



Orkney Islands

Includes »

Stromness.....	270
West Mainland.....	272
Heart of Neolithic	
Orkney.....	272
Kirkwall.....	277
East Mainland to South	
Ronaldsay.....	282
South Ronaldsay.....	284
South Isles.....	285
Hoy.....	285
South Walls.....	285
North Isles.....	288
Rousay.....	289
Westray.....	294
Walking in the Orkney	
Islands.....	298

Best Places to Eat

- » The Creel (p285)
- » Hamnavoe Restaurant (p272)
- » Kirkwall Hotel (p281)
- » Julia's Cafe & Bistro (p272)
- » Haff Yok Cafe (p296)

Best Places to Stay

- » West Manse (p296)
- » Woodwick House (p276)
- » Links House (p276)
- » Bis Geos (p296)

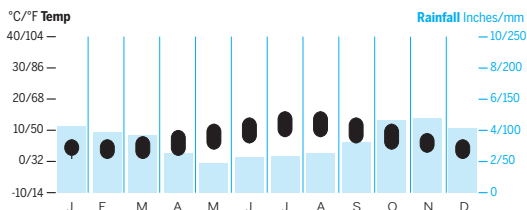
Why Go?

There's a magic to the Orkney Islands that you begin to feel as soon as the Scottish mainland slips astern. Only a few short miles of ocean separate Stromness from Scrabster, 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 by Atlantic gales and ringed with red sandstone cliffs, its heritage dates back to the Vikings – it's recorded in the *Orkneyinga Saga* – whose influence is still strong today. Famed for its ancient standing stones and prehistoric villages, for sublime sandy beaches and spectacular coastal scenery, this is 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.

When to Go

Kirkwall



Apr–May Daffodils line the rural roads; fields and meadows are a riot of wildflowers.

June Orkney rocks to the St Magnus Festival: book accommodation ahead.

May–July Best time to visit seabird nesting colonies; puffins begin to arrive in late April.



Orkney Islands Highlights

1 Travel back in time at **Skara Brae** (p272), a village of prehistoric perfection that pre-dates the pyramids

2 Plunge down the passageway into spooky **Maes Howe** (p274), a vast Stone Age tomb with bawdy Viking graffiti

3 Soak up glorious scenery on a hike to spectacular **Old Man of Hoy** (p299)

4 Learn about Orcadian history at the fascinating **Stromness Museum** (p271)

5 Admire magnificent **St Magnus Cathedral** (p277) at Kirkwall and humble **Italian Chapel** (p283) at Lamb Holm

6 Island-hop the magical **North Isles** (p288), where crystal waters lap against glittering white-sand beaches

7 Take in the raucous sound and sheer spectacle of nesting seabirds at **Noup Head** (p294)

8 Dive the sunken WWI warships of **Scapa Flow** (283)