# ENCHANTED ISLANDS - AN ISLAND HOPPING VOYAGE FROM PORTSMOUTH TO ABERDEEN

This expedition voyage will appeal to those who wish to visit some of the most remote and inaccessible islands in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. We have many years of experience in designing trips to the hidden corners of our remotest places and yet, every year we discover something new. Although we set sail with a fixed itinerary it is the unscheduled events that often become the highlight of the journey. This is a truly unique voyage visiting as it does the remarkable islands on the edge of the British Isles. With the MS Hebridean Sky as our base we have the advantage of being able to reach these remote isles and, with the use of Zodiacs, we will be able to explore in small groups. We will sail from Portsmouth and during our cruise visit both inhabited and uninhabited islands and places of great natural beauty, rich in wildlife and mystical history. From the Isles of Scilly to the Hebrides there are numerous highlights including Tresco's famous subtropical Abbey Gardens and cruising past one of the largest gannetries in the world at Stac Lee. This is not a cruise in the traditional sense, more an exploration with just 100 or so fellow travellers who wish to enjoy the peace, beauty and tranquility of the islands. The sheer diversity of the landscapes and lifestyles will amaze you as will the spirit and warmth of the small communities we will encounter. Learn something of their history, see the abundant bird and marine life, but above all revel in the timeless enchantment that these islands exude to all those who appreciate the natural world.

## ITINERARY

Day 1 Portsmouth, England.

Embark the MS Hebridean Sky in the afternoon. Transfers will be provided from Portsmouth Harbour Railway Station at a fixed time. Sail this evening for the Channel Islands.

Day 2 Guernsey, Channel Islands.

Anchor this morning off Guernsey, the 'Island of Flowers'. There will be the option of a walking tour of St Peter Port including a visit to Castle Cornet, a 12th century battlement which guards the entrance to St Peter Port Harbour. Alternatively, enjoy a panoramic island drive during which we will see the beautiful coastline and beaches and also visit the Little Chapel, built in 1914 as a miniature version of the famous basilica at Lourdes and covered in fragments of shattered china. The afternoon is free to explore this picturesque town at your own pace before we sail in the early evening.

Day 3 Isles of Scilly.

Spend the 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.

Day 4 Lundy Island & Skomer Island, Wales.

We have scheduled a morning on Lundy, a remote island in the Bristol Channel. Although small, just three miles long by half a mile wide, its isolation has made it a home for a range of wildlife whilst there is also a clutch of listed buildings and monuments. The towering cliffs and rocky shoreline are a haven for migrating seabirds and Sika deer, red deer and Soay sheep can also be seen as we walk along its traffic-free lanes and paths. Spend the morning being as active as you wish, maybe explore the wide bays and coves by way of hanging valleys, see ancient burial chambers, climb the lighthouse or buy the island's 'puffin stamps' at the shop. Be on deck in the late afternoon as we pass Skomer Island, one of the most important wildlife sites in Northern Europe. It is a marvellously peaceful and scenic island with fantastic birdlife including 6,000 pairs of puffins and the elusive Manx shearwater and storm petrel. We may also see the seal colony hauled out over the rocks and weather permitting will explore by Zodiac.

Day 5 Calf of Man & Peel, Isle of Man.

Over breakfast we anchor off the Calf of Man, a 600 acre island situated off the southern tip of the Isle of Man. Landing by Zodiac our expedition team will lead walks on the island which is home to thousands of seabirds as well as a small flock of Loghtan sheep, a rare native breed which has been preserved by Manx National Heritage since the 1950s. We may also see grey seals hauled out on the rocks as we walk to the bird observatory and lighthouse. In the afternoon we arrive at the fishing port of Peel where we have a free afternoon. Maybe make your way to

the cathedral, visit some of the many independent shops or explore Peel Castle. Built by the Vikings in the 11th century the castle has been a royal residence, centre of government and military stronghold. We sail late for anyone wishing to take an afterdinner stroll.

### Day 6 Rathlin Island, Northern Ireland.

After a morning at sea we arrive at Rathlin Island. Located just a few miles from the North Antrim coast, Rathlin has been settled for more than 6,000 years. Today, there are only 80 or so inhabitants, whereas before the famine there were 1,200. There will be a choice of guided walks which will either take in the prolific seabird life with astonishing numbers of auks, kittiwakes and grey seals or alternatively cross the island to the historic Rathlin East Lighthouse. This evening we will sail past the magnificent cliffs to the north of the island which are home to the largest seabird colony in Ireland.

### Day 7 Staffa & Iona, Scotland.

Awake this morning as we approach and anchor off 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 closer. We then plan to cruise the short distance to the Isle of Iona which has been occupied for thousands of years and has been a place of pilgrimage and Christian worship for several centuries. It was to this flat, Hebridean island that St Columba fled from Ireland in 563 and established a monastery. Here his followers were responsible for the conversion of much of pagan Scotland and Northern England. No less than 62 Scottish Kings are buried in the Abbey. Visit the Abbey or perhaps walk along the white sandy beaches or go in search of the corncrake amongst the irises.

### Day 8 Canna & Loch Scavaig.

Strategically placed between the mountains of Rum and the Outer Hebrides, the island of Canna and its adjoining neighbour Sanday are bound together like some rare text that reveals over 60 million years of Hebridean geology and history. They have an amazingly rich archaeological landscape with remains dating to all periods of settled occupation in Scotland. Canna is run as a single farm and bird sanctuary by the National Trust for Scotland and enjoys the best harbour in the Small Isles, a hornshaped haven. The fertile soil and its diversity of habitats mean that the island has an incredibly rich plant life with 248 native flowering plants recorded. We will see Canna House and wander across grassy basalt plateaus to the 600 foot cliffs on the north shore. Over lunch we cross to the lovely Loch Scavaig on the island of Skye. Just beyond is the freshwater Loch Corruisk with its breathtakingly beautiful view over the Cuillins. This is great walking country and our expedition team will run a series of hikes for all interests. For those who prefer a less energetic afternoon our Zodiacs will explore the coast looking out for seals.

### Day 9 St Kilda & Stac Lee.

We spend the morning at St Kilda, a remarkable uninhabited archipelago some fifty 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 two thousand years, with the last 36 Gaelic speaking inhabitants evacuated at their own 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 puffin 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 guided walks on the island. Later, we will cruise past one of the largest gannetries in the world at Stac Lee. The impressive stacs rise 170 metres from the sea and are home to up to 60,000 breeding pairs of northern gannets.

### Day 10 North Ronaldsay, Orkney Islands.

Cruise this morning to the Orkney Islands arriving in the early afternoon at the northernmost isle of North Ronaldsay. The birdlife here is prolific as the wetland habitats support the wildfowl and wader species whilst the rugged coastline provides nesting sites for seabird colonies. If weather conditions permit, a series of walks will include the bird observatory and we also hope to view the seals hauled up on the beaches. Those wishing to explore further can visit the lighthouse with views over the nearby islands or the wool mill where yarn is produced from the island's seaweed eating sheep.

### Day 11 Unst & Fetlar, Shetland Islands.

Spend the morning in Unst, Britain's most northerly inhabited island. At the Heritage Centre we will learn about the islanders' struggles over the centuries and the industries that have prospered, and will visit the Unst Boat Haven which is dedicated to the history of the island's distinctive wooden boats which descend from Viking craft. We also visit Saxa Vord with views over Hermaness National Nature Reserve and Muckle Flugga stacks, home to thousands of gannets and puffins as well as rare Arctic alpine plants. Later we will sail to Fetlar which has been inhabited for over 5000 years and lays claim to being the first Norse landing site in the Shetland Islands. Known as the most fertile of the islands, the wildflowers bring colour to the landscape whilst the birdlife on the island is prolific. Our expedition team will lead walks ashore including the Fetlar Interpretative Centre and Museum where we will learn about the wildlife and archaeological history of the island.

### Day 12 Fair Isle.

This morning we arrive at the remote island of Fair Isle. Located midway between the Shetland and Orkney islands, the tiny population of sixty or so islanders always extend us a warm welcome. Enjoy a walk across the island searching out the puffin slopes, visit the community hall for a cup of tea or maybe purchase some of the famous knitwear. Spend a final relaxing afternoon on board as we sail for Aberdeen.

### Day 13 Aberdeen.

Disembark the MS Hebridean Sky after breakfast. Transfers will be provided to Aberdeen Airport and Railway Station at a fixed time.

### Please note:

Itineraries are subject to change.

# YOUR SHIP: HEBRIDEAN SKY

**YOUR SHIP:** **Hebridean Sky**

**VESSEL TYPE:**

**LENGTH:**

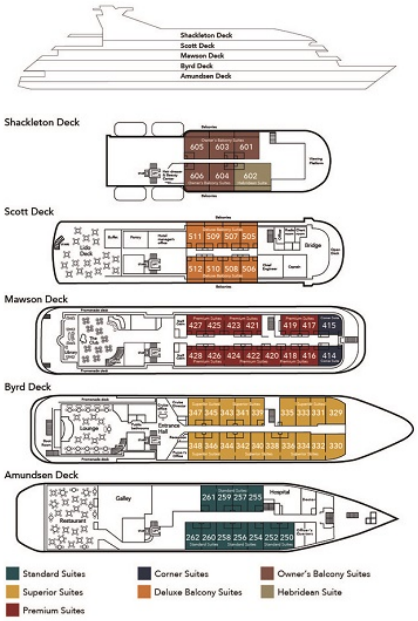
**PASSENGER CAPACITY:**

**BUILT/REFURBISHED:**

Hebridean Sky has always been known for its effortless elegance, impeccable service and atmosphere of charm and camaraderie. Now we add increased adventure options and an on-site Passenger Service Representative. Hebridean Sky is the perfect blend of luxury and adventurous exploration. Is it a luxury ship? An adventure ship? It's both! The vessel underwent a multi-million pound refurbishment in Sweden in Spring 2016. ONBOARD DINING Great expeditions require great food! We are pleased to offer daily changing breakfast, lunch and dinner menus with an emphasis on providing well balanced and nutritional cuisine. Our team of international chefs has boat loads of creativity and you are sure to experience a variety of interesting dishes throughout your voyage. The restaurant is located on Deck 2 and our service team looks forward to providing a memorable dining experience. IMPECCABLE SMALL-SHIP AMENITIES Returning from excursions, passengers enjoy complimentary refreshments, afternoon tea and all-day coffee in The Club, a gracious space for relaxation, surrounded by panoramic windows. Other Sea Explorer features include: Library with Internet access Lounge with audiovisual facilities Dining room Wraparound sun deck with Jacuzzi Exercise room Medical facilities with available doctor Elevator serving all passenger decks Swimming/zodiac platform All Voyages Include: Up to Two Pre-Voyage Hotel Nights Complimentary Wine or Beer with Dinner Certified Emergency MD and Clinic World Class Cuisine Live Entertainment Complimentary Coffee/Tea station Voyage Photographer Dedicated Passenger Service Manager Complimentary Expedition Jacket Please note deck

plan may vary.

# INSIDE YOUR SHIP




Amundsen Deck Standard Sole

Amundsen Deck Standard Suite

Byrd Deck Superior Sole

Mawson Deck Premium Suite

Scott Deck Deluxe Balcony Suite

Shackleton Deck Owner's Balcony Suite

# PRICING

**23-May-2028 to 04-Jun-2028**

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| Amundsen Deck Standard Suite | £7795 GBP pp |
| Scott Deck Deluxe Balcony Suite | £9495 GBP pp |
| Shackleton Deck Owner's Balcony Suite | £9795 GBP pp |
| Amundsen Deck Standard Sole | £9495 GBP pp |
| Mawson Deck Premium Suite | £8295 GBP pp |
| Byrd Deck Superior Sole | £9795 GBP pp |