

Wildlife walk...

Farne Islands - Inner Farne

THE NATIONAL TRUST



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The Farne Islands are one of the natural highlights of the Northumbrian coast. Famed for providing sanctuary to St Cuthbert in the 7th century, Inner Farne is now renowned as a summer haven for nesting sea birds. For a unique wildlife experience, visit between April and July, or explore a more tranquil, historic island after the breeding season finishes.

Getting there

Boat: Seahouses harbour to Inner Farne, boat trips daily, Apr-Sept, weather permitting

Road: car park (non-NT) in Seahouses, close to the harbour

Buses: Alnwick-Belford – connects to  Alnmouth,  Berwick-upon-Tweed & Newcastle

Cycling: Seahouses is just off NCN 1 – the scenic Coast & Castles Cycle Route

Map & grid ref: OS Landranger 75 – NU 230370

Facilities

Basic toilet facilities, picnic area, visitor centre selling leaflets, a guide book and postcards.

Wardens on hand around the island to help and answer questions.

Contact us: 01665 721099 or email farneislands@nationaltrust.org.uk

Walk distance, terrain and accessibility

½ mile circular route, boardwalk slightly uneven and slippery when wet but suitable for most pushchairs. Take care on cobbles and near cliff top viewpoints.

Things to look out for...

- ✦ **Breeding seabirds:** there can be as many as 50,000 birds on Inner Farne during the breeding season, including three different types of tern, puffin, shag, guillemot, razorbill and fulmar, eider duck, and waders like oystercatcher and ringed plover. They arrive in spring, lay eggs, hatch chicks and care for them, before departing in late summer to spend the rest of the year out in the North Sea or on difficult journeys across Europe and Africa, the Arctic tern even travels down as far as the Antarctic!
- ✦ **Visiting birds:** Britain's North Sea coast is an important migration route for lots of birds during the spring and autumn. The Farne Islands can be a welcome resting point after a long flight, especially after stormy weather, when hundreds of tired birds can often drop out of the sky in search of shelter.
- ✦ **Butterflies:** it's not just birds that arrive on Inner Farne after huge journeys across the sea. From May to September, you can spot red admiral, peacock, small tortoiseshell and painted lady. Though some are bred locally, many travel up from the continent.
- ✦ **Plants:** no trees survive in this exposed landscape, just lots of salt-loving plants like sea campion. Look carefully and you'll see wild rabbits hiding in the undergrowth...



Puffins can be seen between April and early August. They dig burrows underground to lay their eggs in. You may spot adults, mouths filled with sand eels ducking into holes to feed their chicks. You're unlikely to spot the young themselves as they stay well hidden to avoid being eaten by gulls.

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The Farnes are home to one of the biggest grey seal colonies in the British Isles. They've been here for at least 800 years but were hunted for oil and skins for most of that time. Now they're protected and you can see them peaking out of the water or huddling together lazily on rocks.

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This stained glass window was added to St Cuthbert's Chapel when it was renovated in the 19th century by Archdeacon Thorp of Durham. He also arranged for the first wildlife wardens to live on Inner Farne after he bought the island in 1861. They protected the seabird nests from Victorian egg collectors who could often take 100s of eggs in one visit.

"Inner Farnes might be famous for its puffins – I never get bored of these comical wee creatures – but even after they leave at the end of July, there is some fantastic wildlife and history to discover on a visit to the island"

David Steel, Farne Islands Head Warden

Route directions:

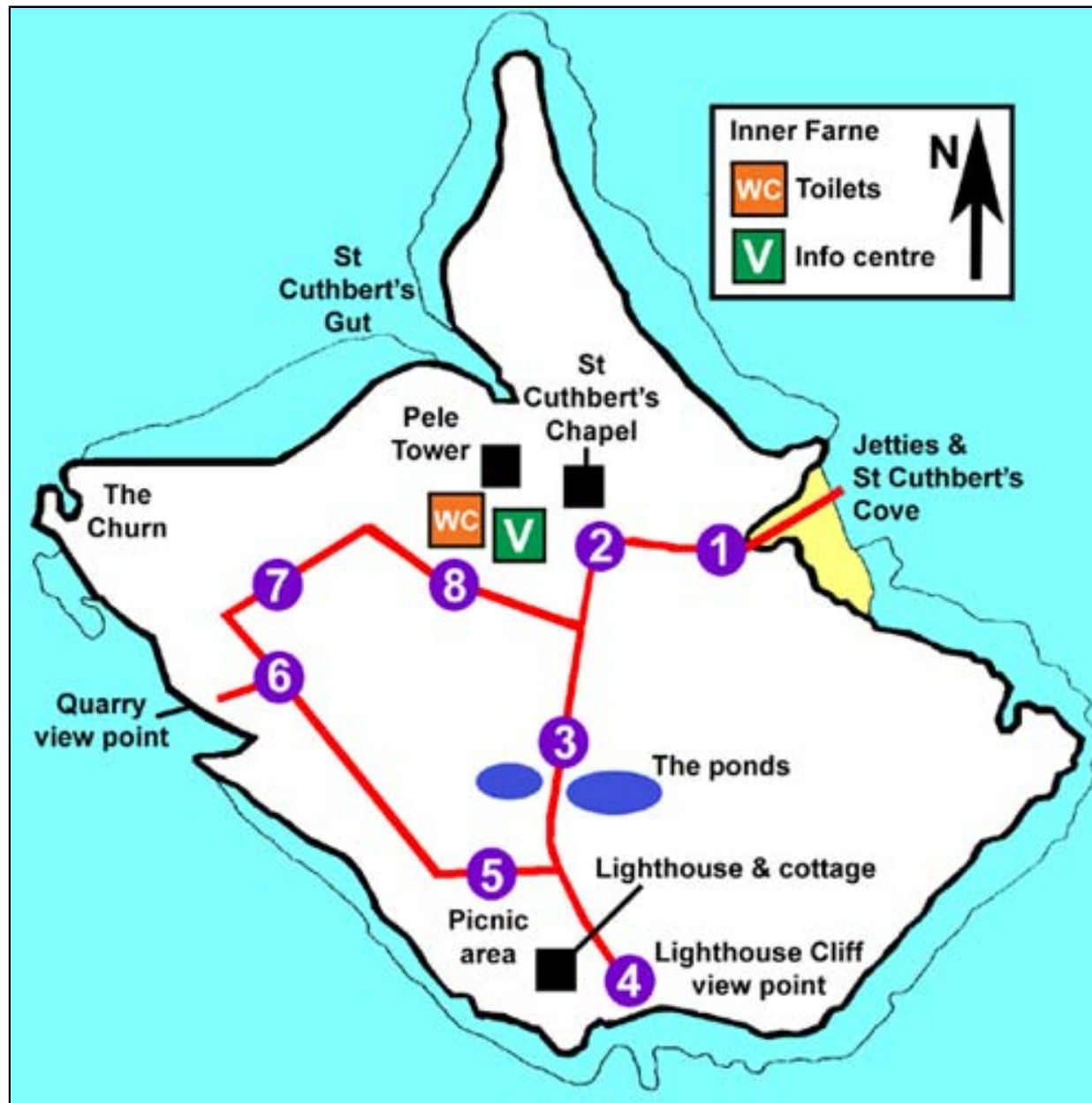
1. Take care stepping off the boat onto the jetties and climb up the boardwalk. The small stone building on your left is the 'fishe-house', it stands on the site of the medieval guest house where visiting monks would stay.

From April to July this is the first place you meet breeding Arctic terns. They nest near the path and can be very defensive of their eggs or chicks. Expect to be dive-bombed, but don't panic, just slowly wave a hand above your head to discourage them.

2. Visit St Cuthbert's Chapel, see the Pele Tower and check out the Info Centre, or go left and start your circuit of the island.

Again this is all Arctic tern nesting zone in early summer – chicks could be dotted around the cobbles so watch where you step and never run!

3. Look left – this is the one spot on Inner Farne where Sandwich tern cluster together to breed.
4. Walk up the island to the lighthouse. Before it was built in 1825 a beacon used to



get lit on top of the Pele Tower to warn off ships.

Turn left to Lighthouse Cliff viewpoint – see Dunstanburgh Castle in the distance on a clear day. These are the tallest rock faces on the island. The cliff tops are home to 1000s of breeding guillemots, shag and kittiwake in summer.

6. Return to the lighthouse and turn left past the picnic area. There used to be two more cottages here where the lighthouse keepers and their families lived.
7. Follow the boardwalk through an area filled with puffin burrows and take a quick detour left to the Quarry viewpoint. Bamburgh Castle is straight-ahead of you on the mainland.
8. On your left is a large expanse of rocky foreshore. If there's a large sea swell then you might see the Churn blow hole spout out water up to 90 ft in the air.
9. Return to the info centre passing the monks' old vegetable garden on your left.

As a charity, independent of government, the National Trust relies on the generosity of its supporters to continue caring for our countryside and wildlife, so that everyone can enjoy the beauty of the outdoors for generations to come.

Find out more at www.nationaltrust.org.uk