

Orkney & Shetland

Includes →

Orkney.....	399
Kirkwall	402
Stromness	409
Hoy.....	411
Northern Islands.....	412
Shetland.....	416
Lerwick.....	417
Bressay & Noss.....	420
South Mainland	421
North Mainland.....	423
The North Isles	424

Best Places to Eat

- Eastward Guest House (p407)
- Scalloway Hotel (p421)
- Foveran (p405)
- Hay's Dock (p419)
- Hamnavoe Restaurant (p411)

Best Places to Sleep

- Brinkness Guest House (p410)
- Scalloway Hotel (p421)
- Almara (p423)
- West Manse (p414)
- Albert Hotel (p404)

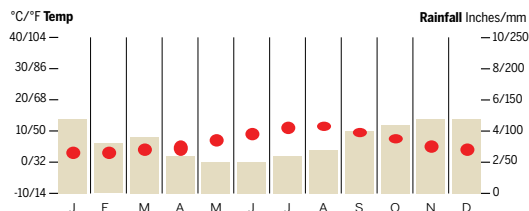
Why Go?

Up here at Britain's top end it can feel more Scandinavian than Scottish, and no wonder. For the Vikings, the jaunt across the North Sea from Norway was as easy as a stroll down to the local mead hall and they soon controlled these windswept, treeless archipelagos, laying down long-houses alongside the stony remains of ancient prehistoric settlements.

An ancient magic hovers in the air above Orkney and Shetland, endowing them with an allure that lodges firmly in the soul. It's in the misty seas, where seals, whales and porpoises patrol lonely coastlines; it's in the air, where squadrons of seabirds wheel above huge nesting colonies; and it's on land, where standing stones catch late summer sunsets and strains of folk music disperse in the air before the wind gusts shut the pub door. These islands reward the journey.

When to Go

Lerwick



Jan Shetland's Up Helly Aa (p417): horned helmets and burning Viking ships on the beach.

Jun Orkney rocks to the St Magnus Festival (p403): book accommodation ahead.

Jul Summer sunlight and Scotland's longest daylight hours.

ORKNEY

POP 21,670

There's a magic to Orkney that you begin to feel as soon as the Scottish mainland slips astern. Only a few short miles of ocean separate the chain of islands from Scotland's north coast, but the Pentland Firth is one of Europe's most dangerous waterways, a graveyard of ships that adds an extra mystique to these islands shimmering in the sea mists.

An archipelago of mostly flat, green-topped islands stripped bare of trees and ringed with red sandstone cliffs, its heritage dates back to the Vikings whose influence is still strong today. Famed for ancient standing stones and prehistoric villages, for sublime sandy beaches and spectacular coastal scenery, it's a region whose ports tell of lives shared with the blessings and rough moods of the sea, and a destination where seekers can find melancholy wrecks of warships and the salty clamour of remote seabird colonies.

Tours

Orkney Archaeology Tours

TOURS

(☎ 01856-721450; www.orkneyarchaeologytours.co.uk) Specialises in all-inclusive multiday tours focusing on Orkney's ancient sites with an archaeologist guide. Also run customisable private tours.

Wildabout Orkney

BUS

(☎ 01856-877737; www.wildaboutorkney.com) Operates tours covering Orkney's history, ecology, folklore and wildlife. Day trips operate year-round and cost £59, with pick-ups in Stromness (to meet the morning ferry) and Kirkwall.

Great Orkney Tours

DRIVING

(☎ 01856-861443; www.greatorkneytours.co.uk) Readers rave about Jean's enthusiasm for the culture and archaeology of these islands on her flexible small-group tours.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Flybe (☎ 0371-700 2000; www.flybe.com) flies daily from Kirkwall to Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness and Sumburgh (Shetland). Most summers it also serves Bergen (Norway).

BOAT

During summer, book car spaces ahead. Peak-season fares are quoted here.

Northlink Ferries (☎ 0845 6000 449; www.northlinkferries.co.uk) Operates ferries

from Scrabster to Stromness (passenger/car £19.40/59, 1½ hours, two to three daily), from Aberdeen to Kirkwall (passenger/car £31.50/111, six hours, three or four weekly) and from Kirkwall to Lerwick (passenger/car £24.65/103, six to eight hours, three or four weekly) on Shetland. Fares are up to 35% lower off-season.

Pentland Ferries (☎ 0800 688 8998; www.pentlandferries.co.uk; adult/child/car/bike £16/8/38/free) Leave from Gills Bay, 3 miles west of John O'Groats, and head to St Margaret's Hope on South Ronaldsay three to four times daily. The crossing takes an hour.

John O'Groats Ferries (☎ 01955-611353; www.jogferry.co.uk; single £17, incl bus to Kirkwall £18; ☺ May-Sep) Passenger-only service from John O'Groats to Burwick, on the southern tip of South Ronaldsay, with connecting bus to Kirkwall. Two to three departures daily. Forty-minute crossing.

BUS

Citylink (www.citylink.co.uk) Runs daily from Inverness to Scrabster, connecting with the Stromness ferries.

John O'Groats Ferries (☎ 01955-611353; www.jogferry.co.uk; ☺ May-Sep) Has summer-only 'Orkney bus' services from Inverness to Kirkwall. Tickets (one way £25, five hours) include bus-ferry-bus travel from Inverness to Kirkwall. There are two daily from June to August.

Getting Around

The *Orkney Transport Guide* details all island transport and is free from tourist offices.

The largest island, Mainland, is linked by causeways to four southern islands; others are reached by air and ferry.

AIR

Loganair (☎ 01856-873457; www.loganair.co.uk) operates interisland flights from Kirkwall to Eday, Stronsay, Sanday, Westray, Papa Westray and North Ronaldsay. Fares are reasonable, with some special discounted tickets if you stay a night on the outer islands.

ORKNEY EXPLORER PASS

The **Orkney Explorer Pass** (www.historicenvironment.scot; adult/child/family £18/10.80/36; ☺ Apr-Sep) covers all Historic Environment Scotland sites in Orkney, including Maeshowe, Skara Brae, the Broch of Gurness, the Brough of Birsay and the Bishop's Palace and Earl's Palace in Kirkwall.