

Northern Lights

PLUS

Children's competition

Orkney and Shetland highlights

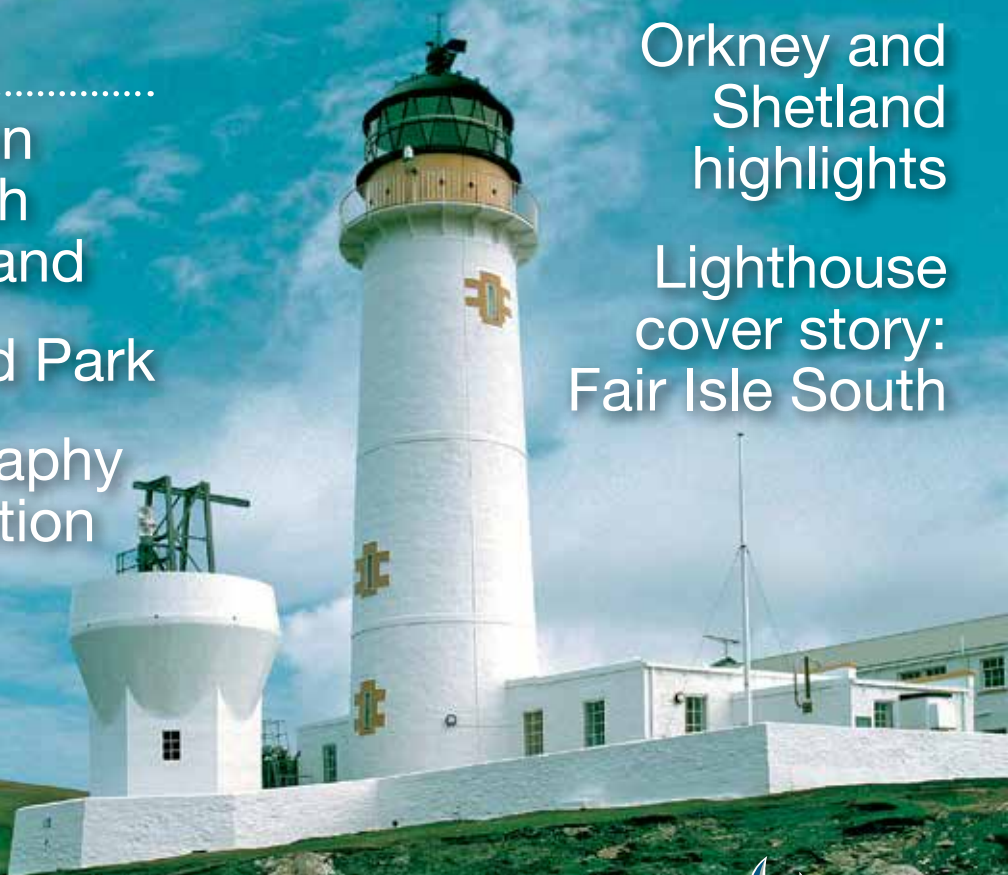
Lighthouse cover story: Fair Isle South

INSIDE

Golfing in the North of Scotland

Highland Park

Photography competition



NorthLink
FERRIES

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Discover more at www.northlinkferries.co.uk

Welcome

A warm welcome on board and to *Northern Lights* – our new magazine.

Serco is delighted to operate NorthLink Ferries on behalf of the Scottish Government. These are lifeline ferry services for islanders, ensuring that people and goods can get to and from the mainland. However, the ferries also provide a gateway for tourists and businesses to access the islands. We aim to provide you with a comfortable crossing, great services on board and value for money.

Since Serco began the operation of NorthLink Ferries in July 2012 we have been working hard to refurbish the ships and improve the services that we offer.

I'm sure you won't have missed the bold new look of our ferries with the large Viking dominating the side of our ships. Don't they look fantastic? On board, there is much to experience during your journey – from recliner seats and comfortable sleeping pods to the Vikings Den for play time, a games zone and new menus, with lots of locally sourced produce to choose from.

For those looking for an exclusive area to relax and dine, our Magnus' Lounge is the answer. Depending on the service you are sailing with, customers with upgraded travel or accommodation can enjoy the benefits of Magnus' Lounge. These include a range of complimentary food and beverage packages, allowing you to unwind whilst we take care of everything else.

This issue of Northern Lights includes a number of features for you to enjoy – whether you are interested in golf or food, there is something for everyone. And, of course, we haven't forgotten about the children on board today (see page 15).

Over the last two years we have listened to passengers and a wide variety of stakeholders. We will continue to do so and would welcome your feedback anytime.

I hope you have a comfortable journey and that you make the most of the facilities on board. Please do speak to any of my colleagues on board if there is anything more we can do to help or improve your sailing with us.



Stuart Garrett
Managing Director
Serco NorthLink Ferries

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NorthLink Ferries

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Contact Stuart

If you have any questions, ideas or concerns then please contact me anytime at speaktostuart@northlinkferries.co.uk



Travel information

MV Hamnavoe Scrabster - Stromness

NEW - Magnus' Lounge

We are proud to now offer Magnus' Lounge on board the MV Hamnavoe. Here you will receive complimentary:

- Tea and coffee
- Soft drinks
- Hot filled rolls (during morning sailings)
- Bar voucher (during afternoon and evening sailings)
- Snacks
- Daily newspapers and magazines

The lounge also provides access to power sockets to charge your electrical items.

MV Hjaltland and MV Hrossey Aberdeen – Kirkwall - Lerwick

Magnus' Lounge – open until late

Peace and quiet to work or unwind – this is Magnus' Lounge. You can select from a number of complimentary items, including:

- Tea and coffee
- Soft drinks
- Two bar vouchers
- Complimentary continental breakfast
- Snacks
- Daily newspapers and magazines

The lounge provides access to power sockets to charge your electrical items. You can pre-book a ticket for Magnus' Lounge or purchase on board. If you have booked one of our Premium or Executive cabins then lounge access is complimentary – enjoy!



MV Hamnavoe Bed and Breakfast – from £47.50 per cabin*

Our B&B offer on board the Hamnavoe helps you get the most from your time in Orkney, with a relaxed start to your onward journey. Passengers are able to spend the night on board in one of our comfortable en-suite cabins before travelling on the first sailing from Stromness to Scrabster. We are pleased to now also offer this convenient arrangement on our weekend sailing from Stromness at 0900, arriving in Scrabster at 1030.

And with up to two complimentary continental or full Scottish breakfasts per cabin, you will be set up for the rest of your day.

* Price is for an outer two berth / outer four berth cabin in low / mid season. Please check our fares for other cabin prices. Up to two breakfasts per cabin are included. Does not include passenger / vehicle fare.

Travel information

Cabins

All accommodation on board NorthLink ferries has been built with your comfort in mind. Cabins are modern, clean and fully equipped with en-suite, washbasin, toilet and shower facilities. *All have been fitted with individual temperature controls and tea and coffee making facilities.



There are various cabin options to suit every budget, including exclusive use, shared, inside and outside, sleeping between one and four passengers. For those with restricted mobility, we have two and three berth cabins that benefit from more space, with easy access doors, bed hoists, toilet and shower facilities and assistance alarms. With a limited number of these cabins available on each ship, advance booking is advised. Please note, these cabins do not have windows.

Reclining chairs

For passengers choosing to travel without overnight accommodation or a sleeping pod, there are reclining chairs available. These seats can be booked with your travel. Blankets and pillows can be hired from the Northern Isles Shop on board.



Sleeping pods

If you want a good night's sleep without the cost of your own cabin then try our new exclusive use sleeping pods. The seat reclines back to allow you to lie and sleep without intruding on the space of the person behind.



Costing £18, each comes with its own large table, adjustable lighting and a USB socket to charge electrical devices. The price also includes a sleeping pack with blanket, pillow and eye mask, as well as a token for a free shower in the facilities next door (exclusively for those purchasing a sleeping pod). This pack can be collected from the ship's reception desk.

On board shop

NorthLink Ferries' on board shops stock the best of the Shetland and Orkney islands' crafts and produce, with a wide selection of jewellery, knitwear, wines and spirits.



There is an extensive range of books and magazines, including many from local writers. Our Vikling range which includes T-shirts, hoodies and stationery is popular with visitors and locals alike. With excellent value for money designer fragrances, compared to high street prices, it's affordable to take a gift home for a loved one.

We understand it is easy to forget a vital item when travelling. Our well-stocked shops mean we will likely have exactly what you need.

Breakfast choices

**Kids
Eat Free**

* Up to two children (under 16s) eat breakfast for free with each adult breakfast purchased

Hjaltland / Hrossey:

From 0600 - 0900 Aberdeen arrival

From 0630 - 0900 Lerwick arrival

Hamnavoe:

Weekdays 0630 - 1015

Weekends 0900 - 1030

All you can eat breakfast

Adults £9.95 & Children £4.95*

- A full cooked Scottish breakfast or a choice from bacon, sausage, grilled tomatoes, black pudding, sautéed mushrooms, fried or scrambled eggs and potato scones
- Cereal
- Fresh fruit
- Grapefruit or orange segments
- Danish pastries
- Croissant with butter and preserve
- Cold meats and cheeses
- Hard boiled eggs (shell on)
- A selection of chilled juices
- Hot drinks from our ETHYCO Fair Trade range
- Teas – breakfast tea, infusion and herbal teas
- Coffees – Americano, Cappuccino, Latté and Espresso
- Decaffeinated coffees – Americano, Cappuccino, Latté
- Hot chocolate

Continental breakfast

Adults £6.95 & Children £3.49*

- Cereal
- Fresh fruit
- Grapefruit or orange segments
- Danish pastries
- Croissant with butter and preserve
- Cold meats and cheeses
- Hard boiled eggs (shell on)
- A selection of chilled juices
- Hot drinks from our ETHYCO Fair Trade range
- Teas – breakfast tea, infusion and herbal teas
- Coffees – Americano, Cappuccino, Latté and Espresso
- Decaffeinated coffees – Americano, Cappuccino, Latté
- Hot chocolate

Lite bite alternative

- Bacon or sausage softie £3.40
- Cereal £2.50
- Danish pastry £2.50
- Croissant with butter and preserve £2.50
- Toast (two rounds) with butter and preserve £1.95
- Americano / Espresso £2.10
- Cappuccino / Latté £2.45

Meet Our Captain



Captain Stewart Gunn

Captain Stewart Gunn – My Story

Stewart Gunn has served in command on all three of NorthLink Ferries' ships at various times over the last seven years. Northern Lights asks him where it all began...

So, why a career at sea?

Being born in Orkney, and raised in Stromness, I have been around boats from a very young age. My parents would not let me go out in a dinghy or small sailing boat (a flattie) until I learned to swim so this was achieved by the time I was 11 and from then on there was no holding me back.

I started helping out on the local Hoy ferry when I was 13 and it was at this time that I opted for a career at sea. My father was a docker for North of Scotland Orkney and Shetland Shipping Company and because of this I set my sights on sailing as Captain of 'St Ola'.

What was your first job?

I joined my first ship, the Northern Lighthouse Authority's 'Pole Star', on my 16th birthday in 1974 as Junior Ordinary Seaman. I spent four months there before gaining a cadetship with Bibby Line of Liverpool. I spent 10 enjoyable years travelling the world, rising to the rank of Chief Officer before being made redundant along with all other seafarers from Bibby Line. They changed the port of registry of all their ships from Liverpool to Hong Kong to save money during the mid-eighties.

That must have been difficult - what did you do then?

I was lucky enough to start with a North Sea shipping company servicing the offshore industry, eventually spending the period 1989 to 1994 as Chief Officer on board a top rated anchor handling tug/supply vessel, MV Barra Supplier.

So, how did you begin working in the ferry business?

Working with a ferry operator was the ultimate dream for me from a very early age. P&O Scottish Ferries employed me as Second Officer in 1994. I spent most of my time on the 'St Ola' where I achieved the position of Relief Master shortly before P&O lost the contract in 2002.

I transferred over to NorthLink Ferries at this point, along with the majority of the sea staff. My first six months were spent as Chief Officer on the Hjaltland. Following this, I was moved to the Hamnavoe at Scrabster Pier as Master.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Firstly, having travelled the world and seen quite a lot, I feel that Scotland, and Orkney and Shetland in particular, can hold their own scenery wise against anywhere in the world. The fact that the weather is changeable enhances this as you can get serene summer evenings where our sailings are through mirror smooth seas and then at other times of the year we can get dramatic seascapes as we sail south from Lerwick. I also particularly love manoeuvring the ship in and out of port.

Would you say your job is complex?

A captain's decision making process when it comes to possible weather disruption is never simple and is based on more than just one forecast. It is usually made after we have been watching the movement of various pressure systems, weather fronts and wave patterns over a number of days from varying different sources - I think this is what you would call keeping a weather eye on things.

This information, along with the knowledge of the handling characteristics of the vessel and the fact that we will likely be carrying people who are unaccustomed to the movement of ships in a seaway, are just some of the things I consider. Tidal heights and directions at the relevant ports we are leaving or going to all play their part too.

When it comes to the complexities of whether to sail or not, I always err on the side of safety; even if in the unusual event the forecasts turns out to be wrong or misleading, I like to feel that my decision was made for the safety of all concerned.

Any memorable stories for our passengers?

During one passage north, my 10 year old grandson was travelling home to Orkney with his father and I invited them both to the bridge for arrival at Hatston. This went without a hitch and I thought nothing more about it until I got home for leave. I was later stopped in the street by my grandson's teacher who asked me if I realised that my grandson was telling everyone that he had parked his grandad's boat at Hatston on Sunday night. Hopefully the people he spoke to realised that he was exaggerating his role on the bridge that evening!

Fair Isle South



Each issue of **Northern Lights** will see us focus on a lighthouse, symbolic of many things including success, hope and guidance, not to mention our seafaring past. These iconic maritime monuments have provided inspiration for science, art and literature.

Here we look to the unspoilt Fair Isle - the remotest of the UK's permanently inhabited islands, 40km southwest of Sumburgh and number five in the National Geographic list of the world's best islands.

Fair Isle boasts not one, but two lighthouses – one to the south (Skaddan) and the other to the north (Skroo). Although almost identical in terms of their machinery and equipment, the real difference is their height – the south towers over the north with a staggering difference of 26 feet.

Did you know?

- The keepers left Fair Isle South on 31 March 1998 for the last time, making it the last manned lighthouse in Scotland to be automated
- The historic attraction boasts a plaque in memory of those killed when the lighthouse was attacked in World War II
- There are 96 steps to the top of the listed building
- There is a helipad for official use by Coastguard helicopters

Looking for an unforgettable place to stay?

Uniquely, Fair Isle South doubles up as a full board accommodation option for adventurers where you can take in the dramatic surroundings and unwind by the sea. Despite being subjected to ferocious storms and air raids in the past, it is now regarded as a peaceful haven where tourists can relax and use the area as a base from which to explore the rest of Fair Isle.

What about transport?

- Travelling to Fair Isle is part of the adventure. Visiting Britain's remotest inhabited island does require a bit of forward planning but it's not too difficult and well worth the effort
- Visitors can fly to Fair Isle Airport from Tingwall or Sumburgh Airport
- Private aircraft use Fair Isle Airport and scheduled flights arrive twice daily, three days a week.
- The North Harbour is the main route for goods, provisions and postal services
- A road network connects the populated areas of the island, along its full length
- For more information, please visit www.fairisle.org.uk

Visit the Northern Isles



Standing Stones, Brodgar



Old Man of Hoy

ORKNEY

Scattered just off the north coast of mainland Scotland, Orkney is a fascinating archipelago of more than 70 islands, rich in archaeological heritage that has helped earn its World Heritage Site status.

Inhabited for at least 6,000 years, some of Orkney's landscape remains unchanged since long before the era of the Great Pyramids, making it a paradise for travellers. In the heart of Neolithic Orkney, today's visitors can step back 5,000 years to learn how the community lived and walk in their footsteps among the 27 remaining megaliths of the Ring of Brodgar stone circle.

But there is so much more to this verdant island community than ancient monuments and thousands of years of history: it is also a land of breathtaking beaches and soaring cliffs, green, fertile countryside and abundant wildlife. And there are adventures to be had for everyone from foodies to thrillseekers and culture vultures.

Gastronauts will enjoy the wonderful local fish and seafood, award-winning whisky distilleries and the UK's most northerly winery.

Orkney is also a year-round playground for power kiting, wind and kite surfing. Check out Scapa Beach near Kirkwall and the Bay of Skail on the West Mainland. Fish for giant Conger eels in the depths of Scapa Flow or explore the historical wrecks that lie on the seabed.

Back on dry land the St Magnus International Festival occurs every June and is a feast of music, theatre, performance and storytelling. All year round two very different cultural and religious icons are not to be missed. St Magnus Cathedral towers above Kirkwall, some parts dating back more than 850 years, while a much more modern and modest little building bears poignant testament to the work of World War II prisoners of war. The Italian Chapel in Lamb Holm was built by Italian prisoners from two Nissan huts and beautifully decorated with frescos, stained glass windows and ornate screens fashioned from scavenged scrap metal.

ORKN



SHETLAND



Breckon Sands

SHETLAND

Most of us know Shetland from its most famous fire festival **Up Helly Aa**, held in the darkest depths of winter each **January**. But at the opposite end of the spectrum, in midsummer, this range of islands enjoys an amazing 19 hours of daylight.



Clickimin

Closer to the North Pole than any other part of Britain, it is also the best place to see the Northern Lights or aurora borealis, the spectacular natural phenomenon that shimmers in the skies producing multi-coloured curtains of light.

Shetland, made up of more than 100 islands, is where the North Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean and is home to a range of stunning natural attractions – 138 sandy beaches, 1,697 miles of coastline, more than 600 archaeological sites and a seabird population that includes 200,000 stunning puffins.

It's a superb destination for outdoor fans with opportunities to indulge in a variety of sports including mountain biking, trout fishing, scuba diving and round-the-clock golf. Famed for birdwatching and its miniature Shetland ponies, it is also a global Geopark with more than 100 sites of interest.

And it has some of the finest archaeological sites in Europe with the world's best preserved broch, or Iron Age tower, on the now uninhabited island of Mousa.

Shetland, and in particular Fair Isle, is known for its knitwear – if you want to ensure you own the genuine article, buy it on the islands. The Shetland Craft Trail introduces visitors to a whole cornucopia of goodies including jewellery, artwork and pottery.

Shoppers will also love a stroll down Lerwick's historic Commercial Street, while on Unst you can discover a chocolatier's workshop and Valhalla Brewery, Britain's most northerly home of beer.

Visit the mainland



Bucholie Castle



Duncansby Head

CAITHNESS

CAITHNESS

Located on the outer edge of Europe, Caithness is unspoilt, dramatic and home to the Flow Country, one of the last true wilderness areas in Europe.

Favoured by the late Queen Mother, Caithness was where she loved to holiday at her home the Castle of Mey, now one of the biggest visitor attractions in the region.

It's not difficult to see why she adored the spot, six miles west of John O'Groats, where the castle stands in rugged, isolated splendour overlooking the Pentland Firth. Visit the castle, its romantic walled garden and tearoom from May to September. Nearby there are opportunities for seal watching at Scotland's Haven, a small natural harbour, while further round the coast Dunnet Head lighthouse marks the most northerly point on the Scottish mainland and the cliffs at Duncansby Head host so much birdlife they're known as Seabird City.

Caithness is also one of the world's top surfing destinations where the famed Thurso East wave is epic.

Discover more about the area at Caithness Horizons museum, on Thurso High Street, which houses a collection illustrating the county of Caithness' story from the Devonian geological period, about 416 to 359 million years ago, to the present day. It embraces history through items including a Bronze Age beaker to models of the Dounreay Fast Reactor.

For the nimble and daring, an outing to the Whaligoe Steps, south of Wick, provides an unusual challenge and not for the fainthearted. The manmade steps, all 330 of them hewn out of rock, descend a steep, unprotected cliff face to one of the most inaccessible harbours imaginable.



*Marischal College
Aberdeen*

● ABERDEEN

ABERDEEN

Once known as the Silver City by the Golden Sands, thanks to its glistening granite buildings and sweeping beach, Aberdeen is now synonymous with the oil industry, a community with a truly cosmopolitan population.

Workers from all over the world are part of this booming economy, boosted by visitors who choose the city as a gateway to the Highlands with its winter sports playgrounds and the glorious scenery of Royal Deeside.

While the city has an array of bars and restaurants, shopping centres, galleries, museums and a lively nightlife, including ballet, opera and West End shows, the nearby countryside offers a peaceful escape from busy urban life.

Balmoral Castle near Ballater, 40 miles west of Aberdeen, is the Royals' favourite hideaway and is open to the public when they are not in residence. But the area is studded with numerous other historic castles waiting to be explored as part of the Castle Trail, as well as the world-famous distilleries on the Whisky Trail and 165 miles of beautiful Coastal Trail views.

The region is also home to a diverse range of cultural events – the Stonehaven fireball ceremony welcomes in each New Year, summer sees the Aberdeen International Youth Festival, the Scottish Traditional Boat Festival in Portsoy and traditional Highland Games are held in towns and villages across the area, culminating with the Braemar Gathering, usually attended by the Queen, in September.

Union Gardens, Aberdeen



HIGHLAND

ESTD **PARK** 1798

SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY

The Spirit of Orkney

Raise a glass to Scotland's national drink by sampling the world famous Highland Park whilst on board or by taking a trip to one of the country's most northerly distilleries.



Taste

There are few other single malt whisky brands that are so consistently praised by experts and connoisseurs as Highland Park for its 12 to 40 year old range. Highland Park has won a number of prestigious awards across its portfolio, including the Highland Park 25 year old which was named Best Spirit in the World by renowned drinks expert Paul Pacult in 2013.

Discover

Highland Park 12 Year Old

First introduced in 1979, the 12 year old malt is what started it all for Highland Park and is available on board your NorthLink Ferries sailing today. This rich yet well balanced whisky contains subtle floral smoke tones, an aspect which makes Highland Park such a distinctive single malt whisky. **The Highland Park 12 year old is available from the on board shop for £30.**

Highland Park 18 Year Old

Why not try the Highland Park 18 year old - a spirit considered by writers across the globe as the 'industry's favourite whisky.' This malt is a masterclass of balance, complexity and refinement with lingering layers of honey, characterful dried fruit notes, marzipan and golden syrup. **You can purchase it from the on board shop for £90.**

Experience

Found at the edge of Kirkwall, Orkney, the Highland Park Distillery is one of Scotland's most northerly distilleries. The fascinating site has been distilling whisky to the same exacting standards since its inception by notorious smuggler Magnus Eunson in 1798 and is one of only six remaining in Scotland that still malts its own barley. Visitors are offered the chance to see the entire process from malting to distillation with a guided tour before having the opportunity to sample a selection of flavours.

Tasting Notes: Highland Park 18 Year Old

Colour: Natural colour, burnished gold, clear and bright

Nose: Rich, mature oak, top note of aromatic smoke

Palate: Rich, full flavour, honey and peat

Finish: Soft, round and long



The five keystones that contribute to making Highland Park:

- Hand-turned malt adds to the deliciously succulent, balanced layers of aromatic character found in Highland Park
- Aromatic peat gives a delectably seductive, luxuriant floral sweetness to Highland Park Single Malt Scotch Whisky
- Cool maturation enhances the smooth character of Highland Park Single Malt Scotch Whisky
- Sherry oak casks contribute to the distinctive richness and multi-dimensional complexity of Highland Park
- Cask harmonisation ensures consistency and balance in Highland Park

50% off Best Spirit Tour at the Highland Park distillery for NorthLink Ferries Magnus' Lounge users*

*Discount valid for NorthLink Ferries passengers who have used Magnus' Lounge on MV Hamnavoe, MV Hjaltland or MV Hrossey. Discount valid for two weeks after date of travel. Discount will be given on production of a stamped Magnus' Lounge Highland Park pass. Best Spirit Tour normally £20.00 per person – offer price £10.00 per person payable at the distillery. Includes a 7 minute film, tour and tasting of three selected whiskies from the Highland Park range.

1-2-3-say competition!

Following the success of our last photography competition, which saw many of our customers send in images of our recently rebranded MV Hjalmland, we have a second chance for all you budding photographers who missed out on a top prize.

To be in with the chance of winning...

FIRST PRIZE – Return ferry trip for you and your family or friends* from Aberdeen to Lerwick with car, cabin and Magnus' Lounge vouchers.

RUNNER UP – Return ferry trip for you and your family or friends* on the Scrabster to Stromness route with car and Magnus' Lounge vouchers.

...all you have to do is take a photograph on board a NorthLink ferry or snap one of our fleet in a scenic location - the more creative you are with your lens, the better!

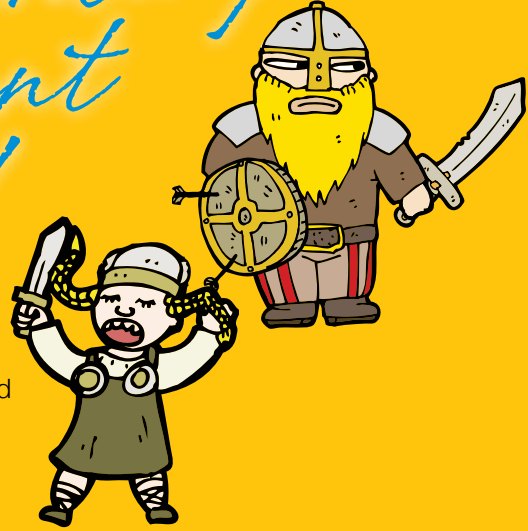
Simply email your high-resolution image to webmaster@northlinkferries.co.uk by Sunday 28th September 2014. The best photographs will be selected and winners notified by Sunday 5th October 2014.

Please note, NorthLink Ferries reserves the right to use any submitted photography for marketing purposes.

*Prizes are limited to one per person and include up to four passengers travelling.

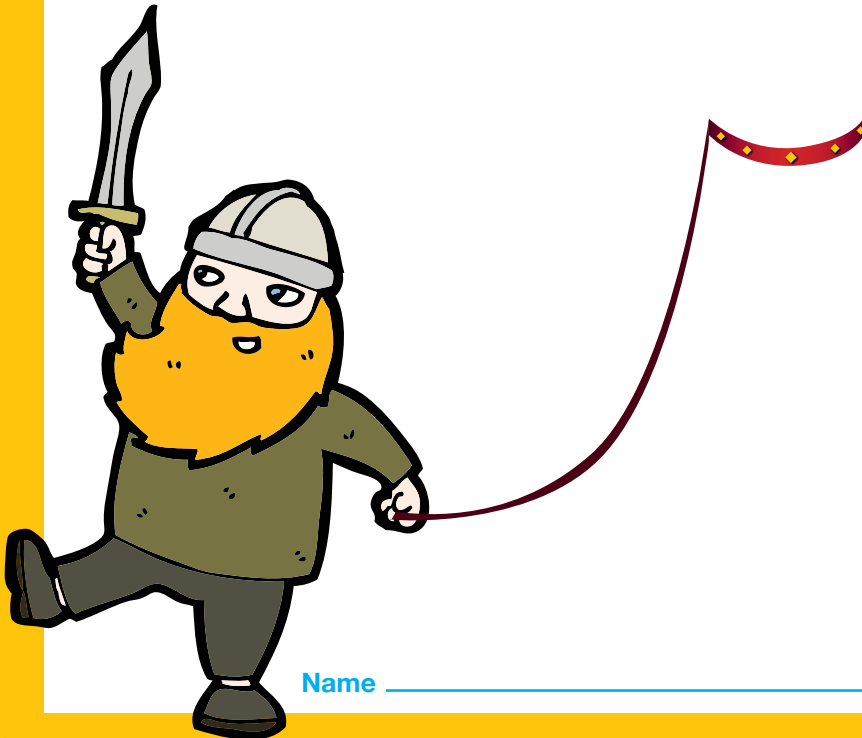


Kids... The Vikklings are on the hunt for a new pet!



What do you think their new pet should look like? Simply draw him/her in the space below and hand in at reception to receive a small prize. Your drawing will then be displayed on board for our passengers to enjoy.

Happy drawing!



Name _____ Age _____

Succulent salmon from the Northern Isles

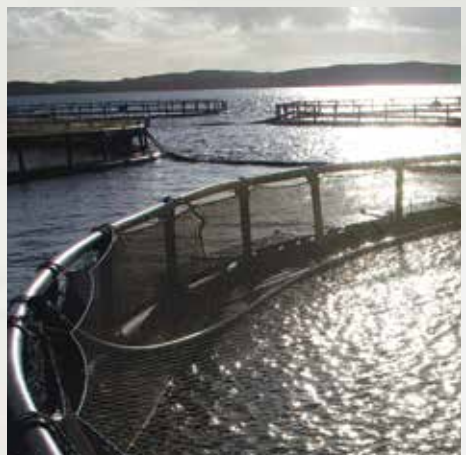
The Northern Isles have a long tradition of harvesting food from the sea – dating back to the time of the Viking settlers of the 14th century. Today, the fish industry remains an important part of its local economy, worth millions of pounds and providing countless jobs.

Salmon is one of the most popular fish produced in Shetland and Orkney, famous in the UK and across the world for its beautiful flavour and texture.

All salmon in Shetland and Orkney is reared in the wild waters which have a powerful, surging current that provide a fast-flowing and clean habitat for the fish to live in. Constantly swimming against the tide, salmon from around the Northern Isles grow to become the strongest and healthiest of fish. This environment makes the perfect salmon, as recognised by many international accreditors. Year after year it wins multiple awards for freshness and superb quality.



Not only available on the islands, Shetland and Orkney salmon can also be found across the UK. Grieg Seafood Hjaltland, the largest producer of salmon in Shetland, supplies a number of salmon products across the country as part of its Wildwaters range, including the finest fillets and smoked salmon varieties flavoured with spices. The best quality about salmon from the Northern Isles is its versatility – baked, grilled, fried or even enjoyable raw. It can be served on its own or combined with flavours such as garlic, fresh lemon and chilli. Over the page, we provide you with some foodie inspiration for your next dish.





Recipe!

Fresh Salmon Fillet

For the ingredients, you will need:

- 2 salmon fillets, about 140g/5oz each
- Grated zest of one lemon and one lime
- A sprig of parsley
- A side salad
- A hollandaise sauce
- Finely chopped chive and dill to serve

To prepare this refreshing dish:

1. Season the Salmon fillets with salt and pepper, and sprinkle with the grated lemon and lime zest. Cover the salmon and steam for 8 minutes.
2. In the meantime, heat the hollandaise sauce gently and mix in the finely chopped chive and dill.
3. Once the fish is cooked, remove it from the steamer and serve the hollandaise sauce generously over the salmon fillet. Garnish with a side salad and finish with a sprig of parsley. Enjoy!

Fore! Golf ahoy

The spectacular coasts and countryside around the North of Scotland boast some of the most dramatic and challenging golf courses in the country.

Orkney and Shetland also play host to some of Scotland's most scenic golf courses. Whether participating in one of the many Open competitions or taking part in the famous midnight golf held at midsummer, golf enthusiasts from around the world have made the pilgrimage to these islands to play.

Here we choose our favourite courses just a short hop from our ports.

ABERDEEN

Royal Aberdeen Golf Club, on the links by the Silver City's golden sands, plays host to the Aberdeen Asset Management Scottish Open on July 10-13.

Dating back to 1780, the Club comprises the Balgownie and Silverburn courses and has welcomed many major players, among them Morris, Jacklin and Norman.

Visitors who live at least 100 miles from the course can play the Balgownie championship course, as long as they have a handicap of 24 or under.

Newmachar Golf Club, on the outskirts of Aberdeen, only five miles from the international airport and the village of Dyce, is home to two 18 hole golf courses as well as a spacious driving range and a short-game practice area.

The par 72, SSS 74, Hawkshill course was designed by Dave Thomas and endorsed by Peter Alliss. It is also regarded as one of the toughest tests of golf in the area. Major championships have been hosted here, including the Scottish Professional Championship and the Scottish Seniors Open.

Meanwhile, the Swailend course, par 72, SSS 71, was also designed by Dave Thomas but is slightly less demanding than the Hawkshill course, although still a great test for golfers of differing standards.



ORKNEY

Stromness Golf Club, is one of the best and most well-known courses on Scotland's islands and is a stunning seaside parkland course. The club, which offers golfers the chance to play midnight golf, holds a variety of competitions all year round. The main competition is undoubtedly the Stromness Open, which for the past 25 years has attracted an entry list of up to 132 from all over the UK with some even making the trip from Kenya, Canada, South Africa and Australia. The popular course boasts stunning views of Scapa Flow.

CAITHNESS

Reay Golf Club lies on the edge of Sandside Bay with panoramic views of the Pentland Firth and North Atlantic from every hole on the course.

The course is a true example of a links course and its exposed location and challenging conditions call for real skill – by the end of the round you will have needed every shot in your bag, says the club, and even one you didn't know you had.

Renowned golf course architect Donald Steele once said that Reay, "in a different location... would enjoy worldwide acclaim." But it is just that location that marks it out, as the most northerly 18 hole links course on the British mainland.

Wick Golf Club is the oldest established golf club in the Highlands and a major bonus for visitors is that there is rarely a need to prearrange a tee time and there are no time limitations on a round – just turn up and enjoy the experience.

The course, a traditional 18-hole links layout, is playable all year round with rarely any winter tees or greens in operation.

Spectacular views abound around the course with perhaps the best saved for the 18th tee – an awesome panorama of Sinclair Bay's unspoiled white sands and its four historic castles overlooking the sea.

SHETLAND

Whalsay Golf Club is famous for being the northernmost golf course in the UK. Set in a unique location and bordered by the sea on both sides, the course boasts unrivalled spectacular coastal scenery. With such tranquil surroundings along with the golfing challenges on offer, Whalsay Golf Course is truly one of a kind.

Club membership has increased rapidly over the years and until 1989 dedicated club members carried out all maintenance work on the course on a voluntary basis. The exciting annual inter county golf match versus Orkney is held in Whalsay every four years and the club is also host to the Wilson Cup every eight years.



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what you imagine...*



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