

Suffolk Coast

SECRET SUFFOLK

LIMOSA HOLIDAYS | TOUR INFO PACK



An indigo-and-maroon male Dartford Warbler chatters from within a gorse patch on a Suffolk heath © Brian Small, Limosa

2019 **Monday 6th - Thursday 9th May (4 days)**
2020 **Monday 11th - Thursday 14th May (4 days)**
Single-centre, small group tour with David Fairhurst

NEW! *May is a brilliant time to go birdwatching on the Suffolk coast. The county's wealth of resident birds are busy nesting, newly arrived summer visitors are establishing territories and migration is in full flow - and regularly brings a few surprises. We'll visit some less well-known birding spots - including an exclusive tour of Snape Warren and the new RSPB-managed area, where David is warden - and of course their flagship reserve, Minsmere. And all while enjoying great food and accommodation at the delightful Westleton Crown - with Woodlarks, Dartford Warblers and Nightingales singing on the heath nearby!*

- Watching for summer visitors along the string of Suffolk coastal reserves
- Nightingales in full song, Grasshopper Warblers reeling and Hobbies hawking
- Exciting passage of breeding-plumaged waders on wetlands and shore
- Extensive reedbeds and lagoons holding Bittern, Marsh Harrier, Bearded Tit and Cuckoo
- Stone-curlew, Woodlark and Dartford Warbler... all 'within a stone's throw' of our hotel
- Exclusive tour of the new RSPB-managed reserve at Snape, not yet open to the public
- Springtime in Suffolk... always a chance of something unexpected!
- Single-centre, small group tour - maximum of 8 participants
- Relaxed, friendly and informal, with as much help with bird identification as you need
- Expertly led by Limosa's resident Suffolk guide, David Fairhurst

What's Included?

- Limosa Tour Leader
- 3 nights accommodation at the lovely Westleton Crown, close to RSPB Minsmere
- All main meals - including packed lunches during the day
- Minibus transport
- All excursions, tour based tips and taxes
- Free pick-up and drop off at Darsham Station for rail travellers

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Outline Itinerary

- Day 1:** We meet for dinner at our hotel just inland of the Suffolk coast. Night Westleton Crown
- Days 2-3:** Two full days of birdwatching in coastal Suffolk - reedbeds, lagoons, heathland and shore. Two nights Westleton Crown
- Day 4:** After a morning birdwatching and our picnic lunch today, we return to our hotel at 2.30pm this afternoon for farewells and departure for home. ^{*1}

^{*1} *Option to stay an extra night at the hotel before or after the break may be available at extra cost for those wishing to extend their birdwatching stay in Suffolk, or to allow time for a more leisurely journey home after breakfast at the hotel the next morning. Ask our office for a quote and availability at time of booking.*

Tour Overview

What could be better than birding along the glorious Suffolk coast in spring? From the local reedbeds Sedge and Reed Warblers fire out their subtly different songs, whilst the far-carrying boom of a Bittern resonates through your body and Bearded Tits “ping” as they scurry across the reed tops. On shorepools, the cacophony of breeding Black-headed Gulls and Common Terns assaults our ears and 'demure-looking' Avocets aggressively defend their nests. For sheer birding spectacle, east Suffolk is hard to beat!

As spring creeps towards summer and the days lengthen, many summer migrants have arrived, filling the air with song as they proclaim their territories and settle down to breed. Days begin with the beautiful (and never-to-be-forgotten) operatic song of Nightingales – here in Suffolk they are at their most vocal at this time of year. And if that's is not enough to get you out of bed, then how about the thrill of watching an indigo-and-maroon male Dartford Warbler singing from a patch of citrus Gorse or the lilting song of a Woodlark in display flight above the heather.

Along the southeast coast of Suffolk are some hidden birding gems. Hollesley and Boyton are two new RSPB reserves, near to the hamlet of Shingle Street. Grasshopper Warblers reel from ditches and on the flooded fields many spring waders and duck cavort. In May, Boyton Marsh RSPB has breeding Avocets and bright Yellow Wagtails that feed in the flooded meadows. This is nowadays one of the best places to find Turtle Doves in Suffolk as they purr from the wires.

Exclusive to our tour is the opportunity to visit with David to the new RSPB-managed reserve at Snape - which is not open to the public - as well as nearby Snape Warren, of which David is the reserve manager.

Of course, no visit to the Suffolk coast would be complete without a visit to the RSPB's flagship reserve at Minsmere. Established in 1947 for the protection of nesting Avocets, Minsmere is ever-expanding and managed to create an impressive mosaic of habitats. Reedbeds meet stony pasture and mature woodland abuts coastal heath, while bird-rich flooded wetlands and the world-famous ‘scrapes’ - Minsmere's pioneering manmade shore pools - are alive with so many species it can be hard to know what to look at first!

At this time of year, we'll check favoured spots along the coast for incoming migrants such as Ring Ouzel, while the sibilant song of Willow Warblers floats from fresh-leaved birch. The songs of Blackcap and Garden Warbler can be tricky hard to tell apart, but our guide will take you through the differences; Yellowhammers call for their simple lunch and Firecrests now breed locally, too. Spring birdwatching is always full of surprises, but even more so in coastal Suffolk with rare waders, Black Terns and Bluethroat possible on passage - and perhaps even Roseate Tern.

Our spring tour is based at the delightful Westleton Crown, renowned for its comfortable accommodation, friendly service and great food - and set within a ‘stones’ throw’ of many of our favourite birding spots... just down the road in fact from Westleton Heath and Minsmere!

Whether you are new to birdwatching or more experienced, guide David Fairhurst will be on

hand throughout, to take you to the best spots and ensure you have as much fun as possible whilst seeing lots of great birds and wildlife.

Limosa has operated numerous bird tours to Suffolk over the past 34 years... Join us in May and treat yourself to the best of British birding!

Daily Itinerary

Our **Suffolk birdwatching tours** commence with arrival at the hotel on the evening of Day 1, where we gather for an informal get-together in the bar around 7.00pm prior to enjoying dinner. The next two days are spent 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, followed by the day's log call over coffee and the chance to relax and chat informally about the day's events. After enjoying a final morning of guided birdwatching and packed lunch in the field on Day 4, the break concludes back at the hotel at around 2.30pm for farewells and departure for home.

Destinations will be chosen from the following outline programme to ensure your visit is both worthwhile and rewarding. We leave the final choice of places to visit to the discretion of the Limosa guide, according to the weather, local conditions and what's about at the time.

BIRDS & PLACES

The Westleton Crown is the perfect base for our birdwatching tour, offering comfortable rooms, great food and being close to local heathlands and coast. Indeed, we have lots of wonderful habitats right on our doorstep, with little driving required.

North of Dunwich village are the extensive reedbeds of Walberswick. Breeding Marsh Harriers and Bitterns are often to be found and the old windmill in the reeds is one of the very best places to get views of moustachioed male Bearded Tits. Nightingales sing from bushes fringing the reeds and Water Rails squeal from deep in the marsh. The shingle beach hosts numerous singing Skylarks and is a protected area used by Ringed Plovers and the delightful

(but decreasing sadly) Little Tern as nesting sites. All in all, this really is a terrific area for birds. If we are lucky a rare Savi's Warbler may have taken up territory and will be buzzing from reeds... Who knows what 2019 might bring?

As well as guiding for Limosa, David is the Reserve Manager at the newly established RSPB area at Snape. Though closed to the public, as a special treat on our tour David will arrange for access to the reserve and nearby Snape Warren. This picturesque area, with fine views across the River Alde and famous Snape Maltings, holds numerous Woodlarks and Dartford Warblers, and is being carefully managed for breeding waders. There may well be a Spoonbill or two on the estuary.

Nearby, is the remote hamlet of Shingle Street (once famed for its wartime Nazi conspiracy theories), where we can listen for Grasshopper Warblers reeling from ditches, watch quartering Marsh Harriers and perhaps walk out to the new reserve at Hollesley Bay. A little to the north, Boyton Marsh RSPB has breeding Avocets and in May can host bright Yellow Wagtails. The narrow lanes are one of the best places locally to find Turtle Doves purring from the wires.

Our visit to Minsmere is going to be busy! From the visitor centre we head out past the Sand Martin colony (sometimes buzzed by a Hobby), and the north bushes - where Nightingales can sometimes be seen walking about on the ground. Scanning the fields, we may be lucky to spot a Stone-curlew squatting on the ground, while the North Bank adds chances of Bearded Tit and Bittern, Reed Bunting and warblers. Walking south past the old tank blocks, relics from the Second World War, we can view the sea, and - looking inland - glimpse the hive of avian activity that is East and West Scrape - though we will have heard it long before we see it!

Entering East Hide in May, one is confronted by a wall of sound as numerous nesting Black-headed Gulls display - joined each year by a few pairs of elegant Mediterranean Gulls, with their bright red bills, black hoods and frosted wings. Avocets sweep the shallows, aggressively chasing off all-comers that get too close; Common Terns breed on the islands and may be

joined by passing Sandwich Terns. Breeding-plumaged Black-tailed Godwits feed belly deep in the water and can 'pull in' boldly coloured Ruff and monochromatic Greenshanks. There is so much more - and with our guide on hand to help to hone your shorebird identification skills this really is British birding at its best!

Moving into the relative calm and quiet of the reedbed, our senses may be accosted by one of the many local Cetti's Warbler, 'shouting at us' from a watery thicket. A Bittern might lift up and bound across the reeds in search of a new feeding area, while Cuckoos call softly from a distant patch or might be seen quietly watching the Reed Warblers, waiting for an opportunity to steal in and secretly deposit their eggs.

Tides and weather conditions on the day will all have a bearing on the number and location of the birds, of course. But in addition to those species already mentioned, Oystercatchers, Curlews and brick-red male Bar-tailed Godwits feed in fields alongside Whimbrels; handsome silver-backed Grey Plovers, Red Knot and Spotted Redshank linger in the pools, while the adjacent freshwater scrapes might host Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper. Most will be migrants, northbound to their High Arctic breeding grounds.

If the weather is fine, an (optional) pre-breakfast start one morning will allow us to experience the special magic of spring bird song. Rich-voiced Nightingales lead the chorus of local Blackbirds, Song Thrushes and Robins, and not-so-local Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers, Whitethroats, Blackcaps and Garden Warblers - after which breakfast will taste even better!

At the opposite end of the day, as dusk descends, Barn Owls drift silently over the marsh, Little Owls yelp and Tawny Owls call from the woods.

As with all our Suffolk breaks, we may vary the above itinerary to take best advantage of the weather and other local conditions - as well as what birds happen to be about at the time of your visit. And while our guide can't promise to find you a rarity on every trip, one thing's for certain - whenever you come and whatever we choose to do, in Suffolk there's always plenty to see!

Trip Information

Group Size Max of 8 participants & 1 leader

What To Expect Led by *Limosa's* friendly expert guides, UK holidays are suitable for birdwatchers of all levels of ability, interest and experience. Just bring your bins and enthusiasm for birds - and we'll do the rest! Our helpful guides are on hand to help you improve your identification and birdsong skills.

Birds: 90-130 species

Accommodation 3 nights accommodation at the comfortable Westleton Crown, close to the Suffolk Sandlings heaths and RSPB Minsmere - and perfectly situated for easy exploration of the glorious Suffolk coast. All rooms are en suite. (Who knows, you might even end up in the room where Prince William and Kate stayed!)

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 a packed lunch on Day 4. Breakfasts and dinners will be taken at the hotel. Lunches will be picnics in the field. The hotel's restaurant has a long standing reputation for excellence.

Walking Easy. Short walks (typically 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 is damp with dew.

Weather The UK's climate is famous for its unpredictability, but extremes are rare. Expect a mix of sunshine and showers along the Suffolk coast in spring, with May temperatures in the range of 7-20C (45-68F). It can sometimes feel chilly if there's an onshore wind blowing at the coast. Suffolk is one of the driest parts of the UK, but some rainfall is of course possible at any season so come prepared with rainwear and lightweight layers of clothing, just in case!

Ground Transport By minibus

How To Get There

Participants arriving in Suffolk **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 7.00pm on the first evening.

For those without their own transport, we pick up at **Darsham railway station (on the Ipswich to Lowestoft line) at approx. 5.30pm on the first afternoon**. We are able to drop off there again by about 3.30pm on the last afternoon (currently, the next train departs to Ipswich at around 3.50pm). *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 or two at the hotel before or after the tour, we are unable to offer return transport to/from the station. Instead, it will be necessary for you to arrange a taxi from Darsham Station to Westleton or vice versa (a distance of approx 3 miles/10 mins by taxi).

Tour Cost

2019 (4 days/3 nights):

£645 (from Westleton or Darsham) *¹

Deposit: £150

Single Supp: £140

Cost includes

- Limosa Tour Leader
- 3 nights accommodation in Suffolk
- All main meals (from dinner on the evening of Day 1 through to a packed lunch on Day 4)
- Minibus transport
- All excursions, tour based tips and taxes
- Limosa checklist of birds
- Pick up/drop off at Darsham Station for rail travellers as outlined above (if required)

Cost excludes

Insurance, drinks & other items of a personal nature. Entry fee at Minsmere RSPB reserve (2018, £9pp) - entry FREE to RSPB members, remember to bring your membership card/s!

*¹ **2019 tour costs shown. Please note costs for our 2020 tour TBA (available summer 2019)**

*² *No additional charge for pick up and drop off at Darsham railway station, as described.*

About Your Guide

David Fairhurst Ever since he can remember, David has been passionate about birds and wildlife. He's enjoyed a varied, 20-year career in conservation, working largely for the RSPB but also guiding bird and wildlife tours. His duties have taken him to all four corners of the UK - from studying Wood Larks in Dorset to tour leading in Shetland - and he is now Reserve Manager at the new RSPB reserve near Snape, which he will introduce us to on our tour! He has also been involved in some fascinating projects around the world - from studying Griffon Vultures in Israel to restoring fragile ecosystems on the Seychelles - and has travelled far and wide in pursuit of birds, including trips across Europe (he's particularly fond of France), Chile and South Africa. David joined the Limosa team in 2014 and is an exceptional field birder and all-round naturalist, with enthusiasm and humour as well as excellent leadership and bird finding skills. He lives with his wife and two young daughters near Minsmere, on the Suffolk coast, and his knowledge of this bird-rich corner of Britain is unsurpassed. Indeed, he has the distinction of having seen more birds at the RSPB's Minsmere reserve than anyone else! His many trips for Limosa include Norfolk, Suffolk, Finland, Sicily and especially France.

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. ^{*1}

^{*1} **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.

Please be sure to read our Booking Conditions and General Information prior to booking. These can be found in full in the footer on every page on our website (or available from our office on request); also in an abridged form at the back of our brochure.

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 GB Pounds Sterling).

We also accept Visa and MasterCard credit cards for payment of Booking Deposits only.

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

These 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.

All birdwatchers should be aware that Travel Insurance does not usually 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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