WILD SCOTLAND 2020

You can travel the world visiting all manner of exotic and wonderful places without realising that some of the finest scenery, fascinating history and most endearing people may be close to home. Nowhere is this truer than around Scotland’s magnificent coastline, an indented landscape of enormous natural splendour with offshore islands forming stepping stones into the Atlantic.

This unique voyage will appeal to those who prefer their islands deserted, but with abundant bird and wildlife. If you have always had a hankering to visit some of the remotest and most inaccessible islands in Scotland, this is the ideal opportunity. Join us aboard the Ocean Nova as we sail from the port of Oban to the islands on the edge, visiting both inhabited and uninhabited islands and places of great natural beauty, rich in wildlife and mystical history, many with a long history dating back to the Iron Age.

Few cruise ships offer the chance to explore in-depth the islands off the northern coast of Scotland. This unique expedition includes the remote, uninhabited outposts of St Kilda and North Rona with the inhabited island of Foula and the northernmost point of the United Kingdom at Unst. 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 over eighty travelling companions, the atmosphere is more akin to a private yacht trip and ashore with our local experts and expedition members we will divide into small groups thereby enjoying a more comprehensive and peaceful experience.

**ITINERARY**

Day 1 Oban, Scotland.
Embark the Ocean Nova in the afternoon. Transfers will be provided from Glasgow Central Railway Station and Glasgow International Airport at a fixed time. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we sail this evening.

**Day 2 Mingulay, Berneray & Pabbay.**
This promises to be a most memorable day as we circumnavigate the uninhabited islands at the very tip of South Uist. Making good use of our Zodiacs we will explore the islands and make beach landings. These islands are a nature reserve with important breeding populations of razorbills, guillemots, black guillemots, puffins, fulmars and shags. There are also five species of gull, all the seabirds being attracted by the cliffs and caves which offer safe nesting sites. The islands also have significant historical sites with there being a continuous population on Mingulay for at least two thousand years before evacuation began in 1907 and the island was completely abandoned in 1912. Ruins of the village remain close to the shore which we will explore on a guided walk.

**Day 3 St Kilda.**
Arrive at first light in 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 only two dozen 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 a number of guided walks on the island. Later, 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 gannet. Tonight we will sail past the Flannan Isles where we hope to see the famous lighthouse.

**Day 4 North Rona & Sula Sgeir.**
Spend the day around North Rona, an isolated island some fifty miles north of Cape Wrath. The last islanders left North Rona in 1844 and today it is home to thirteen species of breeding seabirds including large colonies of great black-backed gulls, great skuas and puffins. There is also a large population of grey seals which we hope to observe on a Zodiac cruise. If weather permits we will also visit the gannet colony on Sula Sgeir, home to over 5,000 breeding pairs and renowned as the least visited national nature reserve in Britain.

**Day 5 Foula & Papa Stour, Shetland Islands.**
This morning we visit Foula, one of Britain’s most remote inhabited islands. Apart from a narrow coastal strip of more fertile croftland, Foula is an expanse of peat and moorland rising steeply to five dramatic peaks. In the long midsummer days, Foula’s wildflowers provide a glorious burst of colour. The world’s largest colony of great skuas compete fiercely with many parasitic jaegers for breeding territories. Over lunch we will sail the short distance to Papa Stour where we will use our Zodiacs to explore the stunning cliff scenery, sea stacks, arches, blowholes and coastal caves.

**Day 6 Unst & Fetlar, Shetland Islands.**
We continue our exploration of Shetland in the northern islands of Unst and Fetlar. Unst is Britain’s most northerly inhabited
island and at the Heritage Centre we will learn about the islanders struggles over the centuries and the industries that have prospered, whilst the Unst Boat Haven is dedicated to the history of the islands distinctive wooden boats which descend from Viking craft. We also visit Saxa Vord with views over Hermaness National Nature Reserve and Muckle Flugga stacks and home to thousands of gannets and puffins as well as rare arctic-alpine plants. Over lunch we sail to Fetlar, inhabited for over 5000 years the island lays claim to being the first Norse landing site in the Shetlands. Known as the most fertile of the Shetland Islands the wildflowers bring colour to the landscape whilst the birdlife on the island is prolific. Our expedition team will lead walks ashore and at the Fetlar Interpretative Centre and Museum we will learn about the wildlife and archaeological history of the island.

Day 7 Lerwick.
Spend the day in the Shetland capital of Lerwick. This morning enjoy a visit to the remarkable archaeological site of Jarlshof which was uncovered by a violent storm in the winter of 1896, revealing an extraordinary settlement site embracing at least 5000 years of human history. The site contains a remarkable sequence of stone structures – late Neolithic houses, a Bronze-Age village, an Iron-Age broch and wheelhouses, several Norse longhouses, a Medieval farmstead, and the 16th century laird’s house. Return to the ship for lunch and enjoy a free afternoon to explore this historic port. Perhaps wander through its narrow stone lanes and maybe visit the excellent Shetland Museum, containing historical artefacts from shipwrecks and the whaling era. This evening we will be entertained by local musicians on board the ship as we moor overnight.

At dawn we sail the short distance to the island of Mousa where we will see the forty-foot defensive tower built by the Picts more than 2,000 years ago and the tallest, best preserved example of an Iron Age broch (tower) in Britain. Spend the morning walking around this fascinating site before we return to the ship and sail to Fair Isle, arriving in the early afternoon. Here, the tiny population of sixty or so islanders always extend us a warm welcome. This afternoon enjoy a walk across the island, visit the Bird Observatory or meet the local community and maybe purchase some of the famous knitwear. Return to the ship for dinner as we sail this evening.

Day 8 Mousa & Fair Isle.
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Day 9 Papa Westray, Orkney Islands.
Spend the morning on the Orkney Island of Papa Westray. Here you have time to stretch your legs on a number of island walks or maybe meet up with the local residents at the nearby community centre. You can choose to visit the 3500 year-old Knap of Howar a Neolithic farm building that claims to be the oldest standing house in Europe and the 12th century St Boniface Kirk. In the north of the island is the North Hill reserve, an area of maritime heath and home to Arctic terns and skuas and also the extremely rare Scottish primrose. Return to the ship for lunch and enjoy an afternoon at sea as we sail back to mainland Scotland.

Day 10 Aberdeen.
Disembark this morning. Transfers will be provided to Aberdeen Airport and Aberdeen Railway Station at a fixed time.

Please Note:
Itineraries are subject to change.
YOUR SHIP: OCEAN NOVA

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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 accommodates 86 passengers in single, double and triple cabins, all with sea-view and private facilities. The double cabins have either two lower beds or upper and lower 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 PolarQuest's 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.
INSIDE YOUR SHIP
## Pricing

18-May-2020 to 27-May-2020

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