

4 Night Guided Birdwatching in the South Downs

Trip style:

Destination: 📍 South Downs

Trip code: ABW04-WBR05



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Autumn and winter bring a flurry of bird activity to Sussex and the South Downs making it prime birdwatching territory. Join a group of fellow nature enthusiasts and spend time discovering some of South East England's best birdwatching spots with an experienced ornithologist. We'll visit top birding sites including RSPB Pulborough Brooks and Burton Mill Pond, plus a few hidden gems, too. Explore natural habitats where birdlife thrives and enjoy expert help identifying what you've spotted.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Daily guided visits to the best birding sites in the area
- Guidance from an expert ornithologist leader
- Visiting RSPB Pulborough Brooks, the South Downs, and Burton Mill Pond
- Chances to spot birds of prey, winter waders, wildfowl and more
- Relaxing at our comfortable country house in the South Downs

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Comfortable en-suite accommodation in our country house
- Local ornithologist leader
- All transport throughout the itinerary
- Cream tea on arrival day
- Cooked or continental breakfast every morning
- Daily packed lunches
- Three-course evening meals, plus tea & coffee
- Easy-to-follow routes, maps, and information available in our Discovery Point if you want to explore independently.

TRIP SUITABILITY

Though these holidays don't cover great distances on foot, they are still active. You'll be hopping on and off the coach and should expect to spend the majority of the day on your feet. Walking to the birdwatching sites may take you across country tracks or footpaths and, at times, off the beaten track so be sure to bring sturdy shoes.

ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival Day

You're welcome to check in from 16:00. If you are a member you can arrive at the house from 14:00 in 2026. Enjoy a complimentary cream tea at 16:30 and meet other guests. Before dinner this evening, your ornithologist leader will introduce themselves and the itinerary. They'll also give an introductory talk on the local area's birdlife and what you're likely to see during your holiday.

Day 2: Pulborough Brooks & Amberley Wildbrooks

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Day 3: The Burgh & Burton Mill Pond

Sitting high on the rolling South Downs the Burgh is an extensive estate managed for conservation. The cover and crops provide food for flocks of Grey Partridges, finches and buntings and these in turn attract birds of prey in the autumn and winter. We'll be looking out for kites, hawks, harriers, buzzards and falcons. In the afternoon, we'll move on to explore Burton Mill Pond. A circular walk takes us through a diverse mix of habitats: wet woodland, heathland, ponds and bogs. We'll look for Great Crested Grebes and other waterbirds on the main pond and walk the boardwalk to explore the murky depths of the 'Black Hole'

Day 4: Seaford Head and Cuckmere Haven

From the eastern end of The Esplanade in Seaford we'll go east over Seaford Head, watching for Peregrines and Fulmars and other seabirds as we make our way to Hope Gap. Here, we'll search for late migrants in the bushes and enjoy spectacular views of the Seven Sisters. Later in the day we'll drop down into the Cuckmere Valley, looking for birds along the estuary.

Day 5: Departure Day

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before making your way home.

Abingworth Hall

Country living just got cosier at this former farmhouse. Abingworth Hall is just a skip away from the village of Thakeham at the foot of the South Downs – a landscape of ancient woodland, hidden valleys, chalky cliffs, and high-backed hills so deserving of its national park status finally bestowed in 2010. While the views from the doorstep are as wow-worthy as you'd expect, the walking opportunities around the sightseeing greats such as Devil's Dyke, Seven Sisters Country Park, Kingley Vale, Parham House, and the Clayton Windmills (known locally as Jack and Jill) are equally standout. You'll also be within easy driving distance of several historic towns and cities, most fabulously Arundel, Chichester, and Brighton.

A warm welcome

We want you to feel comfortable from the moment you arrive. You'll find a welcome pack in your room with guest registration forms, menus, order forms for dinners and picnic lunches, the Wi-Fi password, and the front door code. Our houses are locked at night, so we recommend noting the Duty Manager's number on arrival in case of an emergency (or getting locked out).

Evening entertainment

While evening entertainment varies from house to house, HF Holidays Inter-House Quiz night held after dinner on Wednesdays is a weekly staple. Your HF Holidays leader may be around for tips on guided and self-guided walking routes as well as visit-worthy local attractions.

Walks talks

Our HF Holidays walk leaders host guided walking information briefings before dinner on guided walking holiday arrival days. This is followed by a group Walks Talk for information on the following day's guided walks (held before dinner every evening). Self-guided walking guests are, of course, welcome.

The walking day

Prior to setting off on guided walks, your HF Holidays Leader will run you through a short safety briefing. There's also an up-to-date weather forecast on display at the house to ensure you have appropriate clothing and footwear. If you choose to do your own walks or are on a self-guided walking holiday, we ask that you please complete an Independent Walker Card each day. These can be found near the Discovery Point in the house.