

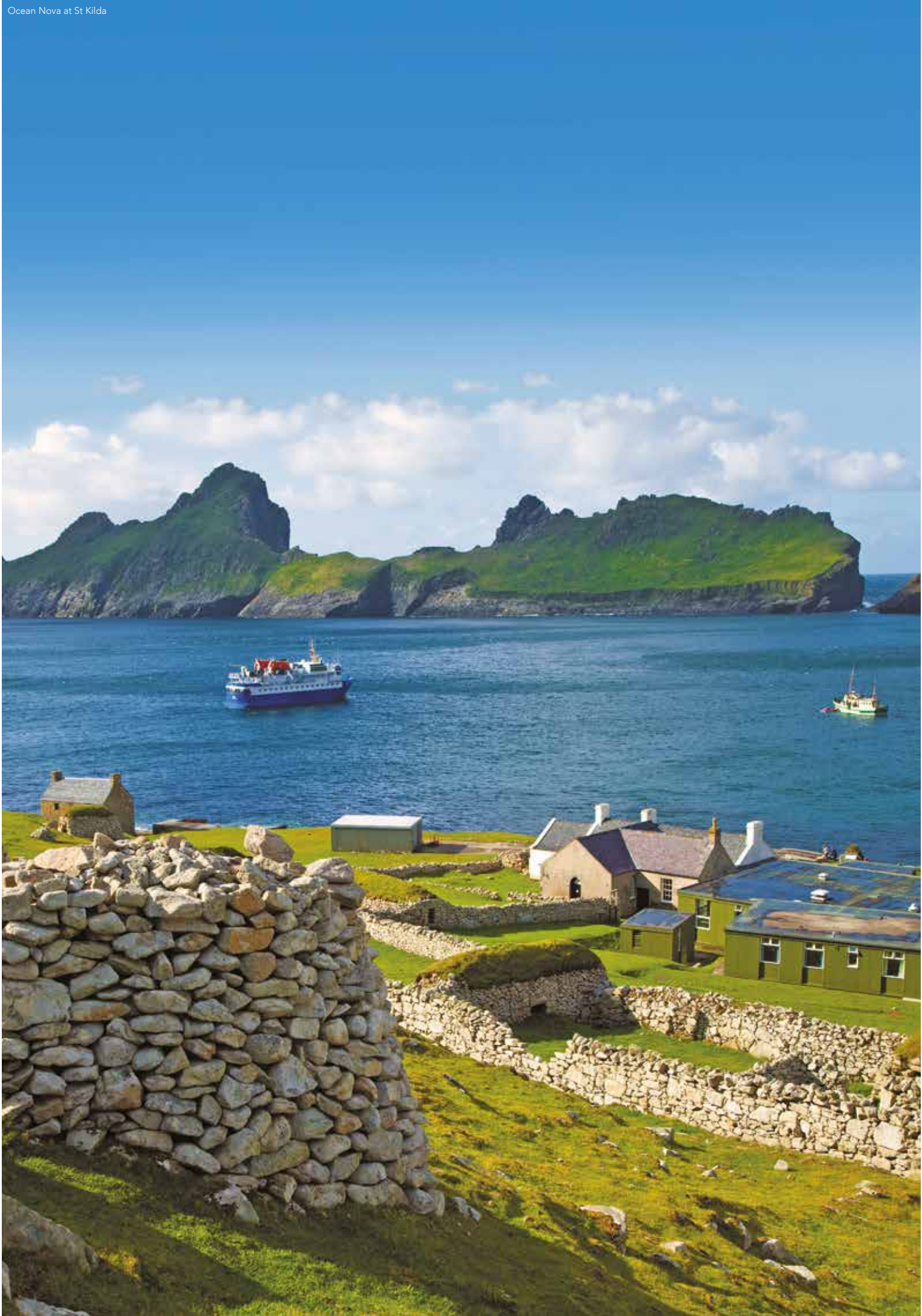
BIRDING IN THE BRITISH ISLES

ISLAND HOPPING EXPEDITIONS
ABOARD THE 84-PASSENGER OCEAN NOVA

SPRING 2024



NOBLE CALEDONIA





Lounge



Category 3 Cabin



Bridge



Dining Room



Exploring by Zodiac

OCEAN NOVA

We have chartered the expedition ship, the Ocean Nova for our unique island hopping expeditions. The vessel was built in Denmark in 1992 with high ice class to serve Greenland's west coast. In 2006 she was completely refurbished and converted into a comfortable, 84-passenger expedition ship and she was updated in 2018.

Your Cabin

The Ocean Nova features 39 guest cabins. Cabins are spread over two decks and include cabins for the single traveller, double and triple cabins, all with sea-view and private facilities. The double cabins have either two lower beds or upper and lower beds. The triple cabins have upper and lower beds. In your cabin you will also find a desk with chair and ample storage space for clothes and equipment. They are well designed with typical Scandinavian light woods.

Your Space

The Panorama lounge affords excellent views and is the main meeting place where you can enjoy a drink with a breathtaking view of the surrounding landscape. It is here that our expedition team will entertain and educate you with lectures on biology, history, geology or ornithology with daily briefings. There is also a library with panoramic views and a good selection of books on the area you are visiting. On board there is a satellite phone, small gym and medical doctor. When conditions permit, passengers are welcome on the Bridge and there is always something to see or search for

from the spacious observation decks.

Your Dining

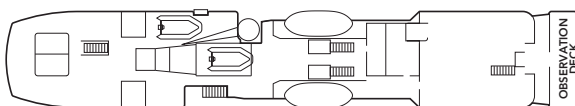
The comfortable dining room seats all passengers in a single sitting and offers delicious hearty meals with a mixture of table service and buffet. It is comfortable and spacious enough to accommodate all passengers and expedition staff in one seating, and the portholes allow you to take in your surroundings as you dine. The informal dining arrangement adds to the friendly atmosphere on board and meals are a great chance to discuss all you have seen with your fellow travellers, and for the expedition team to share their knowledge.

Life On Board & Exploring Ashore

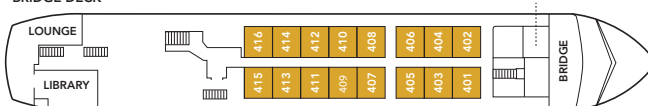
The atmosphere on board is informal and time on board is often spent out on deck keeping watch for wildlife or admiring the spectacular view. The schedule can change due to weather conditions or unexpected wildlife sightings which adds to the adventure. Daily briefings from our expedition team will prepare you for each day's activities and experts in subjects such as ornithology or marine biology will give talks and accompany us ashore.

DECK PLAN

TOP DECK



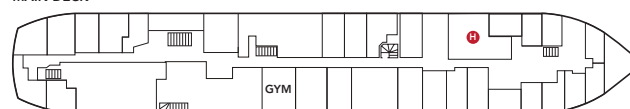
BRIDGE DECK



UPPER DECK



MAIN DECK



■ CATEGORY 1 ■ CATEGORY 2 ■ CATEGORY 3



Please note that the cruises featured in this brochure are expedition cruises and Zodiacs will be used regularly to make landings ashore. Due to the rugged nature of the islands and the lack of transportation, on many of the islands our exploration will be on foot and to make the most of these fascinating cruises participants should be prepared for walks, often over uneven surfaces.

BIRD QUEST



A discovery of Britain's seabird islands aboard the Ocean Nova
28th April to 9th May 2024

The seabird islands of the western British Isles are the envy of the birding world, yet it is not easy to sample the wonderful diversity of their character and come face-to-face with seagoing inhabitants. This unusual expedition cruise will appeal to those who wish to explore our coastal waters, observe the marvellous seabird and marine life and walk across untouched coastal wilderness areas. The focus of our expedition is the prolific birdlife but the region is also rich in historical and cultural heritage and with our naturalists and local guides we will discover some of the most remote and uninhabited islands that surround the coast of Britain together with inhabited islands such as Alderney and Fair Isle.



Cruising aboard the 84-passenger Ocean Nova, we will be able to enjoy expedition cruising at its best. Although we will set sail with a schedule, it will not be set in stone. The Captain and expedition team keep a flexible approach allowing you the opportunity to fully experience the unexpected, whether it be a sighting of dolphins, a whale or any unusual event. Our exploration of inlets, estuaries and protected coastal waters will be made all the more enjoyable by the use of our Zodiac landing craft which enable us to land in remote places such as St Kilda, providing for an unusual perspective and making the otherwise inaccessible readily available. This is a wonderful opportunity to see some of our most beautiful places and view some of the extensive birdlife. No matter your level of expertise you will find a warm welcome and a cornucopia of stunning sights and sounds.

The Itinerary

Day 1 Portsmouth, England. Embark the Ocean Nova this afternoon. A transfer will be provided from Portsmouth Harbour Railway Station at a fixed time. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we sail this evening.

Day 2 Alderney, Channel Islands. Spend the morning on Alderney where our onboard team will lead a series of walks to explore the island. Visit the island's only town, St Anne, which has all the old world charm of a Normandy village with tiny squares and pastel shaded cottages and shops. You may wish to visit the museum which is packed with historical artefacts ranging from the Romans to the German occupation during the Second World War. Those feeling active can join a walk to see the German fortifications and Victorian forts along the coastline before arriving at Les Etacs gannet colony. These rocks are situated just 100 metres offshore and are home to 6,000 pairs of gannets. Return to the ship for lunch and maybe join a lecture during our afternoon at sea.

Day 3 Isles of Scilly. Spend the morning on traffic-free Tresco, walking its idyllic lanes from the beach to the famous subtropical Abbey Gardens. Defying the Atlantic weather, this miracle of a garden is home to more than 20,000 species of plants from over 80 countries. Enjoy time to wander along the paths, maybe visit the Valhalla collection of ship figureheads from ships wrecked on the islands or relax in the café. We spend the afternoon on St Agnes, the most south-westerly community in the UK. Surrounded by rocks and reefs this delightful tiny island offers marvellous coastal walks. The small island of Gugh lies across a narrow sandbar and here we find a single stone monolith called the 'Old Man of Gugh' which dates back to the Bronze Age. En-route we plan to sail past the nearby island of Annet, the second largest of the uninhabited islands and a bird sanctuary. We will cruise by to see the coastline alive with puffins, European storm petrels and shag.

Day 4 Lundy Island & Skomer Island, Wales. This morning we will explore Lundy, a remote island in the Bristol Channel. Walk along its traffic-free lanes and paths, explore the wide bays and coves by way of

hanging valleys, observe the puffins nesting in abandoned rabbit warrens, have a drink at the inn and buy some of the island's 'puffin stamps' at the shop. This afternoon we will sail on to Skomer Island and discover the coastline on a Zodiac cruise. One of the most important wildlife sites in Northern Europe, this island has fantastic birdlife including 6,000 pairs of puffins, countless numbers of guillemots, fulmar, kittiwakes and the elusive Manx shearwater and storm petrel. Return to the ship and later this evening we hope to sail around Grassholm; be on deck to view one of the world's largest gannetries with over 34,000 breeding pairs.

Day 5 Holy Island, Wales & Calf of Man, Isle of Man. Over breakfast we arrive at Holyhead, adjacent to Anglesey with its spectacular sea cliffs. Here we will visit the RSPB's reserve at South Stack, a beautiful but fragile maritime sward and heathland which is home to a large population of guillemots and razorbills. If we are lucky, we might also see some choughs. Returning to the ship for lunch we hope to arrive in the late afternoon at the Calf of Man, a 600 acre island situated off the southern tip of the Isle of Man, and home to thousands of seabirds including Manx shearwater, kittiwake and razorbill. Meanwhile in the water we may be lucky to see dolphins and seals.



Exploring by Zodiac, Staffa, Fingal's Cave



Day 6 Ailsa Craig, Scotland & Rathlin Island, Northern Ireland. In the early morning we will anchor off the granite island of Ailsa Craig. This tiny island, just 2.5 miles in circumference was once a refuge for sailors and base to a 19th century lighthouse. Today it is an RSPB reserve and home to the third largest gannet colony in Britain. We will use the Zodiacs and cruise the coastal waters for a closer look searching for puffins, guillemots and gulls. Sail in the late morning towards Rathlin Island. Located just a few miles from the North Antrim coast, Rathlin has been settled for more than 6,000 years. Today, there are only 80 or so inhabitants, whereas before the famine there were 1200. Enjoy a guided walk which will take in the prolific seabird life with astonishing numbers of auks, kittiwakes and grey seals. This evening we will sail past the magnificent cliffs to the north of the island which are home to the largest sea bird colony in Ireland.

Day 7 Staffa & Lunga, Scotland. Overnight we will sail to Staffa, where the perpendicular rock face features an imposing series of black basalt columns, known as the Colonnade, which have been cut by the sea into cathedral-like caverns, most notably Fingal's Cave. Weather permitting, we will use our Zodiacs to explore closer. We continue to Lunga, the largest of the Treshnish Isles. Of volcanic origin, Lunga has been described as a 'green jewel in a peacock sea'. Populated until the 19th century, the island still bears the remains of black houses. There is prolific birdlife on the island including storm-petrels, puffins, kittiwakes and Manx shearwaters.

Day 8 St Kilda & Stac Lee, Outer Hebrides. Mid-morning we cruise past two of the largest gannetries in the world at Stac Lee and Boreray. These impressive stacs rise 170 metres from the sea and are home to up to 60,000 breeding pairs of northern gannet. Afterwards we sail the short distance to St Kilda, a remarkable uninhabited archipelago some 50 miles beyond the Outer Hebrides. Dominated by the highest cliffs and sea stacks in Britain, Hirta, St Kilda's main island was occupied on and off for at least 2,000 years, with the last 36 Gaelic speaking inhabitants evacuated at their own request in 1930. Immediately after the evacuation, the island was bought by the Marquess of Bute to protect the island's thousands of seabirds including puffin and fulmars, and in 1957 it was bequeathed to the National Trust for Scotland. St Kilda is one of the few UNESCO World Heritage Sites with dual status reflecting its natural and cultural significance. After landing by Zodiac our expedition staff will lead several guided walks on the island.

Day 9 North Rona & Sula Sgeir. Spend the day around North Rona, an isolated island some fifty miles north of Cape Wrath. The last islanders left North Rona in 1844 and today it is home to thirteen species of breeding seabirds including large colonies of great black-backed gulls, great skuas and puffins. There is also a large population of grey seals which we hope to observe on a Zodiac cruise. If weather permits we will also visit

the gannet colony on Sula Sgeir home to over 5000 breeding pairs and renowned as the least visited national nature reserve in Britain.

Day 10 Stromness, Orkney Islands. Over breakfast we arrive in the Orkney Islands. From our berth in Stromness we head into the west of Mainland, Orkney's largest island. We will pass the rugged sea cliffs of Marwick Head, a designated Site of Specific Interest for its breeding seabirds, especially kittiwakes and guillemots, and we may also be lucky and see whales and dolphins offshore. Continue to the wild and windswept beauty of Birsay Moors where a dramatic sweep of moorland and blanket bog fringed by grassland and wetland is home to some of Orkney's iconic residents including hen harriers, short eared owls and Arctic skuas whilst we can listen for the distinctive call of the red-throated divers. There will also be the option to visit the Neolithic Heartland of Orkney; an area designated as a World Heritage Site due to its wealth of pre-historic archaeology. We will see the Standing Stones of Stenness and the Ring of Brodgar which is a huge ceremonial circle of stones dating back almost 5000 years. We continue to the 5000-year-old village of Skara Brae and see the remarkable dwellings revealed from beneath the sand dunes by storms only 150 years ago.

Day 11 Fair Isle, Shetland Islands. Anchor over breakfast off the remote island of Fair Isle. Located midway between the Shetland and Orkney Islands, the tiny population of sixty or so islanders always extend us a warm welcome. Enjoy a walk across the island searching out the puffin slopes, perhaps visit the community hall for a cup of tea or maybe purchase some of the famous knitwear. Sail over lunch and spend the afternoon at sea as we return to mainland Scotland.

Day 12 Aberdeen. Disembark this morning after breakfast. Transfers will be provided to the Aberdeen International Airport and Railway Station at a fixed time.

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Cat	Cabin Description	
1	Bunk bedded cabin for twin use	£4895
2	Standard Twin	£5095
3	Superior	£5395
1	Bunk bedded cabin for sole use	£5795
2	Standard Twin sole use	£5995

PRICE INCLUDES: 11 nights aboard the Ocean Nova on a full board basis
 • House wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner • Noble Caledonia expedition team • Shore excursions • Gratuities • Transfers • Port taxes.
Not Included: Travel insurance.

BIRDS OF THE SCOTTISH ISLES

An in-depth exploration of the remote islands of Scotland aboard the Ocean Nova

9th to 18th May & 18th to 27th May* 2024



You can travel the world visiting all manner of exotic and wonderful places without realising that some of the finest scenery, fascinating history and most endearing people may be close to home. Nowhere is this truer than around Scotland's magnificent coastline, an indented landscape of enormous natural splendour with offshore islands forming stepping stones into the Atlantic.

This unique voyage will appeal to those who prefer their islands deserted, but with abundant bird and wildlife. If you have always had a hankering to visit some of the remotest and most inaccessible islands in Scotland, this is the ideal opportunity visiting as it does the Shetland Islands, Orkney Islands and the majestic Hebrides. Join us aboard the 84-passenger Ocean Nova as we sail from the port of Aberdeen to the islands on the edge, visiting both inhabited and uninhabited islands and places of great natural beauty, rich in wildlife and mystical history, many with a long history dating back to the Iron Age.

Few cruise ships offer the chance to explore the islands off the northern coast of Scotland and our unique expedition combines visits to remote St Kilda with the inhabited island of Fair Isle and the 'Bird Island' of Foula. We will also see the Isle of Noss, one of the most important seabird colonies in Scotland, along with two of the largest gannetries in the world at Stac Lee and Boreray. Such a trip would be almost impossible to arrange independently and requires a small ship with the expeditionary qualities of the Ocean Nova. With just over eighty travelling companions, the atmosphere on board is convivial and when ashore with our local experts and expedition team, we will divide into small groups thereby enjoying a comprehensive and peaceful experience.



Puffin, Fair Isle

The Itinerary

Day 1 Aberdeen, Scotland. Embark the Ocean Nova this afternoon. Transfers will be provided from Aberdeen International Airport and Railway Station at a fixed time. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we sail this evening for the Shetland Islands.

Day 2 Fair Isle, Shetland Islands. After a morning at sea we will anchor off remote Fair Isle. Located midway between the Shetland and Orkney Islands, the tiny population of sixty or so islanders always extend us a warm welcome. Enjoy a walk across the island searching out the puffin slopes, perhaps visit the community hall for a cup of tea or maybe purchase some of the famous knitwear. Sail this evening past the cliffs at Sumburgh Head as we make our way to our overnight anchorage.

Day 3 Sumburgh Head & Lerwick. From our anchorage at Grutness it is a short drive to Sumburgh Head, the southernmost point of the Shetland mainland. Here the steep cliffs are home to colonies of puffins, fulmars,

guillemots and shags with each species occupying different areas of the cliffs. Also see the Sumburgh Head Lighthouse, the oldest in Shetland having been constructed in 1821, whilst from the viewing points we may also spot whales and dolphins in the water. Over lunch we sail to Lerwick for a free afternoon to explore this historic port. Perhaps wander through its narrow stone lanes or maybe visit the excellent Shetland Museum, containing artefacts from shipwrecks and the whaling era. This evening we will be entertained by local musicians as we moor overnight.

Day 4 Isle of Noss & Unst. Departing Lerwick at first light we will sail around Noss Head, one of the most important seabird colonies in Scotland. Here the towering 180 metre sea cliffs will be full of nesting gannets, guillemots and fulmars and we may also see skuas in the skies above. We continue our exploration of Shetland on the northern island of Unst. Unst is Britain's most northerly inhabited island and at the Heritage Centre we will learn about the islanders' struggles over the centuries and of the industries that have prospered whilst the Unst Boat Haven is dedicated to the history of the islands distinctive wooden boats which descend from Viking craft. We also visit Saxa Vord with views over Hermaness National Nature Reserve and Muckle Flugga stacks, and home to thousands of gannets and puffins as well as rare arctic-alpine plants.

Day 5 Foula & Papa Stour. This morning we visit Foula, one of Britain's most remote inhabited islands. Apart from a narrow coastal strip of more fertile croftland, Foula is an expanse of peat and moorland rising steeply to five dramatic peaks. In spring, Foula's wildflowers provide a glorious burst of colour. Translated as "Bird Island" from Old Norse the island is a designated as a Special Protection Area for birds and is home to the world's largest colony of Great skuas, known locally as bonxies, which compete fiercely with Arctic skuas for breeding territories. Kittiwakes and Arctic terns return annually to nest whilst the cliffs team with puffins, shags and fulmars. Over



Iona



lunch we will sail the short distance to Papa Stour where we will use our Zodiacs to explore the stunning cliff scenery, sea stacks, arches, blowholes and coastal caves which are home to Arctic skua and large numbers of Arctic terns.

Day 6 North Ronaldsay & Papa Westray, Orkney Islands. Arriving in the Orkney Islands we will visit the bird observatory on North Ronaldsay. Here the range of wetland habitats support the wildfowl and wader species whilst the rugged coastline provides nesting sites for seabird colonies. Whilst walking on the island we will keep an eye out for ringed plovers, sanderlings and dunlins which gather on the heath. We can also view the seals hauled up on the beaches and for those wishing to explore further can visit the lighthouse with views over the nearby islands or visit the wool mill. Over lunch we sail the short distance to Papa Westray where there will be the opportunity for a number of island walks. You can also visit the 3500-year-old Knap of Howar, a Neolithic farm building that claims to be the oldest standing house in Europe and the 12th century St Boniface Kirk. In the north of the island is the North Hill Reserve, home to Arctic terns and skuas and also the extremely rare Scottish primrose. In the early evening we will meet at the Papay pub for a well-deserved pre-dinner drink.

Day 7 Stromness. From our berth in Stromness we head into the west of Mainland, Orkney's largest island. We will pass the rugged sea cliffs of Marwick Head, a designated Site of Specific Interest for its breeding seabirds, especially kittiwakes and guillemots and we may also be lucky and see whales and dolphins offshore. Continue to the wild and windswept beauty of Birsay Moors where a dramatic sweep of moorland and blanket bog fringed by grassland and wetland is home to some of Orkney's iconic residents including hen harriers, short eared owls and Arctic skuas whilst we can listen for the distinctive call of the red-throated divers. Return to the ship for lunch and spend the afternoon at sea as we sail to the Hebrides.

Day 8 St Kilda & Stac Lee, Outer Hebrides. Mid-morning we cruise past two of the largest gannetries in the world at Stac Lee and Boreray. These impressive stacs rise 170 metres from the sea and are home to up to 60,000 breeding pairs of northern gannet. Afterwards we sail the short distance to St Kilda, a remarkable uninhabited archipelago some 50 miles beyond the Outer Hebrides. Dominated by the highest cliffs and sea stacks in Britain, Hirta, St Kilda's main island was occupied on and off for at least 2,000 years, with the last 36 Gaelic speaking inhabitants evacuated at their own

request in 1930. Immediately after the evacuation, the island was bought by the Marquess of Bute to protect the island's thousands of seabirds including puffin and fulmars, and in 1957 it was bequeathed to the National Trust for Scotland. St Kilda is one of the few UNESCO World Heritage Sites with dual status reflecting its natural and cultural significance. After landing by Zodiac our expedition staff will lead several guided walks on the island.

Day 9 Iona & Lunga, Scotland. This morning we land on Iona. For more than 1,000 years the island of Iona has been a place of deep spiritual significance. St Columba came here from Ireland in 563 AD and early Christianity spread through northern Britain from this remote island community. The island is also a haven for birdlife including the elusive corncrake which reside in the hayfields and are identified by a distinctive rasping call. Enjoy time to explore the Abbey before joining our naturalists on a birding walk. We continue to Lunga, the largest of the Treshnish Isles. Of volcanic origin, Lunga has been described as a 'green jewel in a peacock sea'. Populated until the 19th century, the island still bears the remains of black houses. There is prolific birdlife on the island including storm-petrels, puffins, kittiwakes and Manx shearwaters.

Day 10 Oban. Disembark this morning. Transfers will be provided to Glasgow International Airport and Central Railway Station at a fixed time.

***Please note** that the 18th May departure operates in the reverse direction to that shown from Oban to Aberdeen. Full itinerary can be viewed online.

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Cat	Cabin Description	
1	Bunk bedded cabin for twin use	£4295
2	Standard Twin	£4595
3	Superior	£4895
1	Bunk bedded cabin for sole use	£5095
2	Standard Twin sole use	£5495

PRICE INCLUDES: Nine nights aboard the Ocean Nova on a full board basis
 • House wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner • Noble Caledonia expedition team • Shore excursions • Gratuities • Transfers • Port taxes.
Not Included: Travel insurance.



Old Man of Gugh, Gugh, Isles of Scilly

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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request. Ports & itineraries subject to change.
Cover images: Northern Gannet.