



Shetland Otters

Photographic tour with tour leader Mark Sisson

31st October - 6th November 2026

Trip Overview

Group size:

The trip accommodates a maximum of 5 guests.

Cost: £2,495. Deposit: £375

Cost includes:

Transportation on Shetlands, accommodation, meals, and internal island ferries.

Cost excludes:

Travel to Shetlands, sundry items and alcohol.

Accommodation:

We have comfortable hotel accommodation. Accommodation is based on single rooms (twin/double for couples).

Level of fitness:

Given the subject and location, all of the photography will by necessity be over uneven rocks along the shore and stalking otters will require some agility and the need to move quickly at times too. Although the days are at their shortest at this time of year here, we have timed the trip to optimise the necessary low tides and so will be out for the entire duration of the day with a good amount of walking involved so, you need to be of a reasonable level of fitness.

LEVEL 4



Trip Overview

A European Otter is the central focus of the image, sitting amidst a dense bed of seaweed. The otter has a thick, greyish-brown coat with lighter underparts and is looking towards the right. The background is a soft-focus view of a rocky coastline with more seaweed in the foreground.

We have been running trips to the Shetland Isles in both the summer and winter months for the past decade and this beautiful island archipelago is one of the most dramatic and inspiring locations in the British Isles and a great place for wildlife photography. The whole feel of the Shetlands during the winter months is very different to that most visitors experience, and it's potentially very special with our main target for this seasonal visit being the iconic European Otter. These islands support a large population and one of the best times to see them is at this time of year as families will still be together and cubs at their most playful with each other as independence looms when Spring comes. At the start of winter the cubs will only be a few months old and at their most playful too so this can be a wonderful time to watch and photograph them in locations we consider to be the best in the country too.

We will once again be working with Shetlands based otter experts Richard Shuck-smith and Brydon Thomason in between their regular film project assistance work and these guys know the local otter population better than anyone, hence being so much in demand. With good fieldcraft probably more critical with otters than any other mammal in the UK, having this local expertise dramatically increases our opportunities.

It will be a jam-packed week looking to take full advantage of the settings, subjects and potentially stunning winter light that can be found here at this time of year, have specifically scheduled the trip to optimise the tides to our advantage and a time of year when family groups are at their most active and potentially approachable too you should achieve both some great images but also experiences with these fantastic mammals too.

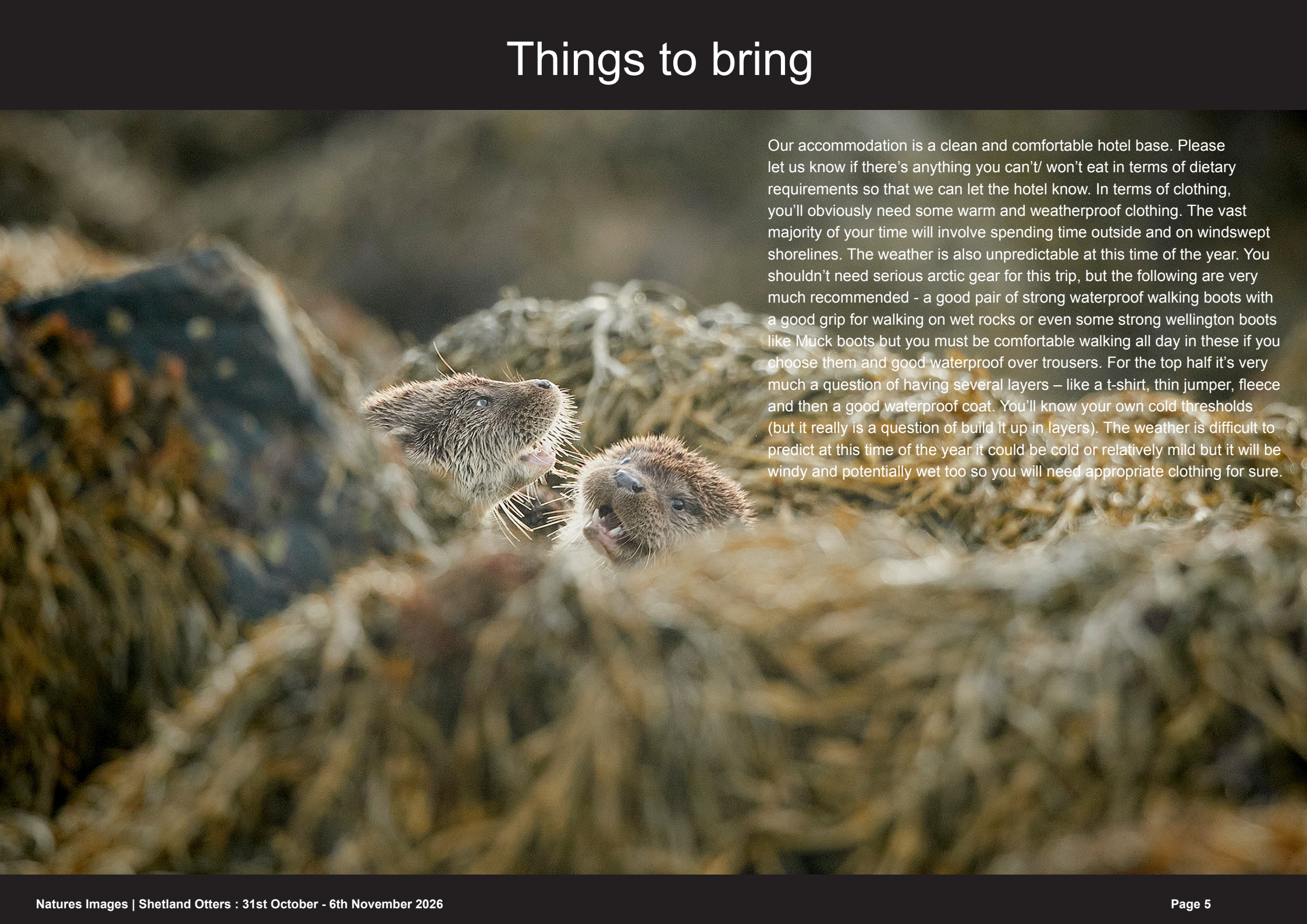
Itinerary

Day 1: We have a day of travelling to Sumburgh Airport on Mainland or Lerwick if you have chosen to take the overnight ferry from Aberdeen the previous day. We will then head to our hotel base towards the north of Mainland where we will be based for the next 5 nights. It is important you let us know what option you will be taking to get to Shetland so that we can organise local transport arrangements accordingly: if you come by ferry with your own car, you will of course be able to use it should you prefer too.

Days 2 – 6: Over each of these and the next day we will be splitting into 2 small groups of photographers, necessary for stalking otters. Each day we will be heading out with local wildlife photographers and absolute otter experts (as their book on the species, all photographed locally, will testify) Richard Shucksmith and Brydon Thomason for an exclusive day photographing Otters. It is only possible to do this in very small group sizes, so we have asked them to add their expertise in terms of local families and additional guiding resources to allow us to do this.

Day 7: We'll catch our return flights (or ferry) away from Shetlands accordingly. Please note the ferry is an overnight service and so will arrive in Aberdeen again the following day.

Things to bring

A close-up photograph of two otters in a nest made of dry grass and twigs. The otter on the left is looking up and to the right with its mouth slightly open. The otter on the right is looking down and to the left with its mouth open, showing its teeth. The background is blurred, showing more of the nest and some dark rocks.

Our accommodation is a clean and comfortable hotel base. Please let us know if there's anything you can't/ won't eat in terms of dietary requirements so that we can let the hotel know. In terms of clothing, you'll obviously need some warm and weatherproof clothing. The vast majority of your time will involve spending time outside and on windswept shorelines. The weather is also unpredictable at this time of the year. You shouldn't need serious arctic gear for this trip, but the following are very much recommended - a good pair of strong waterproof walking boots with a good grip for walking on wet rocks or even some strong wellington boots like Muck boots but you must be comfortable walking all day in these if you choose them and good waterproof over trousers. For the top half it's very much a question of having several layers – like a t-shirt, thin jumper, fleece and then a good waterproof coat. You'll know your own cold thresholds (but it really is a question of build it up in layers). The weather is difficult to predict at this time of the year it could be cold or relatively mild but it will be windy and potentially wet too so you will need appropriate clothing for sure.

Camera equipment

A photograph of two otters in a natural, coastal environment. The otter on the left is sitting upright, facing right, with its mouth open in a playful or communicative gesture. The otter on the right is partially visible, also facing right. They are surrounded by a dense layer of brown and green seaweed or algae. The background is a blurred, rocky shoreline with more vegetation.

In terms of camera kit, you'll need the longest lens you have (300mm with a converter or 500mm would be our recommendation/choice) and then up to two supplementary lenses for other opportunities such as a 24-70mm for wide-angle landscapes and then maybe an intermediate zoom (70-200mm or 100 400mm) so that you don't miss anything in terms of opportunity over the course of the whole trip. You'll get the chance to decide what you want/need for each session (it's likely that you'll just work with the long lens setup for otter stalking), so you won't be burdening yourself with it all of the time either. Tripods or a monopod are recommended for the long lens photography but if you have a more lightweight setup of which there are many these days and are happy hand holding a long lens then this won't be necessary and will make the walking and getting set up quicker and easier. Bring plenty of compact flash cards with you as well because if you get a good day, you will take a lot of images.

In the evenings we will have a chance to critique and look at individuals work if you so wish. Feel free to bring anything you'd like to share on either a laptop or iPad.

Useful Contact Information

My contact number for the build up to and for the duration of the trip is:

Mark: +44 (0) 7905 569685



Please don't hesitate to contact me even if you think it is a minor question, I'm here to help.



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