



## ORKNEY ISLAND HOLIDAYS LTD

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## Highlights of Orkney and Shetland Holiday

A multi-interest Holiday in Orkney and Shetland,  
Britain's most northerly islands, with Orkney Island Holidays Ltd.

Two holidays : June 25<sup>th</sup> to July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012, and July 6<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> 2012.

Cost £1595 per person sharing, single supplement £210. 7 nights.

Leaders Paul and Louise Hollinrake.



**Enjoying the peace and tranquility of a typical Shetland seascape on a calm day.**

## An introduction to your Highlights of Orkney and Shetland Holiday.

Orkney and Shetland are two archipelagoes to the north of Scotland, Orkney a mere four miles offshore while Shetland is another hundred miles distant, on the way to Norway. Though similar when compared to Mainland Britain, there are significant differences between Orkney and Shetland and exploring the two adds to the appreciation both. They were both part of the Kingdom of Norway and Denmark from around 800 AD until 1470, so many placenames and dialect words reflect this. Orcadians and Shetlanders are proud of their Norse ancestry and links with Norway are kept very much alive.

The cliffs in both Orkney and Shetland are home to thousands and thousands of nesting seabirds, such as guillemots, razorbills and kittiwakes. In Shetland there are puffins galore. Everyone leaves with close-up photos of them! The road sides, stream courses and hill slopes have varied wild flowers, and in June and July they are very abundant. In Orkney the rare *Primula scotica* can be found, while both island groups have northern marsh and heath spotted orchids plus a host of other delightful specialities.



“I’m back, dear, is anybody home?”



Seals conserving their energy

You will see both common (harbour) seals and grey (Atlantic) seals in both Orkney and Shetland. Orkney has 17% of the world’s grey seal population. Both species haul out in groups and we may hear them ‘singing’ – the strange noises are actually warnings to each other not to get too close! Common seals pup in June and July so we may see mothers and pups playing in the shallows.

Louise has a long connection with Shetland having holidayed in Scalloway regularly as a teenager. She and Paul moved to live in Orkney in 1986 and with frequent visits to Shetland since then have got to know the two island groups intimately. We enjoy sharing our enthusiasm and the wealth and depth of our knowledge with our guests and we hope you will become one of them.

We have chosen June and July for the Holiday because in our opinion it is the best time for the birds and flowers, the weather has usually warmed up and the daylight hours last long into the evening, known as the “Simmer Dim”.

The approach and mix on the Highlights of Orkney and Shetland Holiday will be the same as all our Holidays: friendly groups of like-minded individuals, interesting days, peaceful nights, long evenings, both of us on hand. We are using good quality Hotel accommodation with ensuite facilities, chosen because they have comfortable rooms, good food and are located within easy reach of the sites we plan to visit in that part of Orkney and Shetland.

For 2012 we have two Highlights Holidays. The first begins in Orkney and finishes in Shetland, while the second begins in Shetland and finishes in Orkney.

### The Weather.

The weather is variable, but generally we have lots of sun, some wind and some rain during the Holiday, sometimes all in the same day. The wind usually keeps it cool and has the advantage of removing any midges which might venture out if it’s flat calm – which can happen but is rare. Make sure you bring waterproof jackets and trousers, wool hat, sunhat and sun cream, and be prepared for anything!

### The Food.

The meals at our Hotels are really good. Breakfasts are hearty and set us up well for the day, and the evening meals are eaten in a relaxed informal friendly atmosphere. Dinner is chosen from a menu, while breakfast consists of a choice of cereals, toast, fruit, yoghurt, etc, your choice of cooked food and tea or coffee. Packed lunches are usually a sandwich, a piece of fruit, packet of crisps and a biscuit etc. Supplement them with snacks from the excellent village stores throughout the islands if you wish. Your Hotel bar bill can be settled by credit card at the end of your stay.

### You can travel to and from Orkney and Shetland either by Air or by Sea.

**For Flights** to or from **Sumburgh Airport** in Shetland and **Kirkwall Airport** in Orkney we suggest you contact **Scapa Travel** in Kirkwall, who can get you the best deals.

Tel: 01856 889040 or e-mail [scapa@barrheadtravel.com](mailto:scapa@barrheadtravel.com) web [www.scapatravel.co.uk](http://www.scapatravel.co.uk)

The hotels are very handy for the airports, being less than ten minutes away by taxi. You could consider staying on for one or more **extra nights** at the end of the trip. Please contact us for advice.

### **Ferries**

**Getting to/from Orkney:** Northlink Ferries operate between Scrabster near Thurso and Stromness, and between Aberdeen and Kirkwall. Their contact details are: Tel: 0845 6000 449, e-mail [info@northlinkferries.co.uk](mailto:info@northlinkferries.co.uk), [www.northlinkferries.co.uk](http://www.northlinkferries.co.uk).

There is also a car ferry from Gills Bay near Wick to/from St. Margaret's Hope in Orkney run by Pentland Ferries, Tel: 01856 831226, e-mail [admin@pentlandferries.co.uk](mailto:admin@pentlandferries.co.uk), [www.pentlandferries.co.uk](http://www.pentlandferries.co.uk).

John O'Groats Ferries run a bus from Inverness, known as the Orkney Bus, which links with their passenger ferry across the Pentland Firth and continues by bus to Kirkwall. Contact details are Tel:01955 611353, e-mail [info@jogferry.co.uk](mailto:info@jogferry.co.uk) and [www.jogferry.co.uk](http://www.jogferry.co.uk). This is the cheapest option for Orkney.

### **Getting to/from Shetland:**

The simplest way by ferry is to/from Aberdeen to Lerwick, Shetland's capital. Northlink Ferries have an overnight passage every day on this route, Tel: 0845 6000 449, e-mail [info@northlinkferries.co.uk](mailto:info@northlinkferries.co.uk) [www.northlinkferries.co.uk](http://www.northlinkferries.co.uk). There is a regular bus service or taxis down to the Sumburgh Hotel at the southern tip of Shetland, about 20 miles away. To return to Aberdeen by Northlink ferry from Orkney it might be necessary to stay an extra night and travel south overnight the following night. You could arrange the extra night at the Lynnfield Hotel or there are many other accommodation options – however it is necessary to book in advance.

### **What IS included in the Cost of your Highlights of Orkney and Shetland Holiday.**

Daily transport by minibus and short walking excursions as per the suggested itinerary.

Guiding with Paul or Louise for six full days to many of the best habitats and regions of Orkney and Shetland that are good for wildlife, archaeology, flowers, geology and other interests.

Entrance fees to all sites of interest that we visit as part of your tour with us in Orkney and Shetland.

Ferry tickets to other islands in the tour itinerary and special excursion to Mousa to see stormie petrels and the most famous Broch in the World.

Airport/Hotel transfers on afternoon of arrival and morning of departure.

**Highlights One:** Six nights full board ensuite accommodation in two good quality Hotels and overnight cabin on board the ferry from Orkney to Shetland.

**Highlights Two:** Seven nights full board ensuite accommodation in two good quality Hotels and evening passage with dinner on board the ferry from Shetland to Orkney.

### **What is NOT included in the Cost.**

Travel to and from Orkney and Shetland at the start and end of your holiday with us.

Travel and medical insurance: It is your responsibility to make sure you are adequately insured. We can advise.

All drinks from the bar, telephone calls, laundry and things of a personal nature.

Extra packed lunch snacks and drinks if required.



**Plant Boat**



**Shetland Yoles**

We have a superb itinerary worked out, so that we can share these fantastic places with you. Here is a summary: **for more details see ‘Sights and Sites’ Pages 6 to 9.**

**Highlights of Orkney and Shetland One: Monday 25<sup>th</sup> June to Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2012**

**Day 1:** Travel to Orkney. Meet as a group before dinner at the Ayre Hotel. We can meet you at the airport or Kirkwall Travel Centre and transfer you to the hotel close by. *Night Ayre Hotel.*

**Day 2:** An archaeological tour of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Area – Skara Brae Village, Maeshowe Tomb and the Ring of Brodgar Stone Circle -- plus the spectacular cliffs of Yesnaby where we will look at some fascinating geology and search for the delightful flower the Primula scotica, an Orkney speciality. *Night Ayre Hotel.*

**Day 3:** A day trip to our home island of Shapinsay with its Iron Age broch and Mill Dam RSPB Wetland Bird Reserve. Weather permitting it may be possible to do a short trip in our workboat to nearby uninhabited islands with their seals and birds. *Night Ayre Hotel.*

**Day 4:** Scapa Flow and the Italian Chapel via the Churchill Barriers, looking at special features of War Time events, plus the birds and flowers that take advantage of the habitats created by the Barriers. Then to the Moors of the Mainland to see red-throated divers, The Loons RSPB Reserve for wetland birds, and a fascinating bit of history at the Click Mill. *Overnight ferry to Shetland*

**Day 5:** Arrive in Shetland with breakfast on the ferry. Then head to Scalloway, the ancient capital of Shetland, and the Loch of Tingwall, site of a Norse parliament and good for birds. Before heading south to Sumburgh we’ll visit the excellent new Shetland Museum in Lerwick. *Night Sumburgh Hotel.*

**Day 6:** After visiting Jarlshof Archaeological Site and the recently excavated Iron Age village of Old Scatness, we will go to the puffin paradise of Sumburgh Head, and visit other bird hotspots in this area. *Night Sumburgh Hotel.*

**Stormie Petrel visit :** We will visit the island of Mousa on one of our nights at Sumburgh (weather permitting) to see the World famous Broch and its breeding stormie petrels, locally known as alamootie, or oily squirts!

**Day 7:** Today we’ll go via the birds of Spiggie Loch to the beautiful St. Ninian’s Isle and its Pictish/Norse settlements. In the afternoon we’ll take a scenic coastal drive from the Atlantic to the North Sea (two miles max!) to get to Catpund Viking soapstone quarry. We’ll look at wild flowers in Dunrossness with local heritage and Shetland stories as we explore. *Night Sumburgh Hotel.*

**Day 8:** Depart after breakfast. We can transport you for a morning flight, otherwise the airport is a few minutes away by taxi.

For more details of the sights you will see and the sites you will visit see pages 6 to 9.

## Highlights of Orkney and Shetland Two: Friday 6<sup>th</sup> July to Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2012

**Day 1:** Travel to Shetland. Meet as a group before dinner at the Sumburgh Hotel. We can meet you at the airport and transfer you to the hotel close by. If you come by ferry there is a convenient bus service from Lerwick to Sumburgh.  
*Night Sumburgh Hotel.*

**Day 2:** After visiting Jarlshof Archaeological Site and the recently excavated Iron Age village of Old Scatness, we will go to the puffin paradise of Sumburgh Head, and visit some bird hotspots in this area. *Night Sumburgh Hotel.*

**Day 3:** Today we'll go via the birds of Spiggie Loch to the beautiful St. Ninian's Isle and its Pictish/Norse settlements. In the afternoon we'll take a scenic coastal drive from the Atlantic to the North Sea (two miles max!) to get to Catpund Viking soapstone quarry. We'll look at wild flowers in Dunrossness with local heritage and Shetland stories as we explore.  
*Night Sumburgh Hotel.*

**Stormie Petrel visit :** We will visit the island of Mousa on one of our nights at Sumburgh (weather permitting) to see the World famous Broch and its breeding stormie petrels, locally known as alamootie, or oily squirts!

**Day 4:** Today we'll head to Scalloway, the ancient capital of Shetland, and the Loch of Tingwall. Then to the excellent Shetland Museum in Lerwick before taking the Northlink ferry to Orkney, with dinner on board and the opportunity of sea-watching for birds and cetaceans.  
*Night Lynnfield Hotel.*

**Day 5:** An archaeological tour of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Area – Skara Brae Village, Maeshowe Tomb and the Ring of Brodgar Stone Circle -- plus the spectacular cliffs of Yesnaby where we will look at some fascinating geology and search for the delightful flower the *Primula scotica*, an Orkney speciality.  
*Night Lynnfield Hotel.*

**Day 6:** A day trip to our home island of Shapinsay with its Iron Age broch and Mill Dam RSPB Wetland Bird Reserve. Weather permitting it may be possible to do a short trip in our workboat to nearby uninhabited islands with their seals and birds.  
*Night Lynnfield Hotel.*

**Day 7:** Scapa Flow and the Italian Chapel via the Churchill Barriers, looking at special features of War Time events, plus the birds and flowers that take advantage of the habitats created by the Barriers. Then to the Moors of the Mainland to see red-throated divers, The Loons RSPB Reserve for wetland birds, and a fascinating bit of history at the Click Mill.  
*Night Lynnfield Hotel.*

**Day 8:** Depart after breakfast. We can transport you for a morning flight, otherwise the airport is about ten minutes away by taxi.



Iron Age houses at Jarlshof, Shetland



Skara Brae Neolithic village, Orkney

[These itineraries are flexible and may be altered to make best use of local conditions and events each day.](#)

## Sights and Sites

### ORKNEY

We'll start our exploration of Orkney with **Skara Brae**, the unique **Neolithic Village**, the most complete of its kind in Western Europe. Houses in an amazingly good state of preservation show us much about how people lived **five thousand years ago**, and you might change your mind about how 'backward' these people were, and exactly what the Romans didn't do for us – this village is three thousand years before 'veni, vici, vinci'!



Inside one of the houses at Skara Brae



The Ring of Brodgar

From Skara Brae we'll go to the nearby cliffs at **Yesnaby**, an area of dramatic beauty with specific geological and botanical attractions. It's here that we will see fossil remains of some of the earliest life forms on earth among the sedimentary layers, and we'll look for a specimen or two of the rare **Primula scotica** in flower. This little gem occurs only at a handful of sites in Orkney and one or two in Caithness, but nowhere else on earth.

The **Ring of Brodgar**, in diameter the second largest stone circle in Britain, stands in the midst of a very full Neolithic landscape still being uncovered. We'll find out what new finds have excited archaeologists this season! Recently a huge rectangular building has been found which contained coloured designs painted on stones. A well-established, important and impressive site in this area is the chambered cairn or tomb of **Maeshowe**, constructed with remarkable precision five thousand years ago, then decorated one thousand years ago by Vikings. It contains the largest collection of Norse runes outside Scandinavia. The original tomb rises to about three metres in height and is reached by a ten-metre stone passage down which the sun setting shines at the mid-winter solstice illuminating the inner chamber.

We take a short ferry trip from Kirkwall to our home island of **Shapinsay**, twenty-five minutes away but a different world. This will give you insights into what it is like to live in one of the smaller islands in Orkney, with its trials and rewards. Being near to Mainland people can commute to work by ferry so the population is quite stable and contains all age groups.



Burroughston Broch, Shapinsay



All set for an excursion to the skerries

Shapinsay has a population of around 320 and is about seven miles long and five wide. The mainstay of the economy is farming, with craft industries, fishing, tourism and service industries playing their part. Many people engage in more than one enterprise to make ends meet. Socially there is plenty going on, with clubs catering for all sorts of interests from badminton, music and football to parent-and-toddlers and machinery restoration.

While in the island we will see an Iron Age site at **Burroughston Broch**, one of the three best brochs in Orkney. It shows the main features associated with Orkney Brochs and you can get right inside to appreciate it.

Near our home in Shapinsay common or harbour seals often haul out to bask on the rocks, and weather permitting it might be possible to get close to them and grey or Atlantic seals in their natural habitat by going out for a short trip in our inflatable workboat, **Westsider 2**.

In this case Paul will take you to some small uninhabited islands and skerries just offshore from our home Furrowend. You'll also see sea birds close up, especially the black guillemots or 'tysties' nesting in crannies created by Paul to help them. You can enjoy the comforts of Furrowend between visits to the different sites.

Paul is the RSPB's representative in Shapinsay and looks after the **Mill Dam Reserve** on the island. This hosts many species of ducks and waders, plus geese and swans, all of which may have broods of young in June/July.

For our third day in Orkney we'll head south across the **Churchill Barriers**, constructed in the Second World War as part of the defence of **Scapa Flow**, the base for the British Fleet in both Wars. At strategic points on our route we will view Scapa Flow, the Barriers and other related places, each with its own story. One of these is the **Italian Chapel** built by prisoners-of-war out of the limited materials they had to hand. It is a poignant monument to peace which evokes the spirit of the Italians and their response to the difficulties of war and being in such an alien environment.



Primula scotica



Oyster plant



The Italian Chapel

The Barriers connect the '**linked South Isles**' of Lamb Holm, Glimps Holm, Burray, and South Ronaldsay. We'll visit Orkney's best site for **oyster plant**, another rarity, with delicate blue and pink flowers cascading over the sand and shingle. We'll also have a couple of stops to scan the sea and lochs for birds, such as **eider ducks, great and arctic skuas, terns, and gulls**. The birds of Orkney benefit from the proximity of seashore, moorland and farmland, so we are likely to see lots of waders such as **curlew, redshank and lapwing**.

We will visit Orkney's best site to view breeding **red-throated divers**, often with young at this time of year. We'll see them flying in with fish from the sea and with luck witness the pair's synchronized displays on both the loch and whilst flying. Here and in the surrounding moorland and farmed areas, we have a good chance to see hunting **hen harriers, buzzards and short eared owls**, species absent from Shetland but doing very well in Orkney. The heather will be coming in to bloom on the moors and we will look closely at some of the typical wild flowers of this habitat.

## SHETLAND

Shetland's most famous archaeological site is **Jarlshof**, a complex area spanning thousands of years from 5000 BC to the present day, and we will begin with a guided tour by Louise: it is a maze of original houses of different ages and after several years study Louise now feels she can interpret the sequence! Nearby **Old Scatness** is an **Iron Age village** where recent excavations are supplemented by reconstructions of ancient houses and workshops. The archaeology was first uncovered when a new runway for the airport was being constructed. (The main road actually crosses this runway just here, with traffic controlled by lights and gates!). You can walk among the original Iron Age buildings, imagining life here two thousand years ago. Sometimes there is a 'living history' presentation here, where you can see how people made the tools, utensils and clothes they needed.

From here we'll go up to **Sumburgh Head RSPB Reserve** to view endearing **puffins** plus **guillemots, kittiwakes, fulmars and razorbills**, while elegant **gannets** fly past in formation. We'll search the seas for **porpoises, dolphins and whales** – there is always a chance they may be there, if you're looking in the right direction at the right time!



Gannet



The tombolo to St. Ninian's Isle

The **RSPB Reserve of Spiggie Loch** is a haven for many species of birds. **St. Ninian's Isle** is linked to the Mainland by a formation known as a tombolo, a sand and shingle spit. On the island are the remains of Pictish and Norse ecclesiastical settlements where a hoard of silver was discovered in 1958.

The main features of the Shetland landscape are the **cliffs and moors** interspersed with lots of water – long arms of the sea called '**voes**' and many freshwater lochs. Both sea and lochs are hosts to birds, and we'll keep our eyes open for a glimpse of an **otter**. The moors are home to **golden plover, snipe, curlew, whimbrel** and of course 'bonxies' or **great skuas**, plus their more acrobatic cousins, the **arctic skuas**, or "scootie aalins" as they are known locally. All of these are possible as we journey around Shetland, stopping regularly to scan the land and sea scapes.

We will be hoping for an evening of calm weather so that we can take a boat trip to the island of **Mousa** aboard the ferry the Solan IV. The broch of Mousa is the most complete example of Iron Age brochs anywhere and well worth a visit, but the added attraction is that it is home to hundreds of nesting **stormie petrels**, little sea birds who only come ashore to raise their chick in holes in walls or on stony beaches. In daylight they are preyed on by skuas and gulls so they arrive around midnight in the twilight to change over sitting duties with their mate. They call each other in with a low churring noise, and thus present one of nature's unique events. It is a special privilege to share these moments in their lives.



A stormie petrel at the Mousa Broch



The Broch of Mousa



Living History at Old Scatness



Scalloway from the Scord

We'll head north to the ancient capital of Shetland, **Scalloway**. Our first view will unfold at the top of the Scord, a gap in the hills from which a panorama of Scalloway and its offshore islands unfolds. Here is the well-maintained Scalloway Castle dating from the sixteen century, surrounded by a lively village which has always been a seafaring centre. This continues today with the North Atlantic Fisheries College which serves Orkney, Shetland and much of Scotland.

Shetland was the base for a Norwegian resistance operation known as the **Shetland Bus**, first at Lunna and then in Scalloway. Traditional Norwegian fishing boats were used on perilous missions across the North Sea, blending with local boats as they picked up agents and folk wanting to escape from occupied Norway. Louise spent many happy childhood holidays in Scalloway and is still friends with the family who had maintained the Shetland Bus boats. The community Museum in Scalloway reflects life over the past two hundred years and is full of fascinating artifacts.

North of Scalloway is the **Tingwall Valley and Loch**. The loch is home to ducks and swans, which may include breeding **whooper swans** if we're lucky. Shetland is the only place in Britain where these swans nest, as normally they are purely winter visitors which breed in Iceland. A small island called the Holm in Tingwall Loch was the site of a Norse parliament about a thousand years ago.

We'll look at some of the wildflowers which bedeck the verges and fields of **Dunrossness**. These include **orchids, asphodel, gentians, many different vetches, ragged robin** and insectivorous plants such as **butterwort**, and naturalized garden escapes like **mimulus** along the ditches.



Butterwort



Mimulus



Northern Marsh Orchid

We'll go to the **Pool of Virkie** and the **Clumlie Loch**, taking time to view the birds – waders and sea ducks - - and we'll visit **Catpund Quarries**. Here a short walk takes us up to the Viking workings where we can still see where and how Norse people chiseled out their raw materials to carve large bowls, cups, lamps and pots in soapstone, also known as steatite, which carves easily and hardens with heat treatment. It was a favourite with Vikings and was exported to Orkney where there are no natural deposits.

And we'll visit **Lerwick**, Shetland's modern capital which grew up with the coming of Dutch fish traders in the eighteenth century and is now a busy and thriving port. We'll visit the new **Shetland Museum**, a beautiful imaginative place, full of interest and innovative ways of getting in touch with what makes Shetland what it is today.

If you wish to extend your holiday with a few **extra days in Orkney or Shetland** we can offer advice on where to stay and what to do. There is plenty of choice of accommodation available but it is important to book in advance.



Evidence of otter



Louise enjoying a geological exhibit

### [Is this the Holiday for you?](#)

Are you looking for :

- a multi interest Holiday in the most northerly parts of Britain ?
- a unique insight into the delights of Orkney & Shetland?
- a well-organised and flexible Holiday where everything is planned well for you?
- a relaxed pace with a friendly and fun atmosphere ?
- an emphasis on having a good time and learning about lots of aspects of these fascinating islands ?

AND

- to be guided by two experienced people who just love the Northern Isles and know them really well ?
- to explore with a small group of new friends?
- to get the most out of your Holiday in Orkney and Shetland?

**Then this Holiday is for you!**

### [What to do now.](#)

If you have any questions about this Holiday please get in touch with us by phone, letter or email, and we will do our best to help. We hope that you decide to come with us to Orkney and Shetland. We think it is a terrific Holiday destination at a time of year when the weather and wildlife are at their very best.

If you would like to join us on this Highlights of Orkney and Shetland Holiday, please complete the enclosed booking form and post it to us as soon as you can, together with your deposit payment made payable to Orkney Island Holidays Ltd.

Our normal Orkney Island Holidays booking conditions apply. If you need a copy of these we will be happy to send them to you.

### [Once you have booked.](#)

We will send confirmation of your booking on receipt of your completed booking form and deposit payment. Then when your balance is paid 10 weeks before departure, we will send you suggestions of what clothing and other things you might bring with you, plus suggestions about a few identification books that may be useful to you.

We look forward to hearing from you soon. [Best wishes, Paul & Louise Hollinrake.](#)



One of many Shetland ponies



Orchid

**[There is so much to see in these Northern Islands. Come with us and find out for yourself!](#)**