



ORKNEY ISLAND HOLIDAYS LTD

Paul & Louise Hollinrake
Furrowend, Shapinsay,
Orkney, KW17 2DY.
Tel : 01856 711373

Email : info@orkneyislandholidays.com

Web : www.orkneyislandholidays.com

Highlights of Orkney and Shetland Holiday

**A multi-interest Holiday in Orkney and Shetland,
Britain's most northerly islands, with Orkney Island Holidays Ltd.**

***Check the Dates & Prices tab on our website or See our Holiday Schedule for
current dates and prices.***

Leaders Paul and Louise Hollinrake.



Enjoying the peace and tranquility of a typical Shetland seascape on a calm day.

An introduction to your Highlights of Orkney and Shetland Holiday.

Orkney and Shetland are two archipelagoes to the north of Scotland, Orkney a mere four miles offshore while Shetland is another hundred miles distant, on the way to Norway. Though similar when compared to Mainland Britain, there are significant differences between Orkney and Shetland and exploring the two adds to the appreciation both. The two island groups were part of the Kingdom of Norway and Denmark from around 800 AD until 1470, so many placenames and dialect words reflect this. Orcadians and Shetlanders are proud of their Norse ancestry and links with Norway are kept very much alive.

The cliffs in both Orkney and Shetland are home to thousands and thousands of nesting seabirds, such as guillemots, razorbills and kittiwakes. In Shetland there are puffins galore. Everyone leaves with close-up photos of them! The road sides, stream courses and hill slopes have varied wild flowers, and in July they are very abundant. In Orkney the rare *Primula scotica* can be found, while both island groups have northern marsh and heath spotted orchids plus a host of other delightful specialities.



“I’m back, dear, is anybody home?”



Seals conserving their energy

You will see both common (harbour) seals and grey (Atlantic) seals in both Orkney and Shetland. Orkney has 17% of the world’s grey seal population. Both species haul out in groups and we may hear them ‘singing’ – the strange noises are actually more like warnings to each other not to get too close! Common seals pup in July so we may see mothers and pups playing in the shallows.

Louise has a long connection with Shetland having holidayed in Scalloway regularly as a teenager. She and Paul moved to live in Orkney in 1986 and with frequent visits to Shetland since then have got to know the two island groups intimately. We enjoy sharing our enthusiasm, and the wealth and depth of our knowledge, with our guests and hope you will become one of them.

We have chosen July for the Holiday because in our opinion it is the best time for the birds and flowers, the weather has usually warmed up and the daylight hours last long into the evening, known as the “Simmer Dim”.

A Summary of the Itinerary.

The approach and mix on the Highlights of Orkney and Shetland Holiday will be the same as all our Holidays: friendly groups of like-minded individuals, interesting days, peaceful nights, long evenings, both of us on hand. We are using good quality Hotel accommodation with ensuite facilities, chosen because they have comfortable rooms, excellent food and are located within easy reach of the sites we plan to visit in that part of Orkney and Shetland. In Orkney the hotel is the Lynnfield in Kirkwall, www.lynnfieldhotel.com and in Shetland the Sumburgh Hotel, www.sumburghhotel.com.

We have a superb itinerary worked out, so that we can share these fantastic places with you. Here is a summary: **for more details about each day see below.**

Day 1: Travel to Shetland. Meet as a group before dinner at the Sumburgh Hotel. We can meet you at the airport and transfer you to the hotel close by. If you come by ferry there is a convenient bus service from Lerwick to Sumburgh.

Night Sumburgh Hotel.

Day 2: After visiting Jarlshof Archaeological Site we will go the puffin paradise of Sumburgh Head. Then via Spiggie Loch to the scenic island of St. Ninian's and its Pictish/Norse settlements.

Night Sumburgh Hotel.

Day 3: In the morning we'll explore the recently excavated Iron Age village of Scatness, then on to the ancient Shetland capital of Scalloway and the Loch of Tingwall.

Night Sumburgh Hotel.

Stormie Petrel visit : We will visit the island of Mousa on one of our nights at Sumburgh (weather permitting) to see the World famous Broch and its breeding stormie petrels, aka alamootie, or oily squirts!

Day 4: Via Dunrossness flowers and birds to Catpund Viking soapstone quarry, with local heritage, wildlife and Shetland stories on the way. Then to the excellent Shetland Museum in Lerwick before taking the Northlink ferry to Orkney, with dinner on board and the opportunity of sea-watching for birds and cetaceans.

Night Lynnfield Hotel.

Day 5: An archaeological tour of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Area – Skara Brae Village, Maeshowe Tomb and the Ring of Brodgar Stone Circle -- plus the spectacular cliffs of Yesnaby where we will search for the delightful flower the *Primula scotica*, an Orkney speciality.

Night Lynnfield Hotel.

Day 6: Scapa Flow and the Churchill Barriers, via the Italian Chapel to the Tomb of the Eagles in the island of South Ronaldsay, where scenic walks, birds, flowers and archaeology await you.

Night Lynnfield Hotel.

Day 7: A day trip to our home island of Shapinsay with its Iron Age broch and Mill Dam RSPB Wetland Bird Reserve. Weather permitting it may be possible to do a short trip in our workboat to nearby uninhabited islands with their flowers and birds.

Night Lynnfield Hotel.

Day 8: Depart after breakfast. We can transport you for a morning flight, otherwise the airport is about ten minutes away by taxi.



Iron Age houses at Jarlshof, Shetland



Skara Brae Neolithic village, Orkney

Detailed Itinerary

Day One

Arrive in Shetland and meet before dinner at the Sumburgh Hotel at the southern tip of the islands. Within a mile or two of the hotel are the lighthouse of Sumburgh Head on the cliffs, the airport, two lovely sandy beaches, and an arctic tern colony. From the dining room you can watch gannets diving, and on a clear day Fair Isle can be seen on the horizon.

Day Two

Shetland's most famous site is Jarlshof, a complex area spanning thousands of years from 5000 BC to the present day, and we will begin with a guided tour by Louise: it is a maze of original houses of different ages and after several years study Louise now feels she can interpret the sequence!

From here we'll go up to Sumburgh Head RSPB Reserve to view endearing puffins plus guillemots, kittiwakes, fulmars and razorbills, while elegant gannets fly past in formation. We'll search the seas for porpoises, dolphins and whales – there is a chance they may be there, however it could be slim.



Gannet



The tombolo to St. Ninian's Isle

In the afternoon we'll head via the RSPB Reserve of Spiggie Loch, a haven for many species of birds, to St. Ninian's Isle. Here a formation known as a tombolo, a sand and shingle spit, links the island to Mainland. On the island are the remains of Pictish and Norse ecclesiastical settlements where a hoard of silver was discovered in 1958.

The main features of the Shetland landscape are the cliffs and moors interspersed with lots of water – long arms of the sea called 'voes' and many freshwater lochs. Both sea and lochs are hosts to birds, and we'll keep our eyes open for a glimpse of an otter. The moors are home to golden plover, snipe, curlew, whimbrel and of course 'bonxies' or great skuas, plus their more acrobatic cousins, the arctic skuas, or "scootie aalins" as they are known locally. All of these are possible as we journey around Shetland, stopping regularly to scan the land and sea scapes.

This evening we will be hoping for calm weather so that we can take a boat trip to the island of Mousa aboard the ferry the Solan IV. The broch of Mousa is the most complete example of Iron Age brochs anywhere and well worth a visit, but the added attraction is that it is home to hundreds of nesting stormie petrels, little sea birds who only come ashore to raise their chick in holes in walls or on stoney beaches. In daylight they are preyed on by skuas and gulls so they arrive around midnight in the twilight to change over sitting duties with their mate. They call each other in with a low churring noise, and thus present one of nature's unique events. It is a special privilege to share these moments in their lives.

If this trip is not possible tonight we'll try again on Day Three.



A stormie petrel at the Mousa Broch



The Broch of Mousa

Day Three

We'll begin with the nearby fascinating Scatness dig, on-going for many years and now being consolidated for visitor access. The archaeology was first uncovered when a new runway for the airport was being constructed. (The main road actually crosses this runway just here, with traffic controlled by lights and gates!). You can walk among the original Iron Age buildings, imagining life here two thousand years ago. There is a 'living history' presentation here, where you can see how people made the tools, utensils and clothes they needed. There are replica Iron Age and Pictish buildings so that you can experience their cosy living conditions.



Living History at Old Scatness



Scalloway from the Scord

In the afternoon we'll head north to the ancient capital of Shetland, Scalloway. Our first view will be from the top of the Scord, a gap in the hills from which a panorama of Scalloway and its offshore islands unfolds. Here is the well-maintained Scalloway Castle dating from the sixteen century, surrounded by a lively village which has always been a seafaring centre. This continues today with the North Atlantic Fisheries College which serves Orkney, Shetland and much of Scotland.

Shetland was the base for a Norwegian resistance operation known as the Shetland Bus, first at Lunna and then in Scalloway. Traditional Norwegian fishing boats were used on perilous missions across the North Sea, blending with local boats as they picked up agents and folk wanting to escape from occupied Norway. Louise spent many happy childhood Holidays in Scalloway and is still friends with the family who maintained the Shetland Bus boats. The community Museum in Scalloway reflects life over the past two hundred years and is full of fascinating artifacts.

North of Scalloway is the Tingwall Valley and Loch. The loch is home to ducks and swans, which may include breeding whooper swans if we're lucky. Shetland is the only place in Britain where these swans nest, as normally they are purely winter visitors which breed in Iceland. A small island called the Holm in Tingwall Loch was the site of a Norse parliament about a thousand years ago.

Day Four

On this day we leave Sumburgh Hotel and wend our way north looking at some of the wildflowers which bedeck the verges and fields of Dunrossness. These include orchids, asphodel, gentians, many different vetches, ragged robin and insectivorous plants such as butterwort, and naturalized garden escapes like mimulus along the ditches.



Butterwort



Mimulus



Northern Marsh Orchid

We'll go to the Pool of Virkie and the Clumlie Loch, taking time to view the birds – waders and sea ducks -- before arriving at the Catpund Burn. Here a short walk takes us up to the Viking workings where we can still see where and how Norse people chiseled out their raw materials to carve large bowls, cups, lamps and pots in soapstone, also known as steatite which carves easily and hardens with heat treatment. It was a favourite with Vikings and was exported to Orkney where there are no natural deposits.

From here we continue north to Lerwick, Shetland's modern capital which grew up with the coming of Dutch fish traders in the eighteenth century and is now a busy and thriving port. We'll visit the new Shetland Museum, a beautiful imaginative place, full of interest and innovative ways of getting in touch with what makes Shetland what it is today.

In late afternoon the ferry to Kirkwall in Orkney leaves. The ferry is a large modern ship, well-equipped and comfortable with lounges, restaurants, a cinema, bars and quiet areas. It is a six hour passage, departing at 5 p.m. and arriving at 11 p.m.

After watching our departure from the deck or indoor lounges we will see the east coast of the Shetland Mainland as we glide past heading south, until Sumburgh Head finally disappears astern. We'll have dinner aboard, then relax indoors or keep a look-out for wildlife from the rear deck. Gannets, fulmars and numerous auks will be seen, plus the possibility of Manx shearwaters, stormie petrels, and cetaceans such as killer whales & dolphins, plus seals. About half way through the voyage we will pass quite close to Fair Isle and will see its cliffs and lighthouses. Later the low islands of Orkney, described by poet George Mackay Brown as 'sleeping whales' will appear on the starboard horizon before we pass the small island of Auskerry and turn into the sound known as The String, from the Norse word for a tidal stream, to approach Kirkwall.

A five minute drive takes us to the Lynnfield Hotel situated overlooking Kirkwall, where lovely rooms with every comfort await.

Day Five

We'll start our exploration of Orkney with Skara Brae, the unique Neolithic Village, the most complete of its kind in Western Europe. Houses in an amazingly good state of preservation show us much about how people lived five thousand years ago, and you might change your mind about how 'backward' these people were, and exactly what the Romans didn't do for us – this village is three thousand years before 'veni, vici, vinci'!



Inside one of the houses at Skara Brae



The Ring of Brodgar

From Skara Brae we'll go to the nearby cliffs at Yesnaby, an area of dramatic beauty with specific geological and botanical attractions. It's here that we will see fossil remains of some of the earliest life forms on earth among the sedimentary layers, and we'll look for a specimen or two of the rare *Primula scotica* in flower. This little gem occurs only at a handful of sites in Orkney and one or two in Caithness, but nowhere else on earth.

The Ring of Brodgar, the second largest diameter stone circle in Britain, is next on the agenda, in the midst of a very full Neolithic landscape still being uncovered. We'll find out what new finds have excited archaeologists this season! Recently a huge rectangular building has been found which contained coloured designs painted on stones. A well-established, important and impressive site in this area is the chambered cairn or tomb of Maeshowe, constructed with remarkable precision five thousand years ago, then decorated one thousand years ago by Vikings. It contains the largest collection of Norse runes outside Scandinavia. The original tomb rises to about three metres in height and is reached by a ten-metre stone passage down which the sun setting shines at the mid-winter solstice illuminating the inner chamber.



Primula scotica



Oyster plant



The Italian Chapel

Day Six

A complete change this morning heading south across the Churchill Barriers, constructed in the Second World War as part of the defence of Scapa Flow, the base for the British Fleet in both Wars. At strategic points on our route we will view Scapa Flow, the Barriers and other related places, each with its own story. One of these is the Italian Chapel built by prisoners-of-war out of the limited materials they had to hand. It is a poignant monument to peace which evokes the spirit of the Italians and their response to the difficulties of war and being in such an alien environment.

We'll visit Orkney's best site for oyster plant, another rarity, with delicate blue and pink flowers cascading over the sand and shingle. We'll also have a couple of stops to scan the sea and lochs for birds, such as eider ducks, red-throated divers, great and arctic skuas, terns, and gulls.

The birds of Orkney benefit from the proximity of seashore, moorland and farmland, so we are likely to see lots of waders such as curlew, redshank and lapwing, with a cruising hen harrier or short-eared owl hunting on field or moor.

The Barriers connect the 'linked South Isles' of Lamb Holm, Glimps Holm, Burray, and South Ronaldsay. At the south end of South Ronaldsay is the Tomb of the Eagles, another Neolithic tomb with a Bronze Age burnt mound on the same farm. The main attraction of this site is that it was found by the family who own the farm, and they now run tours including a lovely exhibition centre where they pass round real objects made by their predecessors on this land. The Tomb itself, where several skulls and the claws of many sea-eagles were found, is well worth the visit, as is the burnt mound – stones which have been in a fire and used to heat water in a clay-lined tank. You can speculate on the purpose of these hot water baths: there are many theories but none can be conclusively proved!

Day Seven

Today we take a short ferry trip from Kirkwall to our home island of Shapinsay, twenty-five minutes away but a different world. This will give you insights into what it is like to live in one of the smaller islands in Orkney, with its trials and rewards. Being near to Mainland people can commute to work by ferry so the population is quite stable and contains all age groups.

Shapinsay has a population of around 320 and is about seven miles long and five wide. The mainstay of the economy is farming, with craft industries, fishing, tourism and service industries playing their part. Many people engage in more than one enterprise to make ends meet. Socially there is plenty going on, with clubs catering for all

sorts of interests from badminton, music and football to parent-and-toddlers and machinery restoration. There are several annual events: the 'Picnic' sports day, the Cattle and Horticultural Show, the Harvest Home and a Christmas social.

While in the island we will see an Iron Age site at Burroughston Broch, one of the three best brochs in Orkney. It shows the main features associated with Orkney Brochs and you can get right inside to appreciate it. Nearby common seals often haul out to bask on the rocks, and weather permitting it might be possible to get close to seals in their natural habitat by going out for a short trip in our inflatable workboat, Westsider 2. In this case Paul will take you to some small uninhabited islands and skerries just offshore from our home Furrowend. You'll also see sea birds close up, especially the black guillemots or 'tysties' nesting in crannies created by Paul to help them. You can enjoy the hospitality of Furrowend between visits to the different sites.

Paul is the RSPB's representative in Shapinsay and looks after the Mill Dam Reserve on the island. This hosts many species of ducks and waders, plus geese and swans, all of which may have broods of young in July.



Burroughston Broch, Shapinsay



All set for an excursion to the skerries

Day Eight

Depart after breakfast. We can take you to the airport for morning flights, or other places in Kirkwall. For afternoon flights it is a short taxi ride from the hotel, where they will be pleased to order a taxi for you.

If you wish to extend your holiday with a few **extra days in Orkney** we can offer advice on where to stay and what to do. There is plenty of choice of accommodation available but it is important to book in advance.

The above itinerary is flexible and may be altered to make best use of local conditions and events each day.



Evidence of otter



Louise enjoying a geological exhibit

The Weather.

The weather is variable, but generally we have lots of sun, some wind and some rain during the Holiday, sometimes all in the same day. The wind usually keeps it cool and has the advantage of removing any midges which might venture out if it's flat calm – which can happen but is rare. Make sure you bring waterproof jackets and trousers, wool hat, sunhat and sun cream, and be prepared for anything!

The Food.

The meals at our Hotels are really good. Breakfasts are hearty and set us up well for the day, and the evening meals are eaten in a relaxed informal friendly atmosphere, where we can enjoy the company of our fellow explorers. Dinner is chosen from a menu, while breakfast consists of a choice of cereals, toast, fruit, yoghurt, etc, your choice of cooked food and tea or coffee. Packed lunches are usually a sandwich, a piece of fruit, packet of crisps and a biscuit etc. Supplement them with snacks from the excellent village stores throughout the islands if you wish. Your Hotel bar bill can be settled by credit card at the end of your stay.

You can travel to Shetland and from Orkney either by Air or by Sea.

For Flights to **Sumburgh Airport** in Shetland and from **Kirkwall Airport** in Orkney we suggest you contact Ridgway Travel in Kirkwall, who can get you the best deals.

Tel: 01856 873359 or e-mail ridgway@globalnet.co.uk. Both the Sumburgh and Lynnfield hotels are very handy for the airports.

You could consider staying on for one or more **extra nights in Orkney** at the end of the trip. Please contact us for advice.

For Ferries The simplest way by ferry is to go from Aberdeen to Lerwick, Shetland's capital. Northlink Ferries have an overnight passage every day on this route, Tel: 0845 6000 449, e-mail info@northlinkferries.co.uk, www.northlinkferries.co.uk. There is a regular bus service or taxis down to the Sumburgh Hotel at the southern tip of Shetland, about 20 miles away. To return to Aberdeen by Northlink ferry from Orkney it would be necessary to stay an extra night and travel south overnight the following night. You could arrange the extra night at the Lynnfield Hotel or there are many other accommodation options – however it is necessary to book in advance.

What IS included in the Cost of your Highlights of Orkney and Shetland Holiday.

Seven nights full board ensuite accommodation in two good quality Hotels and passage on board the ferry from Shetland to Orkney.

Daily transport by minibus and short walking excursions as per the suggested itinerary.

Guiding with Paul or Louise for six days to many of the best habitats and regions of Orkney and Shetland that are good for wildlife and other interests.

Entrance fees to all sites of interest that we visit as part of your tour with us in Orkney and Shetland.

Ferry tickets to other islands in the tour itinerary and special excursion to Mousa to see stormie petrels.

What is NOT included in the Cost.

Travel to Shetland and from Orkney.

Travel and medical insurance: It is your responsibility to make sure you are adequately insured. We can advise.

All drinks from the bar, telephone calls, laundry and things of a personal nature.

Extra packed lunch snacks and drinks if required.



Plant Boat



Shetland Yoles

Is this the Holiday for you?

Are you looking for :

- a multi interest Holiday in a unique part of Britain ?
- a well organised and flexible Holiday where everything is planned well for you?
- a relaxed pace with a friendly and fun atmosphere ?
- an emphasis on having a good time and learning about lots of aspects of these fascinating islands ?

AND

- to be guided by two experienced people who just love the Northern Isles and know them really well ?
- to explore with a small group of new friends?
- to get the most out of your Holiday in Orkney and Shetland?

Then this Holiday is for you!

What to do now.

If you have any questions about this Holiday please get in touch with us by phone, letter or email, and we will do our best to help.

We hope that you decide to come with us to Orkney and Shetland. We think it is a terrific Holiday destination at a time of year when the weather and wildlife are at their very best.

If you would like to join us on this Highlights of Orkney and Shetland Holiday, please complete the enclosed booking form and post it to us as soon as you can, together with your deposit payment made payable to Orkney Island Holidays Ltd.

Our normal Orkney Island Holidays booking conditions apply. If you need a copy of these we will be happy to send them to you.

Once you have booked.

We will send confirmation of your booking on receipt of your completed booking form and deposit payment. Then when your balance is paid 10 weeks before departure, we will send you suggestions of what clothing and other things you might bring with you, plus suggestions about a few identification books that may be useful to you.

We look forward to hearing from you soon. **Best wishes, Paul & Louise Hollinrake.**



One of many Shetland ponies



Orchid

There is so much to see in these Northern Islands. Come with us and find out for yourself!