

# SHETLAND ISLES



"Midsummer on Shetland is a magical time, when the sun barely seems to set. Last year as we landed around midnight on Mousa and looked west, we were treated to a breathtaking sunset with the sky seemingly on fire, as all around Storm Petrels flicked low over the sea and began to swirl like bats around the walls of the ancient broch." Craig Round

Dates Sun 24 Jun - Sun 1 Jul 2018

Price £2,135

Deposit £400 Single Supp £250

Leaders Craig Round and Tim Drew

Flights Loganair, scheduled  
Outbound: Morning, Aberdeen-Sumburgh  
Inbound: Afternoon, Sumburgh-Aberdeen

Weather During a typical week in this season we expect to experience mixed sun and showers, with temperatures in the range 10-20°C

Walking 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

Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8

Insects Biting insects are not a problem

Accom Saxa Vord, Unst - double, twin ensuite, single non-ensuite rooms in individual houses. Please note that single rooms will be sharing a bathroom with one other guest unless a further supplement is paid

Busta House Hotel - double, twin and single ensuite rooms

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Red-necked Phalarope	Dunlin
Whimbrel	Golden Plover
Storm Petrel	Twite
Red-throated Diver	Rock Dove
Great Northern Diver	Raven
Long-tailed Duck	Twite
Whooper Swan	Otter
Great Skua	Minke Whale
Arctic Skua	White-beaked Dolphin
Gannet	White-sided Dolphin
Puffin	Killer Whale
Black Guillemot	Harbour Porpoise
Common Tern	Harbour Seal
Arctic Tern	Grey Seal

Just 6° south of the Arctic Circle - far northern isles and world-class wildlife, huge seabird colonies and delightful Red-necked Phalaropes, at the Simmer Dim.

- Islands at the 'Simmer Dim' when the sun barely sets
- Easy flight to Shetland rather than the 14-hour ferry
- Mousa's Storm Petrels, Fetlar's Red-necked Phalaropes
- The spectacular seabird cities of Noss, Hermaness and Sumburgh
- Otters and offshore whales and dolphins
- Regular rarities and summering scarce breeders
- Closer to Norway than to mainland Scotland

Flying from Aberdeen, we arrive in Shetland and drive north over Mainland. Crossing using inter-island ferries to the low-lying island of Yell we go onwards to our base on Unst, the northernmost inhabited island of the British Isles. With Great Skuas passing overhead and the wild calls of Curlew and Whimbrel all around, it really does feel like a different world here.

2-3 On Unst we really are at the end of the British Isles! We shall cross the moorland to the wild and dramatic cliffs of Hermaness, dodging dive-bombing Great Skuas (in Shetland called Bonxies, meaning 'dumpy bird') as breeding Snipe and Dunlin display overhead, to reach the vast seabird cliffs and gannetry at Saito, as a blizzard of gannets ride the updrafts. Puffins emerge from their burrows and scurry around our feet, as we look out to Muckle Flugga lighthouse and the small rocky island of 'Oootsta' or Out

Stack- after which there is no more Britain! Unst also supports Wheatear, Twite, Whimbrel and occasionally Icelandic race Black-tailed Godwit.

Shetland lies at 60° north, where in midsummer the sun is above the horizon for 19 hours and where, given clear skies in the long twilight, or "simmer dim" the sun barely seems to set. These northern isles have a distinctly Scandinavian feel to them, with many of Shetland's place names reflecting the long association it has had with its Norwegian neighbours and its Viking past, also reflected in the pattern and colours of the Shetland flag.

On our regular short ferry crossings between islands, the tiny harbours are a favourite haunt of Otters and during the crossings Gannets can be seen diving in synchronised teams. Marauding Arctic Skuas harry passing Arctic Terns and streams of Puffins and other auks are always on the move. We shall also be alert to the sight of fins breaking the surface, betraying a







"Shetland has some of the best birding and wildlife spectacles to be seen anywhere in the UK and is a place of incredible beauty, where the wildlife is literally all around you. Last year, after a patient wait, we watched a stunning male Red-necked Phalarope drop from high out of the sky onto the loch, landing only a few feet away, right in front of us. Shetland magic!" Craig Round

Porpoise close inshore, or maybe even Killer Whales! Another of our inter-island boat journeys takes us to Fetlar, reputed to originate from the Viking for 'fat or fertile land' and the fourth largest island in the Shetland Isles. It is home to stunning and rare Red-necked Phalaropes, as they delicately spin on small lochans, picking insects from the waterside stones. Red-throated Divers may have young and we shall hear their weird courtship wailing.

Arctic Skua, Golden Plover; Dunlin and Whimbrel or 'peerie whap' in Shetland meaning small Curlew, can also be seen on the tundra-like heath of Fetlar and their 'rippling' calls can be heard across the island. It also supports outstanding numbers of other breeding waders, such as Lapwing, Oystercatcher and Ringed Plover; with Curlew, Snipe and Redshank in the flower-filled meadows.

North Shetland, renowned for Otters, is probably the UK's premier location for this elusive mammal and we have been lucky with fine views at a number of sites we know. Along the shores we shall see Red-breasted Merganser and Eider or (Dunter) and further inland, coastal species nest everywhere, including Arctic Skuas (Skootie Alan) and Fulmar (Maalies) – we shall really be learning our Shetland bird names!

**4-7** Leaving the north and its myriad islands and skerries behind us, we venture south to explore Mainland Shetland.

Great Northern Diver, Long-tailed Duck and Whooper Swan all over-summer here and we'll also see Rock Dove, Raven and perhaps Peregrine. At Sumburgh Head, close to the dramatic Viking

settlement of Jarlshoff and also at Lax Firth, we've seen White-beaked and White-sided Dolphins and watched Humpback, Minke and predatory Killer Whales! Shetland for a long time was part of the Norse kingdoms and, along with Orkney, Fair Isle and the Faroes, was a staging post for the Norse invasions of Western Ireland. History is never far away on these islands.

A trip highlight for many, is our dusk visit to the island of Mousa, where inside the stonework of the 2,000 year old Iron Age Broch, we are enveloped in silence, until the rhythmic 'churring' of Storm Petrels amongst the stones brings the walls alive, a moment of real 'Shetland magic'! It's a total privilege to watch these tiny ocean-going seabirds flick in low off the sea, returning to their nest sites and patter at our feet and as they swirl like bats around our heads in the fiery sunset of the 'simmer dim', the real world seems a million miles away. The island of Noss is without doubt one of the finest single seabird islands in Europe. On our boat trip around the island, we'll cruise in under the incredible sheer seabird cliffs of the Noup, towering some 590ft above us, it's a truly awesome sight! These are the largest cliffs on Shetland's east coast and home to almost 9,000 pairs of Gannet! Sheer seabird heaven! The great bird city also holds Guillemot, Razorbill, Kittiwake, Fulmar, Shag and we'll see the delightful Black Guillemot (Tystie).

**8** We should have some time to birdwatch on the final morning, before taking an afternoon flight back to Aberdeen.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Fly into Sumburgh and travel north to our base at Saxa Vord on Unst
- Days 2-3 Exploration of Unst, including the wild cliffs of Hermaness and the small island of Fetlar
- Day 4 Travel south on the ferry to our base on the Mainland
- Days 5-7 Birdwatching and wildlife exploration of south Mainland, including a visit to Noss, the Viking settlement of Jarlshoff and a night visit to Mousa
- Day 8 Depart in the afternoon, after a morning spent bird and wildlife watching, on a flight back to Aberdeen

**Craig Round:** Gannets, Red-necked Phalarope, Great Skua, Arctic Tern, Storm Petrels  
**Cath Wright:** Guillemots  
**Adam Moan:** Puffin

