Islands of Scotland and Shetland specialist tour for mature travellers

30 May 20 to 18 Jun 20

Small group tour of the Islands of Scotland and Shetland.

Islands of Scotland and Shetland tour is specifically tailored for mature travellers. Join Odyssey on this Scottish islands tour, which includes Shetland, for 20 days with 3 departures each year. This unique tour of Scotland’s Islands and Shetland explores the nation’s living history. While the islands’ residents mostly lead modern lives,
there is still evidence of a much older way of life. The Scottish Islands are among the world’s great repositories of archaeological treasures, including prehistoric and ancient occupation sites, as well as isolated monuments and unforgettable natural scenery.

**About the Scottish Islands**

This Scottish Islands and Shetland tour program focuses particularly on the culture and heritage of the Scottish islanders. Because Odyssey ensures that the tour is kept to a small group, we stay in comfortable family-run hotels and cruise to some of the more isolated Scottish isles. As we visit each island, we take short history tours and take in some of the most breathtaking scenery in the British Isles that is the islands around Scotland. Our escorted tour of the Scottish Islands also includes a stop at the ancient Island of Iona. This is the point from which St. Columba took Celtic Christianity to the British Isles. This tour of the Islands around Scotland also includes time on the outer Hebrides Islands of Lewis and Harris. Here, our tour with a local guide features encounters with fantastic geological formations and collections of Scottish standing stones.

Guided by the local people, their passion for these unique islands of Scotland shines through. Whilst on this tour, we learn about the settlement and the burial mounds and the unique wildlife of the Scottish Islands. We gain local insights on the relationship with the mainland and learn about the invasions repelled from both the North and the South. And of course the contemporary lives of this diverse collection of people who now inhabit the Islands around Scotland. It is, as we will discover, the local people today who are keeping the history and lifestyle alive of these heritage rich islands.
Scottish Island Hopping tour

This 20-day Scottish Island tour for mature travellers starts in Glasgow. The tour takes in some seven terrific islands whilst passing many more as we circumnavigate the Scottish coastline from west to east.

Odyssey’s tour of the Scottish Islands visits;

- The island of Arran
- Isle of Mull
- Isle of Skye
- Harris & Lewis
- Orkney Islands
- Shetland Islands

The Scottish Isles small group educational program is terrific for couple or the single traveller.

Typically Odyssey Traveller offers 3 departures each year of this program to the Scottish islands, in order to ensure we can keep the groups at a manageable size and offer you as many options as possible.

For more details, click the ‘Top 5’ or ‘Itinerary’ buttons above! If you’re keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right hand side of this page.

If you’re looking to do some Scottish island hopping, here is a link to
an article on the 10 best Scottish Islands

Also this article visiting standing stones and the Neolithic history of Scotland may also assist you with your planning.

Tour Notes

- Ferry routes and schedules are subject to change so, although we will include all elements in the tour, the order/nights may change
- Many of the hotels used on this tour are small or in heritage buildings. Lifts and/or porterage may not be available.
- Maximum of 18 participants.

Top 5

1. Meet hard working people busy at the crafts that occupied the lives of their ancestors at the Orkney and Shetland Islands.
2. Experience Scotland in miniature on the Isle of Arran.
3. Explore the outer Hebridean Islands of Lewis and Harris with their fantastic geological formations, standing stones, and Broch.
4. See Iona, the tiny island from which St. Columba took Celtic Christianity to the British Isles.
5. Visit the western Isles of the Hebrides where our ferry takes us to the Isle of Skye.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Glasgow

Overview: Upon arrival in Glasgow, we will come to the hotel individually. There will be free time before our tour orientation and a
welcome dinner.

**Accommodation:** 1 night at Fraser Suites, Glasgow City Centre.

### Day 2-3

**Locations:** Arran

**Overview:** From Ayrshire, we cross the Firth of Clyde to the Island of Arran. With its rugged granite mountain peaks in the north and green rolling hills and pretty villages in the south, it is believed that Arran has been populated since the end of the last Ice Age. The island boasts a number of Neolithic burial tombs and Bronze Age stone circles. The island was purchased from the Vikings after the Battle of Largs and it is said that Robert the Bruce received the signal to re-invade Scotland while his followers were harassing the English garrison at Brodick Castle. We will have a chance to see this 13th century castle. The island is now best known for outdoor activities and its whisky, cheese, and oatcakes.

**Accommodation:** 2 nights at The Glenartney.

### Day 4

**Locations:** Oban

**Overview:** From Arran we take a ferry to the strangely-shaped Scottish peninsula of Kintyre, traversing magnificent scenery and visiting fine gardens such as Arduaine, noted for its spectacular displays of rhododendrons and azaleas.

**Accommodation:** 1 night at Columba Hotel.
Day 5-6

Locations: Mull

Overview: We will explore the outstanding scenery of Mull, one of the larger of the Inner Hebridean islands. Mull offers rough moorlands, the rocky peak of Ben More, and a stunning coastline. The 13th century Duart Castle, home of the chief of the Maclean clan, is our next stop. We will visit the pretty fishing village of Tobermory and see the brightly coloured buildings lining the harbour. We will see the burial place of Lachlan Macquarie, who was a native of Mull. We will make our pilgrimage to the tranquil islet of Iona, which is the birthplace of Celtic Christianity in Britain. A restored abbey stands on the site where Irish Saint Columba began his crusade in 563 and where 48 Scottish kings are said to be buried. There may also be chance - weather permitting - to make the trip to Fingal’s cave on the Isle of Staffa, one of Scotland’s natural wonders and inspiration for Mendelssohn’s “Hebrides Overture.”

Accommodation: 2 nights at Western Isles Hotel.

Day 7-8

Locations: Isle of Skye

Overview: The Isle of Skye, renowned for its rugged and dramatic scenery, has enjoyed a turbulent geological history and is the largest island of the Inner Hebrides. Its abandoned crofts pay testament to the brutal Highland Clearances which followed the battle of Culloden and it is historically significant as the Island that provided refuge to Bonnie Prince Charlie after the battle. We will explore from the rugged volcanic plateau of the north to the peaks of the Cuillins. We are never far from the sea and will experience numerous sea-lochs, limestone grasslands dotted with sheep and cattle, and crofts
abandoned during the Highland Clearances, when landowners demanded rent instead of military service from their tenants. Thousands of tenants were evicted and emigrated when they were unable to afford the impost. We learn about clan heritage and see the castle at Dunvegan. We will also visit Armadale Castle, which houses the Clan Donald Visitors’ Centre, and experience the local whisky.

**Accommodation:** 2 nights at Royal Hotel or similar.

**Day 9-11**

**Locations:** Lewis & Harris

**Overview:** We explore the islands of Lewis and Harris, which are separated by a narrow isthmus, with the ancient Standing Stones of Callanish and the ruins of Carloway Broch providing testament to long habitation here. We also visit the bustling harbour of Stornoway, view the rolling peat moors of Lewis, and the mountains of Harris.

For centuries, the peat bogs of the eastern shores have provided islanders with fuel and man has been here for 6,000 years living off the sea and the thin turf. However, abandoned monuments attest to the difficulties faced in commercializing the islanders’ traditional skills such as the tough Harris Tweed, known throughout the world. Gaelic, part of an enduring culture, is still spoken on the islands. We learn more about the recent past at Arnol’s Black House Museum, a showcase of crofting life, and there is chance to experience the local producers of cheese, smoked fish, and tweed.

**Accommodation:** 2 nights at Royal Hotel and 1 night at Caledonian Hotel.
Day 12

Locations: Thurso

Overview: We board our early morning ferry for our return to the Scottish mainland where we visit Dunnett Head, the most northerly point on mainland Britain. On a clear day it commands extensive views which include the Orkney Islands to the north, and the length of the north coast of Scotland from Duncansby Head to the east, and to Cape Wrath, in the west. We will drive via Kylesku to a small, remote fishing village, and visit Durness, where we explore Dunnet Head.

Accommodation: 1 night at St. Clair Hotel.

Day 13-14

Locations: Orkney

Overview: On Orkney we will experience some of the most awesome scenery in Britain. We learn about some of the prehistoric, Celtic, and Viking influences on the island peoples, visit some of the picturesque small towns and villages, and catch a glimpse of some of the island's seals, otters, and colonies of sea birds while we search for historical treasures in its great collection of ancient sites. We will visit the Standing Stones of Stenness, the Ring of Brodga, and the prehistoric village of Skara Brae. We will also learn about the wartime history of the island as we view the Churchill Barriers and Italian Chapel. Both Orkney and Shetland have close links to the Nordic countries through language, lifestyle, and history, despite the fact that the Orkney Islands are within 10 kilometres of mainland Scotland. The island differs from Shetland in that it has flat and undulating islands with rich soil, which makes the grass green and nurtures summer crops of grain. Shetlanders are fishermen with
farms while Orcadians are farmers with boats. Orkney is, however, still known for its dramatic coastal scenery, abundant marine bird life, and islands which contain the densest concentration of prehistoric sites in Britain, testifying to their long history of settlement. Eighteen of the 67 islands are inhabited.

**Accommodation:** 2 nights at Ayre Hotel.

**Day 15**

**Locations:** Overnight Ferry

**Overview:** We travel between Orkney and Shetland on board an overnight ferry. Northlink Ferries have all the attributes of a mini cruise liner with en-suite cabins, restaurant, bar, and lounges. A typical local breakfast is provided during the cruise.

**Accommodation:** 1 night on Northlink Ferry.

**Day 16-17**

**Locations:** Shetland

**Overview:** We will view the wild, untamed scenery of Shetland, where we may catch a glimpse of some of the islands' tiny ponies, colonies of sea birds, and other wildlife. We trace the ancient Celtic and Viking influences on the island peoples and their language, as we visit some of the remote villages in our search for historical treasures. We will also visit the Shetland museum in Lerwick, the harbour of Scalloway, the Sunburgh Head, and Jarlshof, where the museum explains the sprawling sea-front ruins spanning 3,000 years. The Shetlands are just over 300 kilometres from the Norwegian coast and were under Norse rule until 1469. About 14 of the hundred or so islands in the Shetland group are occupied and these cliff-edged islands now form the northernmost part of...
Scotland. Shetlanders have a distinctive dialect derived from their long connection with Norway and nowhere on the islands is more than 8 kilometres from the sea, so that fishing and salmon farming still provide a major contribution to the economy. However, North Sea Oil has been the major source of recent revenue. Shetland too boasts some of Britain’s most stunning coastal scenery, awesome colonies of sea birds, abundant marine life, and a rich pre-history.

**Accommodation:** 2 nights at Queens Hotel or similar.

**Day 18**

**Locations:** Overnight Ferry

**Overview:** From Shetland we again take an overnight Northlink Ferry to Aberdeen from where we travel to the Scottish capital, Edinburgh. During our overnight Northlink Ferry service we stay in cabins and breakfast will be included.

**Accommodation:**

**Day 19**

**Locations:** Edinburgh

**Overview:** The city of Edinburgh, the capital of modern-day Scotland, is of great political, cultural, and historical interest. Located near the Firth of Forth, in the Scottish Lowlands, Edinburgh is a city of 2 halves. The old part, with its impressive castle and the Royal Mile stretching down to Holyrood Palace, contrasts with the more recent section of garden squares and elegant Georgian architecture. Princes Street is one of its best-known thoroughfares. Edinburgh is a sophisticated city with a long and rich history, gothic monuments, a royal palace, challenging museums, interesting art galleries, and
many churches.

**Accommodation:** 1 night at Motel One Royal, Edinburgh Royal Mile.

**Day 20**

**Locations:** Edinburgh

**Overview:** This tour concludes in Edinburgh. If you wish to extend your stay, please contact your Educational Travel Adviser.

**Accommodation:**

**Inclusions / Exclusions**

**What's included in our Tour**

- 17 nights of hotel accommodation.
- 2 nights of cabin accommodation on board a ferry (single clients may need to share depending on availability).
- 19 breakfasts and 11 dinners.
- All entry fees and services of local expert driver/guide.
- Cruises, ferry crossings, field trips, and excursions as indicated.
- Touring by comfortable and modern mini-coach.
- Services of a Tour Leader for the duration of tour.
- Gratuities and necessary tips.
- Detailed preparatory information.

**What’s not included in our Tour**

- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Return economy class international airfare and departure taxes.
- Items of a personal nature, such as telephone calls and laundry.
- Porterage.
- Meals not specified in the itinerary.
Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.