



Puffin Bonanza

Photographic tour with tour leader Ellie Rothnie

7th - 16th July 2027

Trip Overview

Group size:

The trip accommodates a maximum of 8 guests.

Cost includes:

Airport transfer and all transportation on Shetlands, accommodation, meals, island internal flight.

Cost excludes:

Travel to Shetlands, sundry items, alcohol and personal travel insurance.

Accommodation:

We have comfortable hotel accommodation on Mainland Shetland and on our island base we'll stay in a very comfortable research station. Accommodation is based on twin rooms. Single supplements are available on request.

Level of fitness:

The Puffin colony is only a short walk from our base and is not a difficult walk although it does involve an incline. There is an option to do longer walks to other colonies. Although the weather is inevitably variable here, when good we will be looking to make the most of the best light early and late in the day.

LEVEL 3



Trip Overview

This kind of tour which just concentrates on one species is a specialist trip, but we feel that is the way to work with certain subjects. We have travelled to many Puffin colonies throughout Europe, and we believe Fair Isle represents one of the best for this sort of approach. We will look to be working with these beautiful birds in the best light and certainly the best setting that we could hope for. The Puffin's chicks will have hatched in their underground burrows and so the adults will be carrying beaks full of fish with the added bonus of standing in carpets of pink thrift; it just couldn't get any better. With the main colonies in locations that work with both morning and evening light along with a variety of settings and backgrounds the chance to build a varied portfolio is as good as it can be. These beautiful islands are well known to us with a multitude of visits from our very first year, and this wealth of experience will guarantee that we will go to the best locations, at the best times, in the best light.



Itinerary



Day 1: We plan to arrive at Sumburgh Airport on Mainland Shetland in the afternoon from where it is just a short transfer to our hotel where we will settle in for a good dinner and in anticipation of the photography to come.

Day 2: After breakfast we will set off to the nearby harbour for our ferry to Fair Isle, a journey of approximately 2 hours: there should be a new boat in place for 2027 too. Fair Isle is one of the remotest inhabited islands in the UK with a population of around 60 people. We will be met at the harbour and will then transfer to the bird observatory which will be our base for the week of puffin photography. We will head out to the puffin colony as soon as we have settled and after dinner will look forward to our first full evening of photography.

Day 3: We have designed this trip to really concentrate on photographing puffins: we think this is one of the best colonies in Europe to do so. The colonies on Fair Isle are not huge by comparison to other locations; it is not the remotest colony either. It is though without doubt one of the finest locations in Europe to get images of this beautiful bird. The setting and quality of the light is what sets it apart allowing for morning and evening photography and the chance to experiment with front and back lighting too. We will be mainly working in the very early mornings or late evenings if the weather conditions are in our favour or throughout the day if we have cloudier conditions.

Itinerary

Days 4 – 8: The days will follow the same pattern, and we will be visiting the various colonies that are dotted around the island. The main colonies that we intend to visit are within walking distance of our accommodation, but we will have the option of trying a couple of other locations, which are slightly further afield. Fair Isle is also an excellent place for other subjects like great and arctic skua, wheatears and meadow pipits so if you do need a break from the puffins there are always other subjects to work with.

Day 9: Our last morning on Fair Isle for the puffins and then we must catch the boat back to Mainland Shetland. We then transfer back to Sumburgh Head hotel to settle in for our final night and a chance to reflect on our puffin encounters.

Day 10: We will catch our respective flights out of nearby Sumburgh Airport back to our chosen destinations and will arrange transfers to the nearby airport to meet up with them accordingly.



Things to bring

Our accommodation is clean and comfortable with all bedding provided and for the accommodation on Fair Isle all shampoo, shower gel and hair dryers are provided. If you have any special dietary requirements, please let us know so that we can pre-warn the observatory where we are staying. In terms of clothing, you'll obviously need some warm and weatherproof clothing. Most of your time will involve spending time outside and on windswept cliffs. The weather is also unpredictable at this time of the year. You won't need serious arctic gear for this trip, but the following are very much recommended - a good pair of strong waterproof walking boots, 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 waterproof coat with a spare jumper or two at hand as well, you'll know your own cold thresholds (but it really is a question of build it up in layers). A good hat and some fingerless mittens are recommended. There's a boot room at the accommodation for outdoor footwear, so remember to bring some indoor slippers/shoes if you prefer not to walk around indoors in socks. The weather is difficult to predict at this time of the year it could be cold, or it could be very warm, if the latter then you must look into buying some sun block. Midges and Mosquitos are not usually a problem because of the wind but on still days they can come out in force so it would be worth bringing some protection just in case.



Camera equipment

In terms of camera kit you'll need the longest lens you have (300mm or 500mm would be our recommendation/choice) and then some 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. You'll get the chance to decide what you want/need for each session, so you won't be burdening yourself with it all the time either. Tripods are not really required unless you have a large telephoto lens. Bring plenty of compact flash cards with you as well because if you get a good day, you will take a lot of images.

You need to have plenty of spare batteries as power sources are good throughout the day but in the evenings the power goes off at around 11.00pm so you will need to charge up batteries during the day, so make sure you have spare ones.



Useful Contact Information

My contact number for the duration of the trip is:

Ellie: +44 (0)7879 480143



Please don't hesitate to contact us even if you think it is a minor question, we're here to help.



Address

4 Deer Park Drive, Newport, Shropshire TF10 7HB

Tel: 01952 411436

Email: mark@natures-images.co.uk

Web: www.natures-images.co.uk

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