Wildlife of the Scottish Highlands & Outer Hebrides

Start: Inverness 10 Aug 2026
Ends: Inverness 22 Aug 2026

Small Group Tour: Max 8 Passengers
Duration: 13-Day

An exciting itinerary to see the birds and mammals of Highland Scotland and the Outer Hebrides in late summer. We cover the mountain, moorland, forest and coastal habitats which make these areas so special, as well as visiting some key cultural and historical sites… and having a tour of a malt whisky distillery too, of course!

Highland scene (Credit- Heatherlea birding & wildlife)

Itinerary Outline

Day 1	Arrive Inverness Airport
Day 2	North of Inverness
Day 3	Loch Ness, Culloden Battlefield
Day 4	Rural Perthshire
Day 5	Angus Coast
Day 6	Nethy Bridge
Day 7	Strathspey
Day 8	Outer Hebrides
Day 9	The Uists
Day 10	Nethy Bridge
Day 11	Strathspey
Day 12	Moray Coast
Day 13	Tour ends at Inverness Airport

Tour Highlights

- Explore Inverness, Loch Ness, Culloden Battlefield & Clava Cairns
- Birdwatch in Scotland's best habitats: coast, moorland, lochs & forests
- Target species include Golden Eagle, White-tailed Eagle, Osprey, Black Grouse, Crested Tit & Corncrake
- Ferry journeys with chances of Puffin, Skua, Manx Shearwater, dolphins & whales
- Discover the Outer Hebrides, including Benbecula & the Uists
- Evening excursions for Pine Marten, Badger & European Beaver
- Scenic Highland and coastal landscapes, including Isle of Skye and Strathspey
- Ancient forests, Cairngorm Mountains & iconic Scottish wildlife
- End the journey on the Moray Coast with rich estuary birdlife
- Optional visits to historic distilleries and Eilean Donan Castle

Itinerary:

Day 1:Welcome to Inverness!

Arrive in the Highland capital and settle into your accommodation for the next three nights. Depending on when you arrive, take time to wander the city with its castle, flowing river, wooded islands, and mix of historic lanes and modern shops. Don't miss the famous second-hand bookshop set in an old church. While wildlife in the city is limited to common garden birds, you may see kingfishers, ducks, gulls, swifts, house martins, and swallows along the river. Meet your Coates Wildife Tour Escort at dinner.

Note: Transfers are not included on Day 1 due to varied arrival times, but we can assist with arrangements if needed.

Accommodation: City centre hotel with ensuite rooms

Meals: Lunch, Dinner at city restaurants

Day 2: North of Inverness

Meet your Heatherlea guide after breakfast and travel north in search of breeding farmland birds, waders, and early-returning Arctic migrants. Target species include Grey Partridge, Lapwing, Curlew, Redshank, Snipe, Common Sandpiper, Bar-tailed and possibly Black-tailed Godwit, Dipper, Stonechat, and Grey Wagtail. Coastal lochs may yield seaducks such as Red-breasted Merganser, Goosander, and Goldeneye. Osprey and raptors, including the locally common Red Kite, are likely.

Lunches and teas are enjoyed in the field. An optional distillery visit is available to learn about the famed "water of life." Before returning to the hotel for an evening recap, we hope to see Bottle-nosed Dolphin, Grey Seal, and possibly Arctic Skua.

Accommodation: City centre hotel with ensuite rooms

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Day 3: Nessie & Local History

Stay local today with a mix of woodland, farmland, lochs, and coastline around Inverness – including a look across the depths of Loch Ness. Visit Culloden Battlefield, the final site of the Jacobite Uprising, and Clava Cairns, ancient Stone Age burial mounds.
Bird targets include Corn Bunting, Yellowhammer, Whitethroat, Spotted Flycatcher, Redstart, Tree Pipit, Eurasian Treecreeper, Siskin, Lesser Redpoll, and Bullfinch. Mammals such as Red Squirrel, Roe Deer, Red Deer, and Sika Deer are often seen, and if the weather is kind, we may also seek rare dragonflies.
Accommodation: City centre hotel with ensuite rooms

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Day 4: To Rural Perthshire

Travel south (approx. three hours), birding en route through moorlands, lochs, and rivers. Look for Red Grouse, Goosander, Nuthatch, Jay, raptors, upland butterflies, and Britain's only venomous snake, the Adder. Visit a yew tree believed to be the UK's oldest living organism. After checking in and dining at the new hotel, head out for an evening mammal search for Pine Marten, Badger, or European Beaver.

Accommodation: Bridge of Calley Hotel
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5: Angus Coast

Explore the Angus region, focusing on the coastal lochs and mudflats known for seaduck and migratory species. Possible sightings include Common and Velvet Scoter, Arctic and Common Tern (perhaps Little or Black Tern), Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint, and Ruff. We may also spot kingfisher, marsh harrier, Bottlenose Dolphin, and Grey Seal. Milder lowland conditions often support excellent bird diversity. After dinner, another evening mammal outing might give views of pine marten, badger, or European beaver.

Accommodation: Bridge of Calley Hotel
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6: Drive to Nethy Bridge

Depart the coast and head into the high mountains, making your way to Nethy Bridge, your main base for the remainder of the trip. En route, stop at lochs and glens in search of raptors such as Goshawk, Golden Eagle, White-tailed Eagle, and Peregrine, plus Great Crested Grebe, Water Rail, and wildfowl. Look for Rock Ptarmigan, Mountain Hare, and Red Deer at one of Scotland's ski centres. If Black Grouse are gathering at their evening lek, you'll stop along the way.

Accommodation: Mountview Hotel
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7: Strathspey

Enjoy a local day exploring lochs, birch, pine woodland, and moorland near Nethy Bridge. Highlights may include Crested Tit, Common (Red) Crossbill, Pied and Spotted Flycatcher, Wood Warbler, Redstart, Tree Pipit, Black-throated Diver, Slavonian (Horned) Grebe, and more. Look for Red Squirrel, Roe Deer, and Red Deer during walks through National Nature Reserves showcasing Caledonian Pine and Upland Birch Forest beneath the Cairngorm Mountains.

Accommodation: Mountview Hotel
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8: The Outer Hebrides

After an early breakfast, travel west for a four-hour drive, possibly stopping at Glenfinnan (famous for its Jacobite history and the Harry Potter viaduct). Board a scheduled passenger ferry to the Outer Hebrides, watching for Manx Shearwater, Gannet, Fulmar, Shag, Cormorant, Kittiwake, Guillemot, Razorbill, Puffin, Black Guillemot, Arctic Skua, Great Skua, European Storm Petrel, Grey Seal, Common Dolphin, Harbour Porpoise, and Minke Whale. On arrival in the Uists, Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Golden Eagle, and White-tailed Eagle are possible.
Stay on Benbecula for two nights.

Accommodation: Isle of Benbecula Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9: Exploring the Uists

Explore the Uists' unique blend of lochs, mountains, sandy beaches, and machair farmland. Though the breeding season has ended, Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Golden Eagle, and White-tailed Eagle are still present. Look for Corncrake, migrating waders on seaweed beaches, Corn Bunting, Eider, Red- and Black-throated Divers, Twite, Merlin, and Otters. Weather may bring rarities, from American waders to Snowy Owls.

Accommodation: Isle of Benbecula Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10: Return to Nethy Bridge via Skye

Take a different ferry back to the mainland, with good chances to see European Storm Petrel and possibly Humpback Whales before arriving on Skye. Enjoy spectacular mountain views as you cross the island. There is an optional visit to the photogenic Eilean Donan Castle, and wildlife stops are planned throughout the journey. Your final three nights are spent again in Nethy Bridge.

Accommodation: Mountview Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 11: Strathspey Part 2

Enjoy another relaxed day exploring glens, woodlands, and moorlands, targeting any remaining Scottish specialities such as Crested Tit, Common (Red) Crossbill, Black Grouse, Goshawk, Goosander, Golden Eagle, Golden Plover, Red Squirrel, Roe Deer, and Red Deer. The itinerary remains flexible to maximise sightings.

Accommodation: Mountview Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12: The Moray Coast

Spend the day at the Moray Coast, visiting the mouth of the River Spey and historic fishing villages known for excellent birding. Offshore, look for gannets, gulls, terns, and auks, with possible sightings of Great or Arctic Skua. Estuary waders may include Little Stint, Turnstone, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew Sandpiper, Knot, Dunlin, and Ringed Plover, many still in breeding plumage.

Farmland birds and rarities are also possible. If you haven't yet visited a distillery, a stop at a renowned Speyside distillery provides the perfect way to end the day before our final review and dinner..

Accommodation: Mountview Hotel
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 13: Tour Departure

After breakfast, transfer to Inverness Airport for late morning departures.

Meals: Breakfast

This itinerary is subject to change due to weather or sea conditions.

Puffin (credit- Heatherlea birding & wildlife)

Tour Cost:

Cost: $ 11,450.00 Per Person

Note: There is no extra charge for a single supplement

Tour Payments

Deposit: At the time of booking, $1200.00 per person

Final Payment: On or before 1 June 2026

Note: The $1,200.00 deposit is non-refundable, and the final payment is non-refundable after 1 June 2026

Travel insurance covering all payments is **VERY** strongly recommended.

Prices are based on all known costs and current rates of exchange. Any significant changes beyond our control may be passed on to participants

Included

- Coates Tour Escort (An escort from Australia will only accompany a group with 6 or more passengers. For groups with fewer than 6 passengers, local naturalist leader will be used.
- Local Naturalist Leader & local guides where necessary
- Land content as detailed in the itinerary;
- Accommodation and all meals—breakfast, lunch, and dinner—as detailed in the itinerary.
- All entrance fees for activities listed in the itinerary.
- All transport is by comfortable minibus.
- All ferry trip fees and entrance costs to mammal hides.
- A checklist specially made for your holiday to record your sightings and notes.
- A courtesy bus will be available to Inverness Airport **at the end of the trip.**
- Goods and Services Tax.

Not Included

- N.B. Transfers are not included on the first day to accommodate different arrival times in the city. We can assist with transfer arrangements if needed.
- Return airfares, airline and airport taxes from home port to Inverness.
- Optional cultural and historical sites (battlefields, castles, etc).
- Travel insurance is highly recommended.
- All other private expenses.
- Alcoholic or carbonated drinks.
- Pre- and post-tour accommodation.
- Tips for your local guide or hotel staff;

Tour Information

Coates Tour Escort: TBA

Flights:
The tour starts and ends in Inverness. The airfare is not included in the tour price. You can book your flights online, or your travel agent can arrange this for you.

Please ensure you are in Inverness **on or before 10 August** in time to meet your Coates guide and fellow passengers. Once you have made your bookings, please send us a copy of your flight itinerary.

Pre & Post Tour Accommodation:
The tour includes accommodation on day 1 and on the final night (day 12). Please contact us if you want to stay extra days before or after the tour.

Passport:
Australian residents will require a valid passport with at least three months ' validity.
If you do not hold an Australian Passport, please contact the office or your travel agent to determine your requirements.

Travel Insurance:
We strongly recommend that travel insurance be taken out to cover the entire time you travel.

Vehicles:
Comfortable minibus & ferry.

Meals:
The itinerary includes breakfast, lunch, and dinner, as stated. We can cater to special dietary requirements with prior notice. Please contact the office if you have special dietary needs, as a surcharge may apply.

Trek Grading:
The walk will be mainly light, although there may be some hill walking for Mountain Hare and Ptarmigan, which can be uneven and slightly more strenuous underfoot. There is usually an option to take a chair lift for part of this walk, and of course, clients can choose to sit out of this excursion if they prefer. Alternatively, there is roughly a 3.3km walk to reach the Beaver watching location. It is over relatively good ground, although a reasonable level of fitness is required.

Weather:
Expect a wide variation in weather conditions. Blazing sunshine, wind and rain are equally likely, and your Clients will probably experience a bit of everything.

Clothing:
A suggested list of items to pack will be included in your pre-departure information, sent to you about one month before departure. However, we recommend bringing waterproofs, walking boots or shoes, and warm clothing for evening excursions.

Red Deer Stag (Credit- Heatherlea birding & wildlife)

To make a booking or for further information, please contact:

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"Specialist in nature tours since 1986"

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