

Walks and Neolithic History in Orkney

<http://www.kudutravel.com/tours/orkney-walking-tour>

12 – 19 June 2020

The Orkney archipelago, a patchwork collection of 67 islands across the Pentland Firth from the north-eastern coast of Scotland, has been inhabited for over 8,000 years and contains some of the oldest and best-preserved Neolithic sites in Europe. The UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Neolithic Heart of Orkney consists of the Chambered Cairn at Maeshowe; the Standing Stones of Stenness; the stone Ring of Brodgar and Skara Brae, an original Stone Age village. All of these ancient sites were featured in BBC's documentary, Britain's Ancient Capital: Secrets of Orkney.

The islanders are also proud of the wealth of Viking history and of their important contribution to the First and Second World Wars through the extensive naval activities in Scapa Flow, including the scuttling of the German Fleet in 1919 and the construction of the Churchill Barriers during the Second World War.

Daily walks in inspiring coastal scenery, accompanied by the cries of myriads of nesting birds, complement the historical content of the tour. During our week's stay on the aptly named Mainland community, we visit 4 other islands, some by road, using causeways constructed to impede the progress of the German navy, others by short ferry crossings.

HIGHLIGHTS of the tour include:

- A UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Neolithic Heart of Orkney consisting of the Chambered Cairn at Maeshowe, the Standing Stones of Stenness, the stone Ring of Brodgar and Skara Brae, an original Stone Age village, all as featured in BBC's documentary, Britain's Ancient Capital: Secrets of Orkney
- Scapa Flow wartime trail on Hoy Island, dedicated to the history of this famous stretch of water, scene of Churchill's Barriers established during the Second World War and the scuttling of the German Fleet in 1919
- Daily walks in the inspiring coastal scenery of the Mainland (island) and 4 other islands (Burray, South Ronaldsay, Rousay and Hoy)
- Britain's most northerly cathedral, the 12th century St. Magnus in Kirkwall, built from locally quarried sandstone of two colours

Guests' comments on this trip:

'The Orkneys continued to delight and surprise us throughout the week long trip. There was so much to see and do but all at a relaxed pace. The islanders were very helpful, taking time to deal with tourists. The wildlife was plentiful and varied and we were serenaded by skylarks on most of our walks. The Orkneys delivered so much more than I thought. We wouldn't have seen as much as we did just going on our own.'

'The Orkneys were, for me, a wonderful mix of history and nature. The programme was varied with lots of different elements each day.'

Itinerary

DAY 1

D included

Meeting at Kirkwall airport at 18.40, we have a 15-minute transfer to the city and our comfortable central 3-star hotel converted from a 17th century town house. As a welcome drink, we may sample one of nearly 500 whiskies offered by the hotel's bar, including Orkney single malts.

DAY 2

B, L, D included

After a rich Scottish breakfast served in the hotel's garden view restaurant, we head south by road. Our first stop is at the Churchill Barriers and the remarkable Italian Chapel built by Italian prisoners of war working on the barriers' construction. Near St. Margaret's Hope, we walk around Hoxa Head Coast Battery, including the remains of two WWII gun batteries (5 km/3 miles). In the afternoon, we visit the Tomb of the Eagles, the 5,000 years old chambered cairn at the southern tip of South Ronaldsay, uncovered by a local farmer while working on his land.

DAY 3

B, L, D included

We walk through the current hotspot of British Neolithic archaeology, starting from the Standing Stones of Stenness, past the Ness of Brodgar excavations, to the Ring of Brodgar. Our morning ends with a tour of the Chambered Cairn of Maeshowe. After lunch, we settle into our 3-star harbour-front hotel in Stromness with a popular restaurant, featuring dishes such as scallops in citrus butter or Orkney steak and Orkney ale pie.

DAY 4

B, L, D included

The small island of Rousay is home to 200 people and over 160 archaeological sites. Having crossed from the Mainland by ferry (15 mins), our day visit starts with a short walk on the banks of Eynhallow Sound, packed with important remains including the Neolithic Midhowe Cairn; an Iron Age Midhowe Broch; a mediaeval ceremonial hall and farm and a church abandoned in the 19th century, when it started sliding into the sea. On the opposite side of the island, we walk a 4 km/2.5 mile circular path over a heath-covered headland with views (weather permitting) of Westray island to the north and Egilsay to the east.

DAY 5

B, L, D included

In Houton, we board the ferry to Lyness on Hoy. We follow part of the Scapa Flow wartime trail, centred around the former fuel pumping station converted into an excellent museum. Later, in the dramatic scenery of Northern Hoy, we walk to the Dwarfie Stane, then drive to Rackwick Bay, where we picnic and enjoy a short walk. On our return to Mainland, we stop at the Orkneyinga Saga Centre in Orphir. This narrative of Orkney Islands' history, from their capture by the Norwegian king in the 9th century until about 1200, was written by an unknown Icelandic author at the beginning of the 13th century. Our accommodation for the next 3 nights is a charming old-fashioned country-house style hotel near Kirkwall.

DAY 6

B, L, D included

Our walk (7 km/4.5 miles) takes us to the Deerness Peninsula in the east of Mainland. The spectacular cliff scenery includes the Gloup, a collapsed deep sea cave separated from the sea

by a broad arch, and the Brough of Deerness, a sea stack with remains of an ancient settlement. In Kirkwall, we explore the 12th century St. Magnus Cathedral built from the same local sandstone used by the Neolithic inhabitants of the islands and the nearby contemporary Bishop's Palace, the town's oldest surviving domestic building. We dine in a renowned restaurant specialising in dishes made from seasonal Orkney produce, including the freshest seafood, from the islands' pristine waters, and beef and lamb from local farms.

DAY 7

B, L, D included

Our day begins with spectacular coastal scenery as we walk to Yesnaby Castle, a stunning 35 m/115 ft sandstone sea stack. Later we walk around Marwick Head, to the clifftop memorial commemorating Earl Kitchener and the HMS Hampshire crew lost in 1916, looking out for seabirds nesting on the cliffs below us. In the afternoon, we visit Skara Brae, the best-preserved Neolithic village in Western Europe, uncovered in 1850, when violent storms erased the sands that had covered this Orcadian Pompeii for thousands of years.

DAY 8

B included

Our journey concludes with a morning transfer to the airport.

Tour leader

Ruth Hackney was born in England and now lives in the Mani in Greece. She began hiking at the age of 10 and also enjoyed playing the viola. Armed with an Oriental Studies degree from King's College, Cambridge and a teaching certificate, she taught English in India, Germany and Greece for 15 years. Since becoming a tour guide in 1996, she has led walking tours in Greece, Scotland and Ethiopia.

Activity Level

Standard

6 walking days, 2 – 5 hrs daily. Warm waterproof gear is essential. Paths are often wet and muddy.

Temperatures

June daily high temperatures range between 14° and 17°C. It is the driest and sunniest time of year in Orkney.

Accommodation

- 2 nights in Kirkwall, in a comfortable central 3-star hotel converted from a 17th century town house
- 2 nights in Stromness, in a 3-star harbourfront hotel with comfortable modern rooms and a popular restaurant
- 3 nights in a charming old-fashioned country-house style hotel near Kirkwall

Trip Price, per person sharing

£2,395.75 until 11th September 2019 **£2,460.50** until 11th December 2019

£2,525.25 until 11th March 2020 **£2,590** after 11th March 2020

<https://www.kudutravel.com/faq#discounts>

£320 single supplement

£400 deposit per person

Please note that the single room supplement is imposed by the hotel and not by Kudu

Travel. If you are willing to share but no other suitable guest books on the trip, we regret that the supplement will be payable. We shall endeavour to obtain double rooms for single occupancy, whenever possible.

Price Includes

- Accommodation for Days 1 through 8, on a twin shared basis
- Meals (with beer and soft drinks at restaurant lunches and wine at dinners) as listed in the daily notation
- Land and sea transportation as described
- Entrance and sightseeing fees except during free periods
- Gratuities for hotel and restaurant staff (appreciation for tour leaders/managers is entirely at your discretion)

Price does not Include

- Transportation to and from Kirkwall airport
- Trip cancellation, medical or other insurance
- Immunisations, prescriptions or other medical requirements
- Passport, visa and health documentation
- Personal expenses (laundry, alcohol besides beer/wine with group meals, free time activities, etc.)

VALUE FOR MONEY - SO MUCH IS INCLUDED

On Kudu trips, you will only need money for postcards, presents to take home, the odd G & T or an irresistible ice cream. Festival and opera tickets, museum and gallery entrances, National Park fees, all meals (with a very few exceptions specified in individual itineraries), wine with lunch and dinner, access to specialist books carried by the guides, gratuities for porters and hotel and restaurant staff, boat rides, train trips, internal flights, wine tastings, 4WDs with drivers, the services of skilled local guides and trackers etc. are ALL INCLUDED in the cost of your holiday.

We are confident that, like previous very satisfied guests, you will discover that our tours give you excellent value for money.

Visa and Health Requirements

Visitors from the EU, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand currently require a valid passport, but not a visa, for entry to the United Kingdom. If you are a national of any other country, please check visa regulations with your nearest British Embassy.

At present, there are no specific and compulsory health requirements for entry to Britain. Residents of countries in the EU can only claim free (emergency) medical treatment in the UK by presenting their European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). You may also wish to check the advice given to travellers by the Department of Health (<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/healthcare-when-travelling-abroad/>) and the FCO (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>).

Insurance

It is essential, and a condition of booking, that you protect yourself with a suitable travel insurance policy as soon as you book a trip. We can arrange comprehensive cover for UK residents. For further details, please see the website, or ask our office.

Size of Party

This trip will run with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 14 guests.