



The Ring of Brodgar, Orkney

Shetland and Orkney: The Northern Isles A Cambridge Alumni Tour

30 August – 7 September 2026



Level 2
GENTLE





Skara Brae, Orkney

Travel to the northernmost reaches of the UK through spectacular landscapes. Discover history that encompasses Neolithic times, the Bronze and Iron Ages, the Picts and the Vikings, and continues into the modern day. This tour takes you to two of the farthest Scottish Isles, both dramatically beautiful and rich in history and culture, allowing you to experience both Shetland and Orkney in just over a week.

The tour gives a superb overview of these far-flung island neighbours, which share connections and history but retain distinctive characters. Proceed at a relaxed pace with local guides in each island to discover history,

archaeology, geography, geology and culture and enjoy the unique wildlife of the area, from puffins to Shetland ponies.

This Cambridge Alumni tour is a wonderful opportunity to unite the magnificent islands of Shetland and Orkney in the company of your fellow alumni.

THIS TOUR IS CLASSED AS:

Level 2 | Gentle



Easy walking at a mostly leisurely pace. Slightly more daily activity and travel.

Tour Leaders

Margaret Cooper has lived in Shetland for over 33 years, developing a deep connection to the Isles through both her personal life and professional career. A qualified Green Badge Guide (Scottish Tourist Guides Association, 2022/23), she is listed on the STGA website and has completed three full guiding seasons.

She works with several Shorex companies, leading guided walks and bus tours across Shetland, and is also a guide for the Mousa Boat, taking visitors around the island of Mousa. Her in-depth local knowledge is recognised by visiting Scottish Blue Badge Guides, who occasionally hire her as a specialist guide. Passionate about Shetland's history, culture, and wildlife, she completed the University of the Highlands and Islands course "*History of Shetland in 100 Sites*" with distinction (SCQF Level 7, Grade A).

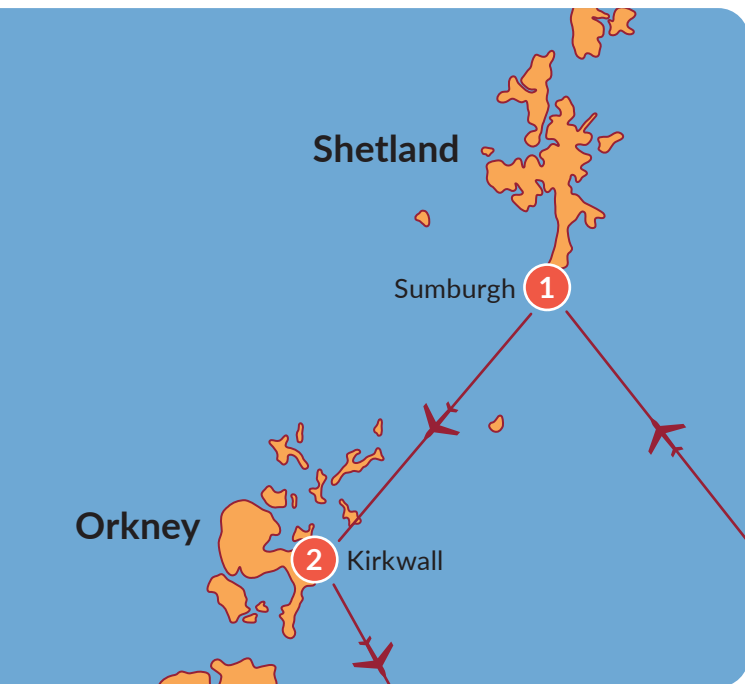
Originally trained as a nurse in Glasgow in 1972, Margaret went on to qualify in midwifery



and intensive care, later holding senior hospital roles across surgery, medicine, outpatients, and pre-operative assessment. She also gained qualifications in management and advanced clinical practice. Her nursing work across almost every inhabited island in Shetland (except Papa Stour) has given her a rare, first-hand insight into island life. She featured in the BBC series *Island Medics*, highlighting her unique role in the community.



Beautiful St Ninians, Shetland (credit Visit Scotland)



Day 1: Shetland (Sun, 30 Aug)

D

Pm: Arrive Sumburgh and transfer to the charming Sumburgh Hotel. Pending arrival time, explore the dramatic local scenery.

Eve: Welcome dinner at the hotel.

Day 2: Shetland (Mon, 31 Aug)

B L

Am: Drive to Sumburgh Head Lighthouse, which has been in operation for 200 years, and an RSPB nature reserve high on the cliffs with spectacular views. Visit the Sumburgh Head Visitor Centre and learn about local wildlife, the history of the lighthouse, Shetland's maritime history and the WWII Radar Hut.

Pm: Drive to the visitor centre and have lunch at the café at Hoswick in Sandwick. Visit Rerwick Beach to spot seals and onto St Ninian's Isle before returning to the hotel.

Day 3: Shetland (Tues, 1 Sept)

B D

Am: Drive to Lerwick, Shetland's capital and the only town on the archipelago. View the well preserved Clickimin Broch, incorporating a late Bronze Age/early Iron Age farmstead and Iron Age fort.

Visit the Shetland Museum and Archives, which has a superb collection of exhibits. There is also the boat shed and hall, demonstrating a traditional style of boat building at the scenic Hay's Dock of Lerwick. Time at leisure.

Pm: Visit Shetland Textile Museum before continuing to the island's former capital, Scalloway. Visit Scalloway Museum and learn about its integral part in the Shetland Bus operation, an undercover operation that took place in WWII. See the ruins of Scalloway Castle and learn the history of the region, from Neolithic settlers to Vikings Scots and WWI. Depart through the Tingwall Valley to hear about the Norse heritage of Tingwall and see Shetland ponies.

Eve: Dinner in Lerwick before returning to the Sumburgh Hotel.

Day 4: Shetland (Wed, 2 Sept)

B L

Am: Drive to the iconic Eshaness Cliffs and the lighthouse. Visit Tangwick Haa, a small museum inside an old haa (hall), which was once the home of the laird. The hall contains information on Shetland's unique and complex geology.

Pm: Drive to the lovely Busta House Hotel for lunch before continuing to Sumburgh via Shetland's only tree plantation.

Day 5: Shetland/Orkney (Thur, 3 Sept)

B D

Am: Short walk to Jarlshof, one of Europe's most important archaeological sites, with a history encompassing the Bronze and Iron ages, Pict settlements, the Vikings and the medieval period. Depart Shetland and fly to Orkney, an archipelago comprising approximately 70 islands with a rich Norse heritage.

Pm: Arrive in Kirkwall and transfer to the Ayre Hotel. Afternoon at leisure.

Day 6: Orkney (Fri, 4 Sept)

B L

Am: Visit the famous Italian Chapel, a beautiful building constructed by Italian POWs in WWII, who were brought to Orkney in 1942 to build a giant causeway - known today as the Churchill Barriers - to seal off access to the naval base at Scapa Flow.

Pm: Visit the Burray Fossil and Heritage Centre, stopping for lunch in Hope. Visit St Magnus Cathedral, see the Earl's Palace and the Orkney Museum, which puts the history of Orkney into context. Explore Kirkwall with the option to visit the quirky Orkney Wireless Museum.

Day 7: Orkney (Sat, 5 Sept)

B L

Am: Travel west of the mainland through Ophir to Yesnaby Cliffs. Orkney's human history stretches back 6,000 years to its Neolithic origins, which are evident in a breathtaking landscape of ceremonial stone circles, tombs, prehistoric villages and many other ancient monuments.

Visit Skara Brae, Skaill House, the Ring of Brodgar and Maeshowe.

Pm: Local lunch before visiting the Standing Stones of Stenness. Return to Kirkwall.

Day 8: Orkney (Sun, 6 Sept)

B D

Am: Visit Stromness Museum and the Pier Arts Centre, seeing work by artists such as Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson.

Pm: Visit Orkney Brewery for lunch (at client's expense). Enjoy a scenic drive along the Scapa Flow, the home of the British fleet in both world wars, with stories of Orkney's key strategic role in those events. Take a tour of the Highland Park Distillery, the world's most northern whisky distillery.

Eve: Farewell dinner.

Day 9: Orkney (Mon, 7 Sept)

B

Am: Depart Orkney after breakfast.

All itineraries are subject to change according to local conditions.

The dramatic cliffs of Eshaness, Shetland (credit Visit Scotland)





Orkney Ayre Hotel

Hotel

Sumburgh Hotel, Shetland

Built in 1867, this former laird's home has an excellent location on the coast of southern Shetland, close to Lerwick. This welcoming hotel is full of charm. There is no lift at the hotel but portage is included and we are holding a number of rooms on a lower floor reached by five steps. Please contact us to reserve one of these rooms.

Orkney Ayre Hotel, Orkney

The Ayre Hotel is one of Orkney's finest hotels and is situated in the principal town of Kirkwall, overlooking Kirkwall Harbour, where the ferries to the North Isles dock. The hotel is in a charming, whitewashed building with harbour views, clean and cosy rooms with good facilities and friendly service. The hotel has a lift and portage is included.



Sumburgh Hotel



Lodberries in Lerwick, Shetland (top); Monument to the Shetland Bus; Skail House, Orkney (credit Visit Scotland); The Italian Chapel (credit Visit Scotland) (above)

Tour costs excluding flights:

The cost of the tour is £2,470 per person sharing

The cost of the tour with a room to yourself is £2,866

The cost includes:

- Eight nights' accommodation in twin or double-bedded rooms in medium grade hotels
- The services of a tour leader, Margaret Cooper
- The services of specialist guides in Shetland and Orkney
- Breakfast daily and meals as per the itinerary
- All internal transport services, including the flight from Shetland to Orkney
- A full programme of cultural visits, excursions, talks and activities as detailed in the itinerary
- All admission fees, tips and taxes

The cost excludes:

- Travel to Shetland and from Orkney and arrival and departure transfers
- Meals not mentioned
- Drinks with meals
- All optional excursions, tours and visits; all personal extras such as laundry and inoculation fees; travel insurance and visas



How to get to Shetland and from Orkney

There are flights to Sumburgh in Shetland and from Kirkwall in Orkney from many UK airports on Logan Air. Upon arrival there is a free transfer to the hotel (subject to availability). Please contact us for assistance in booking the Logan Air Flights.

About Us

To travel with us is to dig below the surface, revealing the deeper destination. Of course, you will visit the great historical sites; marvel at the wonders of architecture and engineering; be moved by the riches of culture and art; and experience the most spectacular landscapes in the world. What we also do is make sure that you see the country as it is today, giving you privileged access that independent travel and other tour companies rarely get close to. We give you a variety of experiences, from the sublime to the humble, in the company of intelligent, curious, like-minded people. And while we can be worthy, we also make sure that you have a lot of fun.

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Shetland ponies (credit Visit Scotland) (top); Jarshof, Shetland (credit Visit Scotland); Earl's Palace, Orkney (credit Visit Scotland); The Churchill Barriers, Orkney (credit Colin Keldie) (above)



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TOURS**

