



Lewis and Harris

Dates: 10th – 17th August 2019



This summer tour will be split between two bases with two nights in Harris and four in Lewis which will allow a thorough exploration of these islands. Although both Harris and Lewis are connected; and in reality they are the same island, they have quite a different feel about them. Harris is in particular hilly and supports the highest point in the islands with the Clisham reaching to 799 metres. It also has stunning beaches at Horghabost and Luskentyre which both lie on the shores of the Sound of Taransay and has been voted one of the most spectacular places in the UK to visit. Lewis by contrast has large areas of moorland with small, hidden beaches at places such as Dalmore and North Tolsta that are equally as striking although perhaps less well known. The cliffs along the north and west coast are also a feature of Lewis with the contorted rocks and faults creating a dramatic coastline too.

Harris could perhaps be known as “Eagle Island” with North Harris supporting the highest density of Golden Eagles in Western Europe as well as an ever increasing population of White-tailed Eagles. It is also a good place to catch up with Common Scoter that can be found in the Sound of Taransay along with the odd Surf Scoter - a regular visitor from the other side of the Atlantic. There's also a good chance of spotting Otters and possibly the odd Harbour Porpoise or even a dolphin or two off the island of Scalpay. Lewis also supports good numbers of eagles although its accolades are for a smaller raptor - the Merlin which is found in a higher breeding density on the moors here than

anywhere else in Europe. These moors also support good numbers of breeding waders and both Red-throated and Black-throated Divers. Great Skuas are a regular sight in Lewis and other seabirds such as Kittiwakes, Fulmars and Gannets will be seen in good numbers around the coast. The coast of Lewis and more specifically the north-east coast between Tiumpan Head and the Butt is becoming better known for their sightings of whales and dolphins with a resident pod of Risso's Dolphin frequenting the area and at this time of year regular sightings of Minke Whale and Common Dolphin. Hopefully with a bit of luck and some calm weather we may see at least some of these as well as the chance of spotting Basking Shark.



Itinerary:

The following itinerary is flexible and we'll make the most of the weather conditions to optimise what we might see although we will visit all the sites mentioned. Once in Lewis we shall also take a short boat trip to look for cetaceans at some point when it best fits in to the itinerary.

Day 1: Once we have all met up we'll take a look off the Braighe, just to the east of Stornoway where we may catch up with Black-throated Diver which are a regular visitor to the bay to the south of Loch Branahue. There are usually a few seabirds off here too with the chance of Common Dolphin as well. We'll continue along the road and travel to Tiumpan Head which has proved excellent for cetaceans and seabirds. After an hour or two we'll start our journey south, stopping on route where Lewis becomes Harris at Bowglas. This is an excellent area for eagles and there's a good chance of seeing both White-tailed and Golden Eagles here whilst in Loch Seaforth, which lies below our vantage point we may be able to see our first Red-throated Diver. We should then reach our hotel in Tarbet in the early evening.

Day 2: This morning we start our exploration of southern Harris heading down to the golden sands at Luskentyre which overlook the Sound of Taransay where with a bit of luck we should be able to locate Common Scoter and possibly even a Surf Scoter. Harbour Porpoise are also a regular sight here although calm conditions are normally needed to spot them. Continuing south we'll call in at Northton where we'll have a look around the machair to see what we can find flowering and at any waders that might be present. We continue through the township of Leverburgh, named after Lord Leverhulme before we stop at Rodel to have

a look around the sheltered bay and 15th Century Church. We'll then take the Golden Road back towards Tarbet, stopping at various bays and inlets too look for seals, otters and any birds that we might find.

Day 3: This morning we'll head north, out of Tarbet and take the minor road that heads west towards Husinish, passing the old whaling station and the loneliest tennis court in the World. We'll make our way to the end of the road where we'll take a short walk to the coast with White-tailed Eagle, Wheatears and Twite all likely sightings before making our way back towards Amhuinnsuidhe Castle. Parking near here we'll take another walk for a couple of miles along a track that weaves its way along a valley between some of the highest peaks in the islands. There's a good chance that we'll pick up White-tailed Eagle and Golden Eagle as well as Dipper along the small stream. We shall return to the main road and drive north past the Clisham and up to Lewis, taking the turning for Carloway and our next hotel for the following four nights.

Day 4: This morning we head north to the Butt of Lewis where we shall explore the cliffs and nearby machair. Whales and dolphins are regular from this most northerly headland and Basking Shark can be seen most summers from here. Golden Plover start to gather on the coastal grasslands whilst offshore we should be able to spot skuas, Gannets, Fulmars and shearwaters. Nearby Loch Stiapabhat should hold small numbers of wildfowl and waders such as Snipe and maybe Black-tailed Godwit. Merlin is also a possibility as they are a fairly common sight on Lewis. We shall also take a look at nearby Port of Ness before we start to make our way back towards the hotel. On the way back we'll stop to have a look at the Norse Mill and Carloway Broch where we have a further chance of spotting Golden Eagle.

Day 5: The Callanish Stones are just a short drive from the hotel and we'll get there early before the mass of visitors. The surrounding hills and lochs are also good for a variety of wildlife including otters, Red Deer, Harbour Seal, Golden Eagle and Black-throated Diver. Moving on from Callanish we'll head for the remote west side of Lewis with its dramatic cliffs and exposed headlands at Mangersta where we'll see various seabirds including Fulmars and Great Skua as well as some interesting flora such as Roseroot. Hidden amongst the cliffs are various stunning beaches such as those at Carnish and Valtos where we'll also find Eider, Black-throated Diver and Black Guillemots amongst others such as Whimbrel, Merlin, Golden Eagle and a variety of seabirds.

Day 6: We'll take a look in the valley and coast at Dalbeg before continuing on to Loch Ordais at Bragar. Both places could produce Twite and Rock Pipit whilst Shags should still be nesting on the rocky coast. The freshwater Loch Ordais usually has a variety of wildfowl and waders and occasional otter. Loch Shawbost is close by and provides similar opportunities to Bragar along with Red-throated Diver. Continuing north we'll stop for a look around Loch Barvas and adjoining machair before taking the moorland road across towards Stornoway. A turning before the main town takes us north again until we reach the "Road to Nowhere" and the stunning beach and views across Broad Bay. We'll return to the hotel via the

Pentland Road where we have a chance of spotting more divers as well as Merlin and Golden Eagle.

Day 7: On our final morning we'll head across the Pentland Road towards Stornoway where we'll take another look off the Braighe and Tiumpán Head in the hope of catching a school of dolphins and any passing seabird before we catch our flights / ferry back to the mainland.

Getting to the islands: [Loganair](#) operate regular flights to Stornoway from Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness although the earlier you book the cheaper the fares. Alternatively [Calmac](#) operate ferries between Ullapool and Stornoway. Once on the islands I will be there to meet you before we head into the field for the afternoon.

Short list of species: Common Scoter, Surf Scoter, Red-throated Diver, Black-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Manx Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, Storm Petrel, White-tailed Eagle, Golden Eagle, Merlin, Golden Plover, Ruff, Great Skua, Arctic Skua, Gannet, Fulmar, European Otter, Grey Seal, Harbour Seal, Common Dolphin, Minke Whale and Basking Shark. Roseroot, Corn Marigold.

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Cost: £1,150 per person.

The price also includes accommodation, all meals (if you have special dietary requirements please let us know when booking).

Group size: 8 maximum

Booking: Please email: steveduffield70@gmail.com

Where to meet: Stornoway airport or ferry port.

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