



Ideas to inspire

Orkney and Shetland

In 2016 Scotland will celebrate and showcase its historic and contemporary contributions to Innovation, Architecture and Design. We'll be celebrating the beauty and importance of our built heritage, modern landmarks and innovative design, as well as the people behind some of Scotland's greatest creations.

Orkney is home to the famous Skara Brae, the Neolithic village estimated to date back to around 3200BC, as well as other amazingly-well preserved sites from pre-historic times. There are fascinating buildings dating from the medieval period to the 17th Century, some of which reflect Orkney's Norse links. There are traces too of the major conflicts of the 29th Century, when the island was used to house prisoners of war.

Shetland also has many fascinating pre-historic sites such as Jarlshof Prehistoric and Norse Settlement and Mousa Iron Age Broch. Many of Shetland's visitor attractions tell their social history providing an insight into Shetland's historic Scandinavian links and insights into the crofting life on here in decades gone by.

In contrast, buildings on both islands, like the Pier Arts Centre in Stromess, Orkney and the Shetland Museum and Archives in Lerwick are thoroughly modern and house inspirational collections.

The islands' traditions and creativity also live on in the spectacular music of Shetland fiddlers known throughout the world, and in the crafts produced on the islands today, from the unique styling of the Orkney chair and distinctive jewellery made here to the wool and knitwear for which Shetland is justifiably famous.

Events:

Festival of Architecture - throughout the Year – Since 2016 is our Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design, we'll celebrate our rich architectural past and present with a Festival of Architecture taking place across the nation.

Up Helly Aa, Shetland - various dates – The annual season of Up Helly Aa events are a sight to behold and emphasise the uniqueness of Shetland's culture. Though the main Up Helly Aa event takes place in Lerwick there are versions held in other parts of Shetland during February and March. www.uphellyaa.org

Orkney Folk Festival - May – This four day festival attracts folk musicians from around the globe to perform in the enchanting setting of Orkney. www.orkneyfolkfestival.com

St Magnus International Festival, Orkney - June – Orkney's annual midsummer festival presents beautiful classical music played in enchanting Orcadian locations. www.stmagnusfestival.com

Doors Open Days - September – Every weekend throughout September, buildings not normally open to the public throw open their doors to allow visitors an exclusive peak behind the scenes at museums, offices, factories, and many more surprising places, all free of charge. www.doorsopendays.org.uk/opendays

Shetland Accordion & Fiddle Festival - October – Shetland's world famous traditional musical heritage is celebrated at this annual event guaranteed to get every toe tapping! www.shetlandaccordionandfiddle.com/calendar-of-events

Orkney and Shetland

Orkney



ORKNEY CRAFT TRAIL – Members of the Orkney Craft Association produce traditional and contemporary items from artworks and jewellery to ceramics and furniture, including the famous Orkney Chair, all designed and made locally. The Association created the Orkney Craft Trail which is downloadable online and leads visitors to workshops where they can talk directly to makers and watch items being made.



ST MAGNUS CATHEDRAL – Britain's most northerly cathedral, St Magnus Cathedral known as the 'Light in the North' was founded in 1137 by the Viking, Earl Rognvald, in honour of his uncle St Magnus. With its distinctive sandstone hues, it's one of Orkney's most significant landmarks.



BISHOP'S AND EARL'S PALACES – Located near the spectacular St Magnus Cathedral, these palaces are regarded as two of the finest examples of architecture in Scotland and highlight Orkney's close Norse and ecclesiastical links. A particular attraction is the magnificent monumental fireplace in the great hall of the Earl's Palace, built around 1600.



SHEILA FLEET GALLERY – Sheila Fleet OBE is one of Scotland's leading designer-makers of gold, silver and platinum jewellery. Her original designs come her passion for Orkney and reflect the natural colours of the sea, sky and landscapes on the islands. Visit her showrooms in Kirkwall and Tankerness.



SKARA BRAE – Skara Brae prehistoric village is the best preserved groups of prehistoric houses in Western Europe. The neolithic settlement, lying near the dramatic white beach of the Bay of Skail, was uncovered by a storm in 1850 and presents a remarkable picture of life around 5,000 years ago.

Orkney



MAESHOWE CHAMBERED CAIRN – Maeshowe is the finest chambered tomb in north-west Europe and is more than 5000 years old. It was disturbed in the mid-twelfth century by Viking crusaders who carved graffiti runes on the walls of the main chamber. Maeshowe is part of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site, along with Skara Brae, Ring of Brodgar and the Stones of Stenness.



RING OF BRODGAR – The Ring of Brodgar is a spectacular stone circle surrounded by a large circular ditch or henge. It was one of the first sites to be scheduled in the British Isles (1882). The ring comprises a massive ceremonial enclosure and stone circle surrounded by at least 13 prehistoric burial grounds dating from between 2500 and 2000 BC.



THE PIER ARTS CENTRE – From an original listing building on the Stromness Waterfront, the Pier Arts Centre was enhanced to reflect the British Modernism collection displayed inside, recognised as one of the finest collections of work from this period in the UK. The excellent shop has some unusual items including a range of jewellery echoing the designs made by artist Alan Davie for his wife Bili.



CHURCHILL BARRIERS – Originally built in the 1940s primarily as naval defences to protect the anchorage at Scapa Flow, the Churchill Barriers are a series of four causeways which allows visitors to easily travel from the Orkney mainland to the explore the southern islands South Ronaldsay, Burray, Lamb Holm and Glimps Holm. Watch out for the remains of some vessels from both World Wars which can still be seen jutting above the water.



ITALIAN CHAPEL – One of the most unusual churches you'll ever see, the Italian Chapel was built on the Orkney island of Lamb Holm by 550 Italian prisoners of war who worked on the construction of the Churchill Barriers during WW2. Constructed from two Nissan huts and such everyday objects as corned beef tins and car exhausts, the chapel is a unique and special place to experience.

Shetland



JARLSHOF PREHISTORIC AND NORSE SETTLEMENT – Jarlshof provides a fascinating insight into the way of life of the inhabitants of Shetland in the late Bronze Age, Iron Age, Pictish era, Norse era and the Middle Ages. It includes oval-shaped Bronze Age houses, Iron Age broch and wheelhouses, Viking long houses, medieval farmstead and a 16th century laird's house.



QUENDALE WATERMILL – Built under the shadow of Fitful Head, this powerful watermill was built as a labour saving revolution for farmers and crofters in the late 1860s, replacing traditional hand querns for grinding cereals. Beautifully restored, the mill now houses a visitor centre with an exhibition of old farming methods and croft implements as well as café and gift shop.



SHETLAND CROFTHOUSE MUSEUM – Step back in time at the Croft House Museum. Located in a delightful setting, this typical thatched 19th century Croft House has been restored to how it would have looked in the 1870s. Smell the peat fire, discover the box beds and try to set the traditional Shetland mouse trap. The Croft House also has a lovely garden with a path which leads to a restored watermill.



SUMBURGH HEAD LIGHTHOUSE – Sumburgh Head Lighthouse, Visitor Centre and Nature Reserve provides an engaging and interactive visitor experience. Explore the history and natural heritage of Sumburgh Head from early geological beginnings and Iron Age settlers to the present day. Discover what life was like for the lighthouse keepers and learn more about the area's other inhabitants such as whales and puffins.



MOUSA IRON AGE BROCH – Standing at a height of more than 13 m, Mousa Broch is recognised as one of the finest surviving examples of a 2,000 year old Iron Age tower or broch and one of Europe's archaeological marvels. After a short boat crossing from Sandwick to the island of Mousa, you can climb the narrow steps to the top of the world's best-preserved broch and take in incredible views across Mousa Sound.

Shetland



SHETLAND TRADITIONAL MUSIC – Shetland's traditional music culture is truly unique. Thought it shares links with Scottish traditional music, it has also absorbed Scandinavian influences over the centuries thanks to Shetland's proximity to and connections with the Nordic countries. The virtuosity of Shetland's fiddle players in particular is known throughout the world and it's worth checking for musicals taking place during any visits to these islands.



SHETLAND TEXTILE MUSEUM – Shetland Wool and textiles are known worldwide. Inspired by the hues within the Shetland landscape, the island's rich heritage in this field can be explored at the Shetland Textile Museum. Visitors can find out more about how knitting was a fundamental part of the crofting life on Shetland from the 1830s, providing the island's women with income and new found freedom.



SHETLAND MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES – Set on the waterfront within a restored 19th century dock in Lerwick, this fascinating museum tells the story of Shetland's heritage and culture from its earliest geological origins to the present day. Its galleries contain everything from delicate Shetland lace to Pictish art and you can watch vessels being constructed using hand techniques handed down through the generations in the renovated boat shed.



SHETLAND CRAFT TRAIL – The members of Shetland Arts & Crafts Association include craftmakers, designers and visual artists who are part of a growing creative community. Often inspired by their environment, culture or indigenous materials, they create contemporary works for sale and exhibition. Many welcome groups and you can meet the artists and designers, commission special pieces or shop for gifts. A downloadable map is available online.



UNST BUS SHELTER – Unst is the most northerly island in Britain and the heart of the Viking seaways. It has much to attract the visitor, but one of its more unusual sites is the Unst bus shelter. The shelter has its own website and is redecorated every year with a new theme. Previous focuses have included the Diamond Jubilee of HM the Queen, the life of Nelson Mandela, the island's sheep and the World Cup!