

Orkney and Shetland - the northern edge



Your Detailed Itinerary

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- the northern edge

Day 1

From Kirkwall, drive to Stromness. Stroll around this little town taking in the traditional Stromness Museum, established in 1837. There is also an excellent choice of cafes and bistros here. Go north to discover the rugged coast at Yesnaby - scenic coastal walks here and excellent birdwatching. Continue north for **Skara Brae**, where the visitor centre brings alive Orkney's Neolithic past. Overnight Stromness.

spectacular walk to the impressive rock stack of the Old Man of Hoy. If time permits, explore the south end of Hoy and overnight there.

Day 4

Return to Mainland, turning east for Kirkwall and south for the famous **Italian Chapel**. Continue to South Ronaldsay to explore the most mysterious chambered cairn **Tomb of the Eagles**. Overnight Kirkwall.

Day 2

A big day on prehistoric Orkney. Make a clockwise circuit of the north Orkney Mainland, taking in the Brough of Birsay with its Pictish and Norse settlement remains, also the complex of the Broch of Gurness to the east. The circuit is completed via the atmospheric **Maeshowe** and **Ring of Brodgar**, also on the 'must see' list. Overnight Stromness area.

Day 5

Take a ferry for Westray, famed for the 'Orkney Venus', and for its coastal walks and wildlife - it's ideal for cyclists as well. (Orkney has a choice of cycle hire shops). Overnight Westray.

Day 6

Return to Kirkwall to shop for local arts & crafts and a visit to St Magnus Cathedral and The Orkney Museum before evening departure and overnight journey to Shetland. Note: Check

departure dates as the Kirkwall-Lerwick ferry link is not a daily service.

Day 7

Get to know Lerwick. The comprehensive and exciting collections in the world-class Shetland Museum tell the story of the islands and entry is free of charge. Its restaurant, Hay's Dock Café Restaurant, serves superb local produce. Also visit Clickimin Broch for an insight into these mysterious defensive towers. Overnight Lerwick.

Day 8

Head south early to take in a selection of Shetland attractions, such as the fascinating Shetland Croft House Museum, **Jarlshof** with its multi-layered history, Old Scatness - often described as Britain's most exciting Iron Age village - and the wild sea views from Sumburgh Head with its wildlife watching opportunities. A boat trip to **Mousa Broch** is also on the 'must see' list, as is a walk on the beach to St Ninian's Isle, where silver treasure was found in 1958 dating from c.800AD. Overnight Lerwick.

Day 9

Only a few minutes from Lerwick, discover Scalloway, the islands' capital till 1708. The Scalloway Museum tells the story of the Shetland Bus, the wartime covert sea-link with occupied Norway. Scalloway Castle dominates the skyline here, built in 1600 by Earl Patrick Stewart. This could also be a day for a **wildlife excursion** or guided walk. Lerwick Visitor Information Centre can advise. Overnight Lerwick.

Day 10

Take the road north for Hillswick and Eshaness, where the **Tangwick Haa Museum** tells the story of the area. As well as breath-taking coastal walking from Eshaness Lighthouse, botanists in particular will find plenty of interest in the exposed landscape of Ronas Hill to the north. This is Shetland's highest point. Overnight Hillswick area or continue north via island of Yell to the island of Unst.

Day 11

Explore the top of Shetland. As well as

Hermaness and its bird life, the island also has the Unst Boat Haven and the Unst Heritage Centre, both giving an insight into the life of the island. And you can tick off a whole list of 'most northerly in the UK' places - for example, beach, post office and castle: 16th-century Munness Castle. You can also see the famous Shetland ponies hereabouts! Overnight Unst.

Day 12

Head south for a fascinating drive, almost the length of Shetland, for an evening ferry departure from Lerwick. There is plenty of interest on the way. For instance, if time permits, stop off at the Old Haa Visitor Centre on Yell.

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Cover: The Ring of Brodgar, Orkney. © Paul Tomkins, VisitScotland / Scottish Viewpoint

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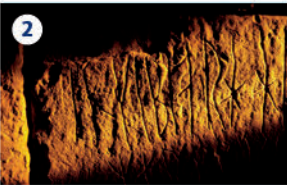
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Two separate island groupings, both with a special and distinctive culture - but also one aspect in common: a sense of being very different to mainland Scotland. Explore their Norse heritage; walk out to discover some of the UK's most spectacular wildlife sites and enjoy the local cuisine. This is just the start of a great northern adventure, made easier by good mainland Scotland links, both by air and sea.



SKARA BRAE – An extraordinary snap-shot of Orkney's far-distant past – a cluster of dwellings complete with Stone Age furniture!



MAESHOWE – The Neolithic stone-masons of Orkney constructed this spectacular burial chamber – already ancient when Vikings sheltered here and left their graffiti.



RING OF BRODGAR – One of Orkney's most important Neolithic settings – a circle of stones that have stood here for five millennia.



ITALIAN CHAPEL – Italian prisoners of war ingeniously converted a Nissen hut into a beautiful chapel using scrap materials and 'trompe l'oeil' painting effects.



TOMB OF THE EAGLES – Possibly Orkney's most mysterious chambered cairns, acquiring its name after the discovery of sea eagle talons and other remains within the tomb. Circular walk.



JARLSHOF – Three extensive village settlements, from Bronze Age to Viking times, plus a mediaeval farmstead and 16th-century house, all here on one site at the south end of Shetland.



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MOUSA BROCH – The UK's best preserved broch – an impressive Iron Age circular tower still standing 12m high on the island of Mousa. Regular boat trips from mainland Shetland.



SHETLAND WILDLIFE TOURS – There is an excellent choice of guided tours on Shetland, with otters, seals, whales and spectacular seabird colonies all making the islands a photographer's delight.



TANGWICK HAA MUSEUM – Restored 17th-century house tells the story of Northmaine (most northerly parish on mainland Shetland). Coastal walking at Eshaness Lighthouse.



HERMANESS – National Nature Reserve at the top of Shetland with seabird colonies and moor-nesters such as great skuas. Fine walk to hilltop with views to Muckle Flugga, at the very tip of the UK.