

Shetland Nature

THE TIPLING, TESNI, THOMASON TOUR



Tour Overview

An exciting new photo-tour collaboration, on which we are thrilled to combine the expertise and leadership of David Tipling and Tesni Ward through our local knowledge, inspired by a lifetime spent among the islands and their wildlife.

With over 25 years' experience leading photo-tours on Shetland, ten of them with us, David is no stranger to the islands and we are thrilled to have Tesni join our team on this exciting new tour. Whilst all camera users will receive full guidance and support, we have two Olympus specialists on board.

Showcasing the very best of the island's spectacular wildlife, this tour visits the very best locations, including Sumburgh Head, Noss, Hermaness and Fetlar,. We explore locations off the beaten track to photograph Otters. We will have the exhilarating opportunity to photograph diving Gannets at point blank range on our exclusive charter to Noss NNR with 'Shetland Seabird Tours'. Perhaps even more spectacular still is our unique evening charter to Hermaness to photograph the awe-inspiring cliffs, colonies and lighthouse from sea level.

Arguably however, the star attraction (and our signature species) is the Otter. To facilitate the chance of this notoriously difficult species, we pair photographers off to search for, stalk and learn about these marvellous semi-aquatic mammals in the hope of good photo opportunities. This is simply not possible in larger groups. Throughout the week we will work around the tide times to make sure everyone enjoys opportunities to photograph these charismatic animals.

Designed and co-led by top photographers with intimate knowledge of the islands and their wildlife, the itinerary is structured in such a way that guests get the best opportunities with the wildlife at the best times for light and behaviour. With this in mind the itinerary needs to remain flexible, where logistically possible.

During summer, there is a decent chance of Orca, although they are far from guaranteed, we regularly connect with these awesome sea mammals. Connected via various local sightings networks, news travels fast and increases our chances of success.

With a group size of just eight, we focus on a hands-on guiding approach with guest-to-guide ratio never higher than four-to-one or less to allow tuition, technical support and creative inspiration.

The importance of fieldcraft and understanding of behaviour are fundamental to how we lead and work on each species. On each and every assignment we pull on our field experience with the species to ensure we work responsibly. Intimate knowledge of each species, their routines and locations, even their body language is at the forefront of every shoot. It is with this level of knowledge that we make sure the balance is levelled between getting the image, but making sure it is taken ethically.

Holiday overview at a glance:

- Leadership and expertise of three esteemed photo-tour leaders
- A day concentrating on otter photography- guests paired off from the main group on assignment with Brydon.
- A boat charter for gannet feeding frenzy photography opportunities
- Sunrise/sunset opportunities to capture inspiring landscape/wildlife images
- Develop and hone field craft skills and subject knowledge
- Group size of between 2-3 guides, low guest-to-guide ratio
- Accommodation split over two bases- at Sumburgh on Mainland and Fetlar in the North Isles

Date for 2023

Wednesday 31st May to Wednesday 7th June



The Itinerary

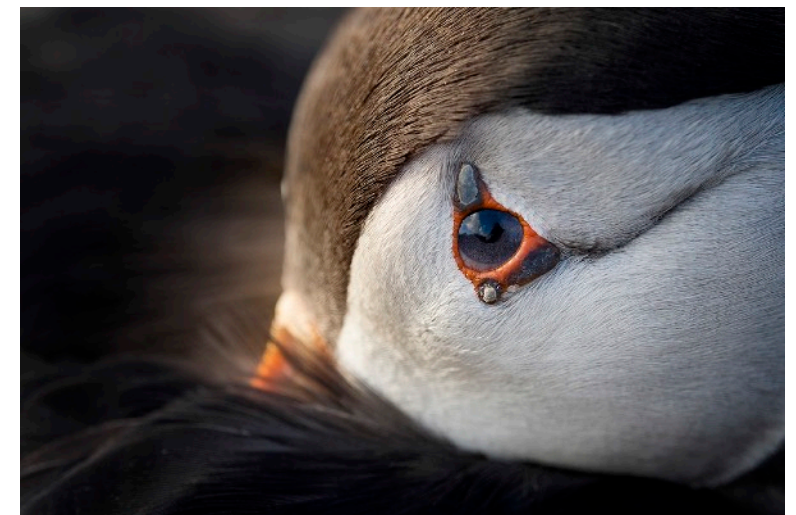
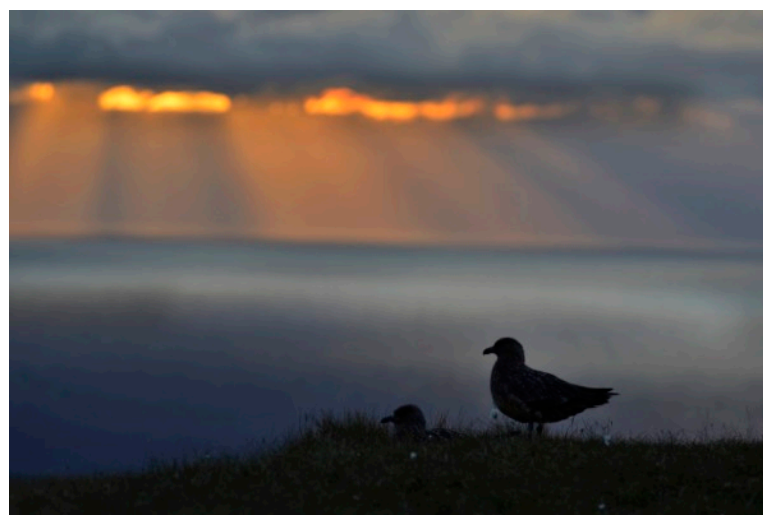
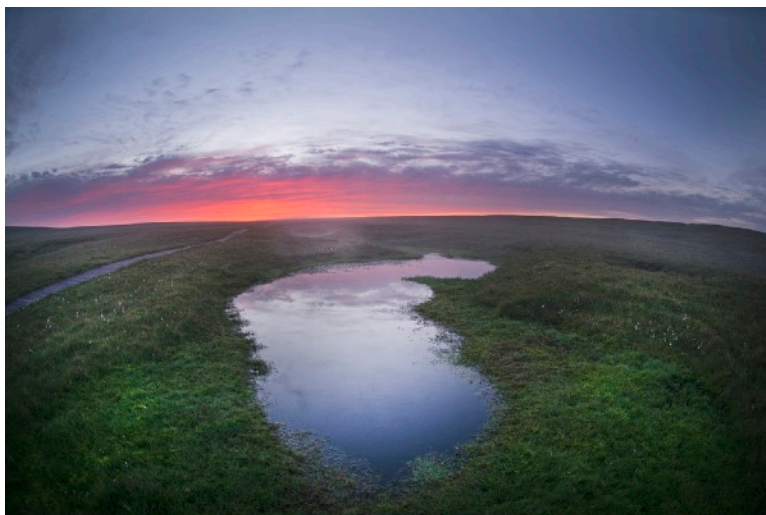
This tour prioritises assignments at the very best locations such as Sumburgh Head, Noss and Hermaness but goes well beyond with the exhilarating opportunity to photograph diving Gannets at point blank range from a boat. Arguably however, the star attraction (and our signature species) is the Otter. To facilitate the chance of this notoriously difficult species the group size is set to just 3, allowing every encounter to be a photographable one. With specific days organised to give you the best chances at photographing these incredible mammals.

Led by photographers with intimate knowledge of the islands and their wildlife the itinerary is structured in such a way that guests get the best opportunities, with the wildlife at the best times for light and behaviour. The group will have plenty of time with both guides, swapping throughout the week.

And always during summer, there is a decent chance of Orca. We have successfully connected with this awesome sea mammals on most photography tours - if we receive news and it is logistically possible, we do our best to find them.

Our Otter assignments will be structured around tide times and on days that logistics works most favourably to suit group assignments such as boat charter days.

To maximise opportunities our day to day itinerary must remain flexible, perhaps even spontaneous, if we hear of Orca (!), and so days might well be shuffled around. The following day to day itinerary is therefore a general overview.



The Itinerary

Wednesday (Day 1)

Arrive on Shetland via ferry or plane, our meet and greet will be in Sumburgh Hotel at 6.30pm. As we get acquainted, we will enjoy discussing the week ahead with an overview of species and locations. After dinner there will be an option for an evening shoot up on the nearby Sumburgh Head NNR.

Accommodation: Sumburgh Hotel (Mainland Shetland)

Thursday (Day 2)

After breakfast we enjoy the first of today's two exciting seabird assignments with a visit to Sumburgh Head. Here, Puffins are our main target species but also some good opportunities with many other species including Fulmar, Kittiwake, Shag and Guillemot and Razorbill.

Late morning we head north for Lerwick where after picnic lunch, we will embark for an exclusive boat charter to the spectacular seabird cliffs of Noss. The charter will headline the extraordinary Gannet feeding frenzy, where thousands of birds swirl overhead and dive after the fish we throw in, just meters away from you. With the boat exclusively chartered, this gives us plenty of time to enjoy the spectacle whilst trying to capture images.

We will also photograph an array of wildlife including Grey Seals, Guillemots, Razorbill, Kittiwakes, Puffin and Shag whilst on the boat.

Accommodation: Sumburgh Hotel (Mainland Shetland)

Friday (Day 3)

Today we return to Lerwick where we catch the ferry to Bressay, from where we will be ferried across to the marvellous uninhabited island, Noss, a National Nature Reserve. Here we spend the day walking around the seabird island. We will concentrate primarily on puffins, often at close quarters, whilst also the reverse spectacle of this iconic Gannetry from above, that we visited by boat.

In the late afternoon we continue northward, island hopping to Yell and onward to Fetlar, our base for the next four nights.

Accommodation: Fetlar

The Itinerary

Saturday (Day 4)

Over days four, five and six we shall run our Otter Assignments which may also mean the order of the itinerary may vary to suit logistics, making sure everyone visits each location.

Here on this ornithologically renowned island, Red-necked Phalarope will be one of our primary focuses. Home to over 90% of the British breeding population, this has long been known as an island specialty. Based here, we will have both early morning and evening opportunities as options for these charismatic little shorebirds. Though long left the island now, Fetlar was also the site of Britain's only record of Breeding Snowy Owl during the 1960's and 1970's and with good densities of other northern specialties such as Whimbrel, Great and Arctic Skua and Red-throated Diver, it is little wonder Fetlar is so well known to naturalists and wildlife photographers.

Accommodation: Fetlar



The Itinerary

Sunday (Day 5)

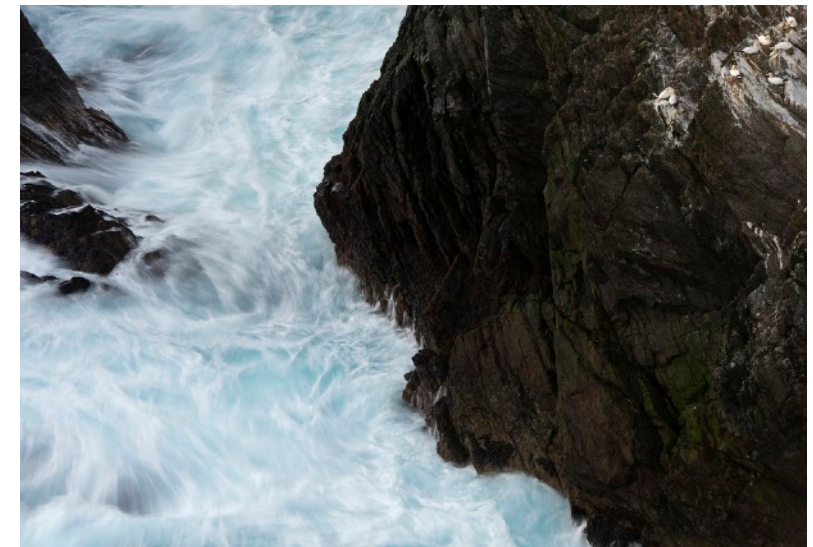
Island hopping today, and whilst on the water, always relishing the opportunity to spot a cetacean, we visit Unst and the world-renowned Hermaness National Nature Reserve - the most northerly headland of the British isles. With the heady blend of its breathtaking sea cliffs, thousands of seabirds, sea stacks and lighthouse it is often described as the most spectacular seabird colony in the world. Target species here are Gannets, Great Skua and Puffin with a wide range of shooting opportunities for each. The 35 minute walk out across the reserve follows a boardwalk access route along which we will enjoy many opportunities for Great Skua, Golden Plover, Skylark and Common Snipe may also be possible here.

Accommodation: Fetlar

Monday (Day 6)

Today we head to the island of Yell via ferry. Our main target species today will be Black Guillemot and Arctic Tern. We will visit a small colony of these captivating auks, enjoying their endearing behaviour and dapper plumage. Walking further along the coast we look for a variety of birds like Dunlin, Ringed plover and Oystercatchers. Following on from here we will head to a beach to photograph Arctic Skuas and terns.

Accommodation: Fetlar



The Itinerary

Tuesday (Day 7)

Leaving Fetlar we will aim to spend most of the day on Unst. Today's first assignment will be Great Skua, better known here as Bonxie. There will be a few different opportunities from a bathing site (where 100's congregate), to a moorland headland with sea cliff backdrop. At both sites behavioural interactions, flight and portraits will be offered. We will also target breeding waders and perhaps some time photographing eiders, terns, seals and breeding shorebirds. Finishing off with a visit to the Keen of Hamar, where with a unique variety of sub-Arctic Alpine plants including the endemic Edmondston's Chickweed, macro will be our main focus.

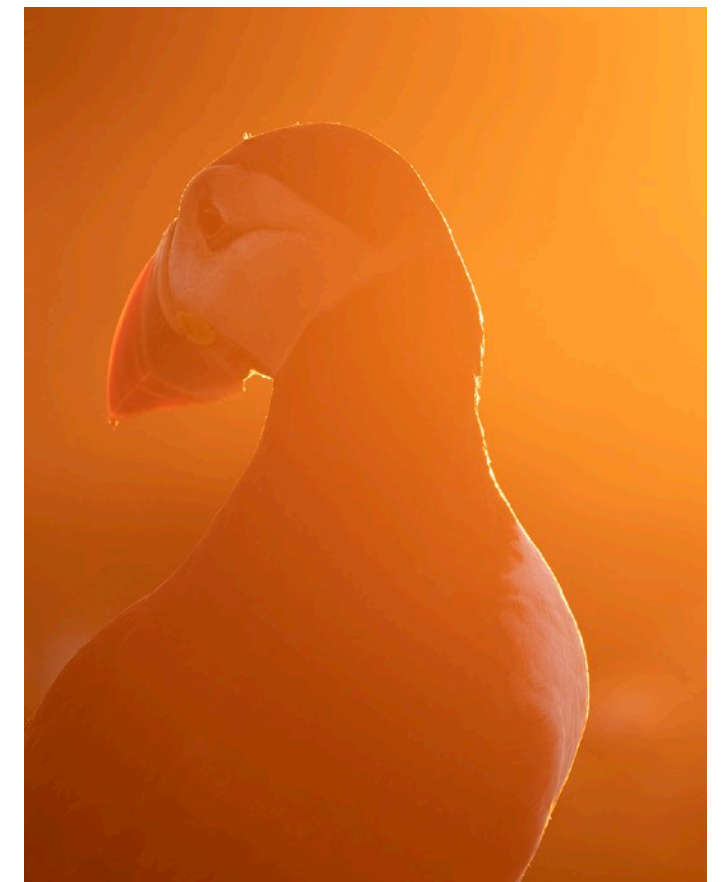
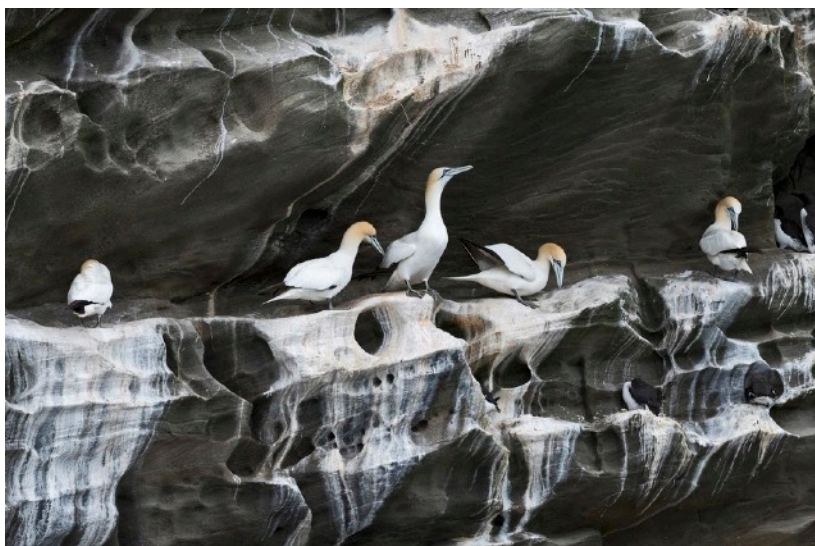
We arrive in Lerwick for lunch before heading out for one last Gannet feeding frenzy with Shetland Seabird Tours. The spectacle of this incredible assignment can often be overwhelming so a second visit gives everyone another chance to make the most of this exhilarating shoot.

Over dinner in the evening we reminisce as we enjoy highlights of the week, through images and experiences we have enjoyed.

Accommodation: Sumburgh Hotel

Wednesday (Day 8)

Departures after breakfast - airport transfers included.



Additional Information

Otters

Otters are very much a specialty of ours. This is the species we are best known for, a reputation built around our knowledge and understanding of them and the fieldcraft which is so imperative to work on them. Whilst working on this popular and challenging species we operate a 'we lead, you shoot' policy, leaving our own gear behind to ensure you and your images are our soul objectives.

This exhilarating opportunity to learn about and enjoy the opportunity to photograph wild otters is very often the highlight in an already action packed, itinerary. With our unrivalled and up to date knowledge .

Fitness

Moderate fitness and agility level is required for this trip - some parts of the itinerary involve a fair amount of walking, perhaps up to five miles a day- particularly on Hermaness. Note especially on Otter tracking days the terrain and pace can be challenging however there is always the offer to help with carrying gear - something that we regularly do for guests when working on otters, even a steady hand offered if crossing precarious seaweed covered rocks- we take our time to make sure you get into the best possible locations, in the safest possible manor.

What do I need to bring

Warm clothes (layers), hat, gloves, waterproof coat and trousers, sturdy walking boots/footwear all recommended and also try to avoid bright colours.

- Spare camera body
 - Telephoto/zoom lens - optimum would be 400 or 500mm however 200 or 300 2.8 with Teleconverter also suitable.
 - Wide angle/zoom lens for landscape
 - Tele converters
 - Tripod- not essential depending on weight of large lens
 - Memory cards and backup storage device
 - Spare batteries and charger
- Less important but useful if you have it
- Filter kit
 - Cable release
 - Binoculars
 - Laptop - very useful for sharing/showing images if opportunity allows

Please do not hesitate to ask if any of the above items of kit/clothing might be an issue and we will help and advise on alternatives.

Your Accommodation & Food - Sumburgh Hotel & Gord Guest House

To maximise our chances between locations, logistics and comforts as well as minimising travel time, we use two different venues. Sumburgh Hotel offers the perfect base for arrival and departure logistics whilst is also perfectly situated for access to Sumburgh Head and just 25minutes to town

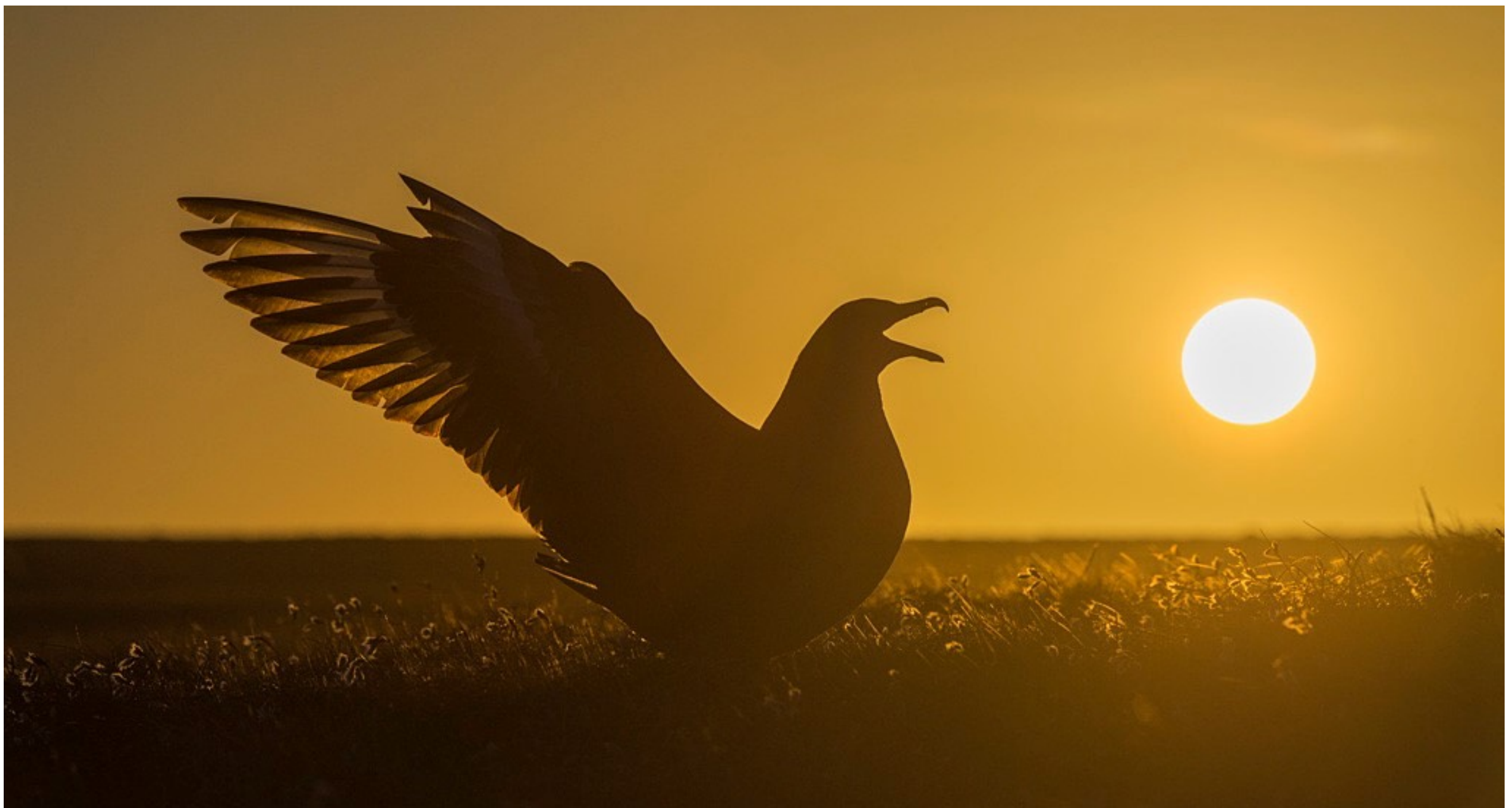


For best logistics in the north isles we are based at Gord Guest House, (with additional capacity in exclusively booked house) on Fetlar. With ensuite rooms/private bathroom. This gives us unique opportunities to target Red-necked phalaropes as well as being just a 25 minute ferry crossing to Yell or Unst with good 'home cooking' style meals.



Alcoholic drinks at accommodation are not included and no single supplements are charged.

TOTAL COST: £2,825



ANY QUERIES LET US KNOW. LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU.

Contact Details:

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