

Northern Lights



PLUS

.....
Children's Section

Lighthouse
Cover Story:
Dunnet Head

INSIDE

.....
Diving in Scapa Flow
Island Innovation
Meet Shetland's Ponies



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Welcome

A warm welcome to NorthLink Ferries and to *Northern Lights* - our on board magazine.

After a great 2015 supporting the Year of Food and Drink we have continued to work this year with Orkney, Shetland and North East based suppliers to reflect wherever possible the very best food and drink available. Be sure not to miss many of these included in our new menu and also available in the on board bars and shops.

This year is the Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design and when visiting Orkney and Shetland we have plenty of choice from amongst some of Scotland's best landmarks including Skara Brae and Jarlshof, Mousa Broch and St Magnus Cathedral, to name but a few.

More modern examples worthy of note of course are the Pier Arts Centre in Stromness and the Shetland Museum and Archives at Hay's Dock in Lerwick. You decide for yourself, but please enjoy.

We've got a great competition running this issue with a fantastic prize to celebrate the Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design. An Orkney Chair commissioned by NorthLink Ferries could grace your home if you are the lucky winner. Good luck.

You may have noticed our football strips for sale in the on board shops, so whether your preference is the red of Orkney or the blue of Shetland there is an option for you. Let us know how far our strips, and indeed this magazine, get to on their travels and we'll feature some of the best on our social media pages. We look forward to seeing our Viking, Magnus, in some really exciting locations.

In this issue, I'm pleased to highlight the career and important role played by one of our senior officers, Mr Steve Lloyd, Chief Engineer. Steve and his team of engineering colleagues do a great job keeping our operational performance at a high standard. It's a pleasure to recognise their work, through Steve's contribution.

Finally if you are heading through or around Aberdeen, remember that the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route works are ramping up and to check the traffic updates before travelling.

Enjoy your crossing and please speak to one of my colleagues if you have any questions.



Stuart Garrett
Managing Director
Serco NorthLink Ferries



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Contact Stuart

I would welcome your feedback at any time. If you have any questions, then please contact me at speaktostuart@northlinkferries.co.uk

NorthLink Ferries

Stromness Ferry Terminal,
Ferry Road, Stromness,
Orkney, Scotland, KW16 3BH

Email: info@northlinkferries.co.uk
Web: www.northlinkferries.co.uk

Your chance to win a trip for two

Fancy escaping to Shetland's glimmering beaches or experiencing Orkney's wonderful wildlife? Alternatively you might find yourself heading south so here's the chance to win a trip for two, and it couldn't be easier to enter.

Just post a picture of yourself with the Northern Lights magazine or a NorthLink Ferries' product featuring our iconic Magnus logo in an eye-catching setting to the NorthLink Ferries Facebook page at www.facebook.com/northlinkferries



Geoff Leask at the Grand Canyon.

Terms and Conditions: Entries must be made by Monday 31st October. Package includes return travel on any route for two including car and two berth cabin with NorthLink Ferries until 30 June 2017. Cabins are available on overnight sailings only. The prize is subject to availability, non-transferable or refundable and no cash alternative will be offered. Upgrades are available upon request.

Orkney and the First World War



The British Navy at Scapa Flow

Commemorations that took place earlier this year for the Battle of Jutland were a poignant reminder of the lives lost during the First World War's only full-scale clash of battleships.

The battle was fought in the North Sea off the coast of Denmark's Jutland Peninsula, when the British Royal Navy's Grand Fleet came face-to-face with the Imperial German Navy's High Seas Fleet.

Over 100,000 sailors and 250 ships featured in the conflict. Between 31 May and 1 June 1916, British fleets located at Rosyth in Fife, Cromarty in the Scottish Highlands, and Scapa Flow in the waters between the Orkney Islands took to the seas under the leadership of Admiral Sir John Jellicoe and Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty.

At the end of the battle, 6,000 British Royal Navy and 2,500 German Navy men lost their lives, with a total of 23 ships destroyed.

Commemoration

To mark 100 years since WW1, a stunning ceramic poppy installation containing 888,246 poppies, made to honour every death in the British and Colonial forces of the First World War, was first

featured at the Tower of London in 2014. The installation coincided with the anniversary of the start of the war.

The iconic poppy sculpture, entitled 'Weeping Window', made its way to Orkney with NorthLink Ferries in April this year to commemorate the centenary of the Battle of Jutland.

Located at St. Magnus Cathedral in May and June, Orkney was the furthest location the poppies had travelled as part of their UK-wide tour.

Originally a concept by artist Paul Cummins, the installation was designed by Tom Piper and sees the ceramic poppies cascade from a window and spill out onto the ground below.

Part of 14-18NOW, a centenary art commission for the First World War, the programme is designed to allow the public to take a fresh look at the conflict and bring stories of the First World War to life.

The installation 'Weeping Window' in Orkney is part of Scotland's Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design, aimed at showcasing the country's achievements through a programme of special events.

Latest Community Activity

Orkney and Shetland may be located in the farthest reaches of the UK, but the islands' strong communities boast a wealth of festivals, sporting events and local fundraising efforts.

NorthLink Ferries is proud to support a range of activities and this year alone the company has provided sponsorship and travel support to more than 100 local groups and clubs through a continuing sponsorship programme.

In addition, the company has also worked closely with community organisations helping to grow the islands' cultural offering, which is something which attracts thousands of visitors each year.

Unique Wildlife Cruise

A partnership with Orkney Nature Festival during May offered nature lovers the chance to experience a unique wildlife cruise on board MV Hamnavoe. Travelling around the coastline of the scenic island of Hoy, the cruise provided a rare opportunity to spot birds and marine life.

More than 400 passengers joined the cruise and live commentary from the RSPB helped guests identify some of the wildlife species that could be spotted along the way.

Fundraising Success

NorthLink Ferries has got behind MV Hjaltland Shop Supervisor Kathryn Fullerton who has been fundraising for a series of Scottish charities. Last year Kathryn successfully raised more than £3,700 for Bloodwise with help from her colleagues and the generosity of people and businesses.

A number of events including a race night and raffle helped raise the funds for the Leukemia and Lymphoma charity which supports those affected by blood cancer and facilitates research.



This year Kathryn and the NorthLink Ferries crew are fundraising for award-winning charity Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland. A recent sponsored walk from Lerwick to Scalloway raised more than £2,500 for the charity with further events planned for later in the year.

To find out how you can get involved in the Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland fundraising or to make a donation, visit our on board shop.



Vikings Travel to New York

For many years NorthLink Ferries has supported Shetland's world-renowned fire festival, Up Helly Aa. This year the company was proud to help take the festival's Jarl Squad to New York.

More than 20 members of the Viking Jarl Squad were supported with travel to Aberdeen before flying out to New York for Scotland Week. The event takes place in April and celebrates the contributions made by Scottish-Americans to the United States.

Experience Dunnet Head Lighthouse

At the most northerly point in mainland Britain, even further north than the town of John o' Groats, surrounded by salty sea air and crashing North Sea waves, rests Dunnet Head Lighthouse.

With an enviable location on a peninsula in Caithness in the far north-west of the Scottish Highlands, the lighthouse commands views to the Orkney Islands and is less than 7 miles south of the nearest point on Orkney.

Perched on 300ft of sheer cliff face, Dunnet Head lighthouse was designed by Robert Stevenson, a member of the highly regarded Stevenson family who were well-known for their lighthouse designs. By the time Robert had come to create Dunnet Head, he had over 10 other successful lighthouse projects under his belt.

Built in 1831, the lighthouse stands at 66 feet tall and was run by a series of keepers until March 1989 when Dunnet Head became automated. It is now monitored remotely and maintained by the Northern Lighthouse Board.

While the lighthouse isn't open to the public, there are a range of walks and views which shouldn't be missed on a trip to this beautiful area of northern Scotland.

A lighthouse fit for royalty

The late Queen Mother, herself a fan of the beautiful and windswept Caithness area, viewed Dunnet Head Lighthouse several times during her visits to the Castle and Gardens of Mey. Her summer home in Mey was just a short drive to the lighthouse.

The last of these visits was in October 1979 when the Principal Lightkeeper at the time, Mr Malcolm, hosted the Queen Mother on a tour of the station followed by tea with the lightkeeper families who lived at the station.

The isolated charm of the Castle and Gardens of Mey was what drew the Queen Mother to come to its rescue while mourning the death of her husband in the 1950s. It was on the verge of being abandoned at the time.

The castle is still set out in the style specified by the Queen Mother when she began renovating the property. As well as guided tours, there is an animal centre, a new visitor centre and tea room as well as stunning gardens and grounds.

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The property opens for the summer season between 18 May and 30 September, with a short period of closure from 25 July to 9 August inclusive.

WWII radar station

Dunnet Head itself is of great historical importance. The area housed a radar station and several fortifications were built during this time to help protect the naval base at Scapa Flow in Orkney.

A mast station, radar station and artillery range were all developed and the remains of some of these buildings can be found just a short way from Dunnet Head Lighthouse.

An ornithologist's paradise

With hundreds of guillemots, razorbills and fulmars filling the air with bird song, Dunnet Head is a magical place for bird watchers and wildlife lovers.

Spring is when this RSPB seabird colony is at its busiest. Some of the region's best known birds, including kittiwakes and guillemots collect items to construct their

nests, whilst courtship dances take place over head.

As summer arrives, the chicks from spring are growing up and the cliffs become quieter as these little ones learn to fly and leave the nest.

On the ground, picturesque areas of coastal heather and grassland habitats exist, providing a home to some special little plants including spring quill, thrift and roseroot.

Visitors to the RSPB Dunnet Head site can park at the council run Dunnet Head car park nearby, journeying on foot along nature trails to enjoy the stunning cliff top views.



Step into Aberdeenshire and Caithness this Summer

There are a variety of events and agricultural shows taking place across the north of Scotland every year for the whole family to enjoy.

Without doubt some of the most memorable of these are Scotland's Highland Games, which celebrate traditions in heavy-weight athletics, dancing, music and food and drink. With a history going back over 200 years, Highland Games are an important part of Scotland's cultural heritage, and around 60 are celebrated across the country each year. The most famous of which has been visited by Her Majesty the Queen almost every year since she came to the throne in 1952.

The first games of the year start around May and run up until October. At many of the games you can expect to see and get involved in an array of activities, including Highland dancing, bagpipe competitions, sporting activities and the competitive tug-o-war and caber toss championships.

Summer has long been a busy season for many communities with farming and agricultural shows too. As well as being important places for farmers' to show, sell and trade livestock, they have become diverse and popular events for everyone to visit.

Braemar Highland Gathering Saturday 3 July

This is the largest and most prestigious event on the Highland Games calendar, with the Queen and other members from the Royal Family attending the event every year. Its origins date back to 1040 when Malcolm III of Scotland would test the strength of his army and soldiers.



Today, the gathering follows in these footsteps with a range of heavy-weight sports, hill and track races, as well as fun runs and sack races for children.

Set in the stunning surroundings of Royal Deeside, the landmark event attracted over 17,000 visitors last year to cheer on the various competitors and watch dozens of pipe bands and Highland dancers.

Caithness County Show Friday 15 and Saturday 16 July

One of the largest two-day agricultural shows in the highlands, the Caithness County Show showcases the best livestock, local produce and crafts from the north east of Scotland. With a competitive flower show for beginners right through to experts, along with a special children's section for young horticulturalists there's definitely something for everyone to enjoy.



Held in Thurso this year, the show takes place just a short car journey from Scrabster and the NorthLink Ferries terminal.

Halkirk Highland Games Sunday 31 July

The Halkirk Highland Games will be celebrating its 130th anniversary this summer. To mark this milestone it will be hosting the Highland Games Invitational Heavy Events Championship, which will see some of the world's strongest athletes compete in traditional sports such as the hammer throw and shot putt.



The event is expected to attract over 4,000 visitors and will be located in the village of Halkirk in Caithness, starting from 12:30pm.

Turriff Show Saturday 31 July to Monday 1 August

From a vintage car exhibition and farm machinery display, to cookery demonstrations and Highland dancing this three-day event is crammed full of things to do for all ages. This year there will even be an appearance by the Royal Signals White Helmets Motorcycle Display team.



2016 marks the 152nd show which will be held at The Haughs in Turriff, Aberdeenshire.

Black Isle Show Wednesday 3 to Thursday, 4 August

This show is the north east of Scotland's most established agricultural event. It will feature a range of activities from show jumping competitions, sheep shearing, a children's funfair and craft fayre. There's also the chance to get up close to Scotland's native horse and pony breeds.



This event will be held at the Mannsfield Showground in Ross-shire near Inverness.

With a host of exciting events on offer, you'll be sure to find something for you and your family to visit this summer.

Celebrating island innovation

Scotland's Year of Architecture, Innovation and Design is upon us. To celebrate, a host of events and activities showcasing the strength of Scotland's design and innovation heritage are planned for visitors, as well as locals, across the country.

From the telephone to the television, Scot's inventions, designs and buildings have had a lasting influence at home and abroad.

And while many might immediately think about grand city tower blocks and modernist public buildings, what Orkney and Shetland might lack in size and scale, they definitely make up for in quality and quantity.

Architecture in the Neolithic period

Offering some of the oldest and best preserved archaeology in the UK, Orkney and Shetland's historical sites can be considered some of the first pieces of architecture built in Scotland.

At over 5,000 years old, notable sites include that of Skara Brae in Orkney.

Considered to be one of the most remarkable sites in Europe, this Neolithic village revealed itself from sand dunes and coastal heathers during a particularly bad storm in 1850.

Following several excavations in later years, a total of eight linked dwellings show how people from this time designed and built their homes in reaction to their lifestyles and the tools available to them at the time.

Skara Brae, along with a chambered tomb named Maeshowe and two stone circles, the Ring of Brodgar and the Standing Stones of Stenness, were thought to be of such importance in telling the story of how people lived and worked that they were designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999. The group of



monuments together is named the Heart of Neolithic Orkney.

Mousa Broch off Shetland is another impressive landmark which still stands thousands of years on following its initial assembly during the Iron Age.

Standing at 13 metres high, this round tower is one of the best preserved prehistoric buildings in Europe, featuring an internal staircase from the first floor level to the top of the tower which offers a commanding view.



Inhabited since Neolithic times, the tower was a prestigious and defensive building which made it almost impossible to approach the island without being seen. Today the tower can be viewed whilst sailing on a short boat journey to the Island of Mousa where wildlife and colonies of seals and birds can also be spotted.



Stunning new creations

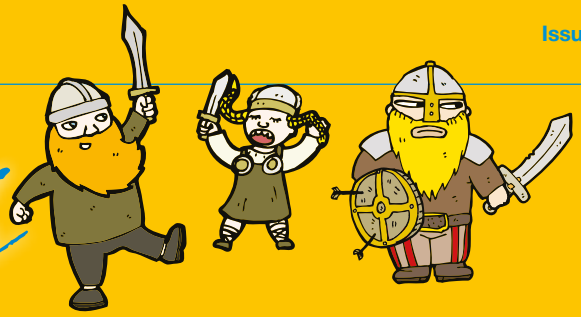
But not all archaeology and design is focused on the old, especially on the islands.

Shetland Museum and Archives sits on the restored historic Hay's Dock in Lerwick and holds extensive collections, telling the story of Shetland's heritage and culture. On launch, the five star visitor attraction was identified as one of the five best practice examples of high quality and sustainable architecture in Scotland.

The Scotstyle list includes Orkney's Pier Arts Centre, a five star rated art gallery and exhibition space in Stromness. The festival describes the building as respecting and enhancing the heritage of Stromness Waterfront by creating a building which 'both houses the collection within and becomes a crucial part of it'.

Both Shetland Museum and Archives and Pier Arts Centre are open to the public throughout the year.

Vikling word search



Can you find ten Orkney and Shetland words in our Northern Lights word search? See how many of the below you can spot:

BEACH DOLPHIN FERRY FIDDLE LIGHTHOUSE
FUDGE MAGNUS PONY PUFFIN VIKING

E	T	H	E	W	N	C	N	M	Y	M	Q
Z	S	B	A	I	P	O	I	A	C	C	F
R	C	U	F	A	R	R	H	G	C	K	P
Z	M	F	O	F	O	I	P	N	I	X	E
E	U	A	F	H	I	G	L	U	I	P	R
P	L	H	O	Q	T	D	O	S	H	O	Y
V	I	K	I	N	G	H	D	L	F	E	N
H	C	A	E	B	M	G	G	L	F	F	O
A	L	Z	P	G	T	E	J	I	E	T	P
L	N	C	S	K	D	E	C	R	L	B	S
X	A	B	T	A	E	U	R	I	O	U	Q
S	J	Q	L	V	X	Y	F	Y	F	M	E

Colouring Page

Please visit our on board shop for a range of colouring books to suit all ages





Super Sudoku

Relax in one of many comfortable areas on board with this brain teaser Sudoku puzzle.

8	9	2			3		1	4
				6	8		7	
4	5			8				1
		8				2		
1		3	7			5		
	7	1			6		5	
5		9	2				8	
6					7			9



Meet MV Hamnavoe's Chief Engineer Steve Lloyd



With over 40 years' maritime experience, Steve Lloyd is one of NorthLink Ferries most skilled crewmembers. Born in Lancashire, Steve has travelled the world visiting countries as far as Brazil and Australia, but with a passion for the island's beauty, history and culture, Orkney will always be where he calls home.

Tell us about how you got to where you are today

As a school leaver and young lad, I was persuaded by a lifelong friend to follow in his footsteps and go to sea in 1975. I was accepted for a cadetship as a Marine Engineer Officer with the Blue Star Line in Liverpool which presented opportunities to travel across the world to ports in New Zealand, Brazil and Argentina.

A few years later and I met my wife who is from Stromness in Orkney. Having spent a short summer holiday with her on the isles, I quickly fell in love with Orkney and set up home here. Since I have worked on the vessels operating out of Stromness and Kirkwall including NorthLink Ferries' MV Hamnavoe where I have been based since 2005.

What do your day-to-day responsibilities include?

As Chief Engineer, I am responsible for making sure that the vessel is in order, safe and secure. I lead a great team who work hard to ensure that we have the correct level of fuel, oil, spare parts and that everything runs smoothly.

I'm also in regular contact with our management team in Aberdeen and spend a lot of my day speaking with suppliers, contractors and of course my shipmates. Our team of engineers work

closely with the deck crewmembers and catering team so it's important that we all get along to provide a service that is safe and efficient for our passengers.

What is it about your job that you enjoy the most?

I really love the variety of my job. No day is the same and with a great team behind me, I really enjoy having the opportunity to work with a range of people and personalities.

I'm also really grateful to be able to work in a place that I love. Orkney is incredibly beautiful, full of fantastic people and things to see and do. It is a great place to both live and work.

How do you spend your free time?

My favourite hobby is target shooting. I practice in Kirkwall and Stromness and have taken part in a variety of competitions. Last summer I was lucky enough to travel with the Island Games team to the Jersey Games – I might not have won but it was a brilliant experience!

I also like to travel. My wife and I often take short breaks to visit our son and daughter who live down south as well as trips abroad – we've been to Thailand, Egypt, Italy and France which have all been lovely holiday destinations but there's nowhere like home in Orkney.

Dive into Orkney's Fascinating Scapa Flow

With military use of Scapa Flow predating the First World War, it comes as no surprise that this Orkney marine site features ships and aircraft sunken beneath its waters.

Home to the entire German Fleet scuttled on 21 June 1919, Scapa Flow is a diver's paradise boasting a range of ships which lie on the seabed ready for exploration.

Qualified scuba diver and underwater photographer, Simon Brown, has frequented these waters over recent years. He tells Northern Lights of one of his most recent visits and what he found lurking in the depths of Scapa Flow.

Nestled amongst the protected monuments of one of the world's top diving sites is a variety of unique wildlife thriving within each wreck's own ecosystem.

Like many of my visits to this fascinating place, I was closely followed by some of the North Sea's marine species as I moved between wrecks. In particular, a very inquisitive male Cuckoo Wrasse kept close whilst I floated above SMS Karlsruhe, his surprisingly tropical colours shining through the North Sea's green waters.

SMS Karlsruhe is the most damaged cruiser which remains in Scapa Flow and although one might think that this restricts accessibility, the ships open areas provide the perfect opportunity for exploration.

With her starboard situated in 25 metres of water, divers can easily spend up to an hour





investigating and carefully detecting the wreck trying to imagine how it once was. Like many of the ships lying on Scapa Flow's seabed, SMS Karlsruhe is covered in small growths including frilled anemone. Known for their long, smooth and cylindrical shape, these plant-like animals soften the appearance of war ships.

Other species which fill this rich artificial reef include ocean bottom animals such as starfish and urchins which inject vibrant colours, whilst crabs and lobsters hide away in the wreck's small nooks.

SMS Cöln, the best preserved vessel in Scapa Flow, has survived the North Sea's

marine life, salty water and of course the ravages of time. Here, bright orange golf ball-sized sponges can be seen dotted along the vessel's complete hull together with small crustaceans and coral.



The engine room of the ship, which sits at a 25 metre depth, is the perfect spot for small cod-like fish and hermit crabs who prefer darker, quieter spots compared to the brightly coloured sea squirts that line the deck.

Although this trip didn't allow me to encounter any larger species, divers have been known to spot friendly basking sharks and the odd seal which often cruise near the surface during warmer summer months.

Award Winning Recipe

Winner of the **2015 Orkney Amateur Masterchef** competition **Kerry Leask** has given us a sneak peak of one of her award-winning recipes.



Going head to head against fellow amateur cooks, Kerry was crowned champion of the Orkney Food & Drink challenge in September when the judges fell in love with her surf 'n' turf fishcake starter and raspberrylicious duck.

Her Orkney Fudge Pudding recipe below was the final dish in her repertoire which clearly won the sweet-toothed panel over.

Orkney Fudge Pudding, served with toffee sauce (serves two)

Ingredients

- 175g brown sugar
- 75g butter
- 1 egg
- ¼ teaspoon of vanilla extract
- 75g plain flour
- Pinch of salt
- 75ml double cream
- 1 pack of ginger-flavoured Orkney Fudge, chopped
- 2 tablespoons of ginger syrup (can be taken from a jar of stem ginger)



For the sauce, add 100g brown sugar and double cream to a medium saucepan and mix well. Add the Orkney Fudge along with the syrup and simmer for three minutes until thick.

Remove the mixture from the heat and pour into a bowl before storing in a fridge for six hours or overnight.

When ready to make the sponge, preheat the oven at 180°C and grease two round moulds.

Beat the butter and remaining sugar until fluffy before adding the egg, vanilla extract, sifted flour and salt. Mix well.

Divide half of the mixture between the two moulds and add a tablespoon of the cold toffee sauce to each. Top up with the remaining sponge mixtures and cook for 20 minutes.

Once the sponge is cooked through, tip out each mould and serve along with the extra toffee sauce which can be heated in the microwave or gently in a saucepan.

Birdlife on the Northern Isles



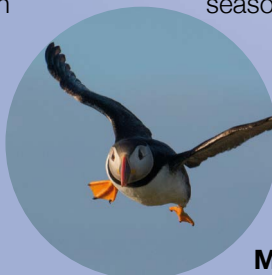
On the edge of towering cliffs, or nestled within farmland, over 100 native and migrating bird species can be found on the Northern Isles.

With its diverse range of habitats, the islands are some of the best locations for sightseers and bird watchers to spot puffins, gannets, guillemots and short-eared owls to name but a few at a range of seabird sites and open moorland.



Sea cliffs and coastlines: On the coastal cliffs you'll be able to spot a collection of birds, including fulmars, guillemots and kittiwakes. The signature puffin is likely to be seen in Shetland and Orkney from March as it prepares for breeding and feeding seasons.

Nature's calendar provides the islands with ever-changing collections of bird species throughout the year, but there's no better time to experience these than during the spring breeding and summer feeding seasons, when the islands are bursting into life.



Wetlands: In the summer months you'll see many wildfowl and waders breeding in the islands' wetlands. These are usually members of the duck and geese families.

In the winter months you might be lucky enough to capture the breath-taking sight of thousands of migrating birds in flight as they set off on their vast journeys home.



Moorlands: The moors provide ideal hunting ground for hen harriers, short-eared owls and red-throated divers. Farmland is well managed to support buntings, finches and the illusive corncrakes that can be occasionally spotted at night.

For beginners and experts, the range of birdlife is truly varied. The following are some of the unrivalled natural environments that you might catch a glimpse on your Northern Isles adventure:



On board: All breeding birds such as puffins, razorbills, guillemots and fulmars can often be seen soaring along the wave contours, with some nesting on the Old Man of Hoy, which can be viewed while sailing passed on the MV Hamnavoe.

With over 13 RSPB reserves across Orkney and Shetland you'll be sure to capture some of these fantastic species throughout your journey and beyond.

The Northern Isles - a local's guide

Home to some of Europe's finest archaeological sites, host to craft trails offering local arts, and providing a habitat for the most remarkable seabird sites, the Northern Isles is one of the most unique places to visit in the UK.

Most visitors travelling to the islands will have the most well-known island attractions already marked on their maps as they set sail from mainland Scotland. From Orkney's Neolithic village of Skara Brae to Shetland's prehistoric Norse settlement of Jarlshof, these locations are truly fascinating and definitely not to be missed.

But there are also hidden gems, places that might only be found off the beaten track and which are definitely worthy of consideration during a trip to the Isles.

Orkney: Unwind with birds of prey

Home to a quarter of the UK's hen harrier population, Orkney is one of the top spots to see these majestic birds of prey.

Just a short walk from Norseman's Village in Rendall, The Eddie Balfour Hide at Cottascarth offers the perfect location to see hen harriers dance overhead whilst taking in the backdrop scenery of rugged moorland and catching a glimpse of other neighbouring wildlife inhabitants.

Resembling an old croft, the hide's interior features a mural by artist Anne Bignall alongside pictures drawn by pupils from Firth Primary School.

Shetland: Enjoy a tippie at the UK's most northerly brewery

Located on Unst, Britain's northernmost inhabited island, Valhalla Brewery celebrates its 10 year anniversary in 2017. Offering brewery tours and tastings of six fine ales produced on the site, the brewery was named after Norse god Odin's celestial great hall. It was here that the bodies of Viking warriors were said to be revived by a horn full of ale.

Travelling to Unst from Shetland's capital of Lerwick takes between 1.5 and 2 hours using Shetland's inter-island ferry service.

Orkney: Climb the UK's tallest lighthouse

Definitely not for the faint hearted, North Ronaldsay lighthouse is the tallest land based lighthouse in the UK and stands at 109 feet. Offering stunning views of Orkney's northernmost island, visitors can climb the 176 lighthouse steps to the lamp as part of organised tours booked through the lighthouse visitor centre.

A visit encompasses an exhibition of the building's history, along with activities suitable for children including learning about Morse code.



Shetland: Join an annual celebration of island wool

Shetland Wool Week is inspired by Shetland's world-class wool industry, the islands' farming communities and the native sheep that live in the subarctic archipelago 170km north of Mainland Scotland.

Attracting visitors from around the world the festival includes exhibitions, classes and events across the islands covering weaving, dying, spinning and lace knitting.

Running this year from the end of September to the beginning of October, the organisers of the annual event provide a unique hat knitting pattern designed for the event, with Wool Week attendees being able to wear their knits to identify each other during the week-long celebration.

Orkney – Paddle amongst nature

Designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest by Scottish Natural Heritage, Waulkmill Bay in Orphir can be found on Orkney's Mainland. This picture-perfect beach is one of the islands'

finest, featuring a long shallow sandy bay which is reached by a staircase (with banisters) down a cliff, followed by a short clamber over a small rocky area.

When the tide recedes much of Waulkmill Bay is covered with patches of sand and just a couple of inches of water, making it an ideal beach for paddling. Plus, the surrounding heather and shrub land is one of the best habitats on the islands for moths and butterflies.

Shetland – Discover BBC series Shetland's filming locations

The BBC TV series *Shetland* has attracted attention from as far as Australia and continues to bring a glimpse of the Northern Isles to people across the globe. Past series' included taking in Fair Isle's Bird Observatory and Guest House and featuring Shetland's Croft House Museum.

This series saw the UK's largest active sand tombolo of St Ninian's Isle used as a location, as well as NorthLink Ferries' very own MV Hrossey as it sailed between Aberdeen and Lerwick.

Take to the isles by sea kayak

For many there is no better way to explore the coastlines of the Northern Isles than by sea kayak.

Lined with caves, arches and tunnels, Shetland's shoreline offers the chance to spot wildlife that is best seen from the nooks and crannies of sea stacks.

Sea Kayak Shetland know their way around some of the best hidden spots on the coast, uncovering an array of terrain untouched by those inhabiting the land above.

Angus and Wendy Nicol first began providing a new perspective of the island when they took over the Sea Kayak Shetland business in 2010. Since then, the couple have been tailoring trips for those with little experience as well as challenging those with more of a feel for the sport.

Angus told NorthLink Ferries: "The conditions have to be just right to explore the caves and appreciate the sea stacks, but we can always adapt an itinerary dependent on the weather and sea-state. We have some great rural paddles on our doorstep so often the windy weather brings an opportunity to discover somewhere different and interesting.

"A few years ago, we ventured out with a couple keen to see just outside the harbour. Not long from the harbour entrance we spotted a pod of killer whales that performed beside us for

a considerable amount of time. It was a great experience and one we didn't expect so close to the shore.

"The weather completely changes how we see each location and our memories of that paddle. From grazing Shetland ponies by the shore to clear blue waters beneath jagged caves, the places we visit are different each time."

Those looking to experience sea kayaking for the first time are provided with everything they need for a paddle. Angus and Wendy ensure that every outing is comfortable and enjoyable.

For more information about Sea Kayak Shetland, visit www.seakayakshetland.co.uk



Meet Shetland's Ponies

As one of world's smallest horse breeds, the Shetland pony is much loved across the globe.

Standing at up to just 42 inches high as an adult, these remarkable and captivating animals are instantly recognisable, charming and endearing. Their warm winter coats and fuzzy manes carry a range of colours from chocolate brown and palomino to snow white and dapple grey, which gradually take a silky sheen as the months warm during summer.

For more than 4,000 years, Shetland has been home to these small ponies. Remarkably strong and sturdy for their size, the breed was once used as a workhorse to help crofting families cultivate land and transport peat from the hills.

With high winds and cold rain to bare, the ponies survived little feed and sparse living conditions much more than larger breeds such as the bulky cob. Their weather protective hair in the tail is known to have been strong enough to be used as fishing lines in the North Sea and their little hoofs robust enough to take on rough roads and rocky seascapes.

Today, Shetland ponies enjoy a peaceful and unrestricted life on the island's heathery hills. Often seen grazing by the roadside or frolicking on the beach, visitors can easily spot ponies as they travel across the island.

A favourite with young children due to their kind yet stubborn personality, Shetland ponies have become a much loved breed within the horse world and out with.

In 2013 mobile phone network provider Three, turned local Shetland resident, Socks the pony, into a global star overnight. A pony of many talents, Socks was seen moonwalking to Fleetwood Mac's 1988 Everywhere by more than seven million people on YouTube alone.

His stardom quickly put Shetland ponies, and the island itself, on the map growing the world's admiration for one of our smallest horses.





WIN – your chance to own an Orkney chair!



Our last edition of Northern Lights featured a fantastic story about the history of Orkney chairs. These wooden, handcrafted chairs have straw backs and are a unique part of Orkney's rich cultural heritage.

NorthLink Ferries is offering passengers the chance to WIN their very own Orkney chair created by local craftsman Robert H. Towers. This beautiful handmade sapele chair is a unique heirloom which will last for generations.



To enter the prize draw, please pick up an entry form at the ship's reception desk, answer a question and leave your contact details. **Completed entry forms should be returned to the ship's reception. A winner will be drawn at random on the 31st October 2016.**

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