



Arctic Seabird Special

Photographic tour with tour leader Ellie Rothnie

22nd - 30th March 2027

Trip Overview

Group size:

The trip accommodates a maximum of 6 guests.

Cost includes:

Accommodation, all local transport, local guide, night hide and boat excursion fees, and all meals.

Cost excludes:

International flights, sundry items, alcohol and personal travel insurance.

Accommodation:

Accommodation is on a twin room basis in typically clean and comfortable Scandinavian guest house. Single room supplements may be available on request.

Level of fitness:

The weather can be very cold and with lots of snow around, so suitable clothing/footwear will be necessary. There are no major treks planned on this trip, but you do need to be sure of foot and relatively fit to get on and around the island of Hornøya.

LEVEL 3



Trip Overview

This is a corner of Norway that we visited regularly over a decade ago now and have brought it back into our programme with an even greater focus for this particular trip. Winter inside the arctic circle is a harsh and snowy environment and only the hardiest of wildlife can cope with it. It is also full of surprises in terms of what you can find to work with in these photogenic conditions. On this trip we will be focussed on visiting the truly unique island of Hornøya which is famous for its seabirds that breed along these rugged cliffs. In late March Puffins and Guillemots are back on the island preparing for the breeding season, they arrive early as competition for suitable breeding ledges and burrows is in short supply, hopefully winter has still got a grip, and snow can be found on the cliffs, making striking and unusual images and we will look to spend 6 days photographing on the island with a fully licensed guide. We have also scheduled two evening sessions into a unique and fantastic hide set up for photographing mountain hares and night with special lighting in place that they are accustomed to. It's produced some outstanding images over its short time and is a real secondary highlight of a real winter adventure of a trip.



Itinerary

Day 1: We will be looking to travel to Kirkenes Airport in northern Norway via Oslo. We will then be met by our Norwegian hosts who will transfer us to Vadso in Varanger, a drive of between 2 and 3 hours. After a full day of travel, we will settle in for our first night, a hearty evening meal and an early discussion on the plans for the coming days. (We will send out the flight recommendations nearer the time).

Day 2: After an early breakfast we will then head out to Hornoya, a small arctic island off the coast of Varanger. This island is an important breeding site for many species of seabirds. The seas around Hornoya are a rich hunting ground for the birds and because of the limited space for suitable breeding ledges and burrows, competition is fierce for the birds. So that is why the island is so special in the late winter because the birds begin to arrive in March and snow is still on the ground so giving this special and unique opportunity of capturing images of seabirds in snow. It is a magical place for photography. Weather allowing our plan is to spend several hours on the island, and we are then back to the hotel in Vadso for dinner and a good night's rest.

Day 3: It is an early start again and we will once again be back out on Hornoya to photograph the seabirds. We can look at what we managed to achieve on the first day and so look to maximise our time on this wonderful island. If we are back in time and it is light enough, we good look at photographing the Kittiwakes that nest along the old buildings in the town of Vardo. Again, we'll be back at the hotel in Vadso for dinner and a good night's rest



Itinerary



Days 4 - 8: Again, we will be heading to the island of Hornoya, but we have two evenings scheduled where we will get the chance to visit a special hide which attracts mountain hares under special lights and the source of some fantastic image opportunities. If we can't get on the island because of the weather, we will look to explore some of the surrounding harbours for sea ducks and waders along the shore. We could also explore the town of Vardo too which is excellent for breeding Kittiwakes on the rustic old buildings of the town.

Day 9: After a leisurely breakfast we will start our return journey back to Kirkenes for our flight to Oslo and onto to our final destinations.

Things to bring

Our accommodation is a typical clean and comfortable Norwegian provincial hotel: please be sure to let us know of any special dietary requirements you may have. In terms of clothing, you'll obviously need plenty of warm and weatherproof clothing. Most of your time will involve being outside and the island of Hornoya can be brutally cold at this time of the year so you need to be prepared for this trip. The following are very much recommended - a good pair of strong waterproof walking boots and ideally those offering some thermal lining. Keeping warm feet, hands and head should be your priorities. Good waterproof over trousers (lined ones are best as they'll keep you warmer especially with a normal pair of trousers and some thermal leggings underneath as well) and dependant on how these 2 items fit together some gaiters can be useful as well as the snow can potentially be quite deep on the island. For the top half it's very much a question of having several layers – like a thermal type of vest, t-shirt, thin jumper, fleece and then a waterproof down coat that is built for keeping out the wind chill. You'll know your own cold thresholds, but it really is a question of build it up in layers. A good hat, some fingerless mittens and then some warm waterproof gloves to go over the top (the former so that when you come to photograph your fingers can still work the camera) should round the piece off, hand and foot warmers is a good idea too. The temperatures we could be working in are potentially as low as -20 and it is also a dry cold so sometimes feels colder than those temperatures when we encounter them in the UK, especially on the island of Hornoya because of the wind-chill factor. A thermos flask is recommended and sunglasses and UV protection. You'll also need a head torch for the night in the Mountain Hare hides.



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 landscapes and Northern Lights 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 essential for capturing the northern lights and you never know if the opportunity for this will arise so it's best to be prepared. Bring plenty of compact flash cards with you as well because if you get a good day, you will take a lot of images.



Useful Contact Information



My contact number for the duration of the trip is:

Ellie: +44 (0)7879 480143



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



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