

Norfolk & Suffolk

NIGHTJARS, BRECKS & COAST

LIMOSA HOLIDAYS | TOUR INFO PACK



This remarkable daytime photo of a Nightjar was taken on a previous summer tour to the Norfolk Brecks © Gary Elton/Limosa

2019 **Monday 10th - Friday 14th June (5 days)** **Single-centre, small group tour with Gary Elton**

Extended summer birdwatching break centred on East Anglia's unique Breckland region, with evening excursions to look and listen for Nightjars in Thetford Forest and day trips in search of some of Britain's rarest breeding birds. With young broods to feed and migrant shorebirds already on the move, June is the perfect time to visit. 2018 tour highlights included Red-crested Pochard, Bittern, Red Kite, Hobby, Stone-curlew, Woodlark, Firecrest and Tree Pipit - plus some great views of Nightjars churring!

- Summer birding amid the forests, heaths and wetlands of Breckland
- Opportunity to see some of Britain's rarest breeding birds
- Bittern, Marsh Harrier, Hobby, Crane, Stone-curlew, Woodlark, Firecrest, Crossbill
- Evening excursions to watch and listen for Nightjar and roding Woodcock
- Little Egret, Avocet, Mediterranean Gull, Little Tern and passage waders at the coast
- Redstart or even Montagu's Harrier possible... if they return this year!
- Single-centre, small group holiday - maximum of 8 participants
- Friendly and informal - as much help with bird identification as you need
- Expertly led by Limosa's own resident Norfolk guide, Gary Elton

What's Included?

- Limosa Tour Leader
- Hotel - 4 nights at a traditional Norfolk village inn, with good old fashioned hospitality
- All main meals included - breakfasts and dinners at the hotel, packed lunches in the field
- Minibus transport - including free pick-up and drop off in Norwich for rail travellers
- All excursions, entry fees, tour based tips and taxes

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Outline Itinerary

- Day 1:** Evening arrival at our south Norfolk hotel. Dinner and ‘Nightjaring’. Night Mundford
- Days 2-4:** We enjoy three full days of guided birdwatching in Norfolk and Suffolk, with evening options to try for Nightjar and Woodcock in Thetford Forest. Mundford (3 nts)
- Day 5:** After birdwatching and our picnic lunch today, we return to our hotel around 2.30pm for farewells and departure home. ^{*1}

^{*1} *Option to stay an extra night at the hotel before or after the break is available at extra cost (B&B basis or DB&B) for those that wish to extend their stay in the Brecks or allow time for a more leisurely journey home after breakfast the next morning. Please ask for a quote and availability at time of booking.*

Tour Overview

Straddling the borders of Norfolk and Suffolk, the complex of dry sandy heaths and coniferous woodlands known as 'Breckland' are at their best for birding in summer. The largest lowland pine forest in Britain - Thetford Forest - is also to be found here, planted on the windblown cultivated heaths - or ‘brecks’ - during the 1920s to address the country’s chronic timber shortage following the Great War.

It’s an area we can justly claim to know as well as anyone for Limosa groups have been regular visitors to the Brecks for more than 30 years, seeking Stone-curlew (known locally as the ‘Wailing Heath Chicken’), Woodlark, Crossbill and the many other scarce breeding species which make this unique region their home. Tree Pipit, Stonechat and Siskin nest and, with luck, we may also find Firecrest and, occasionally, the beautiful Redstart - the latter a species that’s now all but disappeared from most of its former haunts in eastern England. High summer in the forest is also an excellent time to see butterflies, moths and dragonflies.



Participants on our June 2017 and 2018 tours enjoyed great success with Bittern at Lakenheath Fen, where this photo was taken © Gary Elton, Limosa

Breckland is the most important area in Britain for Nightjars, and June-July is the optimum time to hear their curious ‘churring’ song. On past trips our groups have enjoyed marvellous views of ‘singing’ birds, often seeing them both at rest and in moth-like display about our heads. One group even had the amazing good fortune to come across a Nightjar in broad daylight, sitting right beside the trail - where our cover photo was taken! In years gone by, Nightjars were often referred to as ‘goatsuckers’, a name which derived from the curious ancient belief that they sucked milk from the teats of goats - a myth that’s perpetuated today in the Latin name for Nightjar, *Caprimulgus*.

We combine our exploration of Breckland’s dry heaths and forests with a visit to Titchwell, on the North Norfolk coast. An excellent spot year-round for waders and wetland species, highlights from our June 2018 trip here included Red-crested Pochard, Black-tailed Godwit and Ruff in breeding plumage; Avocet, Little Tern and Mediterranean and Little Gulls. Red Kites are slowly increasing in number and the elegant Montagu’s Harrier - the UK’s rarest breeding bird of prey - is sometimes present along the North Norfolk coast in summer, too.

A visit to one of the country's premier lowland wetland reserves - RSPB Lakenheath Fen - is always a highlight. Situated on the western edge of Breckland, this remarkable reserve is surely the finest example of habitat creation anywhere in the British Isles and well worth seeing in its own right. But the prospect of Bittern, Garganey, Marsh Harrier, Hobby, Cetti's Warbler and Bearded Tit among an outstanding list of special birds should ensure an exciting visit. We have even been lucky enough to see Common Crane.

We visit in high summer, just as the breeding season for Britain's rarest species is reaching its climax. With young birds either well grown in the nest or already safely on the wing, and the adults busy ferrying food to their demanding broods, June is the ideal time to look for them.

We stay at a tucked away village inn hotel, conveniently located on the northern edge of Thetford Forest and within an easy drive of the key birding spots. Guide Gary Elton lives in Norfolk and has led the majority of Limosa's tours there over the past ten years.

Join us for a superb summer break that's not only different, but crammed full of great birds - including more than its fair share of Britain's rarest breeding species!

Daily Itinerary

While everyone knows birding in Britain is brilliant in spring, it's a popular misconception that summer birding is quiet and uneventful. Nothing could be further from the truth! For with noisy parties of young birds about and 'return' migration already well underway, June and July is a cracking time to get out in the field.

In Norfolk, the long summer days and light evenings present an unrivalled opportunity to seek out many specialities. Our guide will also help you get to grips with the more familiar British birds as well as unravelling the mysteries of Garganey and other duck as they moult into their more perplexing 'eclipse' plumages. Balmy summer evenings offer the optimum chances to see and hear Nightjar - and Woodcock may still be roding then, too.

Our **Breckland summer birdwatching break** commences with arrival at our hotel on the first evening, where we gather for an informal get-together in the bar at around 7.00pm prior to enjoying dinner. We spend the next three days in the field, with packed lunches and flasks of tea and coffee available on demand. We return to the hotel each evening in time for a delicious dinner - and the option to nip back out into the forest around dusk in search of Nightjars and Woodcock. After enjoying a final morning of birding and packed lunch together on Day 5, the break concludes back at the hotel at around 2.30pm that afternoon to allow good time for farewells and departure for home.

Please note the following itinerary is intended only as a guide and we may vary this to take best advantage of the weather, local conditions and what birds are about at the time of your visit, or to include visits to other sites. Unfortunately, we can't of course guarantee that *all* of the special birds will perform - or even be present in any given year! But one thing's for certain: wherever we go and whatever we do, with the benefit of Limosa's unrivalled local experience there will always be plenty to see...

Day 1 ARRIVAL AT OUR HOTEL, DINNER & POST-PRANDIAL NIGHTJARS

The break begins with an evening rendezvous at our hotel north of Brandon, where we gather for an informal get-together in the bar at around 7.00pm.

If conditions are right (ideally, we'd like a warm, fine and still evening), after dinner tonight we'll take a short drive into the surrounding forest to try for our first Nightjars. While the peculiar 'churring' song and wing-clapping displays are remarkable enough, nothing quite compares with the thrill of watching these mysterious crepuscular birds floating silently over a forest clearing in the fading evening light!

At dusk, Muntjac deer are often to be seen along the roadside verges in the forest and we may occasionally be startled by their sudden and very loud bark! With luck, we will also hear the telltale croaking call and high-pitched explosive whistle of an approaching Woodcock, and watch

as a 'roding' male flies a circuit or two over the treetops within his territory. *Night Crown Hotel, Mundford*

Days 2 - 4

BRECKLAND & THE NORFOLK COAST

In addition to its nationally important population of Nightjars, Breckland is home to some of the UK's rarest breeding birds, holding more than two-thirds of all the Stone-curlews breeding in Britain as well as being a major stronghold for Woodlark and Crossbill. We will devote some time over the next few days to looking for these three special birds, with visits to some classic Breckland heathland habitats. By June and early July, all three species should have fledged young about, which can sometimes make them a little easier to find. Green Woodpecker, Little Owl, Turtle Dove, Northern Wheatear, Mistle Thrush and Spotted Flycatcher are all regularly present, too.

Lynford Arboretum is one of the forest's most productive spots. Conveniently located within a mile of our hotel, it makes a great place to begin. Best known as a regular spot for Hawfinches in winter (*please note we are most unlikely to see Hawfinches here in summer*), the mix of mature coniferous and broad-leaved specimen trees in a parkland setting is also attractive to three key Breckland breeding species: Siskin, Crossbill and Firecrest. Finding the latter can be a lot like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack (there are only a handful of pairs), but we have been lucky on many previous trips. Little Grebe, Common Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch and Treecreeper are also resident at Lynford, while Great Crested Grebe and Egyptian Goose nest on nearby Lynford Water. In summer, we could also find Little Egret, Oystercatcher and Sand Martin.

Coal Tits and Goldcrests are numerous and widespread throughout the extensive pinelands of Thetford Forest, and Red-legged Partridges scurry across the arid fields. This region also harbours a number of other birds that are generally scarce in East Anglia and we will be checking some likely haunts for some of them. Gadwall, Mandarin Duck, Stonechat, Tree Pipit, Grey Wagtail and the now rare Redstart are among notable species to watch for.

High summer can be great for butterflies in the forest and a highlight for participants on several recent June tours was the opportunity to see the moth trap being 'opened' at Lakenheath Fen. The Flame, Dark Arches, Burnished Brass, Angle Shades and Setaceous Hebrew Character have been among varied delights present in the trap!

On one day, we'll travel up to the North Norfolk coast. The RSPB reserve at Titchwell is well known to birdwatchers and always a productive spot for wetland birds. Red-crested Pochard, Little Egret and Mediterranean Gull are usually about in summer, along with a good range of shorebirds including Avocet, Black-tailed and Ruff.

Red Kites now breed in West Norfolk and, as a possible bonus, the elegant Montagu's Harrier is sometimes present around the coast in summer. This is now the rarest of all Britain's birds of prey, with barely a dozen pairs in the whole country in recent years. In the event this graceful predator has returned to the area again this year, and the weather is fine, June and July generally offer the best chances of seeing them.

If weather conditions are right and we haven't been successful before, in the evening we can look again for Nightjars and Woodcock - perhaps trying a different spot this time. Or we may opt instead to take a pre-breakfast trip in search of one or two of the forest's trickier species, which are often most active first thing. *Three further nights Crown Hotel, Mundford*

Day 5

BRECKLAND & LAKENHEATH FEN

Where the westernmost of the elevated heaths fall away into the valley of the Little Ouse, and the poor sandy soils of Breckland meet with the darker and more fertile soil of the intensively cultivated Fens, the RSPB has created its magnificent Lakenheath Fen reserve.

Just twenty years ago, the land that is now nature reserve was predominantly carrot-fields with little to offer in the way of wildlife interest. Now it is a patchwork of bird-rich grazing marshes, lagoons and extensive reed beds. Classic reed bed species such as Bittern, Marsh Harrier and Bearded Tit are now firmly established here and

June-July is an excellent time to look for them, for the adult birds are generally most active and visible then, ferrying food to hungry broods. Common Cranes have recently started to nest at Lakenheath, too - although for all their size, the great grey birds are notoriously difficult to find in the summer grasslands!

In spring and early summer, Lakenheath Fen is still a wonderful spot to see and hear the much-declined Cuckoo. Cormorant, Curlew, Common Tern and Kingfisher are among a range of other wetland species we could encounter on our visit and the extensive reed beds support sizeable populations of Reed Buntings, and Reed and Sedge Warblers, together with a few pairs of Cetti's and Grasshopper Warblers. The scarce Hobby is a late breeder and adults are frequently seen hunting here at this time of year, drawn by the large numbers of Swifts, Swallows, Sand Martins and especially dragonflies that gather to feed over the marshes and pools. The 'flash' is an excellent spot to check for Hobby, and with sharp eyes we might also be lucky to pick out Garganey here, now in its eclipse plumage.



Scarce Chaser is among a nice selection of dragonflies we've recorded on our previous June tours to Breckland © Gary Elton, Limosa

All in all, our visit to Lakenheath should make for an exciting finale to our Breckland holiday, which concludes with return to our hotel at around 2.30pm this afternoon for farewells and journeys home.

Trip Information

Group Size Max of 8 participants & 1 leader

What To Expect Led by *Limosa's* friendly expert guides, these holidays are ideal for birdwatchers of all levels of ability, interest and experience. Just bring your bins and enthusiasm for birds - we'll do the rest!

Birds: 100-120 species

Accommodation 4 nights accommodation in Norfolk, based at the Crown Hotel in Mundford, a comfortable and traditional Norfolk village inn at the edge of Thetford Forest, and perfectly situated for easy exploration of this unique region. All rooms are en suite.

Meals All main meals are included in the tour price, commencing with dinner on arrival at the hotel on the evening of Day 1 and concluding with lunch in the field on Day 5. Portions are generous and the food is good. Breakfasts and dinners will be taken at the hotel. Lunches will be picnics in the field.

Walking Easy walks (approx. 1-3 miles) at a gentle pace over good trails and mostly flat terrain. Sturdy waterproof walking shoes or boots recommended. Wellies will be useful in wet weather and can be handy first thing, when the grass can be damp after overnight.

Weather The UK's climate is famous for its unpredictability but extremes are rare. Summer temperatures in Norfolk are typically in the range of 11-25C (52-77F). Some rainfall is of course possible at any season, so do bring rain wear, just in case.

Ground Transport Excursions by minibus

How To Get There

Participants arriving in Norfolk **by car** will be sent a map and joining instructions for the hotel. We meet for an informal get-together in the hotel bar at around 7.00pm on the first evening.

For those without their own transport, **we pick up at Norwich railway station at (approx.) 4.45-5.00pm on the Monday afternoon** (most routes arrive into Norwich by about that time), and are able to drop you off there again by about 4.45pm on the Friday evening. There is no extra cost for pick-up and drop-off as outlined above.

Please note: if you intend to travel by rail and wish to spend an extra night/s at the hotel, we are unable to offer return transport to/from the station. Instead, it will be necessary for you to arrange a taxi between the station and the hotel - for this reason you might look into travelling to/from Brandon or Thetford stations, which are ca. 15 minutes journey by taxi (rather than travelling to Norwich, about an hour away).

Tour Cost

2019 (5 days):
£785 from Mundford (or Norwich) ^{*2}
Deposit: £150
Single Supp: £100

Cost includes

- Services of expert Limosa guide
- 4 nights hotel accommodation
- All main meals (from dinner on the evening of Day 1 through to packed lunch on Day 5)
- Minibus transport
- All entry fees/permits at reserves, tour based tips and taxes
- Limosa checklist of birds
- Pick up/drop off in Norwich as outlined above, if required.

Cost excludes

Insurance, drinks, snacks & other items of a personal nature.

^{*2} *No additional charge for pick up and drop off at Norwich railway station, as described.*

What You Say...

“As always it was a pleasure to be in a group led by Gary, knowing his expertise and the care he takes with his clients.”

BP, Norfolk Brecks Tour

“A masterclass in birding! Gary’s vast knowledge of birds and their habitats, his enthusiasm and kindness made it superb!”

ST, Norfolk Brecks Tour

“The hotel was very comfortable. All the staff were very friendly and helpful, and most welcoming. Gary was excellent with the songs and calls of all the birds”

CG, Norfolk Brecks Tour

“Gary was very impressive. Very knowledgeable and inclusive. Another tour with just the right pace.”

SS, Norfolk Brecks Tour

“Gary appears to have the vision of a raptor and the hearing of a Soprano Pipistrelle Bat! Enjoyed the birds we saw - whether “old favourites” such as Song Thrush or Avocet or personal firsts: Montagu’s Harrier, Nightjar, Woodcock, Stone-curlews and Bearded Tit.”

P&HS, Norfolk Brecks Tour

About Your Guide

Gary Elton Gary is a principal Limosa guide who lives in Norfolk, where he divides his time between guiding for Limosa and working at Holme Bird Observatory, on the Norfolk coast. A former Herts Bird Club committee member and warden of a local nature reserve in north London (where he lived and birded for over 35 years), he is a qualified ringer with a particular fascination for studying bird migration in the eastern Mediterranean. In addition to leading most of Limosa’s Norfolk breaks over the past 10 years, Gary’s growing repertoire of overseas destinations includes Greece, Spain, Iceland, Sri

Lanka, Gambia, Borneo, Florida, Mexico and Panama. He often joins our guided *BirdWalks* in Norfolk and regularly pops up on TV wildlife programmes, having featured on everything from *Springwatch* to *Bill Bailey's Birdwatching Bonanza*. Gary is great fun and his enthusiasm for birdwatching is infectious. He rates Norfolk as one of his all-time favourite places to watch birds - and you rate him as one of Limosa's most popular guides!

Financial Security

Limosa Holidays is a fully bonded Tour Operator and a member of the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO). We hold an ATOL (Air Tour Operators Licence) granted by the CAA, providing for your protection in the event of Limosa Holidays' insolvency. Our ATOL licence number is ATOL 2950.

For tours not including the cost of a flight from the UK or for holidays booked by you as 'Land Only', all payments made to us are fully bonded through the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT). Our ABTOT membership number is 5230. For details please see our brochure or website: <http://www.limosaholidays.co.uk/financial-protection>

Limosa Loyalty Discount

We are proud of the number of loyal customers who travel regularly with us. As our way of saying 'thank you', we offer a **Frequent Travel Discount**. Under the scheme, everyone who takes four trips with us is entitled to claim a 5% discount on their 5th trip. ^{*3}

^{*3} **Conditions:** *This offer applies to the basic tour cost only and excludes certain commission-based trips, extra costs such as additional flights or accommodation, private extensions and cancellations. • Discounts cannot be given in lieu of tour deposits or off the cost of single room supplements. • Please note discount must be requested at time of booking!*

How To Book

Check availability on our website or with our office. We are happy to hold Provisional Reservations for up to 7 days. After this, we do require a Booking Form and deposit to confirm your place on tour. Any unconfirmed space will be released.

Book Online, by Phone or by Post

You can book and pay the deposit simply and securely **Online** via our website, using the '**Book This Tour**' button on the relevant tour page or the **Booking** tab at the top of the page.

Telephone bookings must be confirmed in writing by completion of a Booking Form (there's one tucked inside every brochure or as a PDF download from our website), which can be mailed to us in the time honoured way.

Be sure to read our **Booking Conditions** and **General Information** (found at the back of our brochure, on our website or available from our office on request) prior to booking.

When to Book

Early booking is advised since flights and accommodation are much more easily secured well in advance. To encourage early booking, we are pleased to offer an **Early Bird Discount** - see our current brochure or website for details.

All our tours are limited to small group sizes. So they can fill up quickly - sometimes even before our new brochure comes out! Single rooms in particular can often be in short supply and among the first to go, so do try to plan well ahead if you definitely require one of these.

Last-minute Bookings: We inevitably receive a few unexpected cancellations over the course of a season so it is always worth enquiring about vacancies on any tour - even for those departing in just a few weeks!

Payments

Deposit: The amount of **booking deposit** per person is shown alongside every tour. We accept deposit payments by **electronic bank transfer**

(please ask for our bank details), **UK debit card** and **cheque** (made payable to *Limosa Holidays* and drawn on a UK bank in GBPounds Sterling).

For payment of **booking deposits** only we also accept Visa and MasterCard credit cards.

Balance: Full payment of the **tour balance** is due not later than 12 weeks prior to departure (20 weeks in the case of certain tours such as cruises or those involving rail travel). We will send you an invoice before the balance is due.

We accept balance payments and any additional payments (e.g. interim flight deposits, flight upgrades, extra hotels etc) by **electronic bank transfer (BACS), UK debit card** or **cheque**.

Payment by overseas customers must be in GB Pounds Sterling and may be made by electronic transfer direct to our bank (*please ask for our bank details*).

We do **not** accept cheques on US Banks in US Dollars, or cheques in Euros or Eurocheques.

Credit cards - please note:

(i) We do **NOT accept** credit cards or overseas debit cards for balance payments (including any additional or interim payments) from customers living within the UK or European Economic Area (the EEA is the EU countries plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway).

(ii) For customers living in North America, Australia and all other areas outside of the UK and the European Economic Area **we are able to accept payment by Visa and MasterCard credit cards or overseas debit card but with a charge of 2.5% of the transaction amount to help offset card company charges.**

Late Booking Payments: In order for us to guarantee your airline seats, hotels etc., full payment is required at time of booking for all late bookings (*i.e. bookings made within 12 weeks of departure*).

Other Things You Need To Know

Travel Insurance

Good travel insurance is **essential** before setting off on any overseas trip - and is to be much recommended for UK tours as well.

Your travel insurance should cover against cancellation, curtailment, missed departure, delay, personal accident, death, loss of baggage and valuables (see note below ref optics), personal liability and legal expenses.

We recommend that you obtain travel insurance as soon as possible after booking your holiday to ensure you are protected right from the word go in the event of unexpected cancellation prior to departure due to accident or illness. You must inform your insurers of any pre-existing medical conditions (including those of persons not necessarily travelling but upon whom your holiday may depend) that may require treatment during a period of overseas travel or might cause you to cancel the trip.

Once you have arranged your insurance, please be sure to send us the following essential details: name and contact details of your insurance provider, your policy number, expiry date and your insurers 24hr Emergency Assistance number.

Important Things to Note about Insurance

- Travel Insurance does **not** normally provide sufficient cover for valuable optical equipment, which is often best protected under your own household insurance policy. If in doubt ask your insurers for advice prior to travel.

Arranging Your Insurance: due to UK Government legislation, under Financial Services Authority (FSA) regulations, we are not allowed to offer or recommend travel related insurance to customers. Premiums can vary widely according to your age, needs, health, choice of destination and other factors, while many people nowadays have Annual Travel

Insurance cover. For these reasons, we leave you free to shop around and pick your own policy, one best suited to your own individual needs.

General Information

www.limosaholidays.co.uk

Our website gives easy access to detailed tour itineraries (Tour Info Packs), trip reports, trip photos and the latest Limosa News.

Special Diets & Other Requests

We pass on all such requests to the airlines, hotels and other suppliers, and do our best to ensure (but of course cannot guarantee) that your needs will be met. Please be sure to tell us about these (in as much detail as possible) at the time of booking, to allow good time to make the necessary arrangements.

Smoking

Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. For the enjoyment and comfort of all, we ask that smokers refrain from smoking in proximity to the group and respect our NO SMOKING policy in the vehicle, at meal times and when watching wildlife.

Any Questions?

If you have any questions at any time, you'll find our office staff friendly, efficient, approachable - and just a phone call away, eager to assist you in every way.

Our office is open 09.00-17.00 hrs Mon-Fri, and can also be reached by fax and email. In the event we are unable to take your call, please leave a message on our answerphone (24 hrs) and our office will contact you as soon as we can.

***Thank you for your interest in our tours.
We do hope that you will be able to join us
- and we look forward to hearing from you
again!***

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