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THE JEWELS OF THE SCOTTISH ISLES

As a tiara of rough dark-brown rubies, small islands adorn the Scottish coastline all the way from Glasgow in the west to Aberdeen in the east. And none of these fascinating history-filled islands are easy to get to. On this special voyage, you will get a unique chance to visit no less than seven Scottish islands. Each one is begging to tell you stories about a dramatic past reaching back millions of years to a birth from hot molten lava, millenniums to stone age dwellings - or just 12 years to create splendid single malt whiskies. Our journey begins in the port of Greenock on the Scottish West Coast. Embarking on Albatros' expedition vessel Ocean Atlantic we head for our first landing on the island of Islay, home to several world famous brands of peaty whiskies. Further north to Oban and Iona and onwards to Staffa and Rum with their dramatic displays of volcanic eruptions. During evening lectures on board, you will get to understand their geological history. We continue to the Outer Hebrides to make landings on remote Hirta in the St. Kilda archipelago and on Lewis in the town of Stornoway. North of the mainland lie the rugged and scenic islands of Orkney, home to some of Europe's oldest preserved dwellings - and Scotland's northernmost whisky factory! The voyage ends in Aberdeen, in mainland Scotland. This spring cruise with Ocean Atlantic is the ultimate journey in the exciting Scottish waters, complete with whisky, wildlife and spectacular landscapes! Albatros Expeditions' own vessel, MV Ocean Atlantic, is relatively small compared to traditional cruise ships. This excellent ice-class expedition vessel is built to tackle hard weather conditions in polar waters, while ensuring your comfort in well-appointed accommodations. Aboard, life is relaxed and cozy. Meals are

prepared by professional chefs and served by friendly, helpful staff, who speak a variety of languages. The cruise does not make any special requirements for you as a participant, but it is assumed that you are agile and good on your feet. Some landings will be made with the ship's Zodiac rubber boats, and this requires some agility to get in and out of. The journey takes place in the mild spring, and we expect calm sea, sun and temperatures of 10 to 15 degrees. **OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS**
Orkney: Bus to the neolithic settlement: Skara Brae. Return to Kirkwall for a spirit tasting.
Lewis Island: Bus excursion to Callanish Neolithic Standing Stones and wild Hebridian



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sail out along the coast of Greenock that has seen active fishing boats since as far back as year 1164.

DAY 2 BEAUTIFULLY LOCATED BUNNAHABHAIN DISTILLERY ON THE ISLAND OF ISLAY

The smell of peat and smoke fills our nostrils as we approach Islay. For decades, the peat has been the primary source of fuel on this small Inner Hebride island. This, the most southernmost of the island group is known as the Queen of the Hebrides. The island has around 3200 inhabitants and an impressive 130 miles of beautiful coastline. We use the ship's Zodiacs to land at the Bunnahabhain distillery where we will take a short tour of the distillery, learning about the process of whisky making from start to finish. Afterwards a tasting is well deserved. A visit including tasting typically takes 30 minutes. Islay is probably best known for its malt whiskies and has a total of eight working distilleries. Whisky is one of the most important sources of income for the island. The whisky they produce is soft, dry, smoked and dusty at the same time. For this reason, Islay is the most visited of all the inner Hebrides in proportion to its size. Be sure to be on the lookout for wildlife while we navigate around Islay and the Hebrides, where seals, otters, geese, waders and golden eagles amongst others, have their home.

DAY 3 THE PILGRIMAGE ISLAND OF IONA AND CLASSIC CITY OF OBAN

Today's first visit will be steeped in Christian history as we visit the small pilgrimage island of Iona. It is considered the birthplace of Christianity in Scotland with the arrival of St. Columba in AD 563 and the founding of the Abbey. The Abbey's

landscapes

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DAY 1 BOARDING IN GREENOCK, PORT CITY OF GLASGOW

Our journey begins in Greenock, where MV Ocean Atlantic is located by the dock. If you arrive early we recommend that you take a walk on the Esplanade, which is a road right down by the water. From the road you can see across the Clyde to the Highlands, Kilcreggan and Helensburgh. Fine views to start our adventure with. Boarding is in the afternoon, where the cabins are designated. After the mandatory security review and drill, we



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long history is rich with Viking attacks, foreign monks and even abandonment at one time, before being reconstructed to its present state. Today, Iona remains a place of pilgrimage and spirituality. Our visit entails a walk around the small town and free time around the Abbey. The capital on the Scottish west coast is Oban. A picturesque Scottish harbor town called "The Gate of the Hebrides", Oban offers typical Scottish city life. If you want more exercise, it is highly recommended to walk up to McCaig's Tower, built in the 19th century. A monument that resembles the Colosseum of Rome. Whisky is of course present here: In Oban, clearly, they have 'Oban', a small town distillery with a big whisky production (open every day, including Sundays). A more historical visit could be the Oban War and Peace museum that has excellent displays depicting Oban over the years (not only during the war). After our afternoon visit, we continue northbound towards Staffa.

DAY 4 THE SMALL ISLANDS OF STAFFA AND RÙM. FINGALS CAVE AND KINLOCH CASTLE.

Venturing south around Mull during the night, we come upon a truly marvelous natural oddity. We plan to land at the small isle of Staffa. The islands hexagonal basaltic pillars were formed many million years ago, and look breathtaking as we inspect them. If the weather conditions allow it, we will make our way into Fingal's cave. Staffa is uninhabited but many visitors come to see the natural wonders and formations. One such guest was the composer Felix Mendelssohn. So inspired by the sounds and views, that the composition "the Hebrides" was composed shortly after his visit. We will see if we can spot puffins, herring gulls or other flyers whilst we traverse the wonderful little island. While navigating the waters to Staffa and beyond, we must keep

our eyes open for sightings of dolphins, porpoises and minke whales, who are all regular guests of this area in the warm periods. After our first stop of the day, we set our sights on the more northerly isle of Rùm. The mountain filled island allows us to take a walk in the nature or join our group tour to the famous Kinloch Castle. Easily the most famous building on the island, the castle was built by George Bullough who inherited the whole island from his father. The island was a private sporting estate from 1845-1957. If you opt to take a walk, the rugged landscape offers great trails and views. We board our ship and now set off towards the remote St. Kilda.

DAY 5 TOWERING AND REMOTE HIRTA IN ST. KILDA ARCHIPELAGO. PUFFINS, DESERTED VILLAGES AND UNESCO HERITAGE.

Today we arrive to the dramatic and isolated island of Hirta, famous for its highest sea cliffs in the United Kingdom. We have traversed 45 miles west of the Outer Hebrides coast to reach this most remote part of the United Kingdom. The uninhabited island has remnants of human heritage, in the shape of medieval villages and architecture. The islands were mainly used for seabird hunting and grazing. The last 36 St Kildans left on 29 August 1930 because life had become too difficult on the remote archipelago. Today there is summer residents in a mix of staff from owners National Trust for Scotland, volunteers and scientists. The volcanic archipelago that consists of the islands of Hirta, Dun, Soay and Boreray has made its way on the UNESCO world heritage list, holding a dual status of both natural and cultural treasure. The spectacular natural landscapes, hidden coves, rugged terrain and bird rich coasts are what we will spend our time on during our visit. St Kilda is a breeding ground for many important seabird species. So we will

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be on the lookout for northern gannets, Leach's petrels, puffins and the northern fulmar, and if we are extremely lucky, we may find the endemic St Kilda wren pecking for insects in the thick vegetation around the cliffs and rocky slopes. When seaborne our eyes are as always peeled for sea mammals, which in these areas also could include humpbacks and even orcas. In the afternoon, we continue our voyage towards the Outer Hebrides.

DAY 6 PORT OF STORNOWAY, OPTIONAL LEWIS EXCURSION WITH THE CALLANISH STANDING STONES & WILDLIFE ALONG THE SHIANT ISLES COAST

As our Jewels of the Scottish isles continues, we navigate through the northwestern part of Scotland. We find ourselves in the remote string of islands known as the Outer Hebrides, herein lies the Isle of Lewis and Harris, a rugged and bleakly beautiful land of heather and moor, loch and stream; home to the main harbor town of Stornoway. Arriving to the main town in the early morning, we offer an optional excursion that takes us along the wild scenery of the Outer Hebrides and ancient history in the form of the Neolithic Callanish Standing Stones. Expect the guides to share many stories behind the sights we pass. (The excursion is part of the excursion package and is not included in the price of the trip). Back in Stornoway we board the ship to sail during lunch, so we can circumnavigate the Shiant islands before setting off towards the Orkney islands. The Shiant isles translate from gaelic to something like "enchanted isles". The privately owned islands has large populations of seabirds and its protected marine area make it what some would call "paradise for observations". We spend some time on the breathtaking scenery before we move on.

DAY 7 ORKNEY ISLANDS AND HISTORIC KIRKWALL - POSSIBILITY OF VISITING SKARA BRAE

During the night we'll have sailed out into the waters between Outer and Inner Hebrides, and in the morning we'll reach the town of Kirkwall on the windy Orkney off the mainland of Scotland. Orkney is old Norse for the "seal islands", and, like the other North Atlantic islands, Orkney has a rich Viking story. We depart Kirkwall and head into the west of Mainland, Orkney's largest island. Along the way we will pass through rolling gentle landscapes into the Neolithic Heartland of Orkney, an area designated as a World Heritage Site due to its wealth of pre-historic archaeology. Passing the Standing Stones of Stenness, we will stop at the 5000 year old ceremonial circle: the Ring of Brodgar. From here we continue to as history goes even further back to one of the oldest European civilizations. Skara Brae, Northern Europe's Pompeii, which was hidden for almost 5000 years before a massive storm (150 years ago) revealed the ancient settlement. The 10 small homes are almost ready for moving into, fully furnished and with sanitation - all made in stone. Back in Kirkwall, we will visit one of the local distilleries for a tasting of some of the northernmost drops in Scotland. A fitting end to an excursion with such an amazing historical backdrop. (The excursion is part of the excursion package and is not included in the price of the trip). In the afternoon we departure south to Aberdeen.

DAY 8 THE JOURNEY ENDS IN ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND.

The captain will lead the ship southwards along the east coast of Scotland, and we'll arrive in Aberdeen, Scotland's

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third-largest city. At this time we'll say farewell to the ship and its crew before departing for the airport and beginning the return journey.

Please Note:

Itineraries are subject to change.



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YOUR SHIP:

YOUR SHIP:

VESSEL TYPE:

LENGTH:

PASSENGER CAPACITY:

BUILT/REFURBISHED:



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