

Orkney and Shetland

Sat 21 May to Thurs 2 June 2022

Orkney is an archipelago, with the largest island called Mainland and a northerly and southerly group of islands, most of which are quite fertile. Orkney contains some of the oldest and best preserved Neolithic sites in Europe. This tour will give you a flavour of what there is to see on the islands.

Shetland is a separate archipelago, about 50 miles north east of Orkney, and was named by the Lonely Planet guide as the sixth best region in the world for tourists seeking unspoilt destinations. We will cycle the length of the mainland and up through Yell and Unst (the northern tip)



Itinerary

Sat 21st May evening ferry from Aberdeen to Orkney

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel

Sun 22nd May visit the Italian Chapel

This forms the eastern side of Scapa Flow where, after attack by Hitler's forces, Churchill had ships sunk to block the passage of submarines. These were called Churchill's barriers and now there is a causeway between the islands.

The chapel was built by Italian prisoners of war.

- Route distance: 70.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 778.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Mon 23 May visit the island of Rousay and Cuween Hill chambered cairn.

Cycling northwest to Tingwall, we catch the ferry to Rousay. It is nicknamed the Egypt of the north because of the vast number of ancient sites. There is also an option to cycle the 13 mile loop of the island, but please note it does include one of the highest roads on Orkney.

- Route distance: 49.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 382.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Tues 24 May visit Skara Brae and Yesnaby, then overnight ferry to Shetland

Passing the chambered cairn at Mae's Howe, visiting the Standing stones of Stenness, and stopping at the Ring of Brodgar, before arriving at Skara Brae. This is a well preserved 5,000 year old Neolithic settlement, that is older than the pyramids.

Then, a visit the spectacular rock stack of Yesnaby. It is almost too much to fit into one day, but fortunately the ferry is late in the evening so we have plenty of time.

- Route distance: 78.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 685.0 m
- Accommodation: Ferry
- Meals: (B)

Wed 25th May we arrive in Shetland

This is the tallest broch still standing and is thought to have been built about 100BC. Brochs are unique to Scotland and are towers built with two concentric circles of drystone walls.

- Route distance: 44.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 712.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Thurs 26th May the south most point at Sumburgh

If the croft house museum reopens in time we will visit it, before going to Sumburgh Head and finishing the day at the Jarlshof prehistoric settlement.

- Route distance: 19.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 274.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Fri 27th May ride north to Brae

This spit of sand, with sea either side, is called a tombolo. It links the "almost island" to the mainland. Please see the attached link for a lovely photo of the tombolo.

<https://www.scottishgeology.com/best-places/st-ninians-tombolo-shetland/>

- Route distance: 92.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1508.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Sat 28th May day trip west to Eshaness

These cliffs were formed 360 million years ago when Shetland was at the equator and cliffs were the flank of a volcano with lava flows around.

Then on to Stenness to view Dore Holm.

- Route distance: 58.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 116.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Sun 29 May NORTH

A day of cycling broken with two short ferry trips, and we finish near to the most northerly bus shelter in Britain.

- Route distance: 72.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 723.0 m

- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Mon 30th May Unst - most northerly point in the UK.

This takes as far north as we can go by bike in Scotland. Visit the Hermaness Nature Reserve as well. Here we have views to Muckle Flugga with its lighthouse, and Out Stack the most northerly point in Britain.

- Route distance: 29.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 723.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Tues 31 May Brae

This gives us a chance to see the route from a different direction.

- Route distance: 72.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 723.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Wed 1 June Lerwick and ferry to Aberdeen

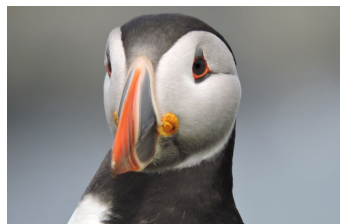
Scalloway is approached by quite a lush fertile valley. The village boasts its own castle and was once the capital of Shetland. Lerwick is more the size of a small town, and it is there that we catch our ferry.

- Route distance: 61.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 141.0 m
- Accommodation: Ferry
- Meals: (B)

Thurs 2nd June breakfast in Aberdeen

The ferry very early and although we first have to disembark with our bikes to vacate the car deck, we will then re-embark the ship, as foot passengers, to have breakfast before setting off for home.

- No cycling
- Meals: (B)



Dates and Prices

Cost

- Land only price: £1440.0

Payment Schedule

A deposit of £200 per person is required to complete a booking, with the final balance of £1,240 per person to be paid by Friday 11th March 2022.

Price includes:

- Ferry costs - all included
- Luggage transfer
- 12 nights accomodation and breakfast
- Dinner on 3 nights
- Entrance fees to the Italian Chapel, Skara Brae, Mousa Broch, Sumburgh Head and Jarlshof are all included

Price does not include:

- Travel to and from the start / end points
- lunch, café stops, drinks
- Any other personal expenses
- Travel Insurance

Cancellations

Written Notice Received: Cancellation Charge: Tour

- before Friday 11th March: £200 Deposit
- after Friday 11th March: £1,440 cost of Tour
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Holiday Information

Area covered by the holiday

- All of the cycling is on Orkney and Shetland, both of which are very sparsely populated. Where possible, minor roads have been planned.

Travel

- The tour starts and finishes in Aberdeen. At the end of the tour we arrive at breakfast time you should be able to travel home that day.

Accommodation

- Hotel accommodation for most nights, and 2 nights in a cabin on the ferry.

Rooms

- Accommodation on a shared room basis (due to lack of space to offer single occupancy).

Luggage transfer

- A car will be provided for luggage transfer, but in case of a medical priority or breakdown, it may be necessary to carry your own luggage.

Rest Day

- There are no planned rest days, but all of the days when we are not moving on are optional rest days. The days at the most southerly and most northerly points on Shetland are planned with very low mileage, to allow some recovery time.

Roads used

- The holiday is classified as grade 5 (medium)
The holiday is for 13 days, but finishes after breakfast on the last day, and has no formal rest days.
This is a moving on holiday staying for 2 or more nights at each location, except for one night at Brae and of course the ferry. So, if anybody needs a rest and repair day, they can sit out on one of the days that we are not moving on. No-one is obliged to ride those days.
Most of the roads are minor (some single track) and used by rural/tourist traffic and are hilly in parts. Though we may need to use some busier roads at times, we avoid them as much as possible.
Detailed route notes will be provided before the tour, along with GPS tracks for those who want them.
Most of each day will be spent cycling. People will be expected to ride at their own pace and often in loose groups, at around 10-12 mph on the flat, slower up hills, usually meeting up at cafes for lunch and refreshment breaks. You will be notified of

recommended refreshment stops each day.

It is expected that you may want to stop for photographs, look at the view or explore some local point of interest and this is okay. You are on holiday.

Inevitably, parts of the route are hilly, so you do need to be fit to get the most out of this tour. It is essential to get out on your bike and do some 50-mile rides before the tour starts. There are some steep descents too, so you should be able to negotiate these safely.

On days where we are catching a ferry, it is important that we meet up on time. The route is planned to allow time for cycling at modest speeds and still be on time for the ferry. For Northlink ferries (Aberdeen, Kirkwall and Lerwick) we need to meet up at least 1 hour beforehand (to load any luggage onto the car). For all other smaller ferries we need to meet up 30 minutes before in order to allow time for any punctures etc. Please note it may not always be possible to follow the itinerary exactly due to road works or weather etc, as things do not always go as planned. In these circumstances, you will be advised of alternative arrangements.

The Leader and Deputy will share the luggage transfer and ride leadership between them. Often with one ahead and the other behind. They will not always be at the front of the group but may be anywhere within it, as circumstances require, so you will need to be aware of the route each day. This information will be given to you before, or at the beginning of the holiday, and again at daily briefings

Weather and Clothing

- Like the rest of the UK the weather in Scotland is very variable. Please bring sun screen and waterproofs, as you might need to use both on the same day.

There is a possibility of both heat waves and cold, wet weather, so be prepared for all possibilities. The temperature in Orkney in May is likely to be between 6 and 12 degrees. On average some rainfall over 1mm can be expected on 4 days of the tour with an average total of 16 mm of rain.

Lightweight clothing, suitable for a range of temperatures, is needed and possibly smarter clothing for the more up-market hotels (though they seem to be very relaxed about what people wear).

Lightweight waterproofs/windproofs will be needed and also warmer clothing for the evenings.

Cycling clothes. Two sets of clothing are recommended as you can wash each evening; two short sleeved tops, a long sleeved top, or arm warmers, shorts, longs or leg warmers, two pairs of socks, a cap or helmet cover and two pairs of short gloves with a pair of finger gloves for rain and cold. Helmet and cycling shoes. Clear riding glasses. Sun cream, lip balm and sun glasses are recommended along with insect bite cream. Evening Dress. You will not need too much; Two T-shirts/shirts, one pair lightweight trousers, maybe a pair of shorts, two sets of underwear, two pairs of socks, light pullover/top and lightweight shoes. The lightweight cycling windproof top can be used in the evening if extra warmth is required. A floppy hat can be useful if the sun is hot.

Trunks if there is the chance of a swim in the sea, average water temperature 13.5 degrees.

Toiletries; These can be kept to a minimum by bringing very small toothpaste tubes, shampoo bottles etc. A very basic first aid kit of plasters and pain killers etc are always recommended. Some places supply shampoo, but not guaranteed, and a small hotel size bottle is always useful to take and use for clothes washing, which can be done whilst showering. Shaving can also be done using shampoo, as can face washing. A piece of string is useful for hanging washing in the absence of coat hangers.

Cycles / Equipement

- A touring cycle, hybrid, tandem, recumbent or lightweight road bike would all be suitable for this holiday, since we will endeavour to avoid tracks if possible. You should ensure your cycle is well maintained, paying particular attention to wheels, tyres and brakes. A low bottom gear (eg. small chainring the same size or smaller than the largest cog on your rear wheel) is recommended; if unsure about gears, please talk to the Bikeplore Leader about them. Mudguards are optional but demonstrate respect to those who are following you in wet weather. Lights are recommended, and will be necessary, as we arrive late at night in Kirkwall. A bell is advised and bring a bike lock for security. Water bottles are required to ensure you are hydrated at all times. You will be expected to carry sufficient spares and tools to deal with punctures and minor repairs, including two inner tubes, a spare gear cable, split link and spare brake pads. There are very few bike shops on the route, and if so they are never when you need them. You are advised to use 28mm tyres, or larger, to suit the variable terrain. You will not need to carry luggage except in case of car breakdown or medical priority. It is suggested that the overall luggage weight should be no more than 10-12kg. A rack-top pack or bar bag will be useful for carrying wet weather gear, spare clothing needed for the day, camera, emergency rations and a map.

Maps & GPS

- Philip's Red Map of the Orkney and Shetland covers all of the islands on one map - ISBN 978-1-84907-229-8. GPS maps for each day will be provided in advance of the tour.

Fitness and Health

- Please ensure that you are fit and healthy enough to cycle the distances (and ascents) planned for the tour. Use of an electric bike can help enable cyclists to complete long rides.

Ascents

- The mapping for Shetland is incomplete and calculating an ascent for the day cannot be done accurately. Therefore to try to show a reasonable idea as to average ascent the daily average of 723metres for all the other days has been used on days 9,10 and 11

Travel Insurance

- Travel insurance is highly recommended.

Tour Leader Details

- I led my first tour in 2014, and since then have run tours every year (except one - guess which) and all in Scotland. Visiting almost every one of the larger islands. Originally tours were through CTC Holidays, but now with Bikexplore. My style is to help people enjoy their holiday and visit the many beautiful remote parts of my home country. In fact, one of my greatest pleasures is in sharing the wonderful quiet Scottish roads and scenery. On tour, my partner Diane shares the ride leadership and luggage transfer. Typically people do not cycle all together, but split into small groups of similar speed / interest and we meet at cafes and leap frog along the route. My other great pleasure from running tours is the social aspect: seeing people form friendships that trancent the duration of the tour.

Tour Leader Contact Details

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