

Orkney Guided Walking with Sightseeing

Trip style: Walking with sightseeing

Destination: 📍 Scottish Islands

Trip code: XAG07-LDW11

Grades: 1, 2

Carbon Footprint: 🌱 262kg CO2



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

For anyone easily seduced by big skies, sea views, and wide-open spaces, Orkney is always a good idea. Scattered off Scotland's northeast coast, this wild windswept archipelago offers a far-from-it-all feel just a skip away from the mainland. Discover squawking seabird colonies, staggering scenery, and some of the best-preserved Neolithic ruins in Europe as you island hop between Mainland, Hoy, South Ronaldsay, and Birsay on this seven-night guided walking holiday.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Exploring the Orcadian archipelago on coastal walks
- Visiting some of the best prehistoric archaeological sites in Europe
- Taking in Orkney's sea cliffs and sandy shores
- Spotting wildlife including seals and seabirds
- Staying on the shores of Harray Loch
- A more personalised experience thanks to small group sizes (maximum 15 people)

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Entrance to Skara Brae, Maes Howe archaeological sites, the Italian Chapel, and the Fossil & Heritage Museum
- Comfortable en-suite rooms in our partner accommodation(s)
- Cooked or continental breakfast every morning
- Daily packed lunches
- Three-course evening meals, plus tea & coffee
- Guided walks with an experienced HF Holidays Leader
- All transport to and from walks where necessary
- Return flights including hold baggage and airport transfers

ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival Day

Arrive on Orkney and settle in to the Merkister Hotel. Your leader will be in reception at 18:30 to give you a quick introduction to the holiday before dinner. Please note the running order of your itinerary may change, the leader will confirm the exact running order while introducing the holiday.

Day 2: Birsay, Marwick Bay & Maes Howe

Our first walk on Orkney follows a clifftop coastal path from Marwick Bay to the Brough of Birsay, overlooking RSPB Marwick Head reserve. If tide times allow, we'll head over to explore the tidal island of Birsay and its remains of Pictish & Norse settlements. If the causeway is covered, wildlife watching on this coastline is superb and there's plenty to discover about the history of the island's fishing and whaling industries, too. In the afternoon we'll visit Maes Howe, one of the most treasured Neolithic sites in Europe. This mysterious tomb was built from huge sandstone blocks over 5,000 years ago and aligns perfectly with the winter solstice – testament to an advanced knowledge of astronomy by its architects. 4 miles (7km) with 510ft (160m) of ascent

Day 3: Hoy & the Old Man

One of the most beautiful and rugged of the islands, Hoy is much more akin to the Scottish Highlands than the rolling countryside and crofts of the other islands. Today's walk takes us to the famous sea stack known as the Old Man of Hoy before returning to Rackwick Bay. 6 miles (9.5km) with 700ft (210m) of ascent

Day 4: Kirkwall

Today we visit the Orcadian capital, Kirkwall. Enjoy a guided tour of the town to hear tales of Viking settlers and shipwrecks or explore independently. Visit the Kirkwall Museum and St Magnus cathedral, stop by a whisky distillery, or spend time exploring the craft and coffee shops of the town. A historical town trail and a coastal walk are on offer today, both together totalling 6 miles (9.5km) with little ascent

Day 5: Skara Brae, Yesnaby and the Ring of Brodgar

A superb coastal trail along the spectacular sea cliffs from Yesnaby to the impressive ancient settlement of Skara Brae – a remarkable feat of ancient engineering predates the pyramids of Egypt and even Stonehenge. We'll also visit the Ring of Brodgar and the Standing Stones of Stenness, which together with Skara Brae and Maes Howe, form the Heart of Neolithic Orkney UNESCO World Heritage Site. Total for the two walks: 6 miles (10km) with 500ft (150m) of ascent

Day 6: Broch of Gurness and Stromness

Distance: 3 miles (5 km) Ascent: 400ft (120m) We head for the Broch of Gurness this morning. This circular stone tower on the shores of Eynhallow Sound is an impressive Iron Age archaeological site and one of Scotland's best-preserved examples of a prehistoric settlement. In the afternoon we'll hop aboard a coach and journey to Stromness where you can check out the shops and cafes independently or join your leader for a short walk around this

picturesque old herring port.

Day 7: Scapa Flow, South Ronaldsay and the Italian Chapel

Hear the story of Orkney's ornate Italian Chapel built from a pair of WWII shelters before a short invigorating coastal walk overlooking Scapa Flow and the islands of Flotta and Hoy. Visit the World War II batteries at Hoxa Head as well as the Sands o' Wright beach where we'll be on the lookout for wildflowers on the shore and dolphins and whales in the water. If the Tapestry Gallery is open, there's time to look inside and be amazed by the handwoven creations on display. We'll also visit the Fossil & Heritage centre. 4.5 miles (7km) with 310ft (90m) of ascent

Day 8: Departure Day

A group transfer takes us back to Kirkwall for the flight back to the mainland.

The Merkister Hotel - Orkney

We've had a long love affair with Orkney's family-run Merkister Hotel, not least for its enviable setting on the shores of Harray Loch. It's just six miles from Skara Brae and has an award-winning restaurant overlooking the loch, serving outstanding Scottish seafood and Aberdeen Angus beef. Rooms are simple but homely and all come with TV and tea and coffee making facilities. You'll find comfortable public areas with free Wi-Fi, as well as a cosy bar, and handy drying facilities, too. This hotel is dog-friendly so you may meet four legged friends in some of the communal areas.