

SCOTLAND'S COASTS AND WATERS 2020

Orkney and Shetland



Q Braewick, Shetland

Q Seastack at Yesnaby, Orkney

Q Breckon Sands, Yell, Shetland

Q Ness of Ork, Shapinsay, Orkney

An island holiday is a very special experience. The distinctive coastlines and culture of Scotland's northern isles, Orkney and Shetland, make a trip to remember.

The Orkney Islands are an archipelago of around 70 islands (20 of which are inhabited) lying a mere 10 miles north of the Scottish mainland. The number of islands, countless cliffs and endless white sandy beaches make for a dramatic shoreline sculpted by the seas over thousands of years. You're never far from a cliff walk in Orkney. The magnificent red sandstone cliffs on Hoy, the striking natural arch known as the Vat of Korbister on Stronsay, or the cliff walks at Yesnaby and Marwick Head on West Mainland are just some examples

Thanks to its coast, cliffs, wetlands and moorlands, the Orkney Islands invite waterfowl, waders, raptors and seabirds, including the much loved puffin, to make their homes here. This is one of the best places in Britain to go seal-watching, as it's a breeding ground for both grey and common seals. Around 15% of the world's seal population is found here. Dolphins and various species of whale can also be frequently spotted.

Divers from across the world are attracted to Orkney's wartime wrecks and the sealife that can be found living within them. Or stay above the seas in a kayak and explore the coastline from a different angle.

You can fly to Orkney's main town of Kirkwall from the airports at Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Inverness with all flights lasting an hour or less. There are four ferry routes to choose from, with up to 12 sailings a day, depending on the season.

Formed by ancient hills sitting on the submerged continental shelf, Shetland boasts over 100 islands, 15 of which are inhabited. Shetland has an incredibly long coastline of over 2700km, equating to 15% of the entire UK coastline, including some of the highest sea cliffs in Britain, hundreds of pristine, sandy beaches, sea stacks and caves.

The unique scenery is due to the diverse geology (all of Shetland is a UNESCO accredited Geopark), with some rocks over 370 million years old, the beautiful landscape also including trout lochs, salt marshes, sand dunes, exposed ancient sea floors and the best cross-section of a volcano in Britain.

Shetland's wildlife is rich and varied, with 12% of Britain's otters around its shores, significant common and grey seal populations, some of the UK's largest seabird colonies (including puffins and gannets), frequent cetacean sightings (especially orcas!) and of course the iconic Shetland pony.

Settled for over 6,000 years, there is a wealth of archaeology, from Neolithic temples, Iron Age round towers and Viking long-houses to excellently preserved WWII sites. Europe's biggest Fire Festival, Up Helly Aa, takes place in Lerwick in January and is a homage to Shetland's Viking past.

Direct flights to Shetland are available from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness all year round, and also from Manchester and Bergen in the summer. Ferries sail from Aberdeen and is a 12-hour overnight mini-cruise.

ORKNEY



1 Old Man of Hoy – one of Scotland's most famous landmarks in Orkney, this 450 foot sea stack lying in a spectacular setting just off the coast of the island of Hoy. Hoy means 'High Island' in Old Norse. To see it, enjoy a three-hour trek from Rackwick to the coast, or take the easy route of spotting it from the daily Scrabster-Stromness ferry.



2 Island Hopping – Orkney consists of 70 islands and skerries, of which 20 are permanently inhabited. There is a magic to Orkney that you will begin to feel as soon as you set foot in this unique place, and there is no better way to experience it than by visiting several different islands from Stromsøy to North Ronaldsay or Westray and experience the special character of each.



3 Westray and Papa Westray – the world's shortest scheduled flight operates between the Island of Westray and Papa Westray. The flight takes 1 minute 14 seconds, covering a distance of 1.5 miles. Papa Westray was once a medieval pilgrimage centre, while Westray is home to over 100,000 seabirds including gannets, razorbills and guillemots, which nest on the high cliffs at Noup Head.



4 Churchill Barriers – The Churchill Barriers are four causeways built after the sinking of the HMS Royal Oak while it lay in harbour in Scapa Flow in October 1939. After WWII, a road was built on top of the barriers allowing easy driving access to the south isles. The area is popular with divers, sea-anglers and also has some superb beaches.



5 Flotta – The tiny island of Flotta has a rich history. It was at the heart of Orkney's military experience of WWII and of the island's oil industry in the 1970s. It also has the distinction of offering one of the most spectacular 360 degree panoramas in the UK, taking in Scapa Flow, the Pentland Firth and views over several islands. The name 'flotta' comes from the Norse for 'flat isle'.



6 Scapa Flow – Scapa Flow is a body of water encircled by the Orkney mainland and south isles, making it a sheltered natural harbour which has been strategically important from Viking times right through to WWI and WWII. Several wartime wrecks are clearly visible. The Scapa Flow Visitor Centre and Museum on the island of Hoy is due to re-open in Autumn 2020, a temporary exhibition is open at the Hoy Hotel.



7 RSPB Nature Reserves – The Royal Society of the Protection of Birds (RSPB) look after 13 nature reserves here, ranging from sea cliffs and farmland to wetland and moorland. The amazing range of habitats produces an unforgettable range of wildlife to see all year-round. There are guided walks on many reserves between May and August, with a chance to watch wildlife with the experts most days of the week.



8 Tours on Orkney – one of the best way to get to know Orkney is by touring the island with expert local guides. There's a range of exciting options to choose from. Get close to the islands' history and nature on a walking tour, enjoy the thrill of the open road on a trike tour, explore the islands' food and drink or set sail on a boat trip to see wildlife and the stunning coastlines.



9 Beautiful Beaches – from long stretches of fine white sand to rugged coves, Orkney's beaches will surprise with their beauty. Take a stroll on Grobust Beach in Westray, explore the rockpools at Dingieshowe Beach in Deerness or watch the sunset at Warebeth Beach on West Mainland. You might also explore the rock pools, spot seals, birdwatch, or just drink in the peace and beauty of an Orkney coastline.



10 Cycling and Walking Routes – enjoy Orkney's open road network through dramatic land and seascapes. See the history, heritage and wildlife of these islands on short trails such as Westness Heritage walk on Rousay or take a longer trek up Ward Hill and the Dwarfie Stane on the Isle of Hoy. Don't miss The St Magnus Way, a long distance pilgrimage route, following the story of St Magnus, giving time and space for reflection.

SHETLAND



1 Tours on Shetland – take a tour to explore Shetland's waters and coastlines. See amazing cliffs, seabird colonies and other wildlife around Noss on a boat trip from the town of Lerwick, or be adventurous on a guided trip by kayak or jet-ski. The area's abundant wildlife means that no matter where on Shetland you are, there are operators who can take you on the perfect wildlife journey of discovery.



2 Isle of Unst – Britain's most northerly Island, has an amazing history and spectacular landscapes, such as the hills of Hermaness. Hermaness National Nature Reserve is home to thousands of breeding birds, and Keen of Hamar is an exposed ancient seabed, with unique flora. Unst also has the highest density of Viking longhouses remains anywhere, plus a full-sized replica Viking ship.



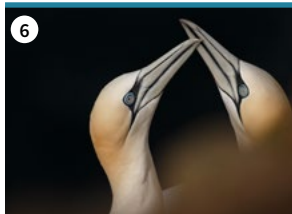
3 St Ninian's Isle – linked to the mainland of Shetland by one of Europe's finest sand tombolos, a stunning 500m long sandy beach with sea either side. The 12th Century chapel on the island became famous in the 1950's for the discovery of the St. Ninian's treasure, 28 silver Pictish items plus the jawbone of a porpoise, buried under a slab near the altar, perhaps during a Viking raid.



4 Sumburgh Head Lighthouse – visitor centre and Nature Reserve is a five star visitor attraction, providing an engaging and interactive experience for visitors of all ages. Explore the history and natural heritage of Sumburgh Head, from early geological beginnings and Iron Age settlers to the lives of lighthouse keepers and also a great place to see puffins!



5 Scalloway Museum and Unst Boat Haven – visit the Scalloway Museum to hear about the wartime operation that ran special agents across the sea from Norway, or visit Unst Boat Haven to explore Shetland's boat-building traditions the origins of which date back to the 9th century. Exhibits include a collection of over 20 traditional wooden boats.



6 Nature Reserves – Shetland is renowned for its diversity of wildlife and natural habitat. In Hermaness find 170m high cliffs with over 100,000 breeding seabirds while the island of Noss has an incredible "seabird city" on its 180m cliffs. Sumburgh Head is famous as a place to spot the charming puffin, while Fair Isle is a stopover for many species of migrant birds.



7 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. It charts the development of the archipelago from its earliest geological origins to the present day. Visit the renovated Boat Shed to watch vessels being constructed by hand using traditional techniques



8 Mousa Isle – Mousa Isle is home of the best preserved broch (Iron Age round tower) in Scotland. Built over 2,000 years ago, it stands over 13 metres high, and in climbing the ancient internal staircase, you will be rewarded with a stunning view. Seabirds and seals can be spotted in coastal areas.



9 Fair Isle – is most famous for the intricately patterned knitwear that has been hand produced on the island for centuries using yarn spun in Shetland, Fair Isle lies midway between Orkney and Shetland. The island is also home to a variety of flora and fauna particularly seabirds and wildflowers. It can be reached by plane or by ferry at the south end of the Shetland mainland.



10 East/West Burra and Tondra – run parallel to the south mainland and are linked by bridges to each other and to the mainland of Shetland. On Tondra the Croft Trail is on a working croft dedicated to Shetland's native breeds. Burra boasts some of Shetland's finest beaches and a wonderful Shetland pony experience, plus Icelandic horse beach-trekking at Houlls Horses and Hounds.

Please note some attractions have seasonal opening hours. Please check opening times with the attraction.

For more ideas and contacts go to www.visitscotlandtraveltrade.com or email traveltrade@visitscotland.com