

The Small Cruise Ship Collection

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FROM IRELAND & THE SCOTTISH ISLES TO THE NORWEGIAN FJORDS

This rare expedition combines a satisfying circumnavigation of Ireland with adventures among outlying, seldom-seen Scottish Isles of incredible beauty. Discover places like Skellig Michael, with its iconic beehive huts and 8th-century monastery today an important seabird breeding site. Sail past the towering Cliffs of Moher and enter cathedral-like Fingals Cave by Zodiac. Marvel at ancient Scottish monuments, from the mysterious standing stones of Callanish, to the 5,000-year-old Skara Brae village. Uncover Viking history in windswept isles where Norse and Gaelic cultures intermingle; then trace the forbears of these lands to Norway and the sublime, glacially carved Sognefjord. Discover the musical traditions of each culture you encounter. An ethnomusicologist on your expedition team helps bring a unique perspective on Europe's traditions and cultural diversity. Our musicologist Jacob Edgar has curated a set of exclusive performances and special concerts. You'll enjoy a performance of traditional Irish music at an authentic Irish dinner in beautiful Connemara, as well as a performance by Gaelic singer Julie Fowlis. An onboard concierge for personal exploration. Combining the best of independent travel with the gracious and effortless benefits of shipboard travel, our concierge provides assistance with daily choices to suit your individual interests: active, cultural, or more sedentary options, and with special arrangements, off-ship dining and more. Get the most out of your time in Europe with personal outing tailored to specific interests. Travel in excellent company. Explore under the sure guidance of an expedition leader, an assistant expedition leader, a mix of historians, naturalists, archaeologists, an ethnomusicologist, an onboard concierge, a National

Geographic photographer plus a National Geographic certified photo instructor, and a wellness specialist. Their knowledge and passion is the key to your incredible



experience.

ITINERARY

DAY 1: Dublin, Ireland/Embark

Arrive in Dublin, Ireland and embark National Geographic Orion. After lunch, explore the Kilmainham Gaol (jail) for great insight into the course of Irish history during the centennial year of the Easter Rising. Sail south from Dublin. (L,D)

DAY 2: Ballycotton/Kinsale

Set out for tiny Ballycotton in County Cork this morning for a walk around a working farm. Continue to Kinsale, a picturesque fishing town with a fascinating history: the Battle of Kinsale in 1601 marked the collapse of Gaelic power in Ireland. Local

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scholars take us for a guided walk before free time to wander the quaint streets, galleries and shops. (B,L,D) Tonight we are joined by National Geographic grantee Michelle Cronin, who has studied puffins and gannets in the Skelligs and wrestled seals in the Blasket Islands.

DAY 3: Skellig Michael/Dingle

Explore the dramatic Skellig Islands, where monastic ruins dating as far back as the sixth century perch high atop a rocky peak jutting out from the sea. Circle Skellig Michael in Zodiacs if weather permits, or, if you wish, hike to the top to view the beehive-shaped stone huts. Spend the rest of the day in delightful Dingle: enjoy a walking tour, explore the archaeology and intriguing history of the area, visit a local distillery, or explore on your own. Shackleton aficionados will want to visit Tom Creans Pub; Crean accompanied The Boss on the Endurance in Antarctica. (B,L,D) Dingle is the largest Irish-speaking community in the southwest, and we'll have a chance to meet them: drop in on artists and craftspeople in their homes, or breathe in the salt air and beachcomb with a seaweed forager!

DAY 4: Aran Islands/Ciffs of Moher

Wake up in the Aran Islands, a hub of Gaelic language and culture. On the main island of Inishmore, see the mystical ring fort of Dun Aengus, poised on steep cliffs above the crashing Atlantic, and pop in to the 18th-century stone Kilmurvey House for scones. Enjoy lunch as we sail to the Cliffs of Moher. If conditions permit, get a spectacular and rare perspective of the cliffs, gliding beneath them in a Zodiac. (B,L,D)

DAY 5: Connemara

The tranquil and starkly beautiful region of Connemara is a great place to wander the ultimate fulfillment of travelers' romantic dreams of Ireland. Hiking with our naturalists (gentle walks or energetic hikes) or cycling on the quiet back roads many of which were built to provide employment during the Famine is probably the best way to get to know the area. Perhaps launch a kayak or even try your hand at fly fishing. Gather for an authentic Irish dinner and a performance of traditional Irish music ashore.

DAY 6: Donegal

Dock at the fishing harbor of Killybegs in County Donegal, a wild, windswept peninsula. Coastal walks and rural life in this traditional Gaelic-speaking area will be our focus. This afternoon photograph the spectacular Slieve League cliffs, the highest in Europe, or learn more about the historical heritage of the region at nearby Stone Age and early Christian sites. Or hit the streets of the lively town of Donegal for some independent exploration. (B,L,D) Cycling is a great way to absorb the landscape. We've set up an optional cycling tour of the Glencolmcille region, riding over a high boggy plateau, through remote glens and along Atlantic bays to the colorful village of Ardara, with stops at the homes of traditional hand-knitters, and tweed weavers.

DAY 7: Northern Ireland

Enter Northern Ireland today. Discover the wonders of County Antrim: visit a clifftop Gaelic castle, see the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge stretching between high seaside bluffs, call at Bushmills, the oldest distillery in the world, and explore the incredible hexagonal basalt columns at Giants Causeway, a UNESCO site. Meander among the columns as a guide explains the myths and scientific theories behind this intriguing geology. This afternoon, visit Belfast and explore the Titanic Museum, and cap off the evening with a civic reception in this Northern Ireland capital.

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(B,L,D)

DAY 8: Dublin, Ireland

Today, explore Ireland's most famous city: Dublin. Join a privately guided tour of Trinity College or venture on your own to stroll Dublin's cobbled streets and explore the city's famed pubs. This evening set sail for Scotland's Hebrides. (B,L,D)

DAY 9: Iona and Staffa, Inner Hebrides, Scotland

Sail through the Sea of the Hebrides to the isle of Iona, the site of Scotland's first Christian settlement. Venture into an ancient nunnery and a 13th-century abbey. Explore St. Oran's Chapel and its royal burial grounds, where Celtic high crosses mark the graves of generations of Scottish kings. Then dock at Staffa, famed for its geometric basalt columns and deep-sea caves. (B,L,D) A special treat will be a Zodiac ride to the awe-inspiring Fingal's Cave for a close-up look at the place that inspired Felix Mendelssohn to write his "Hebrides Overture."

DAY 10: Stornoway, The Isle of Lewis

Along the wild, western coast of Scotland lies the Isle of Lewis, steeped in history and legend. We'll visit to marvel at the massive neolithic Standing Stones of Callanish, which rival Stonehenge in the majesty of their setting. (B,L,D) "There's a saying in these isles that if you scratch the surface, it bleeds archaeology."

DAY 11: Kirkwall, Orkney Islands

The Vikings held a strategic foothold in the Orkney Islands for hundreds of years, and their Norse heritage is apparent in local legends and traditions that endure today. Explore a treasure trove of Stone Age sites, including the megaliths of the Ring of Brodgar and the 5,000-year-old stone-slab village of Skara

Brae. Step inside the medieval St. Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall, which took nearly 300 years to complete. This evening our musical event will feature Julie Fowles, whose Gaelic voice is recognizable from the soundtrack of Disney Pixar's "Brave." (B,L,D) For experienced scuba divers, we have planned a fantastic dive in Scapa Flow (an added cost).

DAY 12: Mousa and Fair Isle, Shetland Islands

Zodiac in to the uninhabited isle of Mousa, a UNESCO World Heritage candidate and the third element in "The Crucible of Iron Age Shetland." Hike to an Iron Age broch, or stone tower, built circa 100 BC, looking for storm petrels along the way. Our next landing is tiny and remote Fair Isle, situated between the Shetland and Orkney Islands. Visit the island's bird research station, and spot some of the roughly 250 species of flowering plants that grow here. Browse local handicrafts including intricately patterned Fair Isle knitwear, which is renowned worldwide. (B,L,D) Learn Shetland dancing, or watch your fellow guests learn! A local dance troupe performs for us in Lerwick.

DAY 13: Isle of Noss and Lerwick, Shetland Islands

Sail to Scotland's Shetland Islands, a rugged archipelago of about 100 islands and islets. Explore Lerwick, a town where Norse and Gaelic cultures intermingle, and see the countryside dotted with Shetland ponies. Then examine Bronze Age ruins and Viking longhouses at the extraordinary prehistoric settlements of Jarlshof and nearby Old Scatness UNESCO candidates which are part of "The Crucible of Iron Age Shetland." Later, take in a cacophony of puffins, guillemots, and razorbills as we walk to the lighthouse at Sumburgh Head. Glide past the cliffs of Noss to view nesting seabirds before setting sail across the North Sea toward Bergen. (B,L,D)

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DAY 14: Sognefjorden, Norway

Norway's glacier-carved western coast boasts some of the most dramatic landscapes in the world. Cruise deep into the sublime Sognefjorden, the third longest in the world, and launch kayaks and Zodiacs to explore its mirror-like waterways. In the picturesque village of Undredal, take a hike up the mountain for an amazing fjord view, see the town's 12th-century stave church and sample its famous brown goat cheese, Brunost. (B,L,D)

DAY 15: Bergen, Norway/Disembark

Our final port of call is the lovely city of Bergen, perched on a fjord and ringed by seven hills. Disembark after breakfast, and have an overview of this beautiful city before heading to the airport for your flight home, or extend your stay in Bergen.(B)

Please Note:

All day-by-day breakdowns are a sampling of the places we intend to visit, conditions permitting.



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YOUR SHIP: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ORION

YOUR SHIP:	National Geographic Orion
VESSEL TYPE:	Luxury Expedition
LENGTH:	103 metres
PASSENGER CAPACITY:	102 (in 53 cabins)
BUILT/REFURBISHED:	2003 / Refurbished 2014

Engineered for maximum comfort and safety, *Orion* is equipped with the latest technology including large retractable stabilizers, sonar, radar, and an ice-strengthened hull. A shallow draft plus bow and stern thrusters provide the convenience of being able to maneuver close to shore. 14 Zodiacs ensure quick disembarkation and offer the ideal transport for up-close exploration. *National Geographic Orion* meets strict specifications for environmental protection and the on board waste management systems meet the stringent Antarctic operational standards enabling us to travel to the most pristine environments. A host of advanced design features and technology ensures sustainable marine environmental practices. *National Geographic Orion* accommodates 102 guests in 53 cabins, including several with balconies. She is spacious and modern, with a variety of public rooms that offer panoramic views of the passing landscape. Friendly and informal, *Orion* fosters a welcoming atmosphere where like-minded guests share in exceptional experiences and enrichment. Her public rooms include a dramatic window-lined main lounge, as well as an observation lounge and library perched at the very top of the ship, with plentiful observation decks. The spacious lounge is

the heart of our expedition community, and is suited for spirited cocktail hours, informative presentations and our nightly tradition of Recap. In addition, a dedicated theater provides a unique setting for specialist presentations or films and slideshows. Both the main dining room and outside buffet easily accommodate all guests at once for open seating dining. On selected nights, weather permitting, our dining room menu is also available on the outside deck. While *Orion* interiors are elegant, life aboard is always casual, with no need for formal clothing. And you'll find shipboard services like laundry, in-room cabled internet, and public-area wifi make packing and traveling more



convenient.



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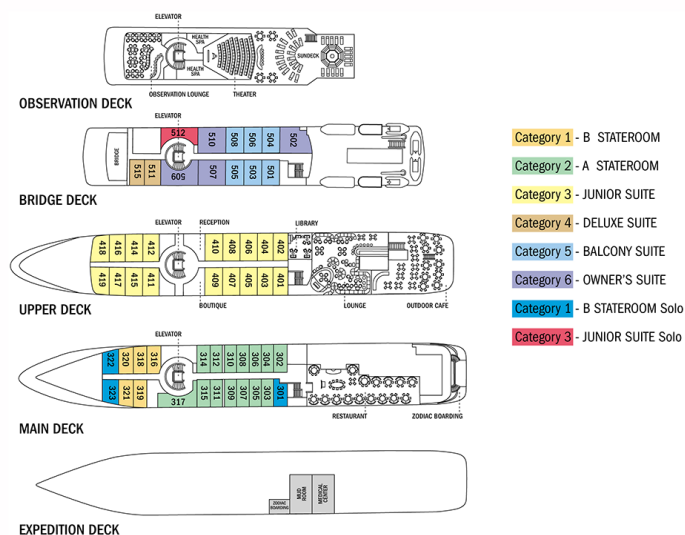
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