

# SPRING IN THE ISLANDS & HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND

AN EXPLORATION OF SCOTLAND'S BEAUTIFUL  
LANDSCAPES ABOARD THE MS HEBRIDEAN SKY

24<sup>TH</sup> MAY TO 3<sup>RD</sup> JUNE 2019



NOBLE CALEDONIA



Loch Scavaig and the Cullin Mountains

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 MS Hebridean Sky. One of Europe's true last remaining wilderness areas, it affords the traveller a marvellous island hopping journey through stunning scenery accompanied by spectacular sunsets and prolific wildlife, and there is no better way to discover the beauty of this region than by small ship. With our naturalists and local guides we will explore using the nimble Zodiac craft which allow us to reach some of the most remote and untouched places. Whether your interest lies in the natural world, history or bird watching or simply being there to witness the timeless beauty of the islands, this trip will lift the spirits and gladden the heart.



## Our View

*"We have been operating cruises around the tip of Scotland for many years and it is itineraries such as these that really showcase the benefits of small ship cruising. With our fleet of Zodiacs we are able to make calls into some of the remote and uninhabited islands that surround the Scottish coast. Few ships make the journey to these outer islands and we are fortunate to be able to explore them in our small groups. Combining visits to the small community of Iona with uninhabited St Kilda and Lunga into one itinerary is rare and by including Stornoway and Lerwick this allows us to experience the history, wildlife and culture of these varied and remote islands."*



Grey seal

## The Itinerary

**Day 1 Oban.** Embark this afternoon. Transfers will be provided from Glasgow Central Railway Station and Glasgow International Airport at a fixed time. Sail this evening.

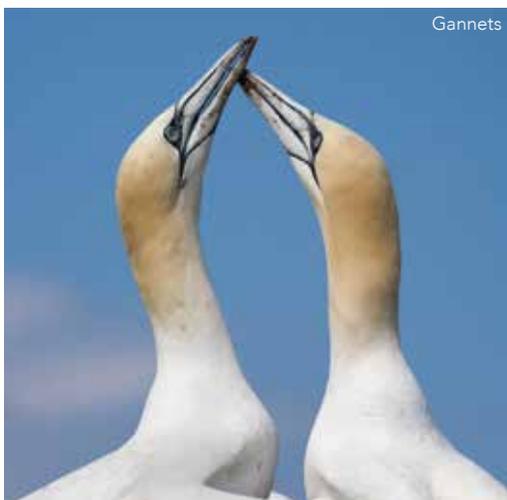
**Day 2 Iona, Staffa & Lunga.** The isle of Iona has been occupied for thousands of years and has also been a place of pilgrimage and Christian worship for several centuries. It was to this flat,

Hebridean island that St Columba fled from Ireland in 563 AD and established a monastery. Here his followers were responsible for the conversion of much of pagan Scotland and Northern England. No less than 62 Scottish Kings are buried in the Abbey. Visit the Abbey or perhaps walk along the white sandy beaches. This afternoon we hope to drop anchor off the south side of 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 cathedralesque caverns, most notably Fingal's Cave. Weather permitting, we will use our Zodiacs to explore closer. We then also 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 also prolific birdlife including

puffins, storm-petrels, kittiwakes and Manx shearwaters.

### Day 3 Loch Scavaig & Canna.

Today our vessel will anchor in the lovely Loch Scavaig. Just beyond is the freshwater Loch Corruisk with its breathtakingly beautiful view over the Cuillins. This is great walking country, but for those who prefer a less energetic morning our Zodiacs will explore the coast looking out for seals. We sail over lunch to the island of Canna. Strategically placed between the mountains of Rum and the Outer Hebrides, 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. Canna has an amazingly rich archaeological landscape with remains dating to all periods of settled occupation in Scotland. The fertile soil and its diversity of habitats mean that the island has an incredibly rich plant life with 248



Gannets



Canna House



St Kilda

native flowering plants recorded. We will see Canna House, once the home of the previous owners, John and Margaret Fay Campbell, and wander across grassy basalt plateaus to the 600 foot cliffs on the north shore.

**Day 4 St Kilda & Stac Lee.** 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 join us on board before our expedition staff lead a number of guided walks on the island. Later, cruise past one of the largest gannetries in the world, Stac Lee.

**Day 5 Stornoway, Isle of Lewis & Shiant Islands.** On leaving the island capital of Stornoway, today's tour takes us across to the beautiful west coast of the island and to Callanish. 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. The stones stand like a petrified forest on the flat top of a peninsula which reaches out into East Loch Roag. Visit the excellent visitor centre to learn more about the site and venture out amongst the stones themselves to experience their mysterious atmosphere. Continue around the west coast to the site of 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. We then head north to Gèarrannan Blackhouse Village, a reconstructed settlement of traditional black houses where people and animals lived in close proximity. The houses are 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. This afternoon we will board the Zodiacs for a cruise around the spectacular basalt cliffs of the Shiant Islands, a group of little islands located a few miles off the shores of Lewis and home to many nesting seabirds.

**Day 6 Inverewe Gardens & Handa.** This morning we will drop anchor and use our Zodiacs to access one of Scotland's premier gardens, Inverewe. This botanical garden in the north-west Highlands presents an amazing collection of exotic trees and shrubs that are sheltered by well positioned windbreaks of native pine. After a guided tour of the gardens we will return to the MS Hebridean Sky for lunch as we sail towards Handa arriving later this afternoon. Here we will use our Zodiacs to explore the magnificent sea cliffs of Torridonian sandstone which rise from the Atlantic. The island comes alive each summer when nearly 100,000 seabirds gather to breed, including internationally important numbers of guillemot, razorbill, puffins and great skua.

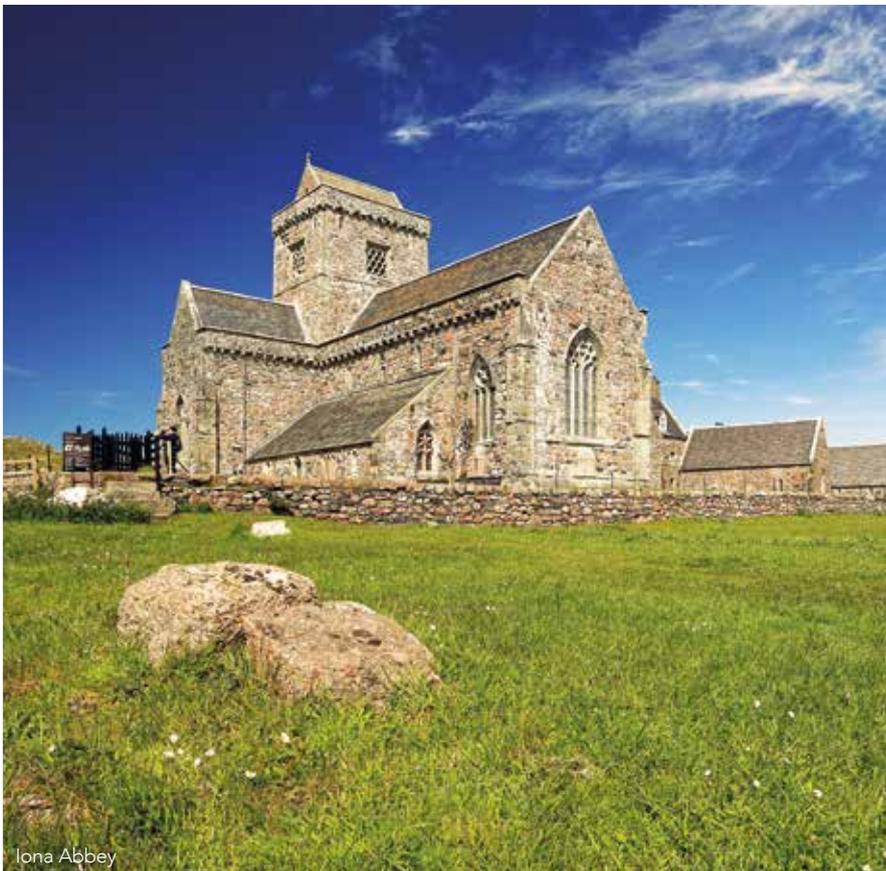
**Day 7 Scrabster.** Spend the day in Scrabster, the most northerly port on the Scottish mainland. This morning we will visit the Castle and Gardens of Mey, built between 1566 and 1572 by George Sinclair, 4th Earl of Caithness. The castle was purchased by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, in 1952, who renovated and restored it and created the beautiful gardens which we will see today. After lunch on board relax for the afternoon or choose to take a drive along the coast to Dunnet Bay, a glorious crescent of sand

and dunes and home to many seabirds and unusual flora that we will discover on a guided walk with the local ranger. We continue to Dunnet Head to see the lighthouse, built in 1831 by Robert Stevenson, and enjoy the views over to Orkney. Before our return to the ship we will visit the Medieval Canisbay Kirk whose position over the Pentland Firth has made it a shipping landmark for centuries. We sail overnight north to the Orkneys.

**Day 8 Westray and Papa Westray, Orkney Islands.** Today we explore the islands to the north of the Orkney mainland. On Westray we will visit Noup Head, an RSPB reserve on the sea cliffs and home to up to 100,000 nesting seabirds. We also see Notland Castle, an incomplete fortress built in the 16th century by Gilbert Balfour, Mary Queen of Scots Sheriff of Orkney whilst in the main village of Pierowall we find the Westray Heritage Centre housing Neolithic carvings. Over lunch we sail the short distance to Papa Westray. Here you have time to stretch your legs on a number of island walks. You can choose to 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



Stac Lee



Iona Abbey

the early evening we will meet at the Papay Pub for a well deserved pre-dinner drink with the locals.

**Day 9 Lerwick, Shetland Islands.**

After breakfast, we will begin our exploration of the Shetlands and travel to the southern point to visit the historic site of Jarlshof where the archaeological ruins date from the Stone Age up until the 17th century. Return to the MS Hebridean Sky for lunch and spend the afternoon at leisure to explore the historic port town of Lerwick. Wander the narrow stone lanes and maybe visit the excellent Shetland Museum, containing artefacts from shipwrecks and the whaling era.

**Day 10 Fair Isle.** This morning we anchor 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, perhaps visiting the Bird Observatory, searching out the puffin slopes, or continue to the community hall for a cup of tea.

**Day 11 Aberdeen.** Disembark this morning after breakfast. Transfers will be provided to Aberdeen Railway station and Aberdeen International Airport at a fixed time.



Noup Head, Westray



Standing Stones of Callanish

**PRICES PER PERSON**

Based on double occupancy

Deck	Suite Category	Brochure Price
Amundsen	Standard	£4290
Byrd	Superior	£4675
Mawson	Premium	£5005
Mawson	Corner	£5195
Scott	Deluxe Balcony	£5715
Shackleton	Owner's Balcony	£6045
Shackleton	Hebridean	£7145
Amundsen	Standard for sole use	£5995
Byrd	Superior for sole use	£6875

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Ten nights aboard the MS Hebridean Sky on a full board basis • House wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner on board • Noble Caledonia onboard team • Shore excursions • Gratuities • Transfers • Port taxes.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

# MS HEBRIDEAN SKY



Alfresco Dining



Owner's Balcony Suite



The Restaurant

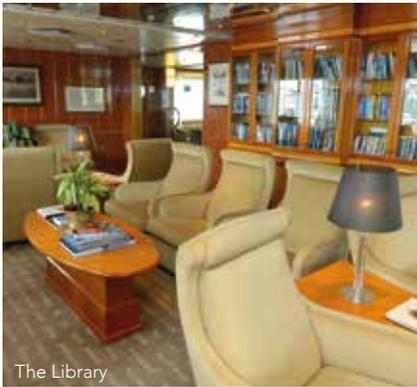
The MS Hebridean Sky is one of our three flag ships and sister vessel to the MS Island Sky and MS Caledonian Sky. All three vessels were built in the same ship yard in Italy at similar times and share the same excellent attributes that make them three of the finest small ships in the world. With a maximum passenger capacity of only 118, a vessel of her size is capable of carrying many more but instead the MS Caledonian Sky has the benefit of unusually large suites, luxuriously appointed public areas and spacious outside decks.

## Your Suite

On board there are 59 exceptionally spacious and well-designed suites. All feature a sitting area and some have private balconies. The feeling of luxury is enhanced by the wood panelling and brass, which predominates throughout the vessel conveying the atmosphere of a private yacht. The passenger accommodation is arranged over five decks and all suites have outside views with those on the Scott and Shackleton Decks featuring private balconies. Each suite affords considerable comfort with en-suite bathroom featuring vanity unit with sink and walk-in shower, large wardrobes, dressing table with large mirror and stool and excellent storage. There is a mini-fridge, flat screen television and a telephone in each suite. Bottled water, Egyptian cotton sheets, dressing gowns and slippers are also provided for your comfort. Other facilities include a programmable electronic safe, hairdryer, assorted Molton Brown toiletries and individually controlled air-conditioning and heating. Soft hues and blended tones enhance the traditional maritime style making the passenger accommodation an inviting and relaxing place to be.

## Your Dining

With only one sitting and a maximum of just over 100 passengers, the cuisine on board the MS Hebridean Sky is of a consistent superior quality that befits such a vessel. In keeping with the informal atmosphere on board, when dining you are able to choose your seating arrangements and choice of restaurants at your leisure; whether that be joining a table of four to six other passengers in the elegant à la carte Restaurant or, outside buffet-style on the Lido Deck in the evening sunshine. In the main Restaurant, breakfast is served buffet-style, with certain items cooked to order on request. Lunch and dinner menus offer plenty of choice, often reflecting the daily catch and local delicacies. The Welcome and Farewell dinners are a sumptuous five course affair. To enhance your dining experience further a selection of wines is included with both meals. Afternoon tea and pre-dinner canapés take place in either the comfort of the Lounge or out on the Lido Deck when the weather is favourable. Tea and coffee are also available 24 hours a day. Special diets can be catered for with sufficient notice.



The Library



Superior Suite



The Club

### Your Space

The spacious and finely decorated public rooms include a large Lounge on the Byrd Deck featuring a selection of seating options from individual armchairs and sofas to side cushioned benches. Daily briefings given by the Cruise Director and talks from Guest Speakers and expedition staff take place in the Lounge. In addition to the main Lounge, there is also The Club, located on the Mawson Deck which features the main bar where the onboard pianist plays periodically throughout the day. The Club also features a 24-hour tea and coffee station. Towards the aft of the ship on the Mawson Deck is the Library. Well stocked with reference books pertaining to the destinations the vessel is visiting and a selection of essential reads, you will not find yourself short of excellent literature on board. A selection of games and two computers offering complimentary internet access can also be found in the Library. The main Restaurant, which can seat all guests at one sitting, is located on the Amundsen Deck, and outside there is a rear Lido Deck located on the Scott Deck where meals are served in warm weather under shade. Further to this on the top Shackleton Deck there is an observation area, complete with sun loungers for sunbathing, relaxing with a book or catching up with fellow travellers. The Promenade Deck wraps around the whole ship providing outstanding views. There is also a small beauty salon on board with appointments made on request. Throughout the vessel, carefully chosen artwork and photos reflect the destinations we sail to.

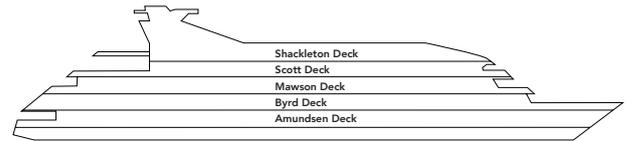
### Your Comfort

The MS Hebridean Sky is equipped with the latest safety, navigation and communications equipment along with roll stabilisers to minimise the ship's motion. During your voyage we hope to offer you the opportunity to visit the Captain and Officers on the Bridge to check the vessel's progress by charts and learn more about your journey. On board you will also find a clinic and Doctor and a lift that serves all decks. When at anchor our nimble Zodiacs will ferry you ashore or, on select cruises, enjoy Zodiac cruises getting you closer to the natural world.

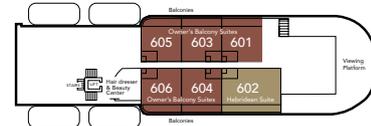
### Your Life On Board

The atmosphere on board is warm and convivial and more akin to a private yacht or country hotel in which you can learn more about the wonderful destinations you are visiting in the company of like-minded people. There is a high ratio of crew to passengers and our friendly crew of 75 are mainly Filipino and Eastern European and our Scandinavian Captains are experienced mariners. After a day ashore you will return to the comfort and peace of a well-run and exceedingly comfortable ship where peace, high quality of service and attention to detail are the order of the day. A little music in the Lounge or bar after dinner, Guest Speakers and informative port briefings and of course good food, all contribute to make any voyage aboard this wonderful vessel a memorable and joyful experience.

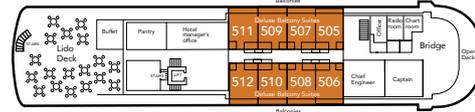
### MS HEBRIDEAN SKY DECK PLAN



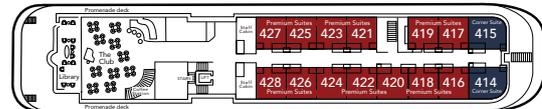
#### Shackleton Deck



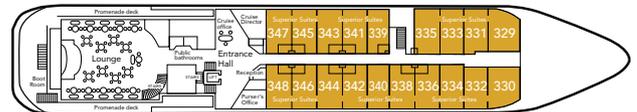
#### Scott Deck



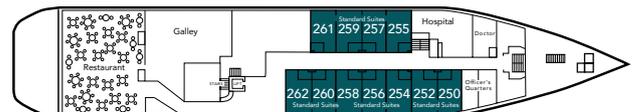
#### Mawson Deck



#### Byrd Deck



#### Amundsen Deck



- Standard Suites
- Corner Suites
- Owner's Balcony Suites
- Superior Suites
- Deluxe Balcony Suites
- Hebridean Suite
- Premium Suites

Please note that beds in each suite can be configured as double or twin with the exception of suites 601 and 602 which feature a fixed double bed.



During this voyage you will be visiting out of the way destinations and will be accompanied by an expedition team. Landings and excursions will be made by Zodiac landing craft. This cruise will appeal to the more adventurous and those who enjoy the natural world.



# NOBLE CALEDONIA

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