

ORKNEY



"Orkney's rolling landscape is not only beautiful, it is packed full of impressive archaeology. Getting to visit world famous sites such as Maeshowe and Skara Brae is really breathtaking."
Jack Ward

Dates Sun 1 - Sun 8 Sep 2019
Price £1,945
Deposit £300 Single Supp £450

Leaders Jack Ward and Kate Mennie

Weather The weather can vary enormously. During a typical week in this season we would expect to experience mixed sun and showers with temperatures in the range 10-20°C. Around the remote coastline of Orkney we may expect cooler temperatures and though it is possible that we shall see unbroken sunshine and settled weather, Orkney can receive wet and windy squalls and occasionally fog. Having said all of that, it can often be warm and sunny and you may want to bring sunscreen.

Walking On Orkney the walking is generally very relaxed and easy, but on at least two of the days we may take walks of up to 3-4 miles on rough grassland and small coastal paths with some climbing.

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8

Insects Biting insects should not be a problem

Accom Premier Inn, Inverness;
Lynnfield Hotel, Orkney;
Double, twin and single rooms
all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Hen Harrier	Pink-footed Goose
Short-eared Owl	Black Guillemot
Merlin	Golden Plover
Great Skua	Sanderling
Arctic Skua	Bar-tailed Godwit
Pomarine Skua	Ruff
Manx Shearwater	Lapland Bunting
Sooty Shearwater	
Red-throated Diver	

Enjoy the magic of Orkney – autumn bird migration, coupled with worldclass archaeological sites, on a holiday dedicated to both, on this delightful island archipelago.

- Autumn migration on Orkney - you never know what might turn up!
- Short-eared Owl, Hen Harrier, Red-throated Divers and skuas
- Visit to Rousay, one of the many islands
- Tomb of the Eagles, via Churchill Barriers
- Maeshowe, Ring of Brodgar, Stones of Stenness
- The Loons RSPB Reserve
- Visit to ancient settlement of Skara Brae

| We meet in Inverness in time for dinner in our overnight hotel, giving us time to discuss the coming week.

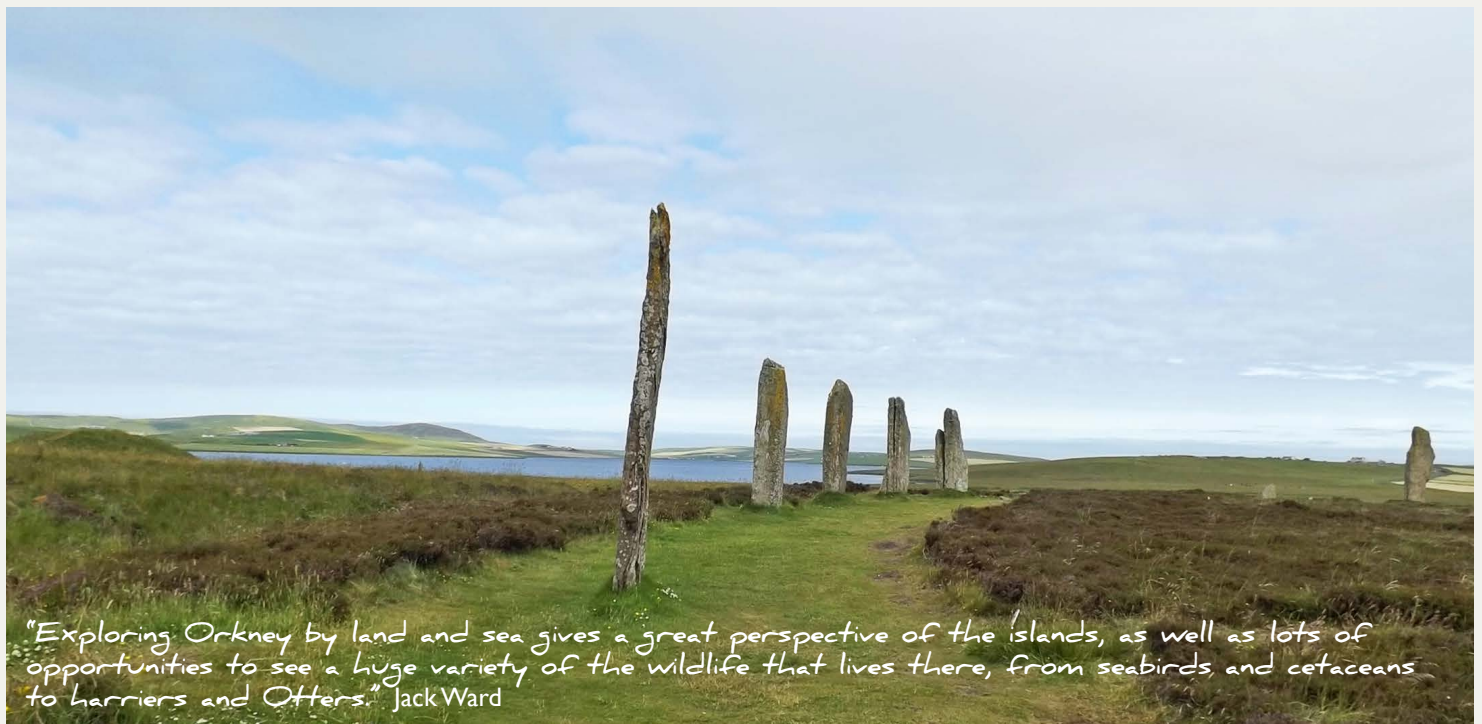
2-7 From Inverness, we follow the coast road through the eastern seaboard of Sutherland and Caithness, to catch our ferry from Scrabster to Orkney. Along the route, past historic villages such as Golspie and Helmsdale, the last Sandwich and Arctic Terns fish on their way south and some of the autumn's Eider and Common and Velvet Scoter can be seen. Buzzards are common and we may also see Red Kite circling above the rich farmland of Easter Ross.

The crossing, on a large modern, fully equipped ferry, takes us across The Pentland Firth, rightly famous for the strength of its tidal race. These waters provide rich pickings for wildlife,

cetaceans in particular and we shall be vigilant during the crossing and watch for Storm Petrel, Manx Shearwater, skuas and dolphins. We shall be travelling during the peak of migration and species such as Sooty Shearwater and Grey Phalarope could be seen. The ferry takes us past the impressive cliffs of Hoy and past the great sea stack of the Old Man of Hoy, to land us in the wonderful harbour of Stromness, where the great author George Mackay-Brown lived.

The landscape of Orkney has broad coastal vistas, interspersed with ancient archaeological wonders. The pastures are home to Brown Hare, with Hen Harrier and Short-eared Owl quartering the moors and meadows. At this time of year there is also the good chance of migrants and we shall check through the





"Exploring Orkney by land and sea gives a great perspective of the islands, as well as lots of opportunities to see a huge variety of the wildlife that lives there, from seabirds and cetaceans to harriers and Otters." Jack Ward

passage flocks of waders for any rarities that might be amongst them, such as Pectoral Sandpiper. Over the years many exciting birds have been found on these northern islands, including Wryneck, Common Rosefinch and Red-breasted Flycatcher.

We shall also look out for Black Guillemot, Great Northern Diver, Twite and Rock Dove and of course Otter is always a possibility. There will be Red-throated Diver, often still in their breeding finery and Turnstone, picking at seaweed on the rocky shore. With the approaching winter, Greylag, Barnacle and White-fronted Geese begin to arrive too.

Orkney is an archipelago and although we are based on Mainland, we shall also travel to the island of Rousay, to the north. This island has a lot of heather moorland and we shall look for raptors such as Hen Harrier and Merlin. There will be waders on the shore and species such as Stonechat should be obvious. The gardens around the ferry point can be good shelter for migrants, so we shall work these to see what we can find! We'll also visit the chambered tomb and broch of Midhowe, whilst being observed by the curious Common Seals along the shore.

The archaeological sites of Orkney cannot be missed. Skara Brae is an absolute must - an entire prehistoric settlement with rooms, beds, dressers and pottery, all exposed by a storm some 5000 years after it was built. The Standing Stones of Stenness and the Ring of Brodgar, where

36 of the original circle of 60 stones still stand, are both impressive, however it's the magnificent Maeshowe that steals the show, along with the Tomb of the Eagles, where we can see neolithic artefacts.

The Tomb of the Eagles is situated on South Ronaldsay and our journey here will take us over the Churchill Barriers that connect the southern islands, where the bays hold divers and waders and we shall look for Otters. This tomb holds the echoes of our past connections with the totemic wildlife around us, in particular the White-tailed Eagle that was once abundant here. Now, after an absence of nearly 200 years, a pair has established itself on the island of Hoy.

On our penultimate day we'll take the return ferry from Mainland back to Scrabster. There are some good wildlife locations near to Scrabster and we shall explore Dunnet Bay, as well as the most northerly point on mainland UK, Dunnet Head, where we could encounter Twite and Wheatear.

Just nearby is a freshwater loch with hide, where we may fill in some of the gaps in our list with species such as Tufted Duck, Little Grebe and the two Highland rarities Coot and Moorhen! We shall return to Inverness in time for dinner on our final evening.

8 After breakfast we say our farewells.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Arrive in Inverness
1 night at the Premier Inn
- Day 2 Travel up the north east coast of Caithness and Sutherland and take the ferry to Orkney
5 nights at the Lynnfield Hotel
- Days 3-6 Wildlife and archaeological exploration of Mainland and the islands
- Day 7 Take early morning ferry from Orkney and travel back down the coast to Inverness. 1 night at the Premier Inn
- Day 8 Depart after breakfast

Colin Scott: Arctic Skua
Chrissie Nicholson: Ring of Brodgar, Old Man of Hoy
Ian Tulloch: Golden Plover
Jane Hope: Sanderling
Chris Brookings: Great Northern Diver
Steve Batt: Raven

