

THE CLASSIC SCOTLAND ISLAND HOPPING TRAIL

Introduction

- 12 Days / 11 Nights
- Any Day Start
- First Class Hotels
- Standard Group Size 1 - 8

The Scottish Islands stretch from the Shetlands in the far north, just 6 degrees south of the Arctic Circle, to the remote Western Isles, made from some of the oldest rocks on Earth. The dramatic landscapes are divided by countless rivers and lochs and the western coasts are edged by miles of sandy beaches. Man has been here for over 6,000 years, living off the sea and thin soil. Orkney was part of the kingdom of Norway until 1469 and many of the Isles still retain elements of their Norse heritage. During the Viking festival of Up Helly AA in Lerwick, for example, the people of Orkney set fire to a replica Viking longship. The Scottish Isles have a remarkable wealth of prehistoric monuments which place them among Europe's most treasured archaeological sites.

Trip Profile

The aim of this tour is to give you a taste of the heritage and cultures of the Scottish Isles and a chance to visit some of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. As you travel from island to island, you will have the opportunity to explore the attractions and delights of the local villages and towns. Please note that ferries between these remote islands are subject to weather conditions and itineraries may need to change at short notice to take account of this.

Why Not? Create Your Own Tour. As with all our tours, the attractions and distilleries you visit will take account of your interests and can be adapted to what you want to see.

Ferry times: This tour is dependent on many external ferries. This itinerary will need to be adjusted to take account of the times of each ferry.

Itinerary

Day One: Edinburgh to Aberdeen to Shetland

We begin our tour in Scotland's capital Edinburgh. We will collect you from the airport or your hotel and travel north. On the way we will pass a number of landmarks including the **Forth Railway Bridge**. This bridge was the world's first steel bridge and is a symbol of Scotland. Further on, there are a number of outstanding castles close to our route. One of the best is **Glamis Castle**. This was the childhood home of the late Queen Mother and set in the lovely rolling hills of Angus. With an ancient history, most of the building you will see today dates from the C17th and 18th. Finally, we will arrive in **Aberdeen**, Scotland's third largest city. Known as the granite city for its striking granite architecture, there are a number of noteworthy attractions. Our aim is to take the overnight ferry to the remote Shetland Isles.



Forth Bridge

Day Two: Shetland to Orkney

We will arrive in **Lerwick** (on the Shetland Isles) early in the morning. By the time we disembark and have breakfast, we will then move onto to see the **Shetland Museum**. This museum tells the story of the islands heritage through thousands of artefacts and displays. Shetland has a strong Norse heritage and this can be seen throughout the island. The island also has a rich craft tradition and you will have time to explore the local shops. Our aim is to catch the evening ferry to Orkney which leaves from the south of the island. On the way we can take a boat to the island of Mousa and the ancient Iron Age tower of **Mousa Broch**. A broch is an Iron Age tower and Mousa is the only one in the world to survive almost complete. Close to the ferry port are the 3,000 year old ruins of **Jarlishof**. This consists of a number of ancient settlements dating to the Bronze Age. We will overnight in Kirkwall.



Mousa Broch

Day Three: Orkney

This morning, we explore Orkney. First, we will tour the capital of the Island, Kirkwall. The Norman cathedral of **St Magnus** – Orkney’s patron saint. This church was founded in 1137 and is famed for its stain glass. Close-by is the C17th **Earl’s Palace**, the finest French Renaissance building in Scotland. This part of Scotland has some of the most outstanding Neolithic treasures on the planet. A few miles from Lerwick is **Skara Brae**, a village dating from 3,000BC. It is remarkably preserved with an intricate maze of dwellings. Close by is the **Ring of Brodgar** and the chambered tomb of **Maes Howe**. Nearby **Standing Stones of Stennes** have been associated with ancient Maes Howe rituals and are an imposing sight. Time permitting we will end the day at **Highland Park** distillery where we try the distinctly heathery flavour captured from the island’s peat. Overnight Kirkwall.



Orkney

Day Four: Orkney to Mainland

Catching the mid morning ferry from Orkney we will alight at the port of **Scrabster** on the mainland. On the way, we pass the **Old Man of Hoy** – a 450 feet high sea stack which is one of the world’s great climbs. Once on the mainland, we will take a leisurely drive through the unparalleled mountain scenery of the northern and western coast of the Highlands. We pass **Smoo Cave**, on the outskirts of the quaint village of **Durness** and the remains of **Ardveck Castle**, overlooking the shores of **Loch Assynt** and dating back to 1490, before arriving in the port. Our overnight stop will be close to the port of **Ullapool**.



Old Man of Hoy

Day Five: Mainland to Lewis

On the morning ferry from Ullapool we will travel to the **Outer Hebrides** and the largest town on the **Isle of Lewis**, Stornoway. The Hebrides are a 150 mile long chain of Island and a haven for outdoor activities with wonderful beaches and a great place to unwind. Arriving about lunchtime, Stornoway’s centre and harbour are worthy of a short walking tour. One of the islands most famous products is tweed. There are a number of makers of the authentic **Harris Tweed** and we can spend some time discovering this unique craft. Overnight in Stornoway.



Stornoway

Day Six: Lewis, Harris to Skye

Travelling out of Stornoway, we will take the short journey to the tiny village of Arnol and **Blackhouse Museum**. This is a traditional thatched long house shared by crofters and their animals. It gives us a wonderful insight into how the islanders lived up until relatively recent history. A little further along the coast is **Carloway Broch**, a Pictish tower over 2,000 years old. The **Standing Stones of Callanish** are a little further on. These are standing stones built between 2900 and 2600 BC and laid out in the shape of a Celtic cross. Our aim is to catch the late afternoon ferry to the Isle of Skye and time permitting we will venture onto the **Isle of Harris**. Overnight in Skye.



Standing Stones of Callanish

Day Seven: Isle of Skye

Skye is arguably Scotland’s most beautiful island and it has a wealth of places to see and things to do. Options include visiting the **Cuillin Hills**, Britain’s finest mountain range, **Dunvegan Castle**, seat of the chiefs of the Clan Macleod, the **Old Man of Storr**, a monolith rising 49 metres by the Portree road. Skye is also known as a haven for artists due to the exceptional light found here and there are many remote galleries to explore as well as award winning seafood restaurants in Portree, the Island’s capital. From here **boat trips** can be taken to feed the Sea Eagles in the Sound of Ramsay or we can end the day with a visit to Skye’s only distillery, home of the volcanically powerful **Talisker** malt. With its distinctively peppery character it is said to “explode on the palate”. Overnight Skye.



Cuillin Hills

Day Eight: Skye to Mainland to Mull

We begin by catching the ferry from Skye to Mallaig. We will pass through spectacular scenery, from vast mountains to white sandy beaches. The ferry leaves the mainland from the tiny port of Kilchoan and arrives at Tobermory, the main town on Mull. Here the rocky coastline gives magnificent sea views. There would be a choice this afternoon, either Torosay Castle, with its fabulous collection of furniture and paintings and gardens lined with statues. Or, we can go to Duart Castle serenely sitting on a promontory on the eastern edge of the island. It is the home of the Clan Maclean, with an outstanding banqueting hall and state rooms all within the C13th keep. Its dungeons held prisoners from a Spanish galleon sunk in 1588. Overnight Tobermory.



Tobermory

Day Nine: Mull, Iona and Staffa

Having visited the St Columbus Exhibition at Fionnphort to discover how St Columba began his mission in Scotland in 563, we travel by boat to the Island of Iona. Iona's Abbey has a wealth of architectural detail and monuments from many periods. At the front is St Martin's cross, the finest Celtic cross in Britain. The ancient burial ground contains the graves of many Scottish Kings, including Malcolm I, Donald I and Macbeth. An alternative tour today would be to take the tiny boat to the incredible Fingal's Cave on nearby Staffa. From this vantage point, it is possible to see some of the wildlife of the area, including whales, dolphins, seals and basking sharks. Overnight Tobermory.



The Abbey on Iona

Day Ten: Mull to Jura and Islay

From Mull we travel to Oban, known as the gateway to the Islands and travel south to Tarbert, passing several castles and stunning scenery on the way. From here, we take the three hour journey to Islay, with a fantastic view of Jura's three peaks, known as the Paps of Jura. Jura, named after the Norse word for deer, is the home of the whisky named after the Island's most famous inhabitant, George Orwell. Also on the way is Kilmartin which is Scotland's richest prehistoric landscape with over 350 ancient monuments. Finally, after the ferry trip, we arrive on Islay and travel to Port Askaig. The island is well known for its peaty malt whiskies and there are seven distilleries to visit here including Bowmore, Lagavulin or Laphroaig. Overnight Islay.



Lagavulin distillery

Day Eleven: Islay

Islay's main administrative centre is the Georgian village of Bowmore. The C18th church is interesting and its circular shape is designed to minimize the Devil's possible lurking places. The Museum of Islay Life in Port Charlotte contains information on the wildlife and social history of the island. From here, we visit the medieval stronghold at Finlaggan. This collection of small islands was chosen by the Clan MacDonald who became the "Lord of the Isles" as their seat to control an area from Kintyre to Lewis. It was the home to the privy council and was out of royal control. Islay is a haven for those who enjoy hunting deer and fishing for salmon and trout and you may wish to spend the afternoon fishing for wild trout on the beautiful Loch Gorm. Overnight Islay.



Fishing on Islay

Day Twelve: Islay to Mainland

From Islay, we return to Glasgow or Edinburgh, to return home. The journey back to either airports or the city centres will take about three to four hours. On the way, we will see places such as Inveraray Castle and town – the home of the Campbell family and legendary Loch Lomond. Inveraray has an award winning whisky shop and you will be able to top-up on the malts you wish to take home. If you are taking another Classic Scotland tour, our journey will begin here.



Inveraray

Please note: this itinerary can be adjusted or extended to include the islands and attractions of your choice.

(12 days, all accommodation with breakfast, **Blue Badge Driver / Guide**, based on the number in your group)

Price per person – please contact us – US Toll Free: 1866 464 7389

Extensions and Alternatives

The Majestic Line

The Majestic Line have a couple of small traditional wooden sailing ships that can be hired for a private tour. Whilst they can depart from anywhere along the west coast of Scotland, the best fit into our tour would be from Day Ten onwards. From Oban the you can cruise around Islay and Jura plus many smaller islands few people reach.

You will have your own chef to produce meals from local produce and the atmosphere is designed to be relaxed and informal.

Prices on application.



The Majestic Line

Hunting, Fishing and Golf

Scotland has some of the best fishing both stream and lake, anywhere. We have ghillies on most islands and we can arrange guided full or half days. Tuition in fly casting can be given by professional guides.

Red deer stalking is the most popular type of large animal hunting in the country. Most hunting takes place on a number of estates distributed throughout the region

Golf is Scotland's national sport and together with some outstanding new courses there are a number of lesser know links courses in the Islands

Prices on application.



Fishing

Helicopter Trips

Take to the air with the ultimate in sightseeing. Soaring above Scotland's great cities to the remote highlands and islands. From short sightseeing trips to longer tours, you would be able visit the outlying islands with your own helicopter and guide. Visit some islands few human reach and discover the unique wildlife and culture of these places.

Prices on application.



Birds Eye Views

Royal Scotsman Train

One of the great railway journeys of the world, The Royal Scotsman has a number of wonderful excursions we can plan into a private tour. Travel between 2 and 7 nights and you will experience the majesty of this outstanding 5 star train. From the comfort and warmth of your carriage the train will glide through the highlands. Food is the key to this experience and you will be served only the finest local produce, cooked by the best chefs. The experience is enhanced by tales told by the locals making Scotland's colourful history come alive.

Prices on application.



Royal Scotsman Train

Accommodation and Tour Details

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation is based on first class accommodation. Lunch and evening meals are not included unless specifically stated in the tour notes. We are able to offer several grades of accommodations from beautiful bed and breakfasts to whisky orientated hotels and castles.

Guides and Entrance Fees

Each tour is lead by a fully qualified **Scottish Blue Badge Driver / Guide**. In most instances, entrances to historic attractions are included in the price we will quote you. Distillery tours will vary according to the level of tour you require and between distilleries.

Prices

We aim to offer the best and most competitive price for each of our tours. We use our partners to get the best price at the time of booking. The cost will also depend on the services you require. Please **[contact us](#)** for the best price.

Airport Transfers

We can provide transfers from any location and airports or cruise ports. Return transfers from London airports to the start and finish of the tour are not in the tour costs.

Practical Information

Climate

As some of attractions on this tour are out of doors it is advisable to take the correct clothing. With the unpredictability of the climate and forecast, wet weather clothing is essential. Sturdy footwear and waterproof clothing are advised.

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Jan 6 | Feb 7 | Mar 10 | April 13 | May 17 | June 20 |
| July 22 | Aug 21 | Sept 19 | Oct 14 | Nov 10 | Dec 7 |

Health

This tour involves a walking on some terrain that can be fairly rough. We ask all our travellers to carefully consider the physical demands of our tours and discuss any concerns that may arise. There is much scope for flexibility within each tour to accommodate a range of limitations and needs, but we do have to be clear what they may be before accepting any booking.

Additionally, if you find walking difficult or any other health requirement, please let us know as soon as possible. There may be motorised wheelchairs available at some attractions. These may be booked if sufficient notice is given.

Taxes

Value Added Tax is applied to most goods. Most travellers can get a VAT refund, but you must ask and the paperwork and procedures can be long and complicated.

Tipping

Some restaurants and hotels will automatically add a 10-15% service charge. Check your bill before tipping further. Taxis, Restaurants, Bell Boys, Porter expect a tip, bar staff in pubs, do not.

Important information

The information in this tour profile is given in good faith and covers the planned excursions, attractions and conditions which should be available on this tour. In some instances, due to unforeseen circumstances, changes in the above itinerary might be necessary. To appreciate this tour to its best, you should be prepared to be flexible where necessary.

Leisure Creations Ltd, 4 Austen Drive, Stock, Ingatestone, Essex, CM4 9FB.

Telephone: +44(0)1277 841651 Fax: +44(0) 870 220 3156

Email: info@classic-scotland.com Website: www.classic-scotland.com

US Toll Free: 1866 464 7389

Leisure Creations Ltd. Registered in England 4057887

Registered office: 4 Austen Drive, Stock, Ingatestone, Essex, CM4 9FB Vat Registration no: 805 9583 05



Issue Date: October 2009 © Leisure Creations Ltd

Photographs: Copyright of Visit Scotland/Scottish Viewpoint and Leisure Creations Ltd