

Nova Scotia Itinerary

[Link: Nova Scotia](#)

Tour Overview

Autumn produces some fantastic birding in Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia is strategically located along the Atlantic Flyway, one of the major bird migration routes in North America. The southern shores of Nova Scotia act as a hotspot stopover for hundreds of migrating warblers, shorebirds and raptors, before they make their way south.

Nova Scotia also boasts a variety of habitats, including coastal areas, marshes, forests, and islands, adding to the variety of birds we will see. Shorebirding here is productive and could include such choice species as American Oystercatcher, godwits, Whimbrel, and White-rumped and Stilt Sandpipers. In the forests, we will look for boreal species including Spruce Grouse and Black-backed Woodpecker.

In addition, we will take a boat tour to view a spectacular array of pelagic species, from shearwaters, puffins and kittiwakes to jaegers and phalaropes, and there is always the possibility of a rarer species showing up—and then of course there are the great whales!

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival and Orientation



Our Nova Scotia birding tour officially begins in the evening in our hotel lobby where we will meet and head off to a nearby restaurant for dinner. Note that if you wish to explore Halifax, it is approximately 30 minutes from the airport. Night near the Halifax airport.

Day 2 & 3: Wolfville



We will leave Halifax and drive the Annapolis Valley towards King's County, where we will encounter an amazing variety of excellent birding habitats, from the Miner's Marsh for waterfowl and songbirds, and the Guzzle for shorebirds and the Grand Pre area. The Guzzle offers a chance to see thousands of roosting sandpipers up close at high tide. We will spend a second day in the area where we will explore the scenic Blomidon and Cape Split areas that are great for songbird migration, and offer views of the dramatic Bay of Fundy tides, and red sandstone cliffs. As with much of Nova Scotia in the fall, rarities turn up regularly in this area, and we make an extra effort to track them down. We will stay in the picturesque and charming university town of Wolfville on the shoreline of the Minas Basin, an offshoot of the Bay of Fundy. Nights in Wolfville.

Days 4 - 6: Brier Island



We will drive down the Annapolis Valley and stop at the French Basin Trail in historic Annapolis Royal. This wetland teems with ducks, songbirds, and shorebirds. We then set off down the Digby Neck and catch a ferry to Brier Island, where we check in at our comfortable lodge. It is traditional on Brier Island to be at Northern Light (lighthouse) near dawn to observe the often-spectacular stream of migrants departing for the northeast; they are compensating for having gone too far out to sea during the night. Northern Flickers, Eastern Kingbirds, several warblers and vireos, with attendant Sharp-shinned Hawks, are prominent. There are always the unexpected among the birds — unseasonable “reverse migrants” and sometimes-real exotics from afar. These rarities often stay through the day, perhaps exhausted by their long, mis-oriented journeys. During the day, there will also be plenty of opportunity to study “obscure fall warblers” and other birding challenges. The island is famous for its raptor flights in fall, particularly of Sharpshins, Broadwings, and falcons. Short walks to Pond Cove will give us a good list of shorebirds: Baird's and Buff-breasted are sometimes there during this season. On one of these days, we will board one of the island's long established whale-watching boats—safe, well-outfitted and comfortable—for our half-day pelagic trip. Among the pelagic species, Great and Sooty and sometimes Manx Shearwaters, Gannets, Red and Red-necked phalaropes, Kittiwakes, and Puffins are frequent. Jaegers, South Polar Skua, fulmar, murre and Razorbills are possibilities, and who knows what else! Then, of course, there are the great whales. Days 4 and 5 we will spend the night on Brier Island. On day 6, we will depart Brier midday and head to Yarmouth for the night, stopping at the scenic and birdy Mavillette Beach Provincial Park.

Day 7: Cape Forchu and Cape Sable Island



The morning we will check out Cape Forchu. It is situated on a point south of Yarmouth. The iconic lighthouse offers great seawatching opportunities, and the surrounding forest is good for migrating songbirds. After lunch, we will head to Cape Sable Island. Cape Sable Island is strategically located along the Atlantic Flyway, making it a crucial stopover for migratory birds. This will be our best site for shorebirding, with American Oystercatcher, Whimbrel and Hudsonian Godwit as specialties. Birds such as “southern” herons and warblers, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Western Kingbird, Blue Grosbeak, Summer Tanager, Dickcissel, and Clay-colored and Field Sparrows are routine on Cape Sable Island at this time of year, and real “improbables” are always possible. Night in Yarmouth.

Day 8: South Shore Beaches and Lighthouses



Today we will return to Cape Sable Island in the morning for anything we missed, and then try Baccaro Peninsula. Another lighthouse clad headland, Baccaro offers some of the best seawatching in all of Nova Scotia. From there we will work our way up the ‘South Shore’ stopping at two sandy beaches on the way as we head towards Lunenburg, a UNESCO world heritage site. Night in Lunenburg.

Day 9: Lunenburg-Halifax



Today we will make our way from Lunenburg to Halifax stopping at various locations along the way. We will try our luck along some side roads for some boreal forest specialties including Spruce Grouse, Black-backed Woodpeckers, and Boreal Chickadee. We will also explore the rocky shores around Peggy’s Cove, taking in Nova Scotia’s most iconic landmark. Night near the Halifax airport.

Day 10: Departure

Our Nova Scotia birding tour ends today, you can depart for flights home anytime today.

What to Expect

Overview

On this tour we will take in the incredible fall migration. We begin birding early in the morning,

usually having breakfast around dawn. We may take a short break in the afternoon. After dinner, we will compile our bird and other wildlife lists, and discuss plans for the next day.

Driving

On most days our driving times will be less than an hour. When we move between locations our longest drive will be 2.5 hours, but we will be stopping along the way.

Walking

The walking is generally easy on this tour. We may encounter some uneven, rocky terrain, but we will generally move at a slow pace.

Boat tours

We will take a 3-hour pelagic boat tour from Brier Island to look for whales and seabirds. We will try to change the day if the weather looks unfavourable.

Climate

Weather at this time of year is generally unpredictable, although autumn is thought by many to be the finest season in Atlantic Canada, with long stretches of mild weather. Heavy storms generally pass through quickly, although we should expect rain for at least one day. The presence of biting insects is typically minimal, but may vary depending on weather conditions.

Accommodation and food

Accommodations include a mix of historic and characterful properties and not all have elevators or many ground-floor rooms. Please let us know in advance if you require assistance, and we will ensure that you have help with luggage. We will sample a range of good restaurants, especially for seafood, during our evenings.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

- Good quality accommodation
- Pelagic boat trip
- Ferry to Brier Island
- Includes all meals and soft drinks
- 4 - 8 Participants will be guided by one guide. 9 - 12 participants will be guided by two guides in two vehicles.
- Gratuities to local guides
- All park, conservation and entrance fees

Tour Price Does Not Include

- Flights to and from Halifax
 - Travel Insurance
 - Items of a personal nature
 - Taxes (14% HST)
 - Alcoholic beverages
-