



Wild Scotland - M/V Greg Mortimer

ARCTIC, UNITED KINGDOM - TRIP CODE GMWS

POLAR

Why book this trip?

Explore Scotland's wild islands, home to some of the world's largest seabird colonies, including adorable puffin and noisy Arctic tern. The Scottish isles are a bird watcher's paradise with species such as fulmar, kittiwake, guillemot, gannet and shag too. Your ship will get you as close to these sightings as possible, but you can also take to the water in Zodiacs to really get the most out of your wildlife experiences. Seal will frolic close to you and you may encounter whale and dolphin swimming around you. Back on land, discover ancient sites, huge monoliths and remote, picturesque villages in the Hebrides, Shetlands and little-visited tiny isles surrounding the mainland. This is a diverse exploration of rugged and remote Scottish islands, from a unique vantage point.

- Visit St. Kilda - a World Heritage Site

- **Zodiac cruise through spectacular lochs** - home to seal, dolphin and basking shark.
- **On the Shetland Islands** - uncover captivating history through a visit to an Iron Age broch.

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| INCLUDED MEALS Breakfast: 10 Lunch: 9 Dinner: 10 | TRIP STAFF Expedition Crew Naturalist(s) | TRANSPORT M/V Greg Mortimer Zodiac | ACCOMMODATION 10 nights premium boat | TRIP PACE: Relaxed |

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Set sail from Oban

Make your own way to Oban Port, in time for embarkation in the afternoon. Our expedition team will warmly welcome you aboard the MV Greg Mortimer and you will have time to settle into your cabin before the briefings begin. We will set sail along Scotland's northwest coast in the evening.



ACCOMMODATION:
M/V Greg Mortimer (or similar)

Grade: Premium Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: DINNER

DAY 2 - Isle of Skye, Barra, Rum and Iona

From golden beaches to jagged peaks, bleak moors and heather clad hills; from abandoned settlements to

picturesque villages, our days in the Hebrides archipelago will be packed with variety. We may explore remote lochs beneath some of Britain's most untamed mountains and wander between unusual rock formations. We may watch for whale, dolphin, otter, seal, and the increasingly rare basking shark. Possibly we will land at an island reserve that is home to red deer and white-tailed sea eagle.



ACCOMMODATION:
M/V Greg Mortimer (or similar)

Grade: Premium Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 3 - Isle of Skye, Barra, Rum and Iona

Early the next morning we will aim for the tiny island of Iona. Barely 5 kilometres long, Iona is renowned as the birthplace of Christianity in Britain. It is also a burial ground of early Scottish Kings. The Irish monk, St Columba and twelve disciples, landed here and founded a monastery in 563 AD. From this base, St Columba set about converting Scotland and much of Northern England to Christianity.

On Staffa, we hope to have the chance to explore Fingals Cave, where the melodious sound of waves crashing against towering basalt pillars inspired Mendelssohn's Hebridean Overture. We may enter the cave in Zodiacs, or clamber ashore to walk into the mouth of the cave. On shore we will also find Puffins in abundance.

The rugged island of Skye, named after the Norse word for cloud, is a hiker's paradise. It is a centre of Gaelic culture, and some islanders still speak the language. Hopefully, there will also be the time and right conditions to explore options on other, smaller islands to the west of Scotland, such as Barra, the Isle of Rum and Iona. It may also be possible to visit some fascinating spots along the coast of the Scottish mainland.

To the south of the Cuillin hills we may visit Rubha an Dunain, a small uninhabited peninsula on the southwest corner of Skye commanding an impressive view of the sea routes nearby. As a result of its strategic position we can see archaeological remains-from a Neolithic chambered cairn, to a Viking canal and more recent black houses. Depending on weather conditions, we may choose to visit the small island of Canna in search of the rare basking sharks, common seals and bird cliffs.



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Grade: Premium Boat



DAY 4 - Saint Kilda and surrounding islands

From the Inner Hebrides we make our way to the Outer Hebrides - also known as the Western Isles - that stretch for 200 kilometres and look out on their western side to the Atlantic Ocean. Our first stop is at the Isle of Lewis, the largest and northern-most island in the Outer Hebrides. We plan to make a stop at Callanais, where archaeology buffs will be keen to see the fascinating group of Standing Stones, dating from around 3,000 BC. Nearby we may visit Bostadh House, a remarkable reconstruction of an Iron Age dwelling tucked away just above a beautiful white beach.



ACCOMMODATION:

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Grade: Premium Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 5 - Saint Kilda and surrounding islands

Weather permitting we plan to land at the isolated archipelago and World Heritage site of St Kilda, where derelict crofts bear testament to the fortitude of islanders who once tended the unique Soay sheep and harvested seabirds for food and to pay their rent in the form of wool, meat and feathers. The isles hold Europe's most important seabird colony and is home to Britain's highest sea stacks or rock columns.



ACCOMMODATION:

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Grade: Premium Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 6 - Saint Kilda and surrounding islands

Island hopping northeast, we aim to visit tiny specks of land that bear the brunt of violent Atlantic storms and rarely see visitors. Home to breeding seal and some of Europe's largest seabird colonies, Sula Sgeir, North Rona and Flannan boast spectacular cliffs, fantastic rock stacks, hidden beaches and luxuriant heaths where sheep once grazed.



ACCOMMODATION:
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Grade: Premium Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 7 - Shetland Islands

Britain's most northerly islands lie almost 160 kilometres north of the Scottish mainland, at a similar latitude to the southern tip of Greenland, or Bergen in Norway. Kept relatively warm by the Gulf Stream, Shetland's 100 islands experience almost 24 hours of daylight in summer. They abound with nature reserves and archaeological sites, and offer a taste of traditional island life.



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Grade: Premium Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 8 - Shetland Islands

We plan to visit some of Shetland's best preserved and most complex archaeological sites of brochs, or fortified Iron Age towers, as well as some of the world's largest colonies of sea bird.

Hermaness National Nature Reserve, close to Britain's most northerly point, is a place of bird cries and sea smells - of myth and mist. The cliffs rise 170 metres above the Atlantic. During summer they are alive with the cacophony of over 100,000 breeding seabird: kittiwake, shag, snipe, dunlin, golden plover and Arctic skua, making this one of Europe's most diverse colonies. The grasslands, moors and cliff tops are a tapestry of colourful wildflowers - gentians, heather, orchids and thrift are a few of the species here.

We hope to visit the rocky islet of Muckle Flugga, Britain's most northerly point, situated only 274 kilometres from Norway. With its mile-long seabird cliffs, the Island of Noss is a National Nature Reserve, where we also hope to make a stop. In breeding season the sound of around 150,000 birds and chicks fills the air. Millions of years of wind and ice have honeycombed thousands of nesting ledges in sandstone cliffs almost 200-metres high. Resident seals and visiting otters feed in dense kelp around the shores.





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Grade: Premium Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 9 - Orkney Islands

Mid way between Orkney and Shetland, Fair Isle houses a major European ornithological research station, and is also famous for knitwear and historic shipwrecks. About 4.8 kilometres by 3.2 kilometres, it is surrounded by impressive cliffs. The 70 or so islanders mostly live in traditional crofts on the more fertile low-lying southern part of the island.

A bird watchers' paradise, Fair Isle lies on the intersection of major flight-paths from Scandinavia, Iceland and Faroe. In summer, the cliffs teem with breeding fulmar, kittiwake, guillemot, gannet, shag and puffin. The Isle is an excellent place to view seabird, especially puffin at close range. Fair Isle also has over 250 species of flowering plants, including wetland flowers, rare orchids, alpine species and common wildflowers. We'll be welcomed by the hospitable villagers and may take a hike or visit the museum. Grey and common seals inhabit these waters around Fair Isle, while sharp eyes may spot harbour porpoises, white-beaked dolphin, Atlantic white-sided dolphin, orca and minke whale.



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Grade: Premium Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 10 - Orkney Islands

Among Orkney's archipelago of 70 windswept islands, lying 9.6 kilometres north of the Scottish mainland, a rich tapestry of archaeology, history and wildlife awaits. You follow the passage of time - from 5000 year old World Heritage neolithic sites, past relics from wandering Vikings and reminders of World War II occupation, to present day crofting communities. Imposing sea cliffs teem with seabirds and cliff top paths and bleak moors beckon keen hikers.

At the Knap of Howar on Papa Westray lies the earliest known house in Northern Europe, occupied by Neolithic farmers over 5,000 years ago. At the east end of Scapa Flow remnants from World War II include an Italian Chapel, created by Italian prisoners of war made out of two Nissen huts, and the Churchill Barriers, constructed on the orders of Winston Churchill to keep out U-Boats.

Discover the rich history in Kirkwall, capital of the Orkney Islands. Initial impressions are misleading, as the harbour area looks modern, but the narrow winding streets and lanes of the old town, which have remained relatively unchanged over the centuries are appealing. Explore magnificent St Magnus Cathedral built from red and white sandstone and considered the finest medieval building in the north of Scotland before popping across the road to Tankerness House and Gardens, a restored 16th century former manse, now housing the Orkney Museum featuring archaeological artefacts from Neolithic times to the Vikings. The exhibition is a great way to whet your appetite for the archaeological gems you will find on the mainland including the unique and well-preserved 5,000-year-old semi-subterranean village of Skara Brae.

Everything west of Kirkwall is known as West Mainland, an area of rich farmland, rolling hills and moorland, with dramatic cliffs along the Atlantic coastline. Some of the main archaeological attractions we may see include the standing Stones of Stenness, the Ring of Brodgar, and the chambered tombs of Maes Howes that to this day still have unresolved mysteries. One of the mainland's main attractions is Skara Brae, the best-preserved Stone-Age village in northern Europe, located in the spectacular white sands of the Bay of Skail. Revealed in 1850 after a storm below away the dunes, the site dates from approximately 5,000 years ago and was occupied for about 600 years, showing a unique picture of the lifestyle of the original inhabitants.



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MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 11 - Aberdeen

Upon arrival in Aberdeen, you will disembark the ship for onward travel.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Climate and country information

Arctic

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.

Whilst landings are included in the cost of your trip as per the outline itinerary, some departures aboard the MV Greg Mortimer have additional optional excursions which can be pre-booked with the ship operator directly. These will be charged at an additional fee, depending on the excursion and we recommend booking these in advance, to ensure availability. Please speak to a member of our Polar team who will advise you on the booking process.

Clothing

Parkas

A complimentary parka is provided for you on board the ship and is yours to keep after the voyage. It has a comfortable wind-resistant inner jacket, which is detachable from the waterproof outer shell, and is designed to be worn over your essential base layers.

Gloves

Keeping your hands warm and dry can be a challenge. Thin polypropylene gloves can be worn underneath warm outergloves. This allows you some protection from the cold when removing your gloves to operate your camera etc. We strongly recommend that you bring more than one pair of gloves, in case one gets wet (or lost).

Hat/Cap

Warm, woollen hat/cap to protect your ears, as well as a scarf, neck gaiter or other face protection, such as a balaclava.

Trousers

Water-resistant trousers of coated nylon or, even better, Gore-Tex® are essential for your comfort. They can be worn over your regular clothes to keep you warm and dry. We suggest that you purchase trousers a few sizes larger than you normally wear as you will be wearing them over other clothing. Gore-Tex® or

similar fabrics are excellent for keeping out wind and water without trapping excess heat. Rain gear and Gore-Tex® products can be found in any outdoor sport clothing store. In addition to your waterproof trousers, warm ski pants are suggested if you have them. Warm trousers such as jeans, corduroys etc are also good.

Socks

Warm wool socks worn over a thin pair of silk, polypropylene socks should provide enough warmth and insulation for your feet. Bring several pairs of socks, since you will inevitably get your feet wet.

Outer Clothing Woollen, knit or cotton sweaters/tops, polar fleece tops (medium weight), several cotton turtlenecks and T-shirts for layering on and off the ship.

Underclothing

Thermal underwear is highly recommended as it will keep you warm without adding bulk. Most polar travellers prefer a lightweight version.

Footwear

Complimentary waterproof boots will be supplied on-board. However, if you have extra small or large feet, you are advised to bring your own.

Also ensure you take good walking boots and trainers for relaxing.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

Sunglasses and sun cream

Insect repellent

Personal toiletries

A refillable water bottle

Books/reading material

Camera and memory cards

Seasickness remedy

Walking poles

Tipping

Local crew

Gratuities are included in the cost of your voyage.

Arctic

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.

Foreign Exchange

United Kingdom

Food and drink

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| | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 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

Your tour leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

ATM's are widely available in main towns.

Credit Card Acceptance

Widely accepted.

Travellers Cheques

Can be exchanged at most banks and post offices.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

M/V Greg Mortimer, Zodiac

Ship description

The MV Greg Mortimer is a 104-metre ship, purpose-built in 2019 for expedition travel. Capable of negotiating the strongest winds and waves, the vessel is being built to world-class polar standards and has been designed in close consultation with expedition specialists. The MV Greg Mortimer is limited to just 138 passengers and guests can enjoy some added comforts such as spacious stateroom cabins, a large mud room with easy boarding access and a hydraulic viewing platform, offering unobstructed views of the wildlife. Other features include a library, Wellness Centre with a gym, sauna and spa and a multimedia room for keen photographers wishing to edit their photos after a day of exploration. As a modern and custom-designed ship, this vessel is at the cutting edge of nautical technology and will ensure a comfortable and safe passage through polar waters.

Cabins

The lead-in prices on our website are based on triple outward facing, Stateroom cabins. All staterooms have private bathrooms, ample storage, with twin beds. Many of the stateroom categories, have floor to ceiling windows that offer prime observation opportunities around the clock. Additionally, there are private balconies in most of the staterooms, allowing you to watch the world float past and take in the salty air of the open ocean. A full layout of the deck plan can be found under the Polar Ships section on our website. Your confirmed cabin type will appear on your Booking Confirmation, which will be sent on receipt of your deposit payment.

Ship dining

Meals are served in the large, spacious dining room with an open seating arrangement, perfect for swapping stories with your extended expedition family. A range of courses is offered at each meal time and you can enjoy a variety of house wines, beers and soft drinks which are included with your evening meal. Complimentary coffee, tea and snacks are available throughout the day and any additional drinks can be purchased at the fully-stocked bar.

On the last day of your trip, the team on the MV Greg Mortimer will provide a special farewell four-course dinner with cocktails - a perfect way to end your voyage and reflect on your magnificent time on-board.

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 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

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

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

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

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.

Arctic

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.

Polar information

Ship information

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platform, offering unobstructed views of the wildlife. Other features include a library, Wellness Centre with a gym, sauna and spa and a multimedia room for keen photographers wishing to edit their photos after a day of exploration. As a modern and custom-designed ship, this vessel is at the cutting edge of nautical technology and will ensure a comfortable and safe passage through polar waters.

Reviews
