

# Whales & Seabirds of Norway's Lofoten Islands

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

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### Outline itinerary

<b>Day 1</b>	Fly Bodø; ferry to Moskenes
<b>Day 2/3</b>	Wildlife exploration from Moskenes
<b>Day 4/5</b>	Wildlife exploration from Andøya
<b>Day 6</b>	Fly London

### Departs

June

### Focus

Whales, birds, mountain scenery and other natural history

### Grading

A. Easy to moderate day walks.

### Dates and Prices

See current brochure or visit [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)  
(tour code NOR07)

### Highlights

- Sperm, Minke, Orca & pilot whales possible, plus White-beaked Dolphin
- White-tailed Eagle, Merlin & Rough-legged Buzzard
- Willow Ptarmigan, Snow Bunting, Ruff & Red-necked Phalarope
- Visit seal & seabird colonies
- Fresh Arctic air, midnight sun & breathtaking scenery
- Picturesque fishing villages, beautiful fjords & quiet roads



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## Introduction

Norway is a country of many spectacular landscapes. From the gentle rolling green hills surrounding Oslo to the towering mountains and deep fjords of the west coast, it is a land of breathtaking contrasts and beauty. Even amongst such natural splendour, however, one region stands out. The Lofoten and Vesterålen Islands lie deep within the Arctic Circle and offer a wild beauty that can best be described as humbling; their majestic mountains rising vertically out of an inky blue sea, leaving room for only a thread-like shore. This is the 'land of the midnight sun' a place of dramatic landscapes; idyllic summers and abundant wildlife; a source of inspiration for many and the soul of northern Norway.

Reaching out from the mainland, the Lofoten and Vesterålen Islands extend westwards far out into the Atlantic Ocean and it is this unique location that attracts such a wealth of wildlife. The open sea, the influence of the Gulf Stream and the proximity of the continental shelf offer a rare opportunity to experience the atmosphere, and the excitement, of an Arctic whale-watching



Lofotens scenery (Alison Douglas)

adventure with a difference. On this exciting tour we will witness the natural phenomenon of Sperm Whales gathering on the edge on the continental shelf, where the warmer Atlantic currents and cold Arctic waters merge to create rich feeding grounds for some of the largest creatures on the planet. On land we will explore the spectacular birdlife in one of the world's most beautiful and pristine archipelagos. We will be travelling on quiet roads that snake across beautiful fjords and through some dramatic countryside with breathtaking views around every corner.

## 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

### Fly Bodø, ferry to Moskenes

We depart from London early in the morning on an SAS Scandinavian Airlines flight to Oslo, the capital of Norway, where we transfer for the one hour flight to Bodø, a small town beyond the Arctic Circle. On arrival we will collect our minibus ahead of boarding the ferry for 3 hour crossing to Moskenes, and our accommodation on the southern-most island of Moskenesøya. We will be based in the small remote town of Reine, the administrative capital of the Lofoten Islands but with a tiny resident population of only 345 people. The scenery here is truly awe-inspiring! Here the roads

snake around beautiful fjords and through some dramatic countryside, breath-taking views presenting themselves at every corner. Accommodation for first two nights is at 'Reine Rorbuer', a collection of comfortable cabins wonderfully positioned near the edge of the harbour with spectacular views over the surrounding mountains. This area is quite breath-taking, a landscape sculpted over the millennia by giant glaciers and other elemental forces to create one of the wildest and most fascinating places in all of Norway.

## Day 2

## Reine, Lofoten Islands

After yesterday's long journey, today will be a leisurely affair. We will fill the day drinking in the stunning scenery, enjoying the birdlife and taking in the ambience of this uniquely beautiful area. There will also be time to embrace the rich cultural heritage of the region before we return to Reine Rorbuer for a second night.

## Day 3

## Reine - Andøya

Today we have a long 5 - 6 hour drive to our next base on the island of Andøya. It will take most of the day to weave our way up the Lofoten Archipelago, but we will stop to admire the stunning landscape and enjoy any birds and other wildlife we see along the way. The main highway weaves a scenic route as it hops from island to island via sweeping bridges. One of the most spectacular of these bridges is the 'Tjelsundbrua' which is 1,001 metres long and towers 76 metres above the waterline, connecting the mainland with the most populated island of Hinnøya. On the island of Andøya (Øya is Norwegian for island) we leave the main road and head north to the small guesthouse of Marmelkroken, our base for the next 3 nights. With long hours of daylight to enjoy at this time of the year you may like to take an evening stroll from the hotel, which overlooks a small wetland and wooded valley, to look for a few local birds or merely enjoy the wonderful scenery and Vesterålen charm.

## Day 4

## Andøya, Vesterålen Islands

This morning we will drive from our accommodation to Andenes on the northern tip of Andøya. Here we join a comfortable whale watching vessel for a morning (3-5 hours) out at sea. On route to the deepwater canyons along the shelf edge, the whales favoured feeding ground, we will be looking out for a variety of pelagic birdlife including Fulmars, Kittiwakes, Common and Black Guillemots, Arctic Skua and lots of comical Puffins. We must also keep a sharp eye open for the majestic White-tailed Eagle which are frequently seen soaring around this dramatic coastline.



Sperm Whale (Marten Brill)

The Sperm Whale is the most frequently observed species of large whale seen in these waters and the largest of all the toothed whales. Interestingly, the whales that spend the summer off the Vesterålen Islands are all males and measure between 14 to 16 metres in length; the females and calves remain in more temperate Atlantic waters far to the south. These spectacular cetaceans feed on squids and deep-sea fish and it has been estimated that an adult can eat one ton of food per day. They typically dive between 500-700 metres, although dives deeper than 3,000 metres have been recorded! The Sperm Whale is very easy to distinguish at sea as - unlike all other great whales - its blow is inclined 45° forward and to the left, due to the front left position of the blowhole.

In addition to the Sperm Whales, we should also look out for Minke, Humpback and Long-finned Pilot Whales, White-beaked Dolphins, and perhaps the distinctive tall dorsal fins of a patrolling pod of Orcas (Killer Whales). Whatever we see, however, the opportunity of spending the morning out at sea in search of cetaceans and seabirds and backed by the dramatic rugged coastline of the Vesterålen Islands is sure to be an undoubted highlight of the tour.



Whale watching from Andenes (Malcolm Stott)

Following our time out on the sea we will spend the remainder of the day enjoying the birdlife and scenery of Andøya before returning to Marmelkroken for a second night.

## Day 5

## Andøya, Vesterålen Islands

We have a full day today to further explore the island of Andøya and enjoy its abundant birdlife and interesting flora. Eider, White-tailed Eagle and Willow Grouse are resident, while Slavonian Grebe, Rough-legged Buzzard, Whimbrel, Ruff, Red-necked Phalarope and Redpoll, Brambling and Snow Bunting enjoy the long days and abundant food of the brief Arctic summer months. We will



Puffin (Marten Brill)

also take a second - 90 minute - boat trip, this time to visit a seabird colony on the nearby island of Bleikøya. This small island is home to thousands of nesting seabirds including 6,000 pairs of Kittiwakes and an amazing 60,000 pairs of Puffins. Common Guillemots, Razorbills and Fulmars also crowd Bleikøya, whilst overhead fly White-tailed Eagles and in the surrounding waters we can look for Grey and Common Seals and perhaps Harbour Porpoise or even Orca for the fortunate few.

After spending a full day enjoying this unique area we will return to our accommodation at Marmelkroken for our final night on the Vesterålen Islands.

## Day 6

## Fly London

This morning we drive to the small town of Evenes, a scenic journey of around 3 hours, in time to catch our afternoon flight back to London (usually via either Oslo or Stavanger). Depending on the departure time, we should have time for a few stops to stretch our legs and soak up the scenery for a final time along the way.

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## Tour grading

Grade A - This is an easy tour with gentle short walks and sightseeing by minibus. Some of the walks will cover hilly terrain, however, so an average level of fitness is required to get the most out of this tour.

## Weather

Although the Lofoten and Vesterålen Islands are known more for their spectacular scenery than stable weather, the summer months of late June through August are the best times to visit and generally enjoy the sunniest and warmest conditions. Daytime temperatures are typically in the mid to upper teens degrees C, but can get into the 20s on occasion. Nights are cool. It can be windy at times and the occasional wet day is not unusual. Please note that all whale watching excursion are subject to the weather conditions and can be cancelled without notice if conditions are rough.

## Food & accommodation included in the price

All accommodation and meals are included throughout the tour. For the first 2 nights of the tour we will be based at *Reine Rorbuer*, a collection of comfortable cabins wonderfully positioned near the edge of the harbour at Reine with spectacular views over the surrounding mountains. Cabins have two twin/double bedrooms sharing one bathroom. They also have a lounge and small kitchenette. For the latter 3 nights of the holiday we will be based at the delightful Marmelkroken Guesthouse on the island of Andøya. Accommodation here is in comfortable, en-suite, apartments which overlook a small marshland. A limited number of single rooms are also available throughout at the supplement price outlined on the front of this itinerary.

## 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](http://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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