

BIRD ISLANDS - AN EXPLORATION OF THE WESTERN BRITISH ISLES

The seabird islands of the western British Isles are the envy of the birding world and yet it is not easy to sample the wonderful diversity of their character and come face-to-face with seagoing inhabitants. This unusual expedition cruise will appeal to those who wish to explore our coastal waters, observe the marvellous seabird and marine life and walk across untouched coastal wilderness areas. The focus of our expedition is the prolific birdlife but the region is also rich in historical and cultural heritage and with our naturalists and local guides we will discover some of the most remote and uninhabited islands that surround the coast of Britain. Cruising aboard the Ocean Nova and in the company of just seventy fellow travellers, we will be able to enjoy expedition cruising at its best. Although we will set sail with a schedule, it will not be set in stone. The Captain and expedition team keep a flexible approach allowing you the opportunity to fully experience the unexpected, whether it be a sighting of dolphins, a whale or any unusual event. Our exploration of inlets, estuaries and protected coastal waters will be made all the more enjoyable by the use of our Zodiac landing craft which enable us to land in remote places such as St Kilda, providing for an unusual perspective and making the otherwise inaccessible readily available. This is a wonderful opportunity to see some of our most beautiful places and view some of the extensive birdlife. No matter what your level of expertise, you will find a warm welcome and a cornucopia of stunning sights and sounds.



ITINERARY

Day 1 Poole, England.



Embark the Ocean Nova this afternoon. A transfer will be provided from Poole Railway Station at a fixed time. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we sail this evening.

Day 2 Alderney, Channel Islands.

Arrive in the Channel Islands and spend the morning on Alderney where our onboard team will lead a series of walks to explore the island. Visit the island's only town, St Anne, which has all the old world charm of a Normandy village with tiny squares and pastel shaded cottages and shops. You may wish to visit the museum which is packed with historical artefacts ranging from the Romans to the German occupation during the Second World War. Those feeling active can join a walk to see the German fortifications and Victorian forts along the coastline before arriving at Les Etacs gannet colony. These rocks are situated just 100 metres offshore and are home to 6000 pairs of gannets. Return to the ship for lunch and maybe attend a lecture during our afternoon at sea.

Day 3 Isles of Scilly, England.

We have a day in the Isles of Scilly, an archipelago of five inhabited islands and up to one hundred and forty uninhabited islets, located 30 miles off the coast of Cornwall. Our day will depend on weather and sea conditions but we hope to visit traffic-free Tresco, walking its idyllic lanes from the beach to the famous subtropical Abbey Gardens. Defying the Atlantic weather, this miracle of a garden is home to more than 20,000 species of plants from over 80 countries. Enjoy time to wander along the paths, maybe visit the Valhalla collection of ship figureheads from ships wrecked on the islands or relax in the cafe. Later we hope to land on St Agnes, the most south-westerly community in the UK. Surrounded by rocks and reefs, this delightful tiny island offers marvellous coastal walks. The small island of Gugh lies across a narrow sandbar and here we find a single stone monolith called the 'Old Man of Gugh' which dates back to the Bronze Age. En-route we plan to sail past the nearby island of Annet, the second largest of the uninhabited islands and a bird sanctuary. We will cruise along the coastline alive with puffins, European storm petrels and shag.

Day 4 Skomer Island & Grassholm Island, Wales.

We awake this morning off the Pembrokeshire Coast at the island of Skomer. One of the most important wildlife sites in Northern Europe, Skomer has fantastic birdlife including over 41,000 individual puffins, countless numbers of guillemots, fulmar, kittiwakes and the elusive Manx shearwater and storm petrel. We will use our Zodiacs to take a closer look and may also see some of the resident seals. Return to the ship for lunch as we sail to Grassholm, one of the world's largest gannetries with over 16,000 breeding pairs.

Day 5 Holyhead, Wales & Calf of Man, Isle of Man.

Over breakfast we arrive at Holyhead, adjacent to Anglesey, with its spectacular sea cliffs. Here we will visit the RSPB's reserve at South Stack, a beautiful but fragile maritime sward and heathland which is home to a large population of guillemots and razorbills. If we are lucky, we might also see some choughs. On a choice of walks, we will also see Ellin's tower, a Victorian folly, and South Stack lighthouse built in 1809, maybe spotting some dolphins in the waters below. Returning to the ship for lunch we hope to arrive in the early evening at the Calf of Man, a 600 acre island situated off the southern tip of the Isle of Man, and home to thousands of seabirds including Manx shearwater, kittiwake and razorbill. Meanwhile in the water we may be lucky to see dolphins and seals.



Day 6 Mull of Galloway & Ailsa Craig, Scotland.

Arriving at our berth in Cairnryan a scenic drive brings us to the unspoilt Mull of Galloway, Scotland's most southerly point. Here, the RSPB site is a Site of Special Scientific Interest with 30 acres of rolling heathland and wildflowers overlooking dramatic cliffs which are home to guillemots, shags and kittiwakes. We also find the Mull of Galloway Lighthouse which was built by Robert Stevenson, with the light first lit on the 26th March 1830. It offers fabulous views over the cliffs and coast and in fine weather across to the Isle of Man and Ireland. Later this afternoon we will anchor off the granite island of Ailsa Craig. This tiny island, just 2.5 miles in circumference, was once a refuge for sailors and base to a 19th century lighthouse. Today it is an RSPB reserve and home to the third largest gannet colony in Britain. We will use the Zodiacs and cruise the coastal waters for a closer look searching for puffins, guillemots and gulls.

Day 7 Staffa & Lunga.

Overnight we will sail to Staffa, where the perpendicular rock face features an imposing series of black basalt columns, known as the Colonnade, which have been cut by the sea into cathedralesque caverns, most notably Fingal's Cave. Weather permitting, we will use our Zodiacs to explore more closely. We continue to Lunga, the largest of the Treshnish Isles. Of volcanic origin, Lunga has been described as a 'green jewel in a peacock sea'. Populated until the 19th century, the island still bears the remains of black houses. There is prolific birdlife on the island including storm petrels, puffins, kittiwakes and Manx shearwaters.

Day 8 St Kilda & Stac Lee, Outer Hebrides.

Arrive this morning at St Kilda, a remarkable uninhabited archipelago some 50 miles beyond the Outer Hebrides. Dominated by the highest cliffs and sea stacks in Britain, Hirta, St Kilda's main island was occupied on and off for at least 2000 years, with the last 36 Gaelic speaking inhabitants evacuated at their request in 1930. Immediately after the evacuation, the island was bought by the Marquess of Bute to protect the island's thousands of seabirds including puffins and fulmars, and in 1957 it was bequeathed to the National Trust for Scotland. St Kilda is one of the few UNESCO World Heritage Sites with dual status reflecting its natural and cultural significance. The local ranger will join us on board before our expedition staff lead several guided walks on the island. This afternoon we cruise past two of the largest gannetries in the world at Stac Lee and Boreray. These impressive stacs rise 170 metres from the sea and are home to up to 60,000 breeding pairs of northern gannets.

Day 9 Shiant Islands & Isle of Lewis.

This morning we will board the Zodiacs for a cruise around the spectacular basalt cliffs of the Shiant Islands, a group of little islands located a few miles off the shores of the Isle of Lewis. This is an excellent place to spot puffins, razorbills, guillemots, seals and hopefully white-tailed eagles. Over lunch we sail the short distance to Loch Sealg on the southern coast of Lewis where we can stretch our legs as we explore the abandoned, former crofters' village of Stiomrabhaigh.

Day 10 Lochmaddy & Wiay Island.

Arriving off the coast of North Uist we will use our Zodiacs to land at the village of Lochmaddy. A scenic drive will take us across the island to Balranald RSPB nature reserve. With its sandy beaches, rocky foreshore, marshes and sand dunes, the flower-rich machair and croft-land, the reserve plays host to a number of intriguing bird species including corncrakes and corn



buntings. Return to the ship for lunch as we sail to Wiay Island where we will take a Zodiac cruise along the coast to explore the many inlets and arches in the basaltic lava which makes up the island. As we search for black guillemots and nesting shags, the clear waters offer a fascinating view into the underwater world that lies beneath.

Day 11 Oban.

Disembark after breakfast. Transfers will be provided to Glasgow Airport and Glasgow Central Railway Station at a fixed time.

Please note:

Itineraries are subject to change.



YOUR SHIP: OCEAN NOVA

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VESSEL TYPE:

LENGTH:

PASSENGER CAPACITY:

BUILT/REFURBISHED:

The ice-strengthened 73 metre long expedition ship Ocean Nova was built in Denmark in 1992 with high ice class to serve Greenland's west coast. In 2004 to 2005 she was completely refurbished and has now a career as a small and comfortable expedition ship. The Ocean Nova can accommodate 86 passengers (but is often limited to 65 - 80 for some cruises) in single, double and triple cabins, all with sea-view and private facilities. The double cabins have either twin beds. The triple cabins have upper and lower beds. In your cabin you will also find a desk with chair and ample storage space for clothes and equipment. In the dining room you are treated to delicious meals in between landings and in the panorama lounge you can enjoy a drink with a breathtaking view of the surrounding polar landscape. This is where on board specialists entertain and educate you with lectures on polar biology, history, geology and conservation. There is also a library with panoramic views and a good selection of polar books. On board there is a satellite phone, gym and medical doctor. Passengers are welcome on the bridge around the clock and there is always something to see or search for from the spacious observation decks. The ship has North European officers and there is a friendly and informal atmosphere on board. Travelling with this small expedition ship offers an entirely different experience and perspective than you can get on a larger and more conventional cruise ship. Cabins are spread over two decks and include cabins for the single traveller, double and triple cabins, all with sea-view and private facilities. The comfortable dining room located on the Upper deck seats all passengers in a single sitting and offers delicious meals with a mixture of table service and buffet. The informal dining arrangement adds to the friendly atmosphere onboard and meals are a great chance to discuss all you have seen with your fellow travellers, and for the expedition team to share their knowledge. With one of the highest ice classes (1B) and a 2000 hp diesel engine, Ocean Nova is a small but sturdy expedition vessel just as at home in the icy waters of Svalbard as she is in a tranquil Scottish loch. The ship has a crew of 34, including North European officers, whose prime concern is your safety as well as ensuring wildlife sightings and weather conditions are maximised. For your safety there are two fully enclosed lifeboats and a medical





clinic onboard.

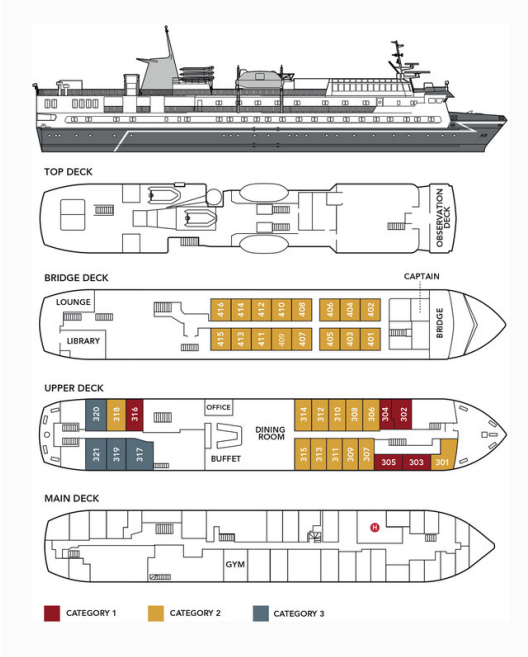
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INSIDE YOUR SHIP



Single cabin



Twin cabin





PRICING

05-May-2028 to 15-May-2028

Twin cabin	**£5695 GBP pp**
Single cabin	**£6595 GBP pp**