

A photograph of two puffins standing on a dark, mossy rock. They are facing each other, with their heads slightly tilted. The puffins have black heads and backs, white chests, and bright orange beaks and feet. The background is a clear blue sky with some white clouds.

Walking Scotland's Orkney Islands

UNITED KINGDOM - TRIP CODE ORK

WALKING AND TREKKING

Why book this trip?

Discover the beautiful landscapes, world-famous archaeological sites and birdlife of the Orkney Isles. Highlights include clifftop walks, wildflowers, puffin colonies, fresh seafood and Skara Brae - without doubt, the finest Stone Age village in Europe. Along the way, we enjoy generous Orcadian hospitality and experience the relaxed pace of island life.

- **Ancient History** - Discover Iron Age villages and Neolithic sites including Skara Brae
- **Orcadian and Norse traditions** - Unearth the Orkney's history, heritage and local traditions
- **Breathtaking landscapes** - Explore some of Britain's most pristine regions on foot

**INCLUDED MEALS**

Breakfast: 6
Dinner: 4

**TRIP STAFF**

Explore Tour
Leader / Driver
Driver(s)

**TRANSPORT**

Ferry
Minibus
On Foot

**ACCOMMODATION**

6 nights
comfortable hotel

**WALKING**

GRADE:
Easy To
Moderate

**GROUP SIZE:**

10 - 16

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Inverness

The trip starts at Inverness Rail Station at 14.00. After meeting we have a scenic drive (3hrs) along the northeast coast of the Highlands to Scrabster port, where our ferry sails (1.5hrs) across the Pentland Firth to Stromness town on Mainland, the principal island of Orkney. From here we drive to our hotel base for the holiday in the historic town of Kirkwall. It is possible to eat on the ferry and the expected arrival time at the hotel is around 21.00. The Tour Leader plans to meet for the introductory briefing upon arrival in the hotel, or after check in.

Kirkwall is situated on the northern coast of Mainland and is the largest settlement and administrative capital of the Orkneys with a population of about 9,300. At its heart stands St. Magnus Cathedral, which was founded in memory of Saint Magnus Erlendsson, one of the Norse earls of Orkney (1108-1117), who became its patron saint. Next to the Cathedral are the ruins of the former Bishop's Palace and Earl's Palace. Kirkwall has many 17th-18th century houses and other structures in the local vernacular style.

It is possible to reach Kirkwall by flight or ferry from Aberdeen. Please advise us at time of booking if you intend on making your own way to the hotel.

Please note that the order of days may be changed around in accordance with the weather and ferry schedules.

**ACCOMMODATION:**

The Orkney Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Deerness Peninsula coastal walk and Scapa Flow

The Deerness Peninsula is on the easternmost part of the Mainland. Here we start our first walk and before long reach the Brough of Deerness - a well-preserved Viking Age settlement on top of a sea stack - and an impressive collapsed sea cave called the Gloop that produces strange gurgling noises! From here we continue along the coastline around Mull Head until we reach the Covenanters Memorial - commemorating 200 prisoners who perished off the coast in 1679. Finally our walk brings us back to the vehicles. Later we drive to visit the simple Italian Chapel on Lambholm Island, built by POWs in WWII, and discover more wartime history at the Churchill Barriers and Scapa Flow. The rest of the afternoon is left free in Kirkwall where you can visit St Magnus Cathedral (closed Sundays) and the Orkney Museum that is housed in one of Scotland's best-preserved sixteenth century town-houses - Tankerness House and gardens - displaying prehistoric, Pictish and Viking collections of international importance. The Orkney Wireless Museum covers the history of radio and recorded sound.

Today's easy-graded walk will take approximately 3 hours and will cover a distance of 10 kilometres along grassy trails with a total ascent and descent of 150 metres.



ACCOMMODATION:
The Orkney Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 3 - Isle of Westray coastal walk

We take the ferry from Kirkwall harbour to Westray in the far northwest, a fantastic voyage out along the old Viking sea route called the Swan's Path that will take about 1.5 hours. It is the second largest of the Orkney Isles, affectionately known as the 'Queen o' the Isles', with a population of just 600 people. Today's highlight is a circular walk out to Noup Head to see one of the largest seabird colonies in the British Isles, second only to St Kilda. Here we'll find guillemot, kittiwake, razorbill, shag and fulmar as well as wild flowers, caves and lighthouses. Puffins are normally seen on Westray between the end of

April and mid-August. The open ground above the cliffs offers superb views and is often beautifully carpeted with yellow, white and purple flowers. From here we continue our walk south along the west coast of Westray. After the walk we visit Noltland Castle ruins, built around 1560 for Mary Queen of Scots. If time permits we may visit Pierowall village before catching the ferry back to Kirkwall.

Today's easy-graded walk will take approximately 3 hours and will cover a distance of 9 kilometres along grassy clifftop trails with a total ascent and descent of 200 metres.



ACCOMMODATION:

The Orkney Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 4 - West Mainland coastal walk to Skara Brae

We start the day with a short drive back to Stromness where we start our walk northwards following the west coastline of Mainland that is dominated by cliffs, and on the trail we pass the impressive sea stacks of Yesnaby and North Gaulton. Along the way look out for the Primula Scotia (Scottish Primrose), Orkney's most famous flowering plant. The walk finishes at the site of 5000-year-old Skara Brae, one of the best-preserved Neolithic villages in Europe. There is the option to visit Skail House, a 17th Century Laird's manor house. If time permits, we may drive a short distance to visit the Earl's Palace - remains of a 16th century castle built by Robert Steward Earl of Orkney and or include a stop at the Kirbuster Museum (1595 house, FOC).

Today's moderately-graded walk will take approximately 4-5 hours and will cover a distance of 12.5 kilometres along grassy clifftop trails, sometimes boggy, with a total ascent and descent of 300 metres.



ACCOMMODATION:

The Orkney Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 5 - Heart of Neolithic Orkney UNESCO site and Stromness

On a small stretch on land between the Loch of Stennis and the Loch of Harray on Orkney's Mainland we will find the archaeological sites of the Ring of Brodgar and the Stones of Stenness (both older than Stonehenge), and the burial tomb of Maeshowe complete with Viking graffiti. Together with Skara Brae, they form the Heart of Neolithic Orkney UNESCO World Heritage site. This morning we will explore all these extraordinary 5000-year-old sites, including the ongoing Ness of Brodgar Excavation. In the afternoon we will visit the pretty town of Stromness, Orkney's second biggest town and home of Orkney's most famous poet George Mackay Brown. You may choose to visit Stromness Museum.

Today is a relaxed day with around 3 kilometres walking between the Neolithic sites.



ACCOMMODATION:

The Orkney Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Isle of Rousay

After breakfast we drive a short distance to Tingwall port to catch the ferry across the waters to Rousay Island - known as 'The Egypt of the North' due to its proliferation of archaeological monuments. While there we will visit the large Midhowe Neolithic chambered cairn and Midhowe Iron age Broch Tower. We walk over the moors to Knitchen Hill and Blochnie Hill; the highest point on the island at 275m, which provides magnificent views over the seaboard and of the nearby islands Egilsay and Wyre. This walk is also partly within the RSPB owned Trumland reserve where we may see raptors and the short-eared owl. If time permits we may visit Trumland house and gardens (stately home). We return later this afternoon to Kirkwall.

Today's easy-to-moderate graded walk will take approximately 3-4 hours and will cover a distance of 9 kilometres on moorland paths, sometimes boggy in places, with a total ascent and descent of 350 metres.



ACCOMMODATION:
The Orkney Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 7 - Tour ends in Inverness

After checking out of the hotel we drive back to Stromness ferry terminal for the 11 am departure. If you intend to fly back from Kirkwall, you will have to make your own way - by taxi or bus - to the airport. From Scrabster we will drive south to Inverness arriving at the rail station at about 15.30 where the trip ends.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Climate and country information

United Kingdom

Climate

The UK has a temperate but very variable climate. In general the summers are warm with July and August being the warmest. The winters are cool and the lowest temperatures are recorded during January and February. Whatever the season it is advisable to be prepared for rain!

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
0	3 Pin Flat	Christian	English

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Highland Park whisky distillery (one hour tour 15 GBP)

Orkney Distillery (Gin)

Stromness Museum - 5 GBP

Skaill House - 5 GBP

Trumland house and gardens, Rousay Island - 3 GBP

Clothing

Orkney has a cool temperate climate and you can expect changeable weather from sunshine to windy days and rain. A good quality waterproof jacket and trousers are essential. We recommend hiking trousers, plenty of layers, warm hat and gloves and sunhat. If the forecast is good T shirts and shorts will be fine. Come prepared!

Footwear

Bring a broken in pair of walking boots/walking shoes and a comfortable pair of shoes for about town. Can be wet underfoot at times.

Luggage

20Kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a waterproof rucksack large enough to carry what you need for the day - waterproofs, warm layer, water, picnic, sun-cream, phone etc.

Equipment

You will need a small rucksack, thermos or water bottle. Binoculars can be good for wildlife spotting. Insect repellent, suncream, good quality sunglasses and a lip salve with sun protection are all useful. You may find walking poles helpful. Gaiters can be useful when it's wet.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

United Kingdom

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may

charge more.

Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£10	£18	£4	£0.8

Foreign Exchange

Local currency	Recommended Currency For Exchange
Pounds Sterling.	Carry a combination of UK Sterling cash, ATM and credit cards.

Where To Exchange	ATM Availability
Your tour leader will advise you on arrival.	ATM's are widely available in main towns.

Credit Card Acceptance	Travellers Cheques
Widely accepted.	Can be exchanged at most banks and post offices.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Ferry, Minibus, On Foot

Accommodation notes

We stay at the comfortable 3-star Orkney Hotel in the centre of Kirkwall nearby all amenities. Dating back to 1670, the hotel offers every modern convenience, while retaining its original features and charms. The hotel has a recently refurbished bar area for socialising in the evening.

ORK17Jul21 stays at The Albert Hotel in the centre of Kirkwall nearby all amenities. Facilities include a bar and rooms are modern, comfortable and en-suite.

Arrival and departure information

Transfers to and from our accommodation are not provided for this trip. If you are planning to arrive or depart by train, this information may be useful to you. Whilst we are unable to make a reservation for you, we have provided contact numbers to enable you to make a direct booking.

Arriving from Inverness Airport: There are a number of taxi companies that can be hailed from the airport to take you to Inverness train station to start the trip. Alternatively, you may pre-book with:
Taxi Inverness: 01463 800 069

Inverness Airport Taxi: 01463 264 064

The journey should take around 20 minutes.

Alternatively the Jet Bus line 11 is an airport shuttle that takes you to Inverness, stopping close to the central railway station.

Essential Information

Government Travel Safety Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK citizens, check the latest Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office advice.

Please refer to our COVID-19 entry requirements page for any country-specific conditions of entry. Whilst we strive to update this on a regular basis we recommend you also check the FCDO website for the latest advice on entry requirements in this fast-evolving situation. Information can change at any time.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

UK: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

Find out more about [Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions](#) before you book.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements.

Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Ability to swim

No

United Kingdom

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Walking and Trekking information

DAILY DISTANCES		
Day 2	9km	3hrs
Day 3	8km	3hrs
Day 4	14km	4-5 hrs
Day 5	3km	1hr
Day 6	10km	3-4 hrs

Walking grade

Easy to moderate

Trek details

Walks on 4 days for around 3-4 hours. The longer walk from Stromness to Skara Brae is 4 to 5 hours. You will be walking on a mix of grassy trails and moorland paths on flat or undulating terrain. The surface can be rough and boggy in places with some steep sections though generally on the flat. Some of the walking is along cliff tops but it is easy to keep your distance from the edge. We have graded the walks as Easy to Moderate.

Additional Information



Reviews



AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS



PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE



AIRPORT
TRANSFERS