Trip Dossier

11 Day Wild Scotland Cruise
Oban to Aberdeen, Scotland
22 June - 2 July 2019

Highlights: Visit World-heritage-listed St Kilda; Explore historic villages in the Orkney Islands; Basking sharks, dolphins & seals in the Hebrides; Fantastic puffin, guillemots, eagles and fulmars; Visit an Iron Age broch with our historian.

Follow in the footsteps of the Celtic forefathers along Scotland’s magnificent northern coastline, filled with history, incredible wildlife and geological marvels. The dramatic coastline of the western islands and Highlands is peppered with many stunningly sheltered cruising waters amid spectacular scenery. Pretty villages and golden beaches extend towards the north western islands which dot the north Atlantic to create a wonderland of seabird speckled cliffs, towering sea stacks, glorious mountains and windswept moors.

The remote northern islands of the Shetlands and Orkneys are warmed by the Gulf Stream and abound with nature reserves and archeological sites and offer a taste of traditional island life. While the north eastern coast typifies a seaboard carved by the North Sea creating a unique visual landscape and a haven for wildlife.

From the Hebrides in the west, to inhospitable windswept specks of land like St Kilda and Foula, and to the Orkney and Shetland islands in the north, we'll explore the intriguing diversity of Scotland's wild islands. We plan to take in Neolithic sites scarcely changed in 5,000 years, and ponder the mystery of huge monoliths that marked seasonal change. We visit picturesque villages, haunted castles that once were stronghold of the Scottish clans; birders will delight in Europe's largest sea bird colonies and the Orkney Islands will please whiskey amateurs with a wee dram of Scotland's finest!
Itinerary

Day 1 - Oban, Scotland
Our staff welcome you aboard Polar Pioneer in Oban.

Day 2 - 3 Inner & Outer Hebrides
Overnight, we travel to Iona, birthplace of Christianity in Britain and burial ground of early Scottish kings. At Staffa, we visit Fingal’s Cave, set amidst spectacular basalt columns, and learn why it inspired Mendelssohn's Hebrides Overture. In the Cuillin Hills, spiritual heart of Skye, we follow a lonely track to Rubh’ an Dunain, an ancient passage grave with a nearby Iron Age fort and stone lined canal, possibly built by Vikings. If conditions allow, we may take longer walks into the hills. Canna offers golden and sea eagles, basking sharks, dolphins, grey seals and puffins.

Day 4 - 6 St Kilda
Conditions permitting, we land on Hirta, in remote St Kilda, home to Europe's most important seabird colony and Britain’s highest sea stacks. We learn of the incredible islanders, who survived here for nearly 5,000 years, and their heroic courtship rituals. On Lewis we visit the Callanish Stones, sombre slabs placed upright nearly 3,000 years ago to mark burial sites. A Zodiac cruise takes us to pure white beaches where the brave might swim and Bostadh’s reconstructed Iron Age house. We aim to visit Sula Sgeir and North Rona, tiny islands with dramatic coastlines, inhabited by breeding seals and seabirds.

Day 7 - 8 Shetland Isles
Closer to Norway than Scotland, the Shetland Isles played a strategic role in Viking conquests. We visit the capital, Lerwick, and explore the complex Stone, Bronze and Iron Age settlement of Jarlshof. On Mousa, we walk to the world's best-preserved Iron Age structure known as a ‘broch’ and our historian recounts its importance. Foula’s five dramatic peaks dwarf its crofting hamlets and its cliffs are alive with kittiwakes, razorbills, fulmars and skuas. Papa Stour's coastline offers Zodiac exploration of dramatic caves.

Day 9 - 10 Orkney Archipelago
Blessed with red, fertile soil, the Orkney archipelago has welcomed people since ancient times. From Kirkwall, we visit 5,000-year old archaeological wonders like Skara Brae, excavated less than 100 years ago. We view relics of Viking occupation and World War II curiosities, including the exquisite Italian Chapel, built from scrap by Italian POWs. We sail past the giant sea stack ‘Old Man of Hoy’. On Papa Westray we see the Knap of Howar, the oldest standing dwelling in Europe before continuing on Fair Isle, a birdwatchers’ paradise, where the few inhabitants still live in traditional crofts and welcome us to admire and buy their exquisite knitwear.

Day 11 - Aberdeen
In Aberdeen, we disembark and bid farewell to Polar Pioneer staff and crew and fellow passengers.
Tour Costs Per Person Twin Share

Cost: $7,400.00  Triple Cabin (Shared Bathroom) pp
$8,900.00  Twin Cabin (Shared Bathroom) pp
$10,700.00  Twin Cabin (Private Bathroom) pp

Prices quoted are per person and in Australian dollars, based on twin share. Single occupancy is 1.7 times the twin share price. No single travel fees apply if you are willing to share your cabin (twin and triple cabins only). Fuel surcharge may apply in the event of significant fuel price increases. No refund for unused services.

Tour Payments

Non-refundable deposit: At time of booking  $3,000.00
Non-refundable final Payment:  90 Days prior to departure

Included

- 1-year membership to National Trust of Australia (NSW), including entry into over 300 properties within the UK
- Accommodation during the voyage onboard Polar Pioneer
- All meals, snacks, tea and coffee during the voyage
- All shore excursions and Zodiac (inflatable boat) cruises
- Educational lectures and guiding services from our expert team
- Access to our on board doctor and basic medical services
- A custom-designed polar expedition jacket to keep
- Free gumboot hire during the voyage
- Comprehensive pre-departure information and briefings
- Professionally produced voyage journal (one per booking)
- Port taxes and charges

Not Included

- Air transport to and from the ship, unless specified
- Airport arrival or departure taxes
- Transfers not mentioned in the itinerary
- Visa, passport, and vaccination charges
- Travel insurance or emergency evacuation charges
- Hotels and meals not included in voyage itinerary
- Optional excursions not included in the voyage itinerary
- Optional activity surcharge. Please contact us if you wish to book any optional activities, such as sea kayaking or polar snorkelling
- All items of a personal nature including but not limited to: alcoholic beverages and soft drinks, laundry services, personal clothing, medical expenses, gratuities, and email or phone charges
Cruse Information

Polar Pioneer - The Polar Pioneer is one of the most popular style of vessels currently used in Antarctica and the Arctic. Originally built as an ice-strengthened research vessel in Finland in 1982, she was refurbished in 2000 and converted into a passenger ship for expeditions to the Polar Regions. Polar Pioneer’s excellent reputation for polar expedition cruising is due to her strength, manoeuvrability and size. She is small and nimble, which means she can sail up close to landing sites and venture where other, larger ships can’t. Carrying just 54 passengers, she allows us to offer you a far more personal and intimate experience of the destination we are visiting.

Dining

Our professional chefs present three healthy, delicious meals daily, with morning and afternoon tea available in the dining rooms in between. All of our produce is sourced locally, with fresh fruit and vegetables, and freshly baked bread and pastries, served wherever possible. We are able to cater for a range of special meal requests, including vegetarian, vegan, gluten free, lactose free and other allergy specific requirements – please ensure you list this on your personal details form.

Observation Decks

Our spacious observation decks provide a congenial place to watch for wildlife or follow the ship’s progress on nautical charts. Rug up for unparalleled scenery from the outer decks or flying bridge, where our naturalists help you identify wildlife.

Learning and Lectures

At sea, join our polar specialists entertain and inform us with illustrated talks, and prepare us for making shore visits with mandatory safety and environmental briefings.

Captain and Crew

Our highly experienced Russian captain and crew are among the best ice navigators in the world. Our efficient stewardesses attend to rooms and serve our meals, whilst the crew work mainly behind-the-scenes to help our expedition leader get the ship to where we want to go.

Getting To and From Your Voyage

This voyage departs from Oban in Scotland, a small sea side holiday spot. This city can be reached via train or bus from mainland UK. Glasgow is the closest major city but Edinburg is also a good option. The voyage concludes in Aberdeen in Scotland. Aberdeen has a city airport that you will be able to connect to another European city and then transfer back home.

Getting Ashore

Polar Pioneer boasts a fleet of Zodiacs that transport us ashore to view wildlife and visit historic sites, and provide us with a platform for photography. Our small excursion crafts take us beyond the reach of giant cruisers, and our philosophy of “getting out amongst it” is put to practice.
Medical Clinic
A basic medical clinic is managed by our English-speaking Ship’s Doctor, who is available at all times to assist with bouts of sea sickness and other unexpected emergencies.

On-board Entertainment
From socialising in our fully-stocked lounge bar to enjoying Captain’s drinks, trivia nights and charity auctions, or escaping to the sauna for some R&R, our small ship offers some surprisingly fun entertainment for when we’re not out and about.

Technology and Connectivity
Polar Pioneer has communication services that are available for an additional fee. These include satellite telephone, email and fax. Please note that these services are basic and not suitable for continuous use. Internet access is available on board for an additional cost. Please note that due to the remote nature of our expeditions, connection cannot always be guaranteed.

Weather:
Although the voyage is in the northern summer temperature and conditions can be a bit cooler and wetter then expected. Day time temperatures are normally around the mid to high teens and as the trip moves further north the temperature will decrease. Summer rain is a potential for the whole trip.
Weather in Scotland in summer is very unique. With daylight lasting up to 17.5 hours you have the potential to spot wildlife at any time.

Fitness Requirements
This voyage is suitable for people of most ages and physical abilities. We offer a variety of soft and harder walking options, some of which may be over uneven and/or slippery surfaces. You are free to choose which activities and outings you would like to participate in, and less nimble passengers are given the choice whether to land or not.
To fully enjoy your expedition, we recommend that you are able to walk up and down the ships gangway (the equivalent to a steep set of stairs), and are able to get in and out of Zodiacs (inflatable rubber boats) with some assistance from the staff.
To make a booking or further information please contact
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