

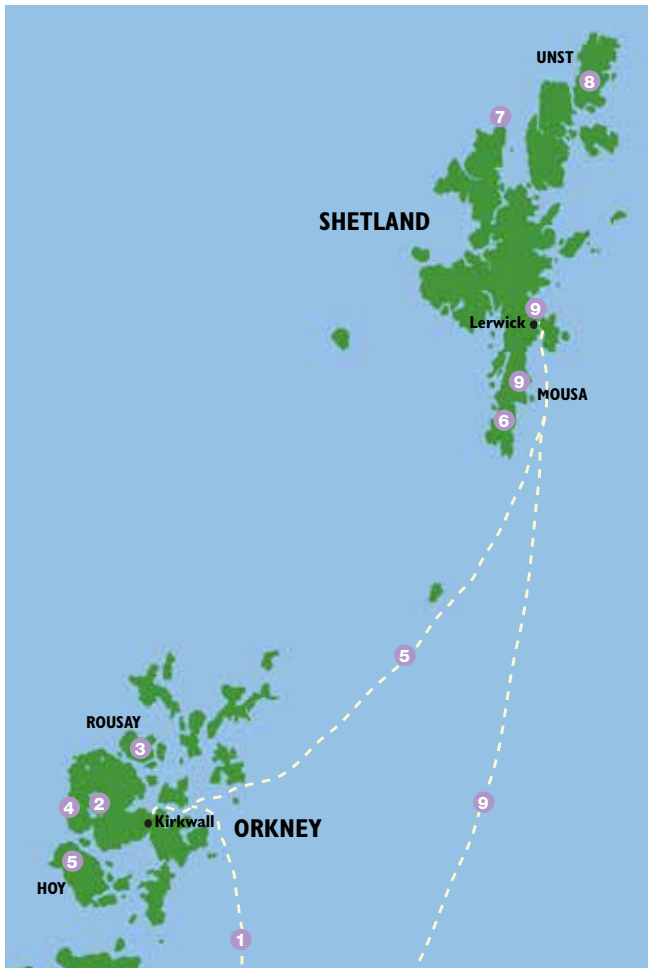


Skara Brae Orkney

Orkney and Shetland Archaeological Hiking Adventure The Caledonian People Saga

Orkney and Shetland (Scotland's Northern Isles) have an amazing wealth of archaeological sites. Houses and tombs dating back 5,000 years share the landscape with Bronze Age cemeteries, standing stones, 2,000 year old brochs, Viking ruins, medieval churches and Renaissance palaces. Together the islands have more than 18,000 known sites, with new discoveries being made every year. This archaeological saga is worth the telling, and there is nowhere better than the Northern Isles to tell it because

nowhere else is the evidence any clearer or more comprehensive. Nor can it be seen in any more glorious setting.



1. Aberdeen - Kirkwall
2. Heart of Neolithic Orkney
3. Isle of Rousay
4. Skara Brae
5. Hoy, ferry to Shetland

6. South Mainland
7. Fethaland
8. Unst
9. Mousa, Lerwick, ferry to Aberdeen

Highlights

- Visits to UNESCO world heritage sites on Orkney, including Skara Brae, Maeshowe and Ring of Brodgar;
- Hiking to Midhowe broch and cairn on Rousay, Orkney;
- Hike to Old Man of Hoy, Orkney;
- Visit to Jarlshof, Shetland;
- Boat trip to Mousa and hiking to Mousa broch;
- Hike to Hermaness, the most northerly point of Britain, with over 100,000 breeding sea birds among them puffins and gannets.



Midhowe stalled cairn, Orkney



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Haaf fishing station, Fethaland, Shetland

Introduction

Orkney and Shetland are covered with monuments that stand as constant reminders of the events and people that have gone before. From the stone age Orcadians and Shetlanders, who left a legacy of monuments that continue to inspire today, through to the Vikings, who took the islands in the ninth century and made them part of the kingdom of Norway, and beyond.

The landscapes of the fertile agricultural islands of Orkney, thanks to its base of Old Red Sandstone, contrast with the more rugged Shetland islands 100 miles further north with its poorer soil and therefore depending much more on the wealth of the sea. Hence the well-known saying that 'an Orcadian is a farmer with a boat, while a Shetlander is a fisherman with a croft'.

Orkney

Orkney has more important archaeological sites per square mile than anywhere else in the world, including Egypt. The Heart of Neolithic Orkney was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999. The Site is composed of the chambered tomb of Maeshowe, the Stones of Stenness, the Ring of Brodgar, Skara Brae settlement and associated funerary monuments and stone settings. These monuments are unquestionably among the most important Neolithic sites in western Europe. They provide exceptional evidence of the material and spiritual standards and beliefs and the social structures of this dynamic period of prehistory. Orkney has thousands of other archaeological sites and we will visit the most important ones.

Shetland

Shetland has almost as many archaeological sites as Orkney including "The Crucible of Iron Age Shetland": Mousa, Old Scatness and Jarlshof. These farmers and, 3000 years later, the Vikings inhabited areas which are now populated by sheep. The lack of intensive modern farming means that the preservation of these sites and their landscapes is exceptional. A visitor can literally stumble across the remains. Of all the great changes in cultures and the comings and goings of people, in Shetland's 6,000 year history, it is the almost 800 year effective rule of the Vikings/Norse that has had the greatest impact on the thoughts and lives of the Shetlanders of today.



Mousa broch, Shetland