Tour Code
SF1

ADVENTURESABROAD

THE SCOTTISH ISLES & FAROE ISLANDS

Edinburgh, Orkney, Shetland & Faroes (Denmark)

11 days

Created on: 28 Mar, 2024

Day 1 Arrival in Edinburgh

Today we arrive in Edinburgh, where the buzz of Scotland's capital city sits in perfect contrast to the peaceful tranquility of the surrounding Lothians region. Edinburgh has one of the most beautiful cityscapes in the world; with Scotland's most famous castle dominating the city skyline, there is plenty to see and do with the perfect balance between all things traditional and contemporary.

Overnight in Edinburgh.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Edinburgh: City Touring

Today we depart on a full day Edinburgh tour to visit Edinburgh Castle, Holyrood House and Rosslyn Chapel. Edinburgh is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe.

We start our sojourn in Scotland’s capital with a tour of one of Europe’s foremost attractions; the dramatic Edinburgh Castle. Standing aloof and massive on its hill, Edinburgh Castle both dominates and adds majesty to the deep historical ambiance of the city. Within the castle itself we view the Honors of Scotland Exhibition and display of Scottish crown jewels, visit St. Margaret’s Chapel, see the famous 500-year-old cannon “Mons Meg”, then stroll through the Great Hall. We take lunch in a local café then next visit Holyrood House Palace, long the residence of the Scottish Royal family, now HRH the (English) Queen’s official residence in Scotland. We view the 17th century state rooms, the historic apartments where Mary Queen of Scots lived, and the ruined abbey of Holy Rood.

Our final visit today is to Rosslyn Chapel. Rosslyn Chapel was founded as a Roman Catholic collegiate church in the mid-15th century CE by William Sinclair, 1st Earl of Caithness. After the Scottish Reformation in 1560 CE Roman Catholic worship in the Chapel ended, although the Sinclair family continued to be Roman Catholics until the early 18th century. Now the Chapel belongs to the Scottish Episcopal Church. More recently, the Chapel has featured in speculative theories regarding Freemasonry and the Knights Templar, including the Dan Brown book, The De Vinci Code.

After our visit we return to our hotel with the evening is at leisure (we include lunch instead of dinner today owing to our full day, an early start tomorrow, and the lingering effects of jetlag).

Overnight in Edinburgh.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 3 Edinburgh - Kirkwall (Orkney)

This morning we fly to Kirkwall, Orkney, and have sightseeing in the afternoon in Kirkwall after arrival.

The name "Orkney" dates back to the 1st century BC or earlier, and the islands have been inhabited for at least 8,500 years. Originally occupied by Mesolithic and Neolithic tribes and then by the Picts, Orkney was invaded and forcibly annexed by Norway in 875 and settled by the Norse. Scandinavian Scotland refers to the period from the 8th to the 15th centuries during which Vikings and Norse settlers and their descendants colonized parts of what is now modern Scotland. Viking influence in the area commenced in the late 8th century, and hostility between the Scandinavian Earls of Orkney and the emerging thalassocracy of the Kingdom of the Isles, the rulers of Ireland, Dal Riata and Alba, and intervention by the crown of Norway were recurring themes. The negative view of Viking activities held in popular imagination notwithstanding, Norse expansion may have been a factor in the emergence of the Gaelic kingdom of Alba, the forerunner of modern Scotland, and the trading, political, cultural and religious achievements of the later periods of Norse rule were significant.

Starting our WALKING tour in Kirkwall, which was first recorded in The Orkneyinga Saga and is thought to date from at least the eleventh century. It was believed to be one of the most important towns of the Norse Western Empire. We take a short walk down the road to the Bishop's palace. built in the mid 12th century for Bishop William the Old, an old crusading companion and friend of Earl Rognvald Kolosson,

the cathedral's founder.

Next we arrive at the cathedral, built in honour of St Magnus. It took three centuries to complete with construction beginning in 1137. Uniquely, St Magnus is renowned for being the only cathedral in Britain with a dungeon, known as Marwick's Hole. Also unique for Britain's cathedrals is the Norwegian bell ringing technique known as 'clocking' in which one person can peel the bells by hand and foot pedals.

We head next to the remains of the Round Kirk and Earls Bu, built in the late 11th or12th century and thought to have been built by Earl Haakon dedicated to St Nicholas. Beside the Round Kirk lie the remains of a great drinking hall, or Bu as it is known, used for drinking sessions periodically interrupted by trips to the Kirk for prayer.

Overnight in Kirkwall.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Orkney Island Tour

Perhaps surprisingly, the Orkneys have more prehistoric remains than anywhere else in Scotland. Due to building in stone on virtually treeless islands -- a practice dating to at least the early Neolithic Period -- Orkney (and Shetland) are extremely rich in physical remains of the prehistoric eras and there are over 8,000 archaeological sites all told!

Today we visit the "Heart of Neolithic Orkney," a group of Neolithic monuments found on the Mainland (as this, the largest of the islands, is called). The name was adopted by UNESCO when it proclaimed these sites as a World Heritage Site in 1999. We visit Maes Howe, a huge Stone Age burial mound considered to be the most outstanding in Britain (dating to around 2700 BC). We also visit the Ring of Brodgar, a dramatically located group of 36 standing stones dating to 1560 BC.

At Skara Brae, a complete Stone Age town was perfectly preserved under sand dunes for 4,500 years until its discovery in 1850. Now excavated, this is one of the most important archaeological sites in Europe.

We will also experience the natural beauty and intrigue of this place as we move about today; the views, the atmosphere and big sky often provide an ever changing panoply from rapid shifts in patterns of light, sun and weather on these small islands where the Atlantic Ocean meets the North Sea. Today's tour is an ideal mix of archaeology and scenery and hilltop views.

Overnight in Kirkwall.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Orkney - Shetland Island Touring

This morning we fly to the Shetlands, arriving around midday.

Situated half way between Britain and Norway, the Shetland Isles were part of the Kingdom of Norway from AD 875 until 1472. Many of the place names are Norse and Shetlanders still celebrate their Norse Heritage at the Festival of "Up-Helly-Aa" each year. With almost 24 hour summer days and rich seas, Shetland is a paradise for sea birds and marine life. Exploring these wild islands we find wonderful cliff scenery with long winding inlets called ‘voes'.

On our way out of the Shetland airport we explore Sumburgh Heads, well-known for the resident Atlantic puffin colony.

Our next stop is an extensive settlement called Jarlshof, a remarkable archaeological site located at the southern tip of the so-called “Mainland” of Shetland. It offers a unique window into over 4,000 years of human history, with evidence of continuous settlement from the Neolithic period through to the 17th century. The site encompasses a complex sequence of dwellings, including prehistoric houses, Bronze Age village structures, Iron Age brochs and wheelhouses, a Norse longhouse, a medieval farmstead, and the remains of a 16th-century laird's house. The multiple layers of Jarlshof's history were revealed following a storm in the late 19th century, which uncovered the initial archaeological evidence. Today, Jarlshof stands as a testament to the adaptability and continuity of human settlement in this remote part of Scotland, offering insights into the daily lives, cultures, and architectural practices of its various inhabitants over millennia.

Shetland ponies are always in evidence as we continue to the Shetland Croft Museum, where we learn about the life of the crofters. We then continue on to our overnight point of Brae on the western side of the Mainland of Shetland.

Overnight in Brae.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Shetland Island Touring

Today we continue our tour of the Mainland of Shetland. Lerwick is the charming capital and main port of the Shetland Islands. Founded in the 17th century as a fishing village, Lerwick grew rapidly with the booming herring trade in the 19th century and today serves as the cultural and administrative centre of the Shetland archipelago. The town is known for its picturesque waterfront, historic stone buildings, and narrow winding streets, which give it a distinctive character. Lerwick's deep harbour is a bustling hub, accommodating everything from local fishing boats to international cruise ships.

At some point today we hope to visit the Shetland Museum in Lerwick. Set on the waterfront within a restored 19th century dock, this fascinating museum tells the story of Shetland's heritage and culture. The museum and archives chart the development of the archipelago from its earliest geological origins to the present day.

We will also be visiting Clickimin Broch, a fascinating prehistoric archaeological site located on the outskirts of Lerwick. This Iron Age broch, a type of complex roundhouse unique to Scotland, dates back to around 300 BC and stands as a testament to the ingenuity of Scotland's ancient inhabitants. The site, set beside the picturesque Clickimin Loch, includes not only the well-preserved broch itself but also a surrounding complex of ancient dwellings, defensive structures, and a later Norse house, revealing layers of habitation that span centuries. The broch's sophisticated design, featuring double-skinned walls and a series of interior chambers, underscores the advanced architectural skills of its builders.

We will return to our overnight accommodation in Brae for our evening meal and our overnight.

Overnight in Brae.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Shetland - Fly to Edinburgh & Faroe Islands, Denmark

This morning we transfer to the airport for our flight to Edinburgh where we will then connect to our flight to the Faroe Islands.

Welcome to the Faroe Islands! Situated in the heart of the Gulf Stream in the North Atlantic at 62°00'N, the Faroe Islands lie northwest of Scotland and halfway between Iceland and Norway. The archipelago is composed of 18 islands covering 1399 km2. Since 1948, the Faroe Islands have been a self governing region of the Kingdom of Denmark. It has its own parliament and its own flag. It is not, however, a member of the European Union and all trade is governed by special treaties. Multicoloured cottages and grass-roofed wooden churches add focus to the grandly stark, treeless moorlands. Timeless networks of cairn-marked footpaths crisscross craggy layer-cake mountains. But even the tiniest once-inaccessible hamlets are now linked by a remarkable series of road-tunnels.

We continue to our overnight point of Klaksvik (approximately 1+ hour).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Northern Islands

Today we will explore the northern islands. We will start out the day by visiting the Christianskirkjan, the church in Klaksvík. Said to be amongst the most beautiful churches on the islands. After Klaksvík we will drive north to the northern most village Viðareiði.

After a break for lunch, we will drive to Kunoy and have a walk in the very nice plantation. Back in Klaksvík, we will take the ferry to Kalsoy, known as the "flute islands" because it is very long, narrow and has many tunnels. Here we will experience nature and small remote villages. In Mikladalur we will see the brand new sculpture of the Seal Woman. In old Faroese legend and folklore, it was believed that on the "Twelfth Night" the seals came out of the sea, stripped their seal-skinds and became real humans. This one seal was not able to return to the sea since

its skin was stolen.

This evening, we will have dinner at the local farm "Varmakeldugarðurin" where you will have a traditional three-course dinner.

Overnight in Klaksvik.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Klaksvik - Vestmanna Bird Cliffs - Torshavn

Today we drive to the idyllic village of Gjógv, renown for its natural harbour. The village is charming and one of the most visited villages in the summer. From Gjógv we drive towards Eiði. On the way, we will pass the highest mountain on the Faroe Islands, Slættaratindur (882m) and have a view to the rock formations "the Giant and the Witch." We will drive from Eiði and cross the "Atlantic Bridge" to Tjørnavík.

From Tjørnuvík our tour goes to Vestmanna for a lunch break. After lunch we will go by boat to the most visited tourist attraction in the Faroe Islands. The Vestmanna bird cliffs. We sail into grottos, through narrow sounds, and close to the almost 2.000 feet high vertical cliffs, where birds such as puffins, guillemots, fulmars and kittiwakes nest each summer. The trip will last about 2 hours.
After our boat tour we will visit the new Saga Museum which, through 17 very life like figures placed in very realistic surrounding, will guide you through the history of the Faroe Islands from the very first settlers up to our times.

We continue on our way to Torshavn for our overnight.

Overnight in Torshavn.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 10 Torshavn, KirkjubÃ¸ur & NÃ³lsoy

We'll have some sightseeing in the capital where we get a good overview of the city and its history, its architecture, old town Reyni, the world's oldest parliament, Tinganes and Fort Skansin.

From Tórshavn we will drive to the historical cultural stronghold Kirkjubøur -- here we will visit the oldest wooden house Roykstovan with its 900 years, the Faroe oldest church from the year 1111, and the ruins of St. Magnus Cathedral.

After lunch we take the ferry to Nólsoy. Visiting the island is like visiting another world -- cars are rare, and you are very close to nature. In Nólsoy we will have a guided tour in the charming village where we will see the Gate of Honour, made out of a whale jaw in the mid-1970'es to welcome Queen Ingrid of Denmark. If time allows, we can walk some hundred meters north or south from the ferry port and enjoy the scenery.

Ferry back to Tórshavn.

Overnight in Torshavn.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 11 Departure from the Faroes

Today we transfer to the airport for our flights out of Faroes (airport code FAE) back to Edinburgh (EDI) and homeward (likely a morning departure).

PLEASE NOTE: Those travellers booking their own air out of Edinburgh must take into account today's flights from Faroes to Edinburgh. Please do not book an onward journey from EDI any earlier than 12:00 noon.

BON VOYAGE!

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Included Meal(s): Breakfast