

The Small Cruise Ship Collection

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SPRING IN THE HEBRIDES - DISCOVER THE LOCHS, CASTLES & GARDENS OF THE HEBRIDES

If ever an archipelago was made for expedition cruising it is the islands off Scotland's magnificent coastline, an indented landscape of enormous natural splendour with offshore islands forming stepping stones into the Atlantic. One of Europe's last remaining wilderness areas affords the traveller a marvellous island hopping journey through stunning scenery accompanied by spectacular sunsets and prolific wildlife. Over the course of nine nights and accompanied by our naturalists and local guides, we will explore the isles and with our nimble Zodiac craft be able to reach some of the most remote and untouched places including the remarkable uninhabited archipelago of St Kilda, spiritual Iona and Ulva, one of the smallest inhabited islands in the Hebrides. We will visit both inhabited and uninhabited islands and places of great natural beauty, rich in wildlife and many with a long history dating back to the Iron Age. Learn something of the history of the islands, see their 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. Such a trip would be almost impossible to arrange independently and requires a small ship with the expeditionary qualities of the Ocean Nova. With just seventy travelling companions, the atmosphere on board is convivial and when ashore with our local experts and expedition team, we will divide into small groups thereby enjoying a comprehensive and peaceful experience. We will witness vibrant colours and amazingly prolific birdlife, explore deserted villages and learn of the history and ancient culture of unique island life.



ITINERARY

Day 1 Oban, Scotland.

Embark the Ocean Nova this afternoon. Transfers will be provided from Glasgow Central Railway Station and Glasgow Airport at a fixed time. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we sail this evening.

Day 2 Gigha & Jura.

Gigha is a place apart: heather covered hills, deserted beaches, and a single lane verged with wildflowers that meanders for some six miles between cottages and farms. Privately owned by its 120 inhabitants, it is a gem of a place and somewhere not easily forgotten. After landing by Zodiac, we will walk to the gardens of Achamore House where the Horlick family have

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created a lovely and eclectic garden with their collection of azaleas, rhododendrons and exotic plants. This afternoon we will use our Zodiacs to land on Jura where we will go ashore at the village of Craighouse and be welcomed at the cooperage of the Jura Distillery for an introduction to the distilling process and an opportunity to taste the local whisky. Alternatively, join one of our naturalists on a walk along the shore.

Day 3 Colonsay & Iona.

Awake this morning off Colonsay. Lying between Mull and Islay, we will spend the morning on a choice of walks exploring this lovely island, with her craggy, heatherbacked hills, picturesque beaches and sparse woodland yet with an impressive array of plant and birdlife. Near Colonsay House, built in 1722 by Malcolm MacNeil and bought by Lord Strathcona in 1904, we will visit the wooded gardens, which protect the tiny, enigmatic 8th century St Oran's Cross. Sail over lunch to 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 4 Staffa & Ulva.

At dawn we 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. At

only five miles long and two miles wide, Ulva is one of the smallest inhabited islands in the Hebrides, with a population of just 16. We will use our Zodiacs to go ashore and spend the afternoon exploring this tranquil island steeped in history and rich in wildlife.

Day 5 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 6 Inverewe & Loch Torridon.

Anchoring in Loch Ewe we visit one of Scotland's premier gardens, Inverewe. This botanical garden in the northwest Highlands presents an amazing collection of exotic trees and shrubs that are sheltered by well positioned windbreaks of native pine. After an independent exploration of the gardens, we will return to the Ocean Nova and sail to the stunning scenery of Loch Torridon where the mountains tower over the villages

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below. We will call into the small community of Shildaig where there will be an opportunity for a stroll in this remote and captivating landscape.

Day 7 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 8 Dunvegan, Isle of Skye & Canna.

From our anchorage in Loch Harport on the Isle of Skye we make our way to the MacLeod stronghold of Dunvegan Castle. Remarkably, the castle has been almost continuously occupied by the MacLeods for nearly eight centuries. Discover the castle, a fascinating place that contains work from at least ten building periods. We will also explore the gardens, following paths through woodland glades past pools and burns fed by a waterfall. The formal gardens were laid out in the 18th century and make a wonderful contrast to the moorland hills and sea. We will also keep a look out for the seal colony on the adjoining rocks. Over lunch we cross to the Small Isles. 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.

Day 9 Loch Scavaig & Inverie.

We will spend the morning at the lovely Loch Scavaig. Just beyond is the freshwater Loch Corruisk with its breathtakingly beautiful view over the Cuillins. This is great walking country, but for those who prefer a less energetic morning our Zodiacs will explore the coast looking out for seals. This afternoon we arrive at the Knoydart Peninsula and the village of Inverie which is the largest settlement in mainland Britain without a road connection. Our expedition team will lead walks in the surrounding forest with great views down to Loch Nevis. Alternatively, choose to explore the town and visit the Old Forge which is listed as mainland Britain's most remote pub.

Day 10 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.



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YOUR SHIP: OCEAN NOVA

YOUR SHIP: Ocean Nova

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



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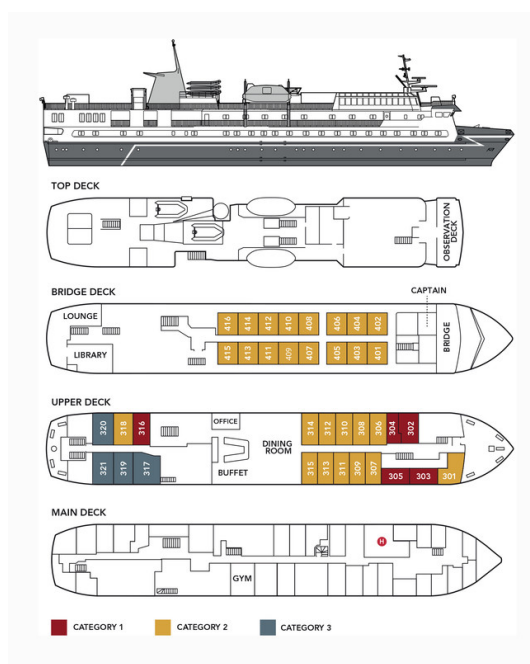
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Twin cabin



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PRICING

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