

WINTER IN NORTHUMBERLAND



"I love Northumberland in all seasons, but winter is special, as it makes those rugged North Sea coastlines, historic castles and landmarks, rolling hills and extensive forests even more dramatic, under the steely grey skies and imposing clouds - straight out of Vera!"
Darren Rees

Dates Sat 9 - Fri 15 Nov 2024
Price £2,095
Deposit £350 Single Supp £300

Leaders Darren Rees and Ailie Brown

Weather Hard to predict and likely to be variable with chance of some sunshine, but may also be cold and wet (8°-15°C) bring waterproofs and good boots.

Walking Walks of up to two miles on mainly level tracks, though perhaps a little more strenuous on the moorland day

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 7

Insects Unlikely to be a problem at this time of year

Accom Double, twin and single ensuite rooms

Group 10

Just some of what we hope to see:

Red-throated Diver	Bar-tailed Godwit
Slavonian Grebe	Black-tailed Godwit
Whooper Swan	Dunlin
Pale-bellied Brent Goose	Common Redshank
Pink-footed Goose	Ringed Plover
Barnacle Goose	Golden Plover
Pintail	Short-eared Owl
Eider	Dipper
Long-tailed Duck	Grey Wagtail
Velvet Scoter	Rock Pipit
Common Scoter	Siberian Chiffchaff
Goosander	Willow Tit
Little Egret	Common Crossbill
Hen Harrier	Siskin
Red Kite	Lesser Redpoll
Merlin	Snow Bunting
Peregrine	Lapland Bunting
Water Rail	Red Squirrel
Purple Sandpiper	Grey Seal
Turnstone	

Fabulous birdwatching and stunning scenery as we explore the coastlines, forests and moorlands of this corner of historic north-east England, including Lindisfarne and Kielder Forest.

- Flocks of winter thrushes arriving from Scandinavia
- Kielder Forest for Red Squirrel, Dipper, Common Crossbill
- Beautiful coastline with long sandy beaches and rocky headlands
- Full day on Holy Island with chance of scarce migrants
- Impressive numbers of ducks, geese and waders on estuaries
- Visit Redesdale to hang out at Winter's Gibbet
- Largest Pale-bellied Brent Goose flock in the UK

Meeting up at our lovely hotel in Bamburgh, we shall hopefully have time to take a short drive along the coast, where we can kick start our holiday with a variety of gulls loafing on the beach, with Eider and possibly some waders, such as Purple Sandpiper, Turnstone and Oystercatcher around the rocks. We shall return to the hotel in good time to freshen up ahead of our first evening meal together.

2-6 With long sandy beaches, rocky headlands and historic sites such as Lindisfarne Priory, Dunstanburgh and Bamburgh Castles, the Northumberland coastline is a wonderful area to explore - but for the birdwatcher it is even more so! From key locations we shall scan the sea for Red-throated Divers, Slavonian and Red-necked Grebes, Long-tailed Ducks and hope for a few Velvet Scoter amongst the large

flocks of Common Scoter that annually winter here. As we walk the white, windswept beaches and saltmarsh, we shall look for Snow Buntings or something scarcer such as Lapland Bunting or Shorelark.

Druridge Bay is famous for a network of wetland Reserves, with hides overlooking freshwater pools along this long stretch of coastline - all home to flocks of Wigeon, Teal, Pintail and Shoveler, along with other wildfowl. In the shallow pools, waders roost at high tide such as Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwits, Knot, Dunlin, Common Redshank and Grey and Ringed Plovers. Flocks of Golden Plover and Curlew are usually found in nearby fields, along with Greylag Geese plus Pink-footed and Whooper Swans. All the time we shall be on the lookout for a Greenland White-fronted or Barnacle Goose in amongst them, arriving from the north.





"Lindisfarne Priory, Bamburgh, Dunstanburgh and Warkworth Castles, just some of the wonderful historic buildings and landmarks found along this incredible stretch of Northumberland coastline. Inland there is Winter's Gibbet, Kielder Water and the gorgeous Cheviot Hills. With all these wonderful locations to absorb, how on earth do we manage to find so much wonderful and varied wildlife?" Darren Rees

We spend a day heading inland where, with luck, we might chance upon a Merlin speeding past, or a Hen Harrier quartering the extensive Cheviot moorland or, with luck, a Short-eared Owl hunting for voles.

We shall make a short detour to the edge of Redesdale to look at the imposing Winter's Gibbet, keeping an eye out for Goshawk that breed in these extensive forests. We shall also check the fast-flowing rivers and streams for Dipper, Grey Wagtail and Goosander, which reside here all year round.

Around Kielder Water the vast coniferous forest is home to Common Crossbill, Siskin, Lesser Redpoll and many more species, along with a special mammal – Red Squirrel. Feeding stations have been created to attract these very beautiful animals and we hope for good views of these normally shy creatures.

One full day will be spent on Holy Island in the shadow of the wonderful and iconic Lindisfarne Priory, which is worth the visit alone. Here, huge flocks of waders follow the rising and retreating tide, with plovers, godwits, Redshank and Curlew probing the newly exposed mud. Gorgeous and diminutive Pale-bellied Brent Geese spend their winter here, in one of the largest wintering flocks in the UK, so finding some shouldn't be a struggle. Purple Sandpiper and Rock Pipits feed actively on the seaweed strewn, rocky shore at high tide, but it's the chance of something unusual which is the attraction.



In recent years, rarities such as Red-flanked Bluetail, Brown Shrike and Pallas's and Dusky Warblers have been found, along with Siberian and Yellow-browed Warblers. If conditions are favourable we could experience large numbers of winter thrushes passing overhead and a sea-watch may produce a passing skua or scarce diver.

The holy relics of St Cuthbert were buried in the Priory and pilgrims still come to pay homage to his memory. It is because of him that laws protect the local Eiders for their down, resulting in the name St Cuthbert's Ducks or Cuddy Ducks, as many Northumbrians still know them today. We shall find a few offshore, plus Long-tailed Ducks and Common Scoter.

Depending on what is around, we may venture south back to Newcastle, where we shall visit the resident Red Kites at Rowlands Gill and then a couple of wetland sites near the airport for primarily Willow Tit, along with the commoner wildfowl and waterbirds.

7 Our final morning will be relaxed and after our final hearty breakfast we say our fond farewells to this beautiful corner of Northumberland.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** We meet in Bamburgh or Newcastle station. 6 nights at The Victoria Hotel, Bamburgh
- Days 2-6** Exploration of the coast north and south of Bamburgh, the forest and moorland of Redesdale, including time around Kielder Water. Full day on Holy Island and possibly south to Newcastle
- Day 7** We depart after breakfast

- Simon Eaves:** Eiders
- Julian Sykes:** Bamburgh Castle
- Mike Shaw:** Golden Plover and other waders
- Roy Atkins:** Pink-footed Geese
- Morag Rea:** Lindisfarne Castle
- James Stevens:** Shorlark
- Mark Denman:** Whooper Swans

