



Front cover: Ring of Brodgar at sunset  
This page: Old Man of Hoy

Orkney is an archipelago of 70 or so islands and skerries (small rocky islands) found off the north-eastern tip of Scotland. Throughout this gently sloping and richly fertile land, Orkney's famous archaeology, superb wildlife, unique arts and crafts and traditional island welcome are well known – at least to lovers of the good life.

# welcome

## HOW TO GET TO HERE

**BY AIR**  
Direct flights to Kirkwall airport with British Airways, operated by Loganair, are available from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness. Connections are available throughout the UK and beyond (ba.com T: 0845 773 3377). Book early for fares from £104 return (including taxes) from Edinburgh.

**BY SEA**  
There is a choice of sailings available from Aberdeen or Scrabster, Gills Bay or John o'Groats in Caithness.

NorthLink Ferries provides a service from Aberdeen to Kirkwall, with evening sailings 4 times a week and Scrabster to Stromness 3 times daily (www.northlinkferries.co.uk T: 0845 600 0449).

Pentland Ferries' route between Gills Bay and St. Margaret's Hope sails 4 times daily in summer (www.pentlandferries.co.uk T: 01856 831226).

John o'Groats Ferries provides a May – September passenger service to Burwick on South Ronaldsay, served by the Orkney Bus, ticketed through from Inverness to Kirkwall (www.jogferry.co.uk T: 01955 611301).

## IDEAL FOR

- ◆ Norse & Neolithic Heritage
- ◆ Wildlife
- ◆ Arts and Crafts
- ◆ Food lovers

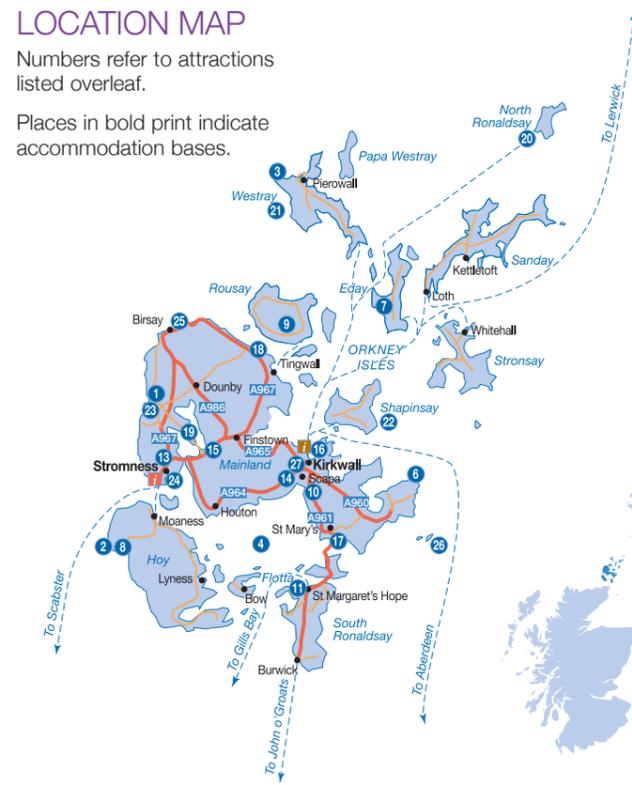
To view accommodation in this area, go to [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) or to order the local accommodation brochure, call 0845 22 55 121.

**MORE INFORMATION**  
[www.visitororkney.com](http://www.visitororkney.com)

## LOCATION MAP

Numbers refer to attractions listed overleaf.

Places in bold print indicate accommodation bases.



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Additional photography: K4 Graphics, Laurie Campbell and Colin Simpson.  
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- ! DON'T MISS
- £ Paid Entry
- Free Entry
- \$ Seasonal
- Disabled Access
- Hearing Loop
- Refreshments
- Gift Shop
- WC
- Rainy Days



**1. Skara Brae** (B9056, 19 miles from Kirkwall) is an unrivalled example of life in Stone Age Orkney. Without doubt the best preserved village in western Europe, the houses contain stone beds, dressers, hearths and drains, giving a fantastic insight into how life was 5,000 years ago. Together with several other historical sites, it is part of the designated World Heritage Site. (HS)

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**2.** The UK's tallest sea stack at 450ft high, **the Old Man of Hoy** takes its name from the second largest island in the Orkney archipelago, on the coast of which it sits. Although only the experienced attempt to climb it, energetic visitors can walk up from Rackwick Bay for a close-up view, or simply look across from the Scrabster to Stromness ferry.



**3.** A striking headland with overhanging cliffs, **Noup Head** stands at the north-western end of the island of Westray. The seabird colonies below the lighthouse here are second only to St Kilda in UK terms, comprising tens of thousands of kittiwakes and guillemots, alongside puffins, razorbills and fulmars. Come here from May to July for the most incredible sights, sounds and smells!



**4.** During wartime, the extensive natural harbour of **Scapa Flow** rendered Orkney strategically important. The Lyness Interpretation Centre in Hoy illustrates the role it played. Initially considered a safe haven, the sinking of the HMS Royal Oak forced the construction of firmer blockades between several of the southern islands. These are known as the Churchill Barriers, named after the wartime leader.



**5.** Orkney has inspired many to express themselves through a variety of arts and crafts. Environmental and Norse influences are apparent in the jewellery, textiles, ceramics and knitwear available throughout the islands, while Orkney's heritage also inspired the annual **St Magnus Festival**. Founded by resident composer Peter Maxwell Davies in 1977, it brings distinguished musicians from around the world to the islands each June.





## WALKS

Walking in Orkney can be strenuous or easy going – whichever suits you best. Many beautiful coastal and hill routes take in the spectacular scenery, with opportunities to see birds and wildlife or ancient archaeological remains along the way.

**6. The Gloup at Mull Head** to the east of Kirkwall (A960 then B9050) is a short and gentle coastal walk with views to the northern isles, along with cliff and heath-nesting birds. The Gloup itself is an awe-inspiring collapsed sea cave, while you may choose to venture half a mile further to the Brough of Deerness, a remarkable clifftop settlement.

**7.** To reach Eday, catch a ferry from Kirkwall harbour. The **Eday Heritage Walk** takes you to Mill Loch where there is a hide to observe the birds, then leads through grassland past standing stones and chambered cairns, onto a headland and back over the moorland.



**8.** The **RSPB reserve in Hoy** takes in a range of scenery, including the famous **Old Man of Hoy**. Starting at **Rackwick Bay**, take a moment to look behind you at the stunning sandstone cliffs. From here, keep your eyes peeled for great skuas, red grouse and dunlins on the moorland, along with guillemots, razorbills and kittiwakes on the cliffs below. The path climbs as you continue to St John's Head, but you can make the return trip as long or short as you wish.

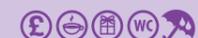


**9.** A ferry from Tingwall will take you across the Eynhallow Sound to **Rousay**. From the pier, take the road to the left for 4 miles. Walk through a historic landscape ranging from evidence of the Clearances of the 19th century back to Stone Age chambered cairns.

## FOOD & DRINK

Enjoy Orkney's wholesome harvest of the land and sea. The islands will certainly leave you with tastes to remember.

**10.** The **Highland Park Distillery** was founded 200 years ago and produces award-winning whisky. The tour within provides a fascinating insight into the traditions of these islands.



**11. The Creel** in St Margaret's Hope is one of the most talked about restaurants in the country. Many eateries boast about the use of local produce but here is one that really delivers in style! To save driving home again, book into one of the adjoining bedrooms.



**12.** Orkney has **quality local produce** in abundance. Try the deliciously creamy ice-cream, the many cheeses and the scrumptious fudge.

Where better to experience mouth-wateringly fresh seafood than a North Sea archipelago? Orkney salmon and herring are among the country's best. And from the fertile land comes the juiciest and tastiest meat. Try the farmers' market next to St Magnus Cathedral on the last Saturday of each month.



**13.** Based in the West Mainland fishing village of Stromness, the **Orkney Beer Festival** takes place in late August. It gives those dropping into the Stromness Hotel the opportunity to try out guest beers and cask-conditioned ales.

**14. The Foveran Hotel's** restaurant, located 3 miles from Kirkwall, is a favourite with visitors and locals. With stunning sea views to Scapa Flow, specialities include Orkney's finest beef, lamb and local seafood.

## HISTORY & HERITAGE

Many historic sites in Orkney are managed by Historic Scotland, and an *Orkney Explorer Pass* allows unlimited access to each of them.

**15. Maeshowe** is a central feature of the Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site. A chambered cairn (off A965), it is considered to be one of the finest architectural achievements of its time, around 5,000 years ago. Timed ticketing is in operation, ensuring lots of room and allowing the informative guides to point out all the interesting aspects of the site. (HS)



**16.** In the heart of Orkney's main town, Kirkwall, lies **St Magnus Cathedral**. It was built in 1137 by Earl Rognvald, in memory of his cousin Magnus who was earlier murdered by another cousin, Haakon, co-ruler at that time. Today the beautiful sandstone building continues to be a place of worship for the local people. ♿

**17.** Travel across the first of the **Churchill Barriers** to see an artistic phenomenon at the **Italian Chapel**. Built by Italian POWs in WWII, using only the most modest of materials, the intricate interior is all the more impressive. ♿



**18.** The **Broch of Gurness** at Aikerness (A966) is a well-organised Iron Age village, giving a fascinating insight into community life 2,000 years ago. (HS)



**19.** The **Ring of Brodgar** and the **Standing Stones of Stenness** (both just off the B9055) are also included within the World Heritage Site. Undeniably mystical, these spiritual places reward visitors with a real sense of ancient times. (HS) ♿

## ISLAND HOPPING

No trip to Orkney is complete without visiting the smaller islands. Each is unique in its own way and gives you an ideal opportunity for wildlife watching, whether it be on quiet shores, hills or out at sea. Here are just three.



Looking from Westray to Rousay

**20.** The isle of **North Ronaldsay** is located further north than the southern tip of Norway! Try the local lamb where its distinctive flavour is thanks to the seashore-grazing habits of the sheep.

**21. Westray** is, as its name suggests, one of the north-westerly isles in the grouping. Walk to Stanger Head and see Castle o' Burrian or visit the local heritage centre at Pierowall.

Orkney has the shortest scheduled flight in the world, taking under two minutes to fly from Westray to Papa Westray.

**22. Shapinsay** is a short boat journey from the mainland and home to the beautiful Balfour Castle. Head to Mill Dam RSPB reserve to see breeding birds, ducks and waders.

## WILDLIFE

Orkney is blessed with an abundance of birds and marine wildlife and draws nature lovers throughout the year. Late spring sees the arrival of hundreds of thousands of breeding seabirds, from the piratical great skua (or 'bonxie') to everybody's favourite, the colourful, clown-like puffin. Inland meadows play host to a wonderful array of raptors and wading birds, while the lochs are home to rarities such as the red-throated diver and red-necked phalarope. Grey seals breed in huge numbers around the coast from late autumn, while whales, dolphins and porpoise are a regular sight off-shore throughout the summer.



Stromness

## OUTSTANDING VIEWS

**23.** For some of the most dramatic seascapes in Orkney, head to **Yesnaby**, in the West Mainland, and walk along the cliff-tops.

**24.** Arriving in Orkney via the Scrabster – Stromness ferry, you will enjoy fine 360° views, from the beautiful hamlet of **Stromness** and its many gable-end houses to the islands of **Graemsay** and **Hoy** (meaning High Island).

**25.** The **Brough of Birsay** is a small island off the north-west of Mainland, only accessible when the tide is low. Beyond is a vast expanse of sea and you'd be forgiven for thinking you were on the very edge of the earth. (HS) £ \$

The ancient chambered cairn at Maeshowe contains 1,000 year old Viking Runic graffiti.

**26.** Just off the eastern tip of Mainland, the island of **Copinsay** is uninhabited, save for its huge colonies of breeding seabirds, including puffins, guillemots and kittiwakes, all set below a dramatic lighthouse. Boat trips leave from Skail in the East Mainland.

A game of street rugby known as the Ba' is played each Christmas and New Year's Day. The two teams, the Uppies and the Doonies, battle it out to see who can get the leather ball to their respective side of town.

**27.** From the top of Wideford Hill, outside **Kirkwall**, there is a beautiful view over both the **northern and southern isles** of Orkney and the capital itself. Watch the sun glint in the copper of the St Magnus Cathedral spire and sparkle on the dancing waves.



St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall