

Pembrokeshire Taster, Spring / Early Summer

The world famous Pembrokeshire Coast Path, with a birds-eye view of the Pembrokeshire islands and swathes of wildflowers and small birds is at its best in May and June, at the height of the breeding season, with summer visitors such as wheatears and stonechats, and with swallows and martins frequenting the cliffs, not to mention chough and ravens. Ramsey Island is home to chough, fulmar, kittiwake, deer, ponies, peregrines and the rarest golden hair lichen and its spectacular sea rocks, the whelps and bitches. If we add a boat trip around Skomer or Skokholm, or a Skomer landing, we have a real taste of Pembrokeshire's coastal paradise.

Outline Itinerary:

Monday

Arrive late afternoon at Haverfordwest Station, where we'll meet you for the short drive to Slate Mill Lodge. Unpack, unwind and then we should have time for a short drive down to lovely nearby Dale for our first exploration of the harbour with its yachts and the Gann Estuary and its wildlife before returning to savour one of David Warren Davis' sumptuous dinners.

Tuesday

Our first full day to get into the spirit of Pembrokeshire! Today we'll aim for a short sea trip on our way to land on Skomer Island for the day, or alternatively a short sea safari around Skomer and Skokholm Islands. If we decide to land, we'll have the whole day on the island, and there's so much to see, there'll be a lot of sitting and watching. Harbour porpoise, all manner of seabirds, pipits, little and short-eared owls, and even pheasants! And of course puffins, razorbills and guillemots galore, as well as Atlantic grey seals in the harbour or on the Garland Stone. Small birds on Skomer are very special too, and include all manner of warblers, spotted flycatchers, linnet, wheatear etc. so we'll need to listen hard and keep our eyes peeled. We may even see some of Skomer's slow worms.

We'll get back to the mainland late afternoon, when we can begin an exploration of the coast path and Marloes Mere. The Mere is a magic area of wetland where almost anything can turn up – in 2012, four Glossy Ibis were in residence for a couple of months, flitting regularly between Ireland and Marloes and one was in residence for most of last summer too. We carry on from the hide there to explore the wonders of the coast path as it meanders around the Marloes Peninsula. We're sure to see ravens and raptors, maybe peregrines and kestrel, and probably the cliff-dwelling chough. We'll look out for stonechats singing from the tops of the gorse bushes, pipits, larks, wheatear and warblers, and shy birds like the mouse-like dunnock, as well as the amazing array of wildflowers along the banks.

Wednesday

After breakfast, we head off north to the lovely St David's Peninsula, about an hour away, to catch the boat from St Justinian's lifeboat station to fabulous Ramsey Island, an RSPB reserve, and Site of Special Scientific Interest for chough. Ramsey is grazed by sheep, to keep the turf short for the chough, and has a couple of high peaks to scale if we're feeling energetic! We'll spend the morning exploring Ramsey's cliffs by boat, seeing kittiwakes, razorbills, guillemots and seals closer-up. We'll land at midday and spend the afternoon exploring the island, with its chough, peregrine, lapwings and herds of deer and ponies, and possibly a little owl, that frequent Ramsey and Skomer Islands.

Returning mid-afternoon to the mainland, we'll make a quick visit to St David's Head with its cromlechs and wild ponies. If we have time, the tiny Llangloffan reedbed reserve a little further north near Mathry is a delight, particularly for warblers.



Bird's Foot Trefoil



Blowing bubbles, Ramsey



Little Owl, Skomer Island



Puffin taking an interest on Skomer.

Thursday

Today we'll start at the coast path near Marloes, where we'll walk to the Deer park admiring the magnificent display of coastal flowers, and the many stonechats and whitethroats en route. We'll arrive at Martinshaven where we'll ascend to the Deer Park. Here, if the tide is right, there are often gannets from nearby Grassholm diving for fish, easily seen from the Headland. The Deer Park is an excellent site for watching chough, and you can often sit and watch them at close quarters on the cliffs or feeding in the short turf. While eating our picnic lunch, it's an excellent place to look out for ravens and raptors, including kestrel and peregrine. We can walk back down to Martinshaven to visit the marine exhibition and maybe even see the swallows that have nested conveniently in previous years in the public toilets there!

In the afternoon, we can drive up to St Ann's Head with its magnificent views and great seawatching, and then head north on a short section of the path past Frenchman's Bay and Welshman's Bay back across into Dale – by either the longer or shorter route, depending how we feel. While you relax in the pub or the café, I'll fetch the car and we can drive back to the Gann for another look for waders and possible otters along Stickleridge. Alternatively, you might like to have a final optional evening boat trip around Skomer Island if the weather's fine looking for rafting auks and shearwaters, harbour porpoise and a fantastic account of Skomer's wildlife and history by the Dale Sailing guide.

Then back to Slate Mill Lodge to relax, unwind and sample David's hospitality again for our last dinner.

Friday

A final peaceful night and hearty breakfast at Slate Mill Lodge, ready for your onward journey. You might like to head straight to Haverfordwest Station after breakfast, or have a final walk along the coast path and catch a later train.



Chough on Skomer



Swallows at your convenience



Gateholm, the sentry to the islands, Marloes Peninsular

Note

Boats will only sail to Ramsey and Skomer Islands if it's safe to do so. If there is unusually severe weather, sailing schedules may be affected. In the unlikely event that our landings are delayed, Welsh Wildlife Breaks has planned some excellent wildlife watching and alternative activities in coastal and inland Pembrokeshire until sailings resume.

Welsh
Wild *life* Breaks