



UNITED KINGDOM

GENERAL INFORMATION



European Robin is an inquisitive and common species in the United Kingdom.

TOUR OUTLINE

We have three United Kingdom (UK) set departure bird tours:

1. [United Kingdom: England Fall Migration Special](#)
2. [United Kingdom: Highlands and Islands of Scotland](#)
3. [United Kingdom: England in Spring](#)

Note: We also have a wide range of day tours on offer in [Norfolk](#), [Suffolk](#), and [Cornwall](#). The following information is pertinent to both of our set departure tours and additional tour-specific information is also provided for each tour.

PASSPORT AND VISA

US citizens do not require a visa to visit the UK for a stay of less than six months. See specific details [here](#) and check for any recent changes to ensure you are properly covered. Your passport must be valid for a period of at least six months beyond the length of your stay in the UK for onward travel to most countries. Please ensure that there is at least one full empty page available in your passport. Please make sure that you also bring a photocopy of your passport, to be kept in a separate location from your original passport, in case of loss or damage.

If you are arriving in the UK from another destination, please refer to those specific government requirements.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as per the [Terms and Conditions](#) of the tour, to protect yourself against medical issues, illness, accidents, loss of valuables and luggage etc., and travel interruptions or delays of any kind.

HEALTH AND PESTS

Please consult your doctor regarding any vaccination requirements when visiting the UK. All travelers should be up to date with routine vaccination courses and boosters (such as Chickenpox (Varicella), Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis, Flu (Influenza), Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR), and Polio for example, others may also be recommended, please check your government recommendations and requirements). Some travelers may require Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Measles immunization if they have any underlying health conditions. Additionally, please update yourself on the UK's Covid-19 vaccination entry requirements.

Please refer to the [CDC](#) for further health issues to be aware of in the United Kingdom. Other specific government advice should also be sought. The UK "[Travel Health Pro](#)" website provides important information for UK travelers visiting the United Kingdom [here](#).

We recommend carrying sunscreen (rated SPF 30 or higher) and wearing a hat to provide protection from the powerful rays from the sun; sunglasses will help prevent glare. A regular intake of water (please bring along a reusable water bottle) should be adhered to at all times to maintain hydration, however temperatures during the period of our tour should not reach particularly uncomfortable levels, for most travelers (see "Weather and Climate" section in tour-specific

information).

Please also be sure to check “Dangerous Animals” below.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Please make sure that you are covered by medical insurance in case of an emergency while on tour with us. Without insurance the cost of medical care can be extremely high. When registering for this tour, please notify us of any medical conditions you think we should know about (including allergies, heart conditions, epilepsy, etc.). This will help us to cater to your needs and update emergency services if required.

CURRENCY

The currency of the UK is Pound Sterling (GBP / £), which comes in £5, £10, £20, and £50 denominations in note form. Decimal coins are used for 1p (pence), 2p, 5p, 10p, 20p, 50p, £1, and £2 values. Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted, including for drawing cash from ATM's (as everywhere, bank charges may apply). Note: We will be able to exchange or draw money at the airport upon our arrival as well as in the various towns and cities we pass through during the tour. Cash will be useful for personal purchases and gratuities.

ELECTRICITY

The UK uses three-pronged square sockets of 220-240 V and a frequency of 50 Hz. Adaptors are needed for overseas appliances. Type G plugs fit all sockets in the UK. Further details, including photos of the plug sockets can be found here.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mobile (cell) phone signal should be present at most locations throughout the tour (roaming charges might apply depending on your phone contract) though coverage might be patchy in remote areas. Wi-Fi should be available at most accommodations on this tour.

SPECIES RECORDING (BIRD AND ANIMAL LISTS)

On arrival in the UK, you will be provided with a printed detailed daily itinerary for the tour (this will also be emailed to you ahead of the tour in PDF format), this document will give information on our planned daily activities. Your tour leader will go through this with you at the first opportunity and thereafter daily in the evening to let you know of any specifics to be aware of for the following day.

We will provide you with a printed blank diary page which will allow you to write down any specific site notes you might want to record to go with the printed bird list that we will give you. The bird list will follow the latest International Ornithological Congress (IOC) taxonomy. At Birding Ecotours we follow IOC taxonomy for birds and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for all other animals recorded during the tour. All our itineraries and checklists

follow these taxonomies. We will go through the bird list each evening of the tour, recording all species seen or heard from that day. This is an optional activity and if you do not want to take part in the nightly bird list that is perfectly fine, but it is a really useful way to remember what was seen during the day.

Birding Ecotours leaders also maintain eBird checklists from all group birding activities during our tours (anything from unscheduled roadside stops to scheduled birding activities). These checklists can then be shared with all participants who use eBird. You will simply need to provide your eBird user details to the tour leader at the beginning of the tour.

After the tour you will be emailed a PDF copy of a trip report, which will cover the sites visited each day in diary fashion with a checklist at the end. Any interesting bird, animal, or landscape photographs taken by the tour leader during the tour may be included in the trip report (and of course, if you get pictures that you are willing to share, we can sometimes include those too). Leader photos will also be added to our Flickr page in a specific tour gallery where you will be able to view them for yourselves.

TRANSPORTATION AND SEAT ROTATION

During our UK tours, your guide will be driving you in a comfortable (9-seater minibus) vehicle, or equivalent. At Birding Ecotours we employ a seat rotation policy on all of our small-group set departure tours. By rotating seats, it will ensure everybody has equal opportunities throughout the tour. Unfortunately, motion sickness will not excuse you from our seat rotation policy and thus if you are prone to motion sickness you should ensure you bring along the necessary medication. We also require that you are fit and flexible enough to maneuver yourself to the back of the vehicle. We also ask tour participants to be mindful of the extra equipment they bring into the general seating area of the vehicle (rather than the luggage compartment) and should ensure they do not clog up general thoroughfare or spare seats with camera equipment, tripods, etc. from a comfort and health and safety point of view.

WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING

Casual and informal dress will be appropriate in the accommodation and restaurants we will visit. Loose, lightweight field clothing works best for our birding activities, with layers being most helpful for changing weather conditions during the day. Trousers and T-shirts are mostly fine, but consider potential insect issues, mentioned below (midges). You will also need to bring some warmer clothing on both of these UK tours – please refer to tour-specific documents for further information.

Sunglasses, a sunhat, and sunscreen (rated SPF 30 or higher) are always useful. A pair of trousers or a long skirt, and a long-sleeved shirt should be included to help protect against the sun and potential colder weather.

We would recommend lightweight walking boots for when out on foot which will give extra ankle support while walking. You might like to consider sandals/trainers (tennis shoes) for use in the vehicles and for walking between your room and restaurant in the hotels and lodges.

WHAT TO BRING: OTHER ITEMS

Do not forget: Binoculars, prescription drugs (also bring the generic names for these drugs), toiletries, prescription glasses (and a spare pair), insect repellent, tick removal tool, sunscreen and sunglasses, camera, flashlight (torch), batteries (for electronic equipment and chargers for the rechargeable batteries, if required), converter plug set (if needed) and plug adaptors, alarm clock, money pouch, field guide(s), and daypacks. The tour leader will have a telescope for use by all participants during the tour.

Other important things to remember include: key documents, cash, passport, proof of vaccinations (and photocopies of vaccination record), your travel or health insurance cards – photocopies of which can be carried by the tour leader in case of emergency, credit cards – see information above, US Dollars / US\$ can be changed to GBP / £ if you prefer not to simply draw from ATM's, cash for drinks, gifts, tips, items of a personal nature etc. not included within the tour cost.

We suggest bringing two colored pens (e.g. blue and red biros) and a 12 inch (30 centimeter) ruler which will help immensely when it comes to filling in the bird list and animal list each evening. Using alternating colors for different days makes the listing activity much easier! Trust us, we have done this many times!

LUGGAGE

Due to restricted space in the vehicles, we ask you to please pack as lightly as possible. A medium, soft-sided duffle bag (not the hard-sided cases) works best for packing into the vehicles. Please bring a daypack to keep items that you wish to use daily when in the vehicle or in the field.

DANGEROUS ANIMALS AND PLANTS

The UK, like much of Europe, has a low risk of harm from wild animals, and we are unlikely to come across any/many of those that are considered dangerous. There are however several animals to be aware of, such as ticks (which may cause Lyme disease), bees, wasps, hornets, horseflies, biting spiders, midges, hairy caterpillars (e.g. of the oak processionary moth), adders, deer, and cows. Certain plants are poisonous or can cause irritation and should be avoided, such as giant hogweed, deadly nightshade, hemlock, and stinging nettles.

CRIME

The UK is generally a safe place to travel, with very friendly people, however, as with anywhere in the world, it is advisable to take care and remain cautious and observant, especially in busy cities and airports, where there are many people around. Please use safety/lock boxes, when provided in accommodation, for storage of personal possessions like passports, money, jewelry, and any other valuable items and follow any advice given to you by the Birding Ecotours tour leader, or the accommodation staff.

LANGUAGE

English is the national and official language of the United Kingdom.

BOOKS

Recommended field guide for this tour:

Collins Bird Guide: The Most Complete Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe – Lars Svensson (2010), HarperCollins (note this book is published by Princeton in the US). This publication is also available as an app on Apple and Android systems. We recommend this guide for our UK tours, as well as all of our European birdwatching tours. See our useful recommended bird books blog post here.

Other bird books of note:

Flight Identification of Raptors of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East – Dick Forsman (2016), Helm.

Flight Identification of European Seabirds – Anders Blomdahl *et al.* (2007), Helm.

Other books of note and specific interest:

Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Britain and Europe – Jeroen Speybroeck *et al.* (2016), Bloomsbury Publishing.

Mammals of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East – Stéphane Aulagnier *et al.* (2009), Bloomsbury Publishing.

Europe's Sea Mammals: Including the Azores, Madeira, the Canary Islands and Cape Verde – A Field Guide to the Whales, Dolphins, Porpoises and Seals – Robert Still *et al.* (2019), Princeton University Press.

Collins Butterfly Guide: The Most Complete Field Guide to the Butterflies of Britain and Europe – Tom Tolman (2009), HarperCollins.

Field Guide to the Dragonflies of Britain and Europe – Klaas-Douwe B Dijkstra *et al.* (2020), Bloomsbury Publishing.

SOUND RECORDINGS

It is possible to listen to, and download, calls of the birds of the UK from the excellent xeno-canto website (though note the Collins Bird Guide app referred to above also contains all bird calls).

USEFUL APPS AND WEBSITES

Aves Vox – this app allows you to download bird songs and calls from xeno-canto to your phone.

eBird – this website/app contains a wealth of information; you can explore the sites we will visit on the tour to find birds that you ‘need’ or would like to see. You can explore photo, video, and sound galleries for practically every species in the world through The Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Macaulay Library. If you subscribe to Birds of the World, you can get further detailed information of the life histories and all kinds of useful information, this is an incredible resource and pulls

information from the Macaulay Library, eBird, and The Internet Bird Collection. You can also keep checklists of your bird sightings very easily using the eBird app and this is a great way to keep track of your world bird list.

Merlin – this app can help you identify birds by sight (from images) and sound (from recordings) and is a useful tool to aid identification.

IOC World Bird List – this website contains all the latest details on taxonomic revisions and updates. You can read about newly discovered and described species, splits (creation of a new species) and lumps (deletion of a species) of existing species, and loads of other important and interesting information.

Lonely Planet – a huge resource on places of interest around the world. If you are interested in, or planning to, extend your stay in the country before or after your tour, this guide will help you find some must-see places.



European Green Woodpecker is an attractive and localized species within the UK, and we will be looking out for this species during our tours.