

WILDLIFE TRAVEL



6th-12th June 2017 (7 days)

THE ISLE OF MULL

Easy birding in the Inner Hebrides

"an amazing experience to see white-tailed eagles up close"

"surpassed my expectations"

Mull 2015

The spectacular coastal scenery and superb wildlife of the west coast of Scotland.

Mull is renowned as the most beautiful and most varied of the Inner Hebrides, second only in size to Skye, with an indented coastline more than 300 miles long and with its highest point at Ben More, 3172 feet above sea level.

Mull has a variety and abundance of wildlife hard to match elsewhere. More than 800 species of flowering plants grow on the island, including sword-leaved helleborine and oysterplant. Birds include hen harrier, golden eagle, twite and black guillemot, together with **corncrake** on Iona and several pairs of **white-tailed eagles**: a sighting of one of these massive 'flying barn doors' would be amongst the highlights of our trip. Around the coast, **otters** and both common and grey Seals are regularly seen, whilst offshore there is always the chance of spotting a passing dolphin.

As well as exploring Mull itself, we will also spend time on the smaller islands of **Iona** and **Ulva**, and there is an optional trip to Staffa and Lunga. Iona is famous for its Abbey and the Christian heritage established by Saint Columba more than 1400 years ago, while the privately owned 'wolf island' of Ulva is the location of 'Sheila's Cottage' and a heritage museum that provides an insight into the history of the island. The highlight of the optional trip to Staffa will no doubt be the magical **Fingal's cave**, immortalised by Mendelssohn and an impressive natural wonder. Lunga is home to nesting puffins, guillemots and razorbills.

Together with the **fantastic wildlife**, Mull has some spectacular landscapes and we will have time to enjoy the variety of scenery and the pace of island life.



Price
£1185

Single Room Supplement
£90

Half Board

Day 1 arrival. Tobermory
Day 2 Ulva, eagle boat trip
Day 3 Staffa and Lunga
Day 4 Dervaig & Calgary
Day 5 Iona
Day 6 Duart & Grass Point
Day 7 return to Oban.

Leaders
Mike Russell
and David Greenhalgh

birds, natural history,
local culture

start/finish in Oban

wildlife and culture holidays



Our profits are donated to
The Wildlife Trusts



ITINERARY

Please note that the itinerary may be changed, particularly the order of days, to suit the weather or other practicalities or at the discretion of the leaders.

DAY 1 Tuesday 6th June

The holiday starts in **Oban**, from where we take the ferry across to the Isle of Mull (ferry departs Oban around midday (2016 times: depart 12.45, the exact ferry times will be confirmed early 2016), keeping our eyes open on the way for gannets, black guillemots and other seabirds. Whenever we are 'on the water', there is always the **chance of seeing** seals or even a porpoise or dolphin. On arriving on the island, we transfer to our accommodation and settle in. During the afternoon we will visit nearby Tobermory to explore this picturesque town, and take a walk out through the woods to the lighthouse, our first introduction to the wildlife and scenery of the island.

DAY 2 Wednesday 7th June

After an optional early morning walk along the shore, where a sighting of an otter fishing offshore is always a possibility, we will head west to Ulva Ferry. From here we will be taking a boat trip out around the coast, enjoying views of the coastline, with seals, otter and perhaps a late staying great northern diver all possible. However, the real target for this trip is Europe's largest eagle, the **white-tailed eagle**. Once extinct as a breeding bird, they are now a regular site around the west of Scotland thanks to decades of conservation effort on their behalf and a successful reintroduction project. However, few places offer quite the same spectacular views as we hope to get, as the birds swoop down over the boat to feed on fish from the water. Definitely a trip not to miss!

After our time with the eagles, we will travel across to the island of **Ulva** where we will have lunch and spend the afternoon exploring the island's nature trails. We will also visit 'Sheila's Cottage' and the small local heritage museum.

DAY 3 Thursday 8th June

For those who wish, there is the option of spending the day 'out at sea', exploring the nearby islands of **Staffa** and **Lunga**. We will travel back across to Ulva Ferry, where we will join our boat. The trip will take us first to Staffa, where the highlight will be the wonderful basalt columns of **Fingal's Cave**. From here, we travel on to Lunga, the largest of the Treshnish Isles and home to oysterplant on the shore and large numbers of breeding seabirds, including guillemots, razorbills and the comical colourful-billed **puffins**. Tide conditions permitting, we will spend an hour ashore on Staffa and two hours on Lunga.

This is an optional trip, at a cost of c.£60 per person, to be booked in advance.

For those who prefer, today can be spent relaxing around Salen, exploring the nearby coastline in search of otters or revisiting Tobermory on the local bus service.

Tonight we dine at the Mediterranean restaurant in Salen (cost not included).



DAY 4 Friday 9th June

Today we will spend around the north of the island, visiting the typically scenic west coast villages of Dervaig and Calgary. As we travel to Dervaig we will stop along the road to look for summer visitors such as common redstart and spotted flycatcher while also keeping a lookout for dippers in the fast flowing rivers. We will then move a short distance west to **Calgary**, taking lunch in the Carthouse Gallery. From here, it is a short walk down through the woodland where sword-leaved helleborine grows to the beautiful white sand beach. On our way home, we will look across and admire the views to the distant islands and visit a local garden with an astonishing variety of plants and features.

DAY 5 Saturday 10th June

This morning we will travel along the shores of Loch Na Keal, enjoying some truly spectacular scenery along the way, including views of Ben More. We will then travel the length of the Ross of Mull to Fionnphort, where we will take the ferry across to the lovely island of **Iona**. We will first try and track down one of the island's most elusive visitors, the **breeding corncrake**, whose rasping call can be heard from the arable fields. During the afternoon, there will be time to explore the famous **Abbey** and Iona Heritage Centre and the little village of Baile Mor before catching the ferry back to Mull. Taking the scenic route back to Salen, there should be time for photography and otter-spotting on the way.

DAY 6 Sunday 11th June

On our last full day on Mull, we will spend the morning around Grass Point. Here we will look for orchids growing along the roadside and butterflies including the rare Marsh Fritillary. White-tailed Eagles are always a possibility, 'wild' goats are sometimes seen on rocky hillsides and, as everywhere, we will keep our eyes peeled for otters on the shore.

If there is time, we may visit beautiful **Duart Castle**, the ancestral home of the Mclean clan with a stunning setting, on a peninsula jutting out in to the Sound of Mull.

Our farewell dinner will be at the Mediterranea restaurant in Salen (cost not included).

DAY 7 Monday 12th June

We will take a relaxed morning walk through the woods near **Fishnish** before we must bid farewell to the island and take our ferry back to Oban on the mainland, where our holiday finishes. (2016 times: arrive 11.10, the exact ferry times will be confirmed early 2017)

Accommodation, meals and transport

Our accommodation will be at **Salen Hotel** on the eastern coast of the island, overlooking the Sound of Mull. All rooms are en-suite. We will buy items for picnic lunches at local shops, or get food at local cafes or tea rooms, as appropriate. Costs for these are not included, to allow you flexibility on choice, including price. Evening meals will be taken at Salen Hotel and a nearby restaurant. Requests for special diets can be accommodated. Transport on Mull is by small bus/minibuses.



Leaders

Mike Russell is a Director of Wildlife Travel and has recently retired having worked for the Sussex Wildlife Trust since 1985. With a life-long interest in birds he has sought to encourage and enthuse others to become involved in conservation. Mike has led many holidays for Wildlife Travel, to destinations as far apart as Brazil and Bulgaria, Portugal and Poland, the Danube and the Galapagos. He has also led some of our previous trips to Mull. Our local guide and driver is **David Greenhalgh**, who has a broad knowledge of the island and its culture.



Weather

The Scottish summer is unpredictable. The weather could be hot and sunny on some days and cold and wet on others! We will adapt our itinerary to the weather, although we may be limited by the boat schedules. If the wind is too strong the boats may not run, although they may still run in wet weather. It can be 'breezy' or even windy on the coast at times. We will not walk for long in adverse weather conditions. All excursions are optional. Evenings can be cold.



Focus of interest

Although birds are a major focus, this holiday also has a broad natural history focus combined with local cultural interests and some spectacular west coast scenery. We will be looking for local specialities including otter, white-tailed eagle, corncrake and plants such as orchids.

TO BOOK

Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Complete the Booking Form and send to Sunvil Holidays (AITO, ABTA V6218), our tour operator, with your deposit. All details about booking are given in the Booking Pack.

DEPOSIT £400 PER PERSON
BALANCE DUE BY 7th March 2017

INCLUDED: Return ferry from Oban to Craignure, Mull. Local transport on excursions as specified in the itinerary, including eagle watching boat trip and foot ferry to Iona. 4 evening meals. Entrance fees as specified in the itinerary. Services of leaders and guides.

NOT INCLUDED: Travel to Oban. Optional Staffa & Lunga boat trip (cost c.£60, booked in advance & added to invoice). Lunches and 2 dinners (days 3&6). Refreshments and drinks with meals. Optional entrance fees (including Iona Abbey) Gratuities. Travel insurance.

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