

# TRAVEL TO THE SCOTTISH ISLANDS

Island travel is an essential part of the Scottish experience. Round the western and northern rim of Scotland are all kinds of islands. Many thriving and vibrant communities, whose daily lives are bound up with ferry departures and arrivals, are also places with strong culture and traditions and a clear sense of identity.

## **Island Hopping**

Take a magical journey around some of Scotland's most romantic islands. Each has its own story to tell, and an excellent network of ferry services makes getting around straightforward. This will give you the freedom to hop from island to island.

Caledonian Macbrayne ('CalMac') ferries sail to twenty-two islands and four peninsulas on Scotland's west coast. Tour Scotland's islands with Caledonian Macbrayne's Island Hopscotch tickets. These flexible tickets with 26 options are valid for one month from the date of the first journey. Tickets are valid for one journey on each route and can be used in either direction. [www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk)

NorthLink Ferries sail to the islands of Orkney and Shetland. There are three sailings each day from Scrabster (near Thurso) to Stromness in Orkney and nightly sailings from Aberdeen to Lerwick in Shetland – with four of these sailings going via Orkney's capital, Kirkwall. [www.northlinkferries.co.uk](http://www.northlinkferries.co.uk)

## **Air Travel**

With a number of regular scheduled services, air travel to the Scottish islands offers a faster alternative to other travel methods. Most flights are operated by British Airways or Loganair. For inter-island flights in Shetland (excluding Fair Isle), book direct through Loganair. Other services between the mainland and several of the major islands are provided by Highland Airways and Eastern Airways. [www.visitscotland.com/sitewide/travel\\_around\\_scotland](http://www.visitscotland.com/sitewide/travel_around_scotland)

## **Shetland**

Shetland lies some 80 miles (128kms) north of mainland Scotland and is made up of over 100 islands, though only around 15 of these are continuously inhabited. The islands' population is around 23,000. Because of the northern latitude, summer months have notably long daylight hours and Shetland is sometimes called 'the land of the summer dim' – a reference to the summer twilight. In winter, there is always the chance of seeing the aurora borealis, the 'Northern Lights'. [www.visitshetland.com](http://www.visitshetland.com)

### **Travel by Air**

There are regular flights from Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness and Wick. All flights go to Sumburgh Airport on the southern tip of Shetland. From the airport there is a bus service, which will take you to Lerwick, Shetland's capital. For flight information and reservations please contact British Airways. There are also inter-island flights from Tingwall Airport north of Lerwick. [www.directflight.co.uk](http://www.directflight.co.uk)

In the summer months there are direct flights from London, Stansted to Shetland. For more information contact Atlantic Airways. [www.flyshetland.com](http://www.flyshetland.com)

### **Travel by Ferry**

Northlink Ferries operate the crossing from Aberdeen to Lerwick on Shetland. Departures are once per day, departing from Aberdeen at either 1700 or 1900 depending on the day of travel. All departures arrive at Lerwick Ferry Terminal, just 1 mile outside of Lerwick, at 0730 the following morning. Some services travel via Kirkwall on Orkney. [www.northlinkferries.co.uk](http://www.northlinkferries.co.uk)

Information on local bus services on Shetland can be found at [www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com).

### **Orkney**

North of mainland Scotland, Orkney consists of about 70 islands, of which less than one third are inhabited. Orkney has the largest density of archaeological sites in Britain and is also a special place for wildlife, with notable seabird colonies, for example. The characteristic Orkney landscapes are also an inspiration for the many talented crafts-people living and working throughout the islands.

[www.visitorkney.com](http://www.visitorkney.com)

### **Travel by Air**

There are flights from Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness and Wick. All flights go to Kirkwall in Orkney. The local bus service connects with Kirkwall town centre and Stromness. There is also an excellent internal air network, with year round flights connecting the regional Orkney island airports with Kirkwall. These include the world's shortest scheduled flight – only 2 minutes – from Westray to Papa Westray.

For information and reservations please contact British Airways. [www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com)

### **Travel by Ferry**

Ferries to Orkney depart from Aberdeen, Scrabster, Gills Bay and John o' Groats.

Northlink Ferries: Scrabster to Stromness, Orkney: up to 3 return crossings Monday-Friday with 2 return crossings on Saturdays and Sundays; crossing takes around 90 minutes. There is also a connecting bus service from Stromness to Kirkwall.

Aberdeen to Lerwick, Shetland: daily all year, via Kirkwall, Orkney 3-4 times per week. Contact Northlink Ferries for timetable information and reservations.

[www.northlinkferries.co.uk](http://www.northlinkferries.co.uk)

Pentland Ferries operate a passenger and vehicle ferry crossing between Gills Bay near John o' Groats and St Margaret's Hope, Orkney. There are 3 sailings each day; crossing time is 1 hour.

[www.pentlandferries.co.uk](http://www.pentlandferries.co.uk)

John o' Groats Ferries operate a daily foot-passenger service, May-September, from John o' Groats to Burwick on Orkney. Crossing time is 40 minutes. The company also runs summer day tours from John o' Groats (May-September) and from Inverness (June-September) or take the 'Orkney Bus', an express coach service from Inverness to Kirkwall every day from 1 May-2 September.

[www.jogferry.co.uk](http://www.jogferry.co.uk)

Orkney Ferries Ltd operate inter-island services between the various Orkney islands.

[www.orkneyferries.co.uk](http://www.orkneyferries.co.uk)

Information on local bus services on Orkney can be found at

[www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com)

### **The Outer Hebrides**

Strung out along the northwest edge of Europe, this 150 mile-long island chain is noted for its unspoilt environment, wildlife, beaches, and strong sense of identity and Gaelic culture.

[www.visithebrides.com](http://www.visithebrides.com)

### **Travel by Air**

British Airways operated by Loganair operates flights Monday to Saturday, to Stornoway from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness. There is also a Sunday flight from Glasgow. There are also daily flights from Glasgow to Barra and Benbecula, with additional Sunday flights to Barra in the summer months. For details contact your travel agent or British Airways. [www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com)

BMI also fly from Edinburgh to Stornoway, seven days a week. To book contact BMI or your travel agent.

[www.flybmi.com](http://www.flybmi.com)

From Inverness to Stornoway, you can also fly with Highland Airways.

[www.highlandairways.co.uk](http://www.highlandairways.co.uk)

Eastern Airways have one return flight Monday-Friday from Aberdeen to Stornoway.

[www.easternairways.com](http://www.easternairways.com)

Barra (where the aircraft use the extensive beach as a runway), Benbecula and Stornoway airports are all served by regular local bus services.

### **Travel by Ferry**

Caledonian MacBrayne runs car and passenger ferries to all the islands all year round: Ullapool to Stornoway (Lewis); Uig (Skye) to Tarbert (Harris) and Lochmaddy (North Uist); and Oban to Barra and Lochboisdale (South Uist).

Ferries also run between: Castlebay (Barra) to Lochboisdale (South Uist); Berneray (North Uist) to Leverburgh (Harris). A new car ferry now runs daily between Barra and Eriskay.

For all ferry journeys it is advisable to book vehicle space in advance, but this is not necessary for passengers. For ferry times and reservations contact Caledonian MacBrayne.

[www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk)

Information on local bus services on the Western Isles can be found at [www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com)

Causeways link Benbecula and the Uists, as well as South Uist to Eriskay.

## Skye

The mountain profiles of the Cuillins of Skye are amongst the very finest in Scotland. On the western seaboard, Skye is joined to the mainland by the Skye Bridge at Kyle of Lochalsh. There are also two mainland ferry connections from Mallaig and Glenelg, the latter summer only.

[www.visithighlands.com/skye/](http://www.visithighlands.com/skye/)

### Travel by Ferry

Caledonian MacBrayne operate the ferry crossing between Mallaig and Armadale. The ferry operates 7 days a week from early morning until late afternoon.

It is advisable to book vehicle space in advance, but this is not necessary for passengers. For ferry times and reservations contact Caledonian MacBrayne.

[www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk)

Skye Ferry operates a service from Glenelg to Kylerhea from Easter to October. The 5-minute crossing starts at 0900 daily (1000 Sundays) and operates as frequently as required until at least 1745 (no Sunday service mid March-mid May except Easter Sunday).

[www.skyeferry.co.uk](http://www.skyeferry.co.uk)

Information on local bus services on Skye can be found at

[www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com).

## The Small Isles

Canna, Eigg, Muck and Rum, collectively called the Small Isles, lie south of Skye and north of the Ardnamurchan Peninsula. Their distinctive outlines – notably the Sgurr (peak) of Eigg – add greatly to the sea views from Arisaig, Morar and Mallaig. Each island can be reached only by sea.

[www.visithighlands.com/fort-william-lochaber/](http://www.visithighlands.com/fort-william-lochaber/)

### Travel by Ferry

Caledonian MacBrayne operate the ferry crossing between Mallaig and the Small Isles. The ferry operates 6 days a week, although each island is not served daily. It is always advised to book vehicle spaces in advance. For full timetable information and reservations contact Caledonian MacBrayne.

[www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk)

Arisaig Marine, based in Arisaig, run regular services and cruises to the Small Isles in the summer months.

Tel: +44 (0)1687 45022

### **Coll and Tiree**

Coll lies west of Mull. It has a population of around 200. The island has a small village, Arinagour, with ferry links to Scarinish on Tiree and to Oban on the mainland. The island is famous for its wildlife, especially typical Hebridean species such as the corncrake. There are also beautiful sandy beaches and also a rich archaeological past.

West of Coll, the island of Tiree, 10 miles (16kms) long and 4 miles (6kms) wide in parts, home to some 800 people, is one of the sunniest places in Britain because its low profile does not attract the clouds, which cling to the mainland hills on occasions. Its exposed position in the face of prevailing Atlantic westerly weather also means it can be quite windy. This is why its waves and white sandy beaches are popular with windsurfers. Every October the island hosts the Tiree Wave Classic – a world championship windsurfing event.

[www.visitscottishheartlands.com](http://www.visitscottishheartlands.com)

### **Travel by Ferry**

Caledonian MacBrayne operates the ferry crossing between Oban, on the west coast of Scotland, and Coll and Tiree. The ferry does not operate every day so it is advisable to check when planning your trip. It is always advised to book vehicle spaces in advance. For full timetable information and reservations contact Caledonian MacBrayne.

[www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk)

### **Travel by Air**

British Airways operated by Loganair operates flights Monday to Saturday, to Tiree from Glasgow. For details contact your travel agent or British Airways.

[www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com)

Information on local bus services on Coll and Tiree can be found at

[www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com)

### **Mull and Iona**

Mull is the third largest of the Hebridean Islands, with magnificent natural landscapes and dramatic coastal scenery, especially on its west side. Tobermory is the main town, with colourful buildings surrounding its natural harbour. [www.visitscottishheartlands.com](http://www.visitscottishheartlands.com)

The ferry from Oban, on the west coast of Scotland, to Craignure on the Isle of Mull is operated by Caledonian MacBrayne. It is advisable to book vehicle space in advance, but not necessary for passengers.

[www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk)

Iona lies off the south west tip of Mull and is barely 3 miles (5kms) by 1 mile (2kms). It is was here in 563AD that St Columba, banished from Ireland, landed and founded a monastery and the island became 'the cradle of Christianity' in Scotland. Its Abbey grounds are also the burial place of many Scottish Kings.

The ferry from Fionnphort, on the south western tip of Mull, to Iona is operated by Caledonian MacBrayne. Passenger ferry only.

[www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk)

Information on local bus services on Mull can be found at

[www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com)

### **Colonsay**

The little island of Colonsay offers a great experience of the Hebridean islands of the west. It has a special tranquillity and unspoilt natural beauty, with a good variety of habitats from unusual dwarf Atlantic woodland to sandy beaches. The island is reached by ferry from mainland Scotland.

[www.visitscottishheartlands.com](http://www.visitscottishheartlands.com)

### **Travel by Ferry**

There is a regular ferry service between Oban and Colonsay. The service runs 3 days a week in winter and 5 days in summer. In summer it is also possible to take a ferry from Kennacraig, on the Kintyre peninsula, to Colonsay, this service runs via Islay. It is advisable to book vehicle space in advance, but this is not necessary for passengers.

[www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk)

### **Islay and Jura**

Islay is famed for its single malt whisky, with more distilleries than any other Scottish island. It also has excellent beaches and has an important nature reserve for over-wintering geese.

Its neighbour Jura is one of the wildest and least populated of Scotland's islands with a rugged hinterland and only one road, one hotel and one distillery! It is associated with the writer George Orwell who wrote his futuristic novel 1984 here. Both islands have mainland ferry links. Islay has an air link with Glasgow.

[www.visitscottishheartlands.com](http://www.visitscottishheartlands.com)

### **Travel by Air**

You can fly directly to Islay from Glasgow in 45 minutes. There are flights daily for, more information contact British Airways.

[www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com)

### **Travel by Ferry**

#### **Islay**

There is a regular ferry service between Kennacraig on Kintyre, and either Port Askaig or Port Ellen on Islay taking about two hours. It is advisable to book vehicle space in advance, but this is not necessary for passengers.  
[www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk)

#### **Jura**

ASP Seascot operates a regular service between Islay and Jura on behalf of Argyll and Bute District Council.  
Tel: +44 (0)141 332 8118

Information on local buses on Islay & Jura can be found at  
[www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com)

#### **Gigha**

The community-owned Isle of Gigha is one of the most beautiful of the Hebridean islands. A narrow island only 7 miles (11kms) long, Gigha lies off the Kintyre peninsula, within three hours' drive of Glasgow. Gigha has fine seascapes and notable gardens at Achamore House. Reach Gigha by ferry from Tayinloan on Kintyre.  
[www.visitscottishheartlands.com](http://www.visitscottishheartlands.com)

### **Travel by Ferry**

Caledonian MacBrayne operates a frequent, daily service from Tayinloan on Kintyre to Gigha taking around 20 minutes. It is advisable to book vehicle space in advance, but this is not necessary for passengers.  
[www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk)

#### **Bute**

Bute is a pretty island about 15 miles (24kms) long and less than 5 miles (8kms) wide just off the west coast of southern Scotland. Its main town of Rothesay has been a traditional holiday resort for generations of Scots from the Glasgow area. The island has excellent walking and lots of sandy beaches, and is popular with yachtsmen, anglers and golfers. Many also come to see the Gothic masterpiece of Mount Stuart. The island is reached by sea.

[www.visitscottishheartlands.com](http://www.visitscottishheartlands.com)

### **Travel by Ferry**

Caledonian MacBrayne operates two very frequent services to Bute, one from Wemyss Bay, west of Glasgow, which takes around half an hour, and the other from Colintrave on the Cowal Peninsula to Rhubodach, taking just 5 minutes. It is advisable to book vehicle space in advance, but this is not necessary for passengers.  
[www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk)

Information on local bus services on Bute can be found at [www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com)

### **Arran**

The Isle of Arran is the most southerly Scottish island and sits in the Firth of Clyde between Ayrshire and Kintyre. Arran is 19 miles (30kms) long by 10 miles (16kms) wide. Because its rugged northern half contrasts with the gentler south end with its rolling green landscapes and woods, it is sometimes called 'Scotland in Miniature'. It is a traditional holiday island, especially popular with outdoor enthusiasts.

[www.ayrshire-arran.com](http://www.ayrshire-arran.com)

Caledonian MacBrayne operates 2 services to Arran. One from Ardrossan to Brodick, and one from Claonaig, on Kintyre, to Lochranza. In the winter months the Lochranza ferry changes its route and runs from Tarbert, further north on Kintyre via Portavadie on the Cowal peninsula.

It is always advised to book vehicle spaces in advance. For full timetable information and reservations contact Caledonian MacBrayne.

[www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk)

Information on local bus services on Arran can be found at [www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com)

*Scotland  
Welcome to our life.*

Want to know more about Scotland?  
The No. 1 Booking and Information Service for Scotland  
Tel: 0845 22 55 121 or +44 (0)1506 832 121 (outside UK)  
Email: [info@visitscotland.com](mailto:info@visitscotland.com)

**[www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)**

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