

## 6 day Orkney Walking

An in depth experience of the birdlife that and archaeology of the Orkney Islands. We spend two days on the mainland, a day on Hoy and a day on Westray for the largest bird colonies in the UK. Enjoy fantastic easy to medium walks along the dramatic coastline and rolling countryside of the Orkney Islands. Visit the world Heritage site stone age Scara Brae and Celtic standing stone circles. We will ensure that you have comfortable accommodation and delicious great value food along the way.

Saturday - This morning we'll take in the fine views of the Forth Rail Bridge, Edinburgh's engineering icon, before crossing the Firth of Forth. We'll make our way to St Andrews for a morning walk around the old cathedral and University City. From there we will continue to Arbroath for lunch. Taste the local Arbroath smokies! After lunch we will walk along the cliff tops for views of Donnottar castle then continue to the Granite City of Aberdeen to catch the evening sailing to Kirkwall. Dinner will be on board the ferry with a 2300 transfer to your accommodation.

Sunday - Depart 10am for a day exploring west mainland. We begin our day visiting Maes Howe, a Neolithic building, most probably a tomb, with the most amazing Viking graffiti! After, we'll walk out to explore the Stones of Stenness and the Ring of Brodgar, two fantastic stone circles that are older than Stonehenge! After beginning to understand how the people celebrated life and death, we'll visit Skara Brae, two stone age villages one built upon the other that go back over 5000yrs. Discover how people used to live back then by exploring the old houses overlooking Skail Bay. We'll also get a chance to go into Skail House, a Laird's manor house. This afternoon we'll walk up to the towering cliffs of Marwick head for fantastic bird watching as well as to soak up the views. From here, as long as the tide is the right, we'll enjoy a short walk over the causeway to the Brough of Birsay. Once an island that held a pictish settlement, followed by a Viking settlement, was the centre for education on the Orkney Islands and also has amazing views.

Monday - Day trip to Westray for walking and bird colonies. Today is a full day of walking and exploring! We leave the mainland behind as we make our way by local ferry to Westray. Once on the Island, we'll walk out to Noup Head, one of the largest seabird colonies in the British Isles, second only to St Kilda. With puffin, guillemots, kittiwakes, razerbills, shags & fulmars. watching, wild flowers, caves and lighthouses, it's a superb day out! 6.25 miles, 10km, 4-5 hours, 195 metres. Return on the evening ferry after early dinner in Pierowall.

Tuesday - Hoy 10:00 sailing, arriving 10:30am 17:00 return. Today we sail from Stromness to the island of Hoy where we'll enjoy a lovely day walk through Berriedale Wood with cascading burns. It's a rare habitat on Orkney that holds many plant species otherwise extinct on the Orkney Isles. As we drop down to Rackwick Bay, we'll wander over to see the epic Old Man of Hoy, a sea stack towering out of the Atlantic Ocean for 450ft. After arriving back to the main road, we'll get a lift back to the ferry with one of the locals! 10.25 miles 16.4 km, 400m,

Wednesday - This morning you have the option to visit Highland Park Distillery, the most northerly distillery in Scotland producing award winning peaty whisky. Alternatively it's some free time to discover St Magnus's Cathedral, the Bishop and Earls Palaces, the Museum of Orkney or wander around the shop where you'll find amazing local produce and gifts.

This afternoon we'll enjoy a walk to the Gloup, a blowhole, and Mull Head where archaeologists set up summer digs and give informative talks about the broch and what finds they've made. From here it's onto the Italian Chapel. Built during the second world by Italian Prisoners of War, it's an amazing achievement to see how they turned basic materials into a stunning chapel that will capture your imagination. There'll be time to stop at the Orkney Wine shop for a wee taste of their wines - Blaeberry Hirst, Strubard and Gooseberry are some of our favourites!

Venturing over Churchills Barriers, we'll see the remains of ships sunk during the first World War to protect the natural harbour that is Scapa Flow. The masts and rusting hulls still stand poignantly out of the water on either side.

This evening we'll return to Kirkwall for a lovely evening dinner before boarding our overnight ferry back to Aberdeen.

Thursday - We'll make our way through Royal Deeside to enjoy a morning walk around Loch Kinord through some native Scottish Forest. You will see the fine Pictish Kinord stone, the remains of an iron age crannog (island fort) and Castle Island - thought to have been inhabited by Macbeth himself. 6km/3.75 miles, 1.5 - 2 hours, Ascent 40m. After lunch in the picturesque village of Braemar, we'll make our way through Glenshee and the Cairngorm Mountains to Blairgowrie in Perthshire and walk along River Ericht with its waterfalls, woodlands and old mills. 6km/3.75 miles, 1.5 - 2.5 hours, ascent 190m. Hear about the history of the covenanters and King Charles II before returning to Edinburgh around 6.30pm.