

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

7th-14th May 2018 (1 week)

THE ISLES OF SCILLY

Spring flowers and natural history



"We were privileged to have Rosemary as our leader... we just loved it all!"
Scilly 2012

Explore the long lost land of Lyonesse, enjoying the best of the spring wildlife.

Once believed to be the lost land of Lyonesse, the beautiful Isles of Scilly lie just 30 miles due south west of the Land's End Peninsula. Under the influence of the Gulf Stream, the islands have an equable climate with very mild, frost-free winters so many Scillionian plants and animals are species that have a more southern, even Mediterranean distribution. **Exotic plants** from other parts of the world also grow in Scilly, so in places you might think you had wandered into the Eden Project! May is a perfect time to explore the islands; **spring flowers** will be at their best, seabirds will be nesting and north-bound **bird migration** will be at its peak. We will walk from unspoilt coves to **dazzling white sand** beaches, across springy areas of 'waved' heathland, past tiny fields ablaze with corn marigolds and through wetland nature reserves. There are many archaeological sites, and some of those we will visit are also rich in wild flowers.

We will be staying at a very comfortable guest house situated in Hugh Town, St Mary's. Our itinerary is based around using the local boat services to visit the islands. We shall spend a whole day on Tresco, where the spectacular Abbey Gardens are a must for most people and also the extraordinary dune system where exotic plants compete with the subtleties of the native flora.

Our leader for this trip is **Rosemary Parslow**, author of the New Naturalist book on the Isles of Scilly. Rosemary knows the islands extremely well and is the botanical recorder for the area. Travelling with Rosemary to most of the inhabited islands, this is a wonderful introduction to the wildlife of Scilly.



Price

£1095

Single Room Supplement
(limited supplement-free single rooms)

£250

Bed & Breakfast

Day 1 from Penzance
Day 2 St Agnes
Day 3 Tresco
Day 4 St Martin's
Day 5 St Mary's
Day 6 Bryher
Day 7 Boat trip or TBA
Day 8 to Penzance

Leaders

Rosemary Parslow
& Liz Askins

start/finish in Penzance



Wildlife and culture holidays



Our profits are donated to the **Wildlife Trusts**



The Natural History

The islands support a unique flora with links with the Lizard Peninsula of Cornwall, north-west Europe and the Mediterranean. There are also many introductions which thrive alongside the native plants and a very interesting arable weed flora in the bulbfields. Although there are few species of land birds, seabirds will be nesting in May and in Scilly you never know what could turn up. The marine life is fascinating with many unusual south-western species and there are many special insects and other fauna. To complement the wildlife there are Bronze Age, Romano-British and later monuments on all the islands. As a result of the islands' designated status, such as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the 27 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), many habitats are well preserved, such as heathland, coast and 'granite hedges' which, sadly, have suffered on mainland Britain. Furthermore, many of the smaller islands, notably Tean, Annet and Mincarlo are uninhabited and provide wonderful shelter and breeding sites for many birds.

Scilly is internationally renowned as a key place to see **rare migratory bird** species, with the islands providing a respite on many a long Atlantic flight! The isles are an important year round location both in terms of migrants and breeding species. In the shallow clean seas is a sparkling garden of jewel anemones, brilliant sponges and corals, surrounded by vast kelp forests and wild prairies of sea-grass. Tresco Abbey Garden is justifiably world renowned. 19 acres of winding, tree lined avenues, a dazzling array of species, as well as sculptures make this a must see on a visit to Scilly. The 5000 or so species that currently thrive here, were collected during the 19th Century from around the world by Scillonian master mariners, as well as from Kew Gardens.

Accommodation and meals

Mincarlo, our guesthouse, sits in a quiet corner of the bay on the waterfront, overlooking St Mary's harbour on the eastern side of Hugh Town, the islands' capital. Depending on the size of the group, we may overflow into another nearby guesthouse: if so, we will discuss this before you book. All rooms are en suite. We will be staying on a B&B basis. In the evenings, we will be eating at local restaurants or pubs: the price of evening meals, and of our lunches, is not included, to allow you freedom of choice from the menu. Items for picnic lunches are available from local shops, or local cafes may be possible on some days. **There are very limited single rooms. Single occupancy of a double room is possible (although expensive on the Isles of Scilly). Please contact us to discuss the options.

Fitness

We will be **walking for most of each day**, and the terrain is uneven and/or gently hilly in some places. We will walk at a relatively slow pace but may cover about 3 miles (or perhaps more) on some days. **You therefore need to have a reasonably good level of fitness although none of the walks are strenuous.** In some locations 'facilities' are scarce! **You also need to be able to step into and out of the ferry boats** (pictured right) that take us between the local islands so the trip is not suitable for those with limited mobility or poor balance. If you have any concerns on fitness, **please talk this through with us before booking.**



The Scillonian III

The Scillonian III has comfortable seating, a bar, buffet and an exhibition of island life, and a commentary is broadcast as you pass Newlyn, Mousehole and Wolf Rock lighthouse. Information on parking and accommodation at Penzance is available from Penzance Tourist office. It is possible to fly to the islands, from Southampton, Bristol, Exeter, Newquay or Land's End. Please ask us for details. Your luggage can be taken to your accommodation and back to the ferry for a small cost.



ITINERARY

Please note that the itinerary, and particularly the exact order of the days, may be changed to suit the boat schedules, sea conditions, weather or other practicalities or at the discretion of the leaders.

Our excursions include boat trips to the other inhabited islands. These lie between about twenty minutes and three-quarters of an hour away. The other islands we visit will partly depend on tides and weather (everything in Scilly is very influenced by the sea), but we should get to the most south-western of the islands, St Agnes, where we can walk over the heathland on Wingletang Down, to Beady Pool and Horse Point at the extreme southernmost tip of the islands. We will have a look at plants found on heath and coastal grassland and then cross the island to look for shore birds along the sandy and rocky bays. On other days we will visit other islands; probably St Martins, which is very different with long white sandy beaches, blown-sand fields and the chamomile-scented cricket pitch.

Day 1 Mon 7th May We take the **RMV Scillionian** from Penzance to St Mary's. The morning crossing can be interesting for sea birds and cetaceans. After lunch in Hugh town we will walk the short distance to our guest house. There may be time for an introductory walk before dinner.

Day 2 Tue 8th May We go by launch to the small island of **St Agnes**, spending the day exploring heathland with fantastic granite carns, and wonderful coastal scenery looking out towards the Western Rocks.

Day 3 Wed 9th May We go to the island of **Tresco**, very different from the others, with plantations of exotic trees and shrubs. We walk to the middle of the island to visit the famous sub-tropical Abbey Gardens. The island also has superb areas of heathland including one of the best examples of wind-pruned waved heath in Britain.

Day 4 Thu 10th May A longer boat trip will take us to **St Martins**. We spend the day exploring this island with sugar-white sandy beaches, tiny bulb fields and dreamy views of the Eastern Isles. Depending on boat schedules, we may also be able to take a trip to the uninhabited eastern isles to see the seals and seabirds. There is an optional evening talk in Hugh Town by Will Wagstaff, local naturalist.

Day 5 Fri 11th May A chance to spend the whole day on **St Mary's**. We will walk some of the dramatic coast and visit at least one of the wetland sites and archaeological sites that are also important botanically.

Day 6 Sat 12th May Today, the launch takes us to **Bryher**, where we spend the day. Firstly, we walk to Rushy Bay to look at some rare plants, then we head along the cliff path to Hell Bay. Here, the dramatic waves breaking on the rocks can be spectacular.

Day 7 Sun 13th May Depending on boat schedules, we may take another boat trip or revisit one of the islands for further exploration.

Day 8 Mon 14th May We have the option of either a free morning, a short local walk or a visit to Hugh Town to see the excellent **local museum** and the **Garrison** with views over the archipelago. In the late afternoon, we return on **RMV Scillionian** to Penzance.



Leaders

Once again, **Rosemary Parslow** will be leading our visit to Scilly. Rosemary knows the islands extremely well and is the botanical recorder for the area and the author of the New Naturalist book on the islands. Rosemary is an enthusiastic naturalist, with a wide interest from birds and plants to marine life and insects. She has led many Wildlife Travel holidays to the Isles of Scilly, as well as trips to Hungary, Cyprus and Spain.

Rosemary will be joined by **Liz Askins**, a local botanist and resident of St Marys, who co-lead our 2017 visit to the islands.

Between them, our leaders will ensure you get the most out of your time on the islands.

Weather

The islands are known for their mild climate. We can expect some sunny days but there may be rain, although there is usually less rain than mainland Cornwall. We will adapt the itinerary to the weather.

Transport

We travel by ferry (Scillonian) from Penzance to Hugh Town, journey time c 2hrs 40mins. Ferry times based on 2017 (exact times depend on tides, to be confirmed nearer the time)

7th May depart Penzance 09.15, arrive Hugh Town 12.30
14th May depart Hugh Town 16.30, arrive Penzance 19.15

Local transport is by ferry, and some short local bus/taxi journeys from and to Hugh Town (as specified in the itinerary).



TO BOOK

Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Complete the Booking Form and send to Sunvil Holidays (AITO, CAA-ATOL Licence 808, ABTA V6218), our tour operator, with your deposit. All details about booking are given in the Booking Pack.

DEPOSIT £350 PER PERSON
BALANCE DUE BY 6/2/2018

INCLUDED: Return ferry, Penzance/St Mary's. Local transport as specified in itinerary. 7 night's accommodation, bed & breakfast. Services of leaders.

NOT INCLUDED: Additional cost of flying. Evening meals. Lunches. Drinks and refreshments. Entrance fees (Tresco Gardens, museum Hugh Town, historical sites, evening talk). Gratuities. Travel insurance.



WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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