be on the lookout for birds, with Stonechat, Peregrine Falcon, Kestrel and Skylark all likely, while with luck we may encounter an Adder or Slow-worm.



Common Blue

### Day 2

### Braunton Marshes & Lee Bay

After breakfast and (weather permitting) we'll visit the Braunton Countryside Centre to take in its informative displays on the stunning dunes and marshes nearby. We'll be joined by local experts for a morning walk around Braunton Burrows, a remarkable natural sand dune system that supports a large number of rare and unusual plants and animals. Amongst these, we'll be looking for Water Germander, Bee Orchid, Marsh Helleborine, Early Marsh Orchid, Sea Stock, Round-headed Club Rush, Sea Rocket, Sand Pansy, Viper's Bugloss, Sand Toadflax, White Horehound and Sea Holly. Butterflies including Dark Green Fritillary, Common Blue, Brown Argus and Marbled White are possible, as are birds such as Oystercatcher, Shelduck, and Barn Owl. Braunton Burrows is an excellent site for reptiles, and supports populations of Adder, Grass Snake, and both Common and rare Sand Lizards. Nearly every pond contains numbers of Great Crested Newts.



Southern Marsh Orchid

We'll head for The Quay Cafe at Velator, the former harbour area of Braunton, for a light lunch, and then head off to the southern area of Braunton Burrows. Here we'll see the results of a great deal of work being done by the Dynamic Dunescapes project to restore areas of mobile sand dunes and reveal historic seed banks.

After a fascinating day seeking out some of the 600 species of flowering plant on this nationally important site, we'll head back to Woolacombe for an excellent dinner at the hotel.

## Day 3

## Exmoor Valleys

Today, we will venture into the ancient wooded valleys of Exmoor. After breakfast, we'll make the three-quarters-of-an-hour journey to the Heddon Valley, where our primary target will be the rare High Brown Fritillary butterfly. We'll follow a path that runs through the valley down towards the sea, and then along the clifftop towards Woody Bay. The first section through the woodland will give us a chance of Redstart, Stonechat, Kingfisher, Dipper, Grey Wagtail, Pied Flycatcher, Wood Warbler and Whitethroat, while the cliffs host breeding Peregrine, Raven, and many seabirds including Fulmar, Kittiwake, Shag and Guillemot. Gannets may occasionally be seen offshore.

We'll have a light lunch at the National Trust Hunter's Inn, before a gentle walk up the western side of the valley towards the tiny church at Trentishoe, which holds a maternal roost of Lesser Horseshoe Bats.. On the way, we'll check the steep southern side of the valley for that elusive butterfly, the High Brown Fritillary. We'll return to the hotel for dinner and the rest of the evening will be at leisure.



## Day 4

## Island of Lundy

Weather permitting, we will make a full day visit to the famous island of Lundy. The boat departs at 0900, and the crossing will take approximately two hours. The area around Lundy was the UK's first Marine Conservation Zone, and from the boat we will be keeping an eye out for a variety of marine species, including Common and Bottlenose Dolphin, Harbour Porpoise, Grey Seal and even Basking Shark.

Lundy itself supports significant and growing seabird colonies. In 2004, a successful drive to eradicate invasive rats was completed and since then the island's seabirds have rebounded spectacularly. Guillemot, Razorbill, Puffin, Shag, Fulmar and particularly Manx Shearwater now breed in impressive numbers once again and other birds include Peregrine, Linnet, Rock Pipit and Wheatear. Soay Sheep and Sika Deer graze the clifftop pastures, while the plant life features Thrift, Sea Campion and the endemic Lundy Cabbage, which is found nowhere else on Earth.

Our arrival back on the mainland probably will be around 1830, after which we'll journey back to the hotel for a dinner and relaxation.

## Day 5

## Morte Point & Departure

We'll enjoy a more relaxed start on our final morning. After a leisurely breakfast, we'll travel a short distance northwards to Morte Point, overlooking both Lundy and the Bristol Channel, where we'll be met by a local seal and cetacean expert. He will help us look out for Grey Seals and Harbour Porpoises in the water below, while sharing his superb knowledge of these marine mammals, and the fascination history and geology of this spectacular headland. Other birds here could include Stonechat, Pied Wagtail, Whitethroat, Linnet, Dartford and Grasshopper Warblers. After a pub lunch at The Ship Aground in Morteheo, we'll return to the hotel and the tour will sadly come to an end. Martin Batt, the tour leader, will take anyone travelling home by train to Barnstaple Parkway and the drop off time at the station will be 1500hrs.

If anyone wishes to enjoy an extended stay at the Woolacombe Bay Hotel, either before or after the main tour, we would be delighted to arrange this.



## Tour grading



Grade A/B. Although we will be doing plenty of walking, this will mainly be on well-maintained and generally flat paths. There will be some steeper climbs in Heddon Valley, and up the road from the quay to the plateau of Lundy. There is some uneven sand in Braunton Burrows.

## Weather

North Devon in June can be very pleasant, but equally there will be a chance of some windier and wetter weather. Come prepared for the British summer!

## Food & accommodation

Breakfasts and dinners are included in the cost of the holiday. We will be staying at the 4-star Woolacombe Bay Hotel, a beautifully situated hotel with excellent facilities, including a pool and spa.

## Extra expenses

Please note that we do not include the following in the cost of your holiday: lunches (which will be taken in a variety of local pubs, cafes and tea rooms), alcoholic drinks, tips to local guides, and all items of a personal nature such as souvenirs, telephone calls etc.

## How to book your place

In order to book a place on this holiday, you will need to read the Naturetrek terms and conditions in the back of our brochure or on our website, and then book either online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), by calling us on 01962 733051, or by completing and returning the booking form in the brochure together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost. If you do not have a copy of this brochure, please call us on 01962 733051.