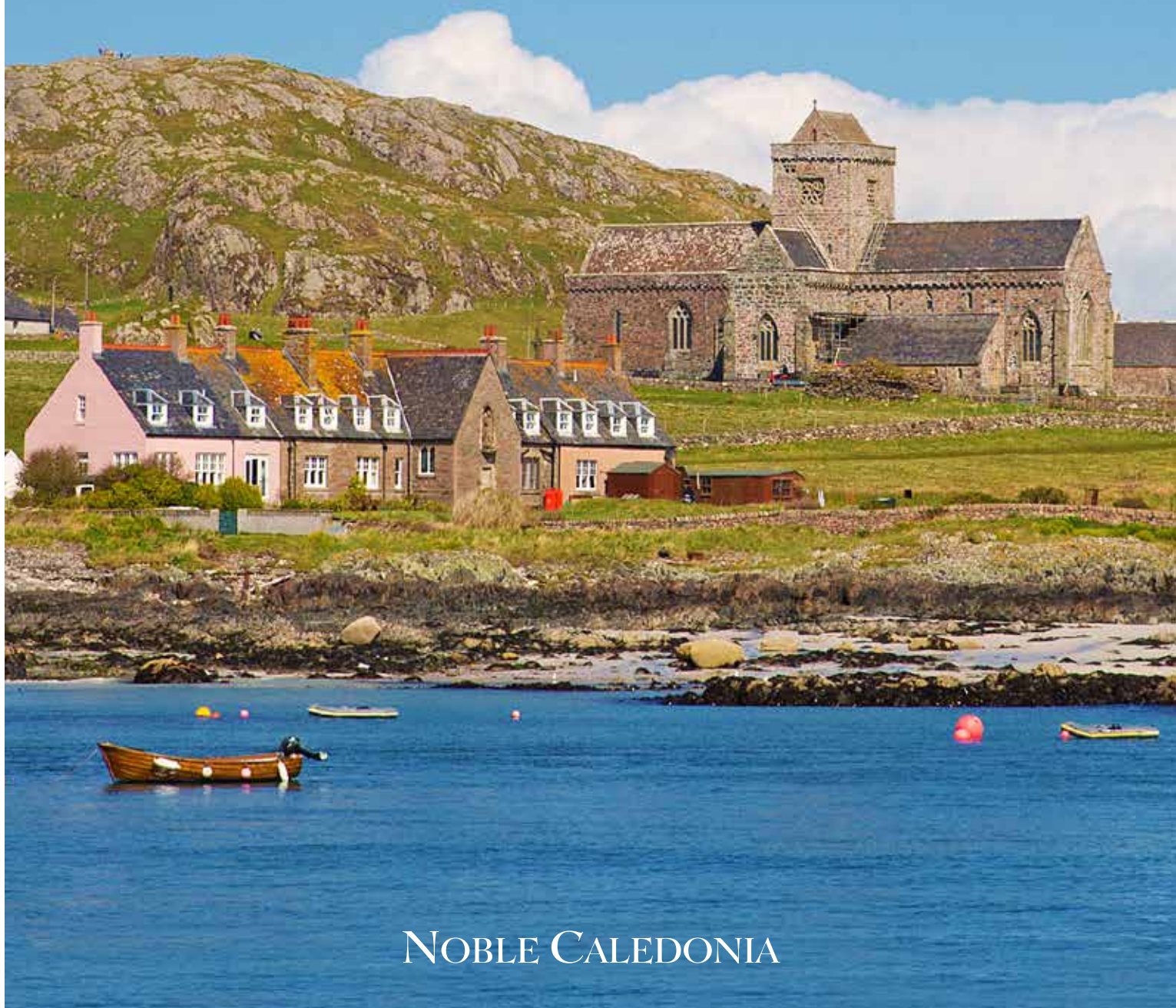


# ISLAND HOPPING IN THE HEBRIDES

Explore the majestic beauty of the Hebrides  
aboard the Ocean Nova

11th to 18th May 2019



NOBLE CALEDONIA



St Kilda



Gannet in flight



Exploring the island of Barra



Standing Stones of Callanish, Isle of Lewis

Words do not do justice to the spectacular beauty, rich wildlife and fascinating history of the Inner and Outer Hebrides which we will explore during this expedition aboard the Ocean Nova. One of Europe's last true remaining wilderness areas affords the traveller a marvellous island hopping journey through stunning scenery accompanied by spectacular sunsets and prolific birdlife. With our naturalists and local guides and our fleet of nimble Zodiacs we are able to visit some of the most remote and uninhabited islands that surround the Scottish coast including St Kilda and Mingulay as well as the small island communities of Canna and Iona.

Having arranged hundreds of small ship cruises around Scotland, we have realised that everyone takes something different from the experience. Learn something of the island's history, see their abundant bird and marine life, but above all revel in the timeless enchantment that these islands exude to all those who appreciate the natural world. We are indeed fortunate in having such marvellous places so close to home. Now, more than ever there is a great appreciation for the peace, beauty and culture of this special corner of the UK. Whether your interest lies in horticulture or the natural world, history or bird watching or simply being there to witness the beauty of the islands, this trip will lift the spirits and gladden the heart.



## The Itinerary

**Day 1 Oban, Scotland.** Embark the Ocean Nova this afternoon. Transfers will be provided from Glasgow Central Railway Station and Glasgow International Airport at a fixed time. Enjoy Welcome Drinks and Dinner as we sail this evening.

**Day 2 Barra & Mingulay.** This morning we will land on Barra which is near the southern tip of the Outer Hebrides and visit Castlebay which curves around the barren rocky hills of a beautiful wide bay. Here we find the 15th century Kisimul Castle, seat of the Clan Macneil and a key defensive stronghold situated on a rock in the bay. During lunch, we will sail the short distance to Mingulay, which is nearly 1600 acres and the largest of the group of islands south of Barra. Its towering cliffs and stacks face the Atlantic while the east side slopes gradually down to the sandy beach of Mingulay Bay. Despite there being a continuous population on the island for at least two thousand years, evacuation began in 1907 and the island was completely abandoned in 1912. Ruins of the village remain close to the shore which we will explore on a guided walk. The islands are also a nature reserve with important breeding populations of razorbills, guillemots, puffins, fulmars and shags.

**Day 3 St Kilda.** Arrive at first light in St Kilda, a remarkable uninhabited archipelago some fifty 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 two thousand 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 only two dozen UNESCO World Heritage Sites with dual status reflecting its natural and cultural significance. The local ranger will



Iona Abbey



Puffins



Loch Scaivaig and the Cullin Mountains



Canna House

join us on board before our expedition staff lead a number of guided walks on the island. Later, 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.

**Day 4 Stornoway & Shiant Isles.** Arrive today on the Isle of Lewis. On leaving the island capital of Stornoway, we will head across the island to the beautiful west coast. Described as Scotland's Stonehenge, the Callanish Standing Stones date from around 3000 BC, there are a total of 32 stones in a circular and avenue design which stand like a petrified forest on the flat top of a peninsula which reaches out into East Loch Roag. We also visit the Dun Carloway Pictish Broch, probably built sometime in the last century BC, it would have served as an occasionally defensible residence for an extended family complete with accommodation for animals at ground floor level. Our final stop is the Gèarrannan Blackhouse Village – a reconstructed settlement of traditional black houses which were made using dry stone masonry and have thatched roofs, distinctively weighted down with rocks. Visit the small museum, enjoy a display of a typical crofting activity such as weaving and take in the views at this dramatic site on the wild Atlantic coast. Spend the afternoon exploring the Shiant Isles. Anyone



Gannetry of Stac Lee

who has read Adam Nicholson's captivating book 'Sea Room' will want to visit these lonely little islands located a few miles off the shores of Lewis. We will use our Zodiacs to explore the coastline and see the abundant birdlife and seals.

**Day 5 Canna & Loch Scaivaig.** Strategically placed between the mountains of Rum and the Outer Hebrides, the island of Canna and its adjoining neighbour Sanday are bound together like some rare text that reveals over 60 million years of Hebridean geology and history. They have an amazingly rich archaeological landscape with remains dating to all periods of settled occupation in Scotland. Canna is run as a single farm and bird sanctuary by the National Trust for Scotland and enjoys the best harbour in the Small Isles, a horn-shaped haven. The fertile soil and its diversity of habitats mean that the island has an incredibly rich plant life with 248 native flowering plants recorded. We will see Canna House and wander across grassy basalt plateaus to the 600 foot cliffs on the north shore. Enjoy lunch as we sail to lovely Loch Scaivaig on the island of Skye. Just beyond is the freshwater Loch Corruisk with its breathtakingly beautiful view over the Cuillins. This is great walking country and our expedition team will run a series of hikes for all interests. For those who prefer a less energetic afternoon our Zodiacs will explore the coast looking out for seals.

**Day 6 Iona & Lunga.** This morning we land on Iona. For more than 1000 years the island of Iona has been a place of deep spiritual significance and no less than 62 Kings of Scotland are buried here. St Columba came here from Ireland in 563 AD and early Christianity spread through northern Britain from this remote island community. After exploring the Abbey, time permitting you may care to take a short walk on the wild side to the 'Bay at the Back of the Ocean'. Over lunch we sail 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 7 Colonsay & Jura.** Lying between Mull and Islay, we will spend the morning exploring the island of Colonsay, with her craggy, heather-backed hills, sparse woodland yet impressive array of plant and birdlife. Near Colonsay House, built in 1722 by Malcolm MacNeil and bought by Lord Strathcona in 1904, we will visit the attractively dilapidated wooded gardens which protect the tiny, enigmatic 8th century St Oran's Cross. Return to the vessel for lunch as we sail through the Sound of Islay to Jura, arriving in the late afternoon. Dominating the views of Jura are the three hills called 'The Paps of Jura', the highest being Beinn an Oir at 785 metres. We will go ashore at Craighouse and will be welcomed in the cooerage where we will be given an introduction to the Jura Distillery and an opportunity to taste the local product. Alternatively, join one of our naturalists on a walk along the shore or join the local bus for a short drive around the island.

**Day 8 Oban.** Disembark this morning. Transfers will be provided to Glasgow Central Station and Glasgow International Airport to arrive in the late morning.

## PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Cat	Cabin Description	
1	Bunk bedded cabin for twin use	£2795
2	Standard Twin	£2995
3	Superior twin	£3495
1	Bunk bedded cabin for sole use	£3795
2	Standard twin sole use	£3995

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Seven nights aboard the Ocean Nova on a full board basis • House wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner on board • Shore excursions • Noble Caledonia expedition team • Gratuities • Transfers • Port taxes.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.



Lounge



Category 3 cabin

# 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 now has a career as a small and comfortable expedition ship.

## Your Cabin

The Ocean Nova accommodates just 84 passengers. 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

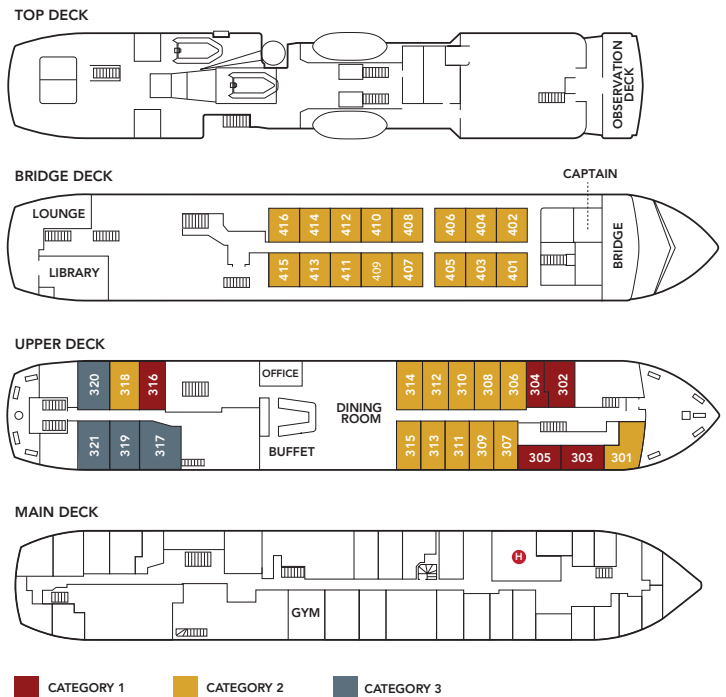
The Panorama lounge located on the Top deck affords excellent views and is the main meeting place where you can enjoy a drink with a breathtaking view of the surrounding landscape. It is here that our expedition team will entertain and educate you with lectures on biology, history, geology or ornithology 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. 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.



### Explorations Ashore & Expedition Cruising

Please note that this is an expedition cruise 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 this fascinating trip participants should be prepared for walks, often over uneven surfaces.

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All special offers are subject to availability. Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request. Ports and itinerary subject to change.

Cover image: Iona Abbey in Scotland's Inner Hebrides