

SCOTLAND'S HIDDEN LANDSCAPES - THE HEBRIDES, ORKNEY AND SHETLAND TO BERGEN

Celtic coasts to Norse shores Exploring the Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland Islands before crossing to Norway, this journey unveils the many layers of history and culture that define this region. You'll walk in the footsteps of Neolithic civilisations at sites such as Stornoway's Callanish Standing Stones and Skara Brae in Orkney. You'll also experience unique culture shaped by Celtic and Norse legacies, which comes to life in architecture, language and renowned textiles like Fair Isle knitwear. Scotland 's rugged isles in spring You'll be inspired by the rugged beauty of these archipelagos, carved by the Atlantic's mighty power. From mystical moorlands and basalt columns to craggy cliffs and sweeping white-sand beaches, each island has a distinctive character. On this spring voyage, you'll experience a landscape awash with colour with several expedition days to discover hidden bays and rarely visited islands, looking out for seabirds and dolphins along the way.



ITINERARY

Day 1 Embark in Glasgow (Fairlie)

Start in Scotland's stylish city of culture

A former industrial powerhouse, Glasgow has reinvented itself as a cultural hot spot, packed with museums, galleries and parks. Discover the splendid Art Nouveau architecture of Charles Rennie Mackintosh before your expedition cruise begins.

You'll embark your ship MS Spitsbergen in Fairlie, a small community outside of Glasgow. Lying on the shores of the Firth of Clyde and nestled against a backdrop of the North Ayrshire



Hills, this area is known for coastal towns with Viking heritage and scenic walks.

Get to know the ship before meeting the Expedition Team - your guides for the adventure ahead. Enjoy your first onboard dinner as we set sail.

Day 2 Islay's whisky and nature

Fire up your spirit of discovery on 'whisky island'

Islay, the 'Queen of the Hebrides', is the southernmost island of the Inner Hebrides, with rugged uplands and coastline. The island is the proud home of world-famous peaty single malts - but that's far from the only reason to visit.

Islay is a wildlife haven, home to over 200 species of birds - including oystercatchers, gannets and Golden Eagles. From its sandy beaches, you can sometimes spot dolphins and basking sharks.

Join a local guide on a heritage walk, and of course, no trip to Islay is complete without a 'wee dram' from one of the island's famous and historic whisky producers, including Laphroaig and Ardbeg.

Day 3 The spirit of Iona

See Iona's sacred abbey and Fingal's Cave on Staffa

Your adventure continues to Iona, off the coast of Mull in the Inner Hebrides. You can visit the restored 6th century abbey, one of Scotland's oldest and most sacred Christian pilgrimage sites. Join the Expedition Team for a hike or enjoy a walk at your leisure to the enigmatically named 'Bay at the Back of the Ocean'. This sweeping white-sand bay faces the wild Atlantic Ocean head-on and is fringed with machair, a typical grassy vegetation of the Hebrides.

If conditions allow, we'll also sail to Staffa. We'll attempt to take our small boats for a closer look at Fingal's Cave, marvelling at the hexagonal basalt columns, superb natural acoustics and mesmerising, coloured waters.

Day 4 Expedition day

Explore the tranquil islands of the Outer Hebrides

Today we plan to explore the Outer Hebrides and attempt a landing at one of the many tiny islands. Your Captain and Expedition Leader will choose the best landing site depending on the conditions of the day.

The mighty wind and waves of the Atlantic have carved sheltered harbours here, allowing settlements to arise as far back as the Neolithic period. Perhaps we'll visit a remote community and get insight into their way of life, or head to a pristine white sand beach for a nature landing or hike. We may also take our small boats for some coastal cruising in search of wildlife such as puffins, guillemots, kittiwakes and seals.

Day 5 Stalwart Stornoway

Experience 'Scotland's Stonehenge' and find your tweed



We travel next to Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. The island has strong Gaelic traditions and is the home of the famous Harris Tweed cloth. Sometimes referred to as Eilean an Fhraoich, or 'Heather Isle', this beautiful island has one of Europe's largest blanket bogs, serving as both a unique ecosystem and a huge carbon sink.

While here, we'll visit Gothic-style Lews Castle with its trails, fantastic views and fascinating museum showcasing Hebridean history and heritage. Lewis is also home to 'Scotland's Stonehenge', the 5,000-year-old Callanish Standing Stones, and Dun Carloway, the best-preserved Iron Age broch in Scotland.

Day 6-7 Enigmatic Orkney

Discover Norse heritage and wild outpost islands

Uncover thousands of years of history as we spend two days exploring the storied Orkney archipelago.

Delve into ancient times at the Neolithic settlement of Skara Brae and Ring of Brodgar - all part of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site. You'll also discover Kirkwall, the archipelago's largest town. This vibrant place has influences from every era from the Vikings to World War II. Visit the regal 12th century St Magnus Cathedral and the adjacent Earl's Palace to see the stone ruins of this once-grand Renaissance building. Whisky aficionados may also enjoy Kirkwall's Highland Park and Scapa distilleries' sublime single malts.

On your second day in Orkney, your Expedition Team will attempt to take you to explore one of the northern Orcadian islands, such as Papa Westray or Westray, in search of historic treasures and a wealth of nature and wildlife. These islands are outposts against the wild Atlantic, framed with rocky sea cliffs where seabirds nest and pristine sandy beaches. They've provided shelter for mankind and nature across the millennia

Day 8 Far-flung Fair Isle

A scenic stop for bird lovers

Your cruise continues to the Shetland Islands as we venture to remote Fair Isle, known for its birds and knitwear.

A magnet for birders and wildlife photographers, the island is home to 27 bird species. It's a vital stop for migrating seabirds, drawn to the red sandstone cliffs, green fields and moors.

We'll attempt to land so you can join a clifftop hike to a spectacularly sited lighthouse with the Expedition Team. Gain fascinating insights into the life and history of the 65-strong island community at the local museum. You can support Fair Islanders by buying genuine Fair Isle knitwear direct from local makers.

If landing isn't possible, the scenic cruising is just as spectacular.

Day 9-10 Shetland Uncovered



Discover the Norse roots of Scotland's most northerly inhabited isles

We cruise northwest to spend a day and a half discovering more of the Shetland Islands.

The capital Lerwick is a friendly, Victorian-influenced fishing town set in beautiful scenery. Navigate the narrow lanes on foot to discover little shops selling local whiskies, woollen sweaters and fudge. By the old waterfront, you'll find the Shetland Museum, showcasing Pictish carvings and Shetland lace shawls.

Nearby you can see 17th century Fort Charlotte and the regal-looking town hall. Keep your binoculars handy to scan for grey and common seals along Lerwick's beaches, as well as local birdlife such as Red-throated Divers, redshanks and curlews. You can also choose to visit the Sumburgh Head cliffs where you'll find a cacophony of breeding seabirds, or discover the many layers of history at Jarlshof, a Neolithic and Norse settlement.

We'll also attempt to land at the UK's most northerly point, Unst. Often a first landfall for travelling Norsemen, Unst is rich in Viking and Norse heritage and remains. If we can, we'll walk to the wild cliffs of the Hermaness National Nature Reserve, shelter to thousands of breeding seabirds including fulmars, puffins, shags and gannets.

Day 11 Arrival in Bergen, Norway

Visit Bergen's UNESCO-listed Bryggen district

Having followed the trail of Norse history through the Scottish Isles back to its homeland, your cruise now reaches its finale in Bergen, one of Norway's most beautiful cities. You'll have experienced so much of these wondrous isles on your journey and you'll treasure the memories for years to come.

After you disembark MS Spitsbergen in the morning, we recommend spending some time exploring on your own before you return home. Why not visit the UNESCO-listed Bryggen district with its colourful wooden wharves and artisanal boutiques. Across from here, you'll also find the city's famous fish market.

Please note:
Itineraries are subject to change.



YOUR SHIP: SPITSBERGEN

YOUR SHIP:	**Spitsbergen**
VESSEL TYPE:	**ExpeditionPassenger Capacity: 335Built / refurbished: 2009 / 2016**
LENGTH:	
PASSENGER CAPACITY:	
BUILT/REFURBISHED:	

Completely rebuilt in 2016, the 100 metre MS Spitsbergen features high technical standards as well as comfortable, modern public areas and cabins. The vessel's fresh Scandinavian design reflects a colour palette derived from the sea. She is modern and environmentally progressive, and further improvements that will reduce emissions and fuel consumption even more are in process. The new ship's maneuverability and optimal size make her quite suitable for exploring polar waters of both teh Arctic and Antarctica. Spitsbergen has a wide range of facilities including a sauna, fitness centre and hot tub, several bars and restaurants and a panoramic lounge. MS Spitsbergen has an on-board Expedition Team and serves as a university at sea. Interesting lectures inside the ship as well as out on the sun deck make this an exciting and educational journey. Topics depend on the season and the waters we sail in. The Expedition Team host a lecture programme and evening gatherings daily. Out on deck you can participate in live points of interest to learn more about the nature, culture and other phenomena we encounter along the coast. In addition, the Expedition Team will introduce you to the uniquely Norwegian notion of `friluftsliv´ (outdoor life), and encourage you take part in `friluftsliv´ hikes and activities during the journey. Ship Facilities Compass Service Centre Brygga bistro Shop Torget main dining Wi-Fi Lift Guest launderette Panoramic deck 8 Outside bar for events,



decks 7 & 8

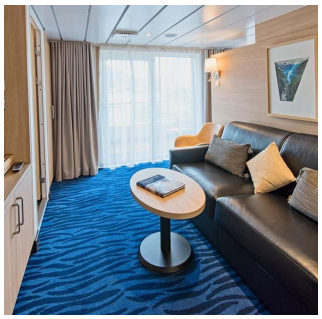


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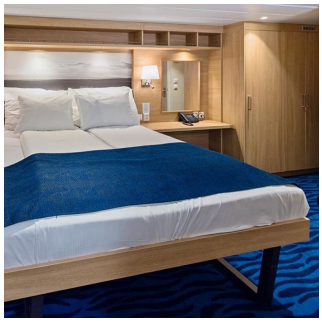
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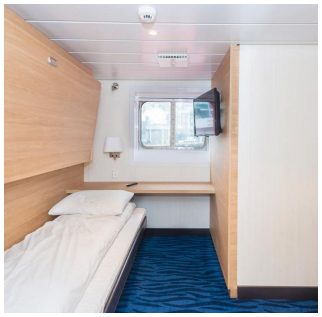
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