

Northern Lights

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Discover more at www.northlinkferries.co.uk

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Welcome

Welcome on board. Whether you are enjoying our newly re-fitted Magnus Lounge, the Feast Restaurant or perhaps simply relaxing in either a pod, seat or cabin then you are very welcome. My colleagues are, as ever, on hand to help you if need be. A couple of recent initiatives of course mean you may need less assistance than previously. Firstly, our new Assa Abloy smart access cards have dramatically reduced key access failure rates and separately, our Customer Service Director, Billy Robb, has led on the introduction of Starlink WiFi – still accessed in the same manner, but with new enhanced connection capabilities.

Together with Paul Gellately, our HR Manager, I was delighted to recently attend the Investors in People Scotland day in Edinburgh. We proudly received, and indeed were the only employer present to do so, our IIP Platinum – We invest in people; IIP Gold – We invest in wellbeing; and an Investors in People for a number of years and to have been assessed and accredited in each category has indeed been a great achievement delivered by everyone in the business, on every vessel and at each location.

On page 10, you can read of the career path taken and the responsibilities owned by our colleague, Captain Stuart McCallum MNM, our Marine Manager, Designated Person Ashore and Company Security Officer. Stuart is a highly respected industry operator with a wealth of knowledge and operational experience. It is re-assuring to have such experience within our business.

However, and with an eye to the future, at the other end of their career path and setting out on their life adventures, we have been pleased to see Jude Hill, Callum McLeod and Lucas Baltrunas complete their apprenticeships in our engine department, with Jude moving into a core rating position. In mid-June, Cadets, Kai Collin and Connor Kyle, graduated from City of Glasgow College with their Higher National Certificate in Marine Engineering. They, along with all our colleagues who have embarked on a personal development programme, should be very proud of their achievements.

This summer will bring many unforgettable events, the Orkney 2025 Island Games amongst them. Tall Ships Aberdeen 2025 is also sure to provide a wonderful spectacle of sail within our operating port. For some participating, this may lead to career choices in the mercantile marine or associated professions. Good luck to them all and safe sailing.



Stuart Garrett
Stuart Garrett
Managing Director
Serco NorthLink Ferries

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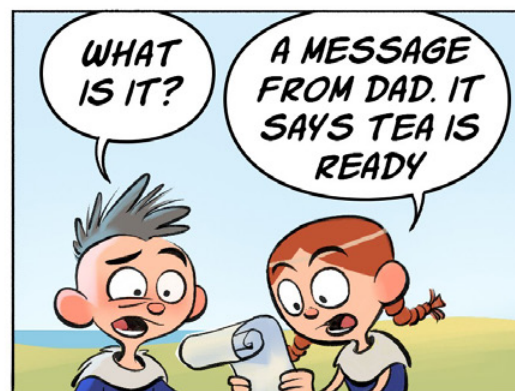
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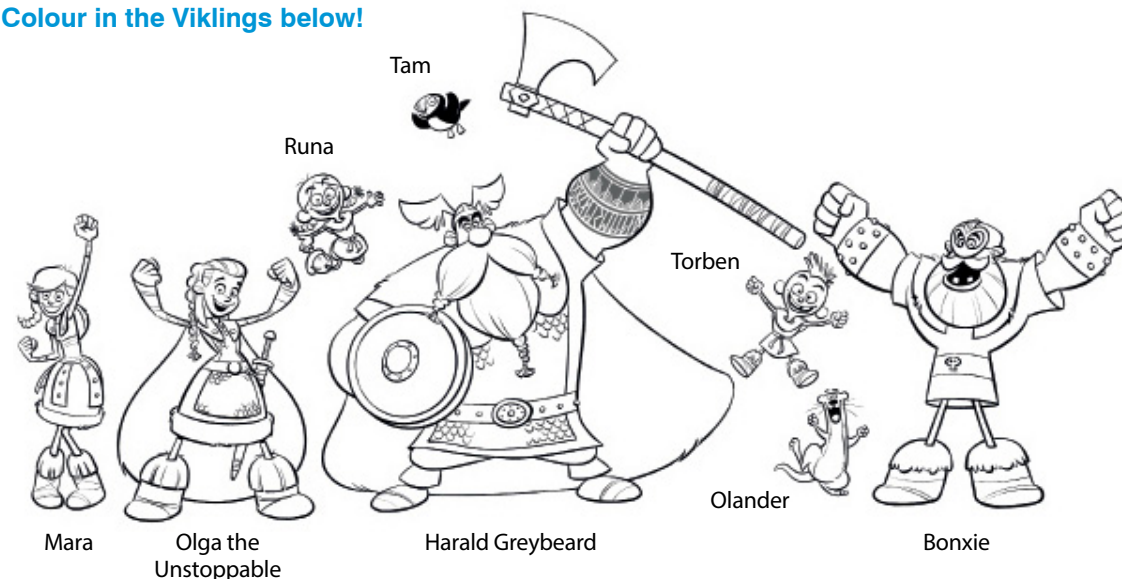
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Girdle Ness Lighthouse, Aberdeen

The Vikklings Alex Leonard – No.5



Colour in the Vikklings below!



Island hopping around Orkney

With over 70 islands, 20 of them inhabited, island hopping is a great way to experience the best of Orkney and discover the unique charm of each isle.

This handy guide introduces each island and highlights some of the top places to visit – perfect for helping you plan your island-hopping adventure!

Mainland Orkney

The largest of Orkney's islands, the Mainland is where you'll find famous Neolithic sites like Skara Brae and the Ring of Brodgar, the striking St Magnus Cathedral and an impressive stretch of cliffs at Yesnaby.

Hoy

Meaning 'high island', Hoy is great for hillwalking with its dramatic summits and is also home to the lovely Rackwick beach. Hike to the Old Man of Hoy, explore the Scapa Flow Museum or visit the Dwarfie Stane – a mysterious rock-cut tomb.

Flotta

This peaceful island played a strategic role in both world wars. Visit the Flotta Heritage Centre and Buchanan Battery to learn about its wartime history or visit the Cletts – a compelling pair of sea stacks.

Graemsay

Nicknamed the 'green isle', Graemsay is a tranquil island home to a pair of lighthouses. Explore fascinating wartime remnants at Graemsay Battery or visit Sandside Bay to spot seals.

Shapinsay

Just a short ferry ride from Kirkwall, Shapinsay is rich in history and beautiful landscapes. Highlights include the well-preserved Burroughston Broch, birdwatching at RSPB Mill Dam and the 5,000-year-old Mor Stein standing stone.

Stronsay

Known as the 'island of bays', Stronsay features long sandy beaches and dramatic cliffs; excellent for wildlife watching. Wander to the Vat of Kirbister (a spectacular natural arch), relax on Mill Bay or explore Whitehall village.

Sanday

Sanday is aptly named and famous for its beautiful beaches like Tresness and Cata Sand. Visit the unique, black and white striped Start Point Lighthouse or the 5,000-year-old Quoyness Chambered Cairn.

Westray

Hailed the 'Queen o' the Isles', Westray is where you'll find the Castle O'Burrian sea stack – one of the best places to see puffins in Orkney. Discover the historic ruins of Noltland Castle or take in breathtaking clifftop scenery at Noup Head.

Papa Westray

Take the world's shortest flight from Westray to Papay and visit the Knap of Howar – the oldest standing stone buildings in north-west Europe. The North Hill Nature Reserve is worth visiting for its rare wildflowers and teeming bird colonies.

North Ronaldsay

Orkney's northernmost island, North Ronaldsay is famous for its seaweed-eating sheep and the Sheep Dyke which encircles the island. Other highlights include Dennis Head Lighthouse – the tallest land-based lighthouse in Britain – and birdwatching at its bird observatory.

Eday

With the Red Head – a dramatic red sandstone cliff – sweeping moorlands and peaceful beaches, Eday is great for walkers. Don't miss the Vinquoy Chambered Cairn which is built into a hillside, or the Stone of Setter – Orkney's tallest standing stone!

Egilsay

Famous for its link to St Magnus, Egilsay features the 12th century St Magnus Church as well as a stone cenotaph marking his martyrdom. The Onziebust Nature Reserve is worth visiting too, where you can spot corncrakes, curlews and red shanks.

Rousay

Called the 'Egypt of the North', Rousay has over 160 archaeological treasures! Visit Midhowe Broch and Cairn – one of Orkney's best-preserved brochs and its largest tomb – or Taversoe Tuick, an unusual two-storey cairn.

Lamb Holm, Glimps Holm, Burray and South Ronaldsay

This chain of islands is linked to Mainland Orkney by the Churchill Barriers. Visit the stunning Italian Chapel on Lamb Holm, the beach and sunken blockship at Glimps Holm, and Burray's Fossil and Heritage Centre. South Ronaldsay offers lovely coastal walks. Explore the picturesque village of St Margaret's Hope or visit its imposing pair of wartime batteries at Hoxa Head.



Tresness Beach, Sanday



Noltland Castle, Westray



The Italian Chapel,
Lamb Holm



Midhowe Broch, Rousay



The story of Billy and Molly

From National Geographic and Silverback Films, 'Billy & Molly: An Otter Love Story' is a heart-warming documentary, available on Disney+, about the unlikely friendship between a wild otter and a man living in Shetland.

We had the pleasure of speaking with Billy about this remarkable story...



Could you tell us about your first encounter with Molly?

We live by the sea and one day I saw an otter fishing nearby. She'd catch a crab, eat it on the floating jetty in front of our house, then repeat. Curiosity got the better of me, so I sat where she was coming out of the water. As luck would have it, she came out with another crab and ate it in front of me. She paused, looked me in the eye, then went back to eating which wasn't normal – she should have scarpered!

Molly was really thin, so I left some fish out for her, and it disappeared. One day, as I put more out, she popped up right in front of me – I think that's when she realised where the fish was coming from. I spoke to Hillswick Wildlife Sanctuary and they said it was fine to continue feeding her – but not to domesticate her or let her inside the house!

What inspired you to share your story in a documentary?

It was never planned! We were building an extension and a guy helping with the groundwork saw Molly and was shocked. I told him the story, and he said



his friend Charlie Hamilton James was interested in otters. Charlie travelled from Bristol and spent a lot of time filming her. He loved her and came back a second time – it was only then I found out he was one of National Geographic's top photographers and filmmakers! He later asked to make a film about Molly. My instinct was to say no, but after speaking to my wife, we decided to go for it.

Charlie and I talked a lot about life, I enjoy getting to know folk on a deeper level. We spoke openly about the good and bad moments. Charlie used some of this information to make a slightly deeper story. There was a lot of trust involved but I'm delighted with how it turned out.

Your wife, Susan, narrated the film – how did that happen?

Charlie initially planned for someone else to narrate, but one day asked Susan to record a little bit. Although terrified, she agreed and was a natural! He set up a little studio in the spare room and it all just fell into place.

Can you describe one of your favourite memories with Molly?

The most special moment was realising she was pregnant. The goal was to feed her and get her back to health so she could continue being a wild otter. Seeing her go off, get pregnant and have her youngster was the most incredible thing and I helped to make it happen – it was immensely satisfying!

Did you give Molly's pup a name and do you still see them?

I called it Chip after the teacup from Beauty and the Beast. We still see them occasionally especially during winter when food is scarce, but she is completely wild now.

What do you hope viewers take away from the documentary?

I hope people enjoy Molly and the beauty of Shetland. However, there is a deeper message – that you can make a difference. Whether it's feeding birds during winter or an animal that looks hungry, just do what you can. There are several organisations in the UK that can give advice and guidance if needed.

Girdle Ness Lighthouse

NorthLink Ferries operate nightly sailings onboard the MV Hjalmland and MV Hrossey, which depart from Aberdeen in the evening and arrive in Shetland the following morning. As our ferries leave Aberdeen Harbour, they sail past a tall lighthouse on its starboard (right) side; this is Girdle Ness Lighthouse.

Girdle Ness is a windswept peninsula located minutes from the city centre in Torry (a suburb of Aberdeen), extending south of the entrance to Aberdeen Harbour. Aside from the lighthouse, the headland is also topped with an artillery battery and the challenging Balnagask Golf Course.

Following the wreckage of The Oscar, a whaling ship that sank off the Girdle Ness coast in 1813 where only two of the 45 crew survived, calls were made to establish a light in the area.

A unique design

Built twenty years later in October 1833, Girdle Ness Lighthouse has been helping ships navigate Aberdeen Harbour for almost 200 years.

The lighthouse tower reaches 121-feet-tall and has 182 steps to the top. It was designed by Robert Stevenson – whose family designed most of Scotland's lighthouses – and built by Aberdeen contractor, James Gibb.

When Girdle Ness Lighthouse was first built, it was hailed as having a cutting-edge design. In 1847, the Astronomer Royal, Sir George Airy, described it as 'the best lighthouse that I have seen'.

It was the only lighthouse in Scotland to feature a double light. The lights were set one above the other, at 115-feet and 185-feet above sea level. The lower light was positioned in a distinctive gallery built around one third up the tower, which is still visible today.

The unique double-light system remained until 1890, when the lower light was removed. The upper light was replaced with a powerful revolving light which flashed twice every twenty seconds and could be seen up to 22 miles away.

Girdle Ness in World War II

On 18 November 1944, this quiet headland was shaken by an unexpected explosion.

A drifting mine from the North Sea washed ashore and detonated near the lighthouse. The blast damaged doors and windows in the tower and adjoining lightkeeper's accommodation. Luckily, no one was injured, and the structure remained intact.

What to see around Girdle Ness

Although Girdle Ness Lighthouse was automated in 1991 and isn't open to the public, the surrounding area is well worth exploring. A peaceful coastal path links a number of interesting sites, perfect for walking with views of the North Sea.

Just across from the lighthouse stands the old foghorn, known locally as the 'Torry Coo'. It was installed in 1902 operating for 85 years, sounding warnings to ships when visibility dropped below five miles.

Further along the path is Torry Battery, a former artillery battery constructed in 1860 to defend the harbour from seaborne attacks. Among the ruins, you'll also find the Greyhope Bay Centre



MV Hrossey sailing past Girdle Ness



The Torry Coo foghorn

– an eco-conscious café and community space housed within a converted shipping container.

The elevated position of Torry Battery provides a fantastic lookout for dolphin spotting. There's an 80% chance of seeing dolphins playing or feeding at the harbour entrance on any given day, making it one of the UK's most reliable places for sightings!

A trio of lighthouses

In addition to Girdle Ness Lighthouse, two smaller lighthouses help guide vessels into the harbour. On its north side, the North Pier Lighthouse stands at the end of a 2,600-foot-long breakwater; while to the south, another lighthouse sits on the Aberdeen South Breakwater.

Keep a lookout as you sail in to or out of Aberdeen with NorthLink Ferries to see if you can spot all three lighthouses!

Stuart McCallum, Marine Manager

Tell us about yourself

I've been involved in the Marine industry since leaving school in 1985. I joined my first ship in Sydney at 16-years-old as a Deck Boy, sailing around Australia and the South Pacific Islands.

How did you get into your current role?

Before coming ashore, I was part of the new build teams as Delivery Master for two RoRo Ferries built in Spain and Commissioning Master for four RoRo Ferries built in Germany. This involved bringing the vessels into service, gaining all regulatory certification and crew familiarisation, before delivering them to the UK and handing over to operational crews.

After gaining my Master Mariner certification and sailing as Master for several years, I needed a fresh challenge. Coming ashore into management was the logical step as I wanted to remain in the industry. I started my current role at NorthLink Ferries in 2013 after a period as Marine Manager for a shipping company in Egypt.

What are your main duties?

My main duty is ensuring regulatory compliance on all our vessels, particularly with regards to safety and the environment.

My colleagues and I are currently working on the new build Freight-Flex project for the Northern Isles,

alongside the vessel owners. These vessels will replace our current Freight ships, offering more resilience and capacity for the lifeline service. It will be a busy but exciting few years until they arrive in 2029, closely followed by the Passenger vessel replacement programme.

What is the best part of your job?

Ensuring the company operates to the highest standards of compliance. When this is achieved through internal and external audits, it makes it all worthwhile. I also enjoy working with different individuals both ashore and onboard – encouraging and watching young future leaders progress through training and step-up opportunities is very fulfilling.

What would people find surprising about your job?

Perhaps the amount of engagement I have with industry bodies, such as the UK Chamber of Shipping, Maritime and Coastguard Agency and DNV (our classification society). These are industry decision-makers, so it's important to have input and be involved.

What do you do in your spare time?

I enjoy exploring the many historic areas around Aberdeen. When time allows, I visit Donegal on the West Coast of Ireland – it's an amazing place.

Recipe

Orange Biscuits recipe



This recipe for Orange Biscuits is perfect if you have a cocoa craving. They can be made quickly and easily with just a few ingredients, and the biscuits have a lovely zingy shortbread texture, and just the right amount of chocolate!

The recipe for this delicious treat came from Fintry Favourites, a recipe book published in 1983 from Fintry near Turriff in Aberdeenshire. It was donated by J. M. Norrie from Slackadale, and we thank the chef very much for sharing it.

It makes 15 biscuits in total.

Ingredients

- 100g (4oz) margarine
- 50g (2oz) caster sugar
- 125g (5oz) self-raising flour
- Grated rind of an orange
- 1 teaspoon orange juice (we squeezed the orange)
- 25g (1oz) chocolate chips or grated chocolate
- Chocolate for decoration

Method

1. Cream the margarine, sugar and orange rind in a bowl – we used our electric hand mixer to whisk it into a thick paste quickly.
2. Add the flour, juice and chocolate chips and mix it all together.
3. Wet your hands (the mixture is sticky) and roll the mixture into small balls. If you like to be precise, we made each one 20g in weight, which made 15 biscuits in total.
4. Place a little apart on a tray covered with baking paper and flatten with a wet fork.
5. Cook until golden brown in a fan oven for about 25 minutes at 160°C.
6. When the biscuits have cooled, decorate with melted chocolate.



Castles of Caithness: A Journey Through Time

Caithness, nestled in the far northeast of Scotland, is a treasure trove of historic castles, each echoing tales of Norse heritage, clan rivalries, and royal connections. Whether you're tracing the North Coast 500 or seeking a journey through time, here are six captivating castles in Caithness that promise a memorable visit.



Castle Sinclair Girnigoe

📍 OS Grid Reference: ND 3784 5493

Dramatically perched on cliffs north of Wick, this atmospheric ruin dates to the late 15th century. Built by William Sinclair, 2nd Earl of Caithness, it was a stronghold for Clan Sinclair and the site of family conflict, including the notorious imprisonment of John Sinclair by his own father. Though weathered by time and sea, preservation work by the Clan Sinclair Trust allows visitors to explore its remnants and take in sweeping views of Sinclair Bay.



Castle of Mey

📍 OS Grid Referewnce: ND 2893 7387

The best-preserved castle in Caithness, Mey was restored by Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother after she purchased it in 1952. Formerly known as Barrogill Castle, it became her beloved summer home. Located near John o'Groats, the castle is now open to the public from May to September, offering guided tours of its historic rooms, beautifully maintained gardens, a tearoom and visitor centre.



Castle of Old Wick

📍 OS Grid Reference: ND 368 487

Believed to date to the 12th century, this stark, lone tower stands on a narrow headland and is one of Scotland's oldest castles. The castle is thought to have been constructed by Earl Harald Maddadson, it once served as the mainland stronghold of the Norse-Scottish Earl of Orkney and Caithness. Though currently closed for safety inspections, it remains a powerful and photogenic site, accessible up to a viewpoint overlooking the ruins and the North Sea.



Keiss Castle

📍 OS Grid Reference: ND 3569 6164

Constructed in the late 16th century by George Sinclair, 5th Earl of Caithness, the castle served as a residence for the Sinclair family. Its strategic coastal position offers stunning views of the sea, making it a favourite spot for photographers and history enthusiasts alike. While the original structure is in ruins, a newer Keiss Castle was built nearby in the 18th century and remains a private residence.



Bucholie Castle

📍 OS Grid Reference: ND 3821 6583

One of Caithness's most adventurous castle visits, Bucholie stands on a wild clifftop reached by a narrow natural bridge. Originally built as Lambaborg around 1140 by the infamous Norse pirate Sweyn Asleifsson, it later passed to the Mowat family, who renamed it Bucholie. Now a dramatic ruin, it rewards those who make the remote trek with breathtaking views and echoes of Viking lore.



Dunbeath Castle

📍 OS Grid Reference: ND 1580 2826

The current structure, dating from the 17th century, was built on the site of an earlier medieval fortress. While the castle itself is privately owned and not open to the public, its dramatic location and architecture can be admired from surrounding viewpoints. The nearby village of Dunbeath offers additional historical sites, including the Dunbeath Heritage Centre, which celebrates the area's rich cultural heritage.

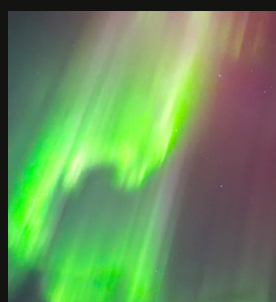
Exploring the castles of Caithness offers a unique glimpse into Scotland's storied past, from royal retreats to clan strongholds. Many of these sites are accessible year-round, though it's advisable to check opening times and access conditions, especially for those in remote or coastal locations.

Whether you're a history buff, architecture enthusiast, or simply seeking breathtaking landscapes, Caithness's castles provide an unforgettable journey through time.

The quiet romance of the Northern Isles



With windswept cliffs, starlit skies, and glistening sands, the Orkney and Shetland Islands offer a backdrop that feels timeless - perfect for sharing with someone special. Off Scotland's northern coast, these breathtaking isles invite you to slow down, explore, and experience a beauty that lingers long after you leave.



ORKNEY

Tidal island intrigue in Birsay

At low tide, walk together across the causeway to a tiny island steeped in Viking history. From May to July, puffins return to nest—loyal birds reuniting each year with their lifelong mate. Along the beach, search for Groatie Buckies, tiny shells said to bring wealth if carried in your pocket.

Whispers of the past at the Ring of Brodgar

Stand inside a 5,000-year-old stone circle as the sun sets. Nearby, the Odin Stone, now lost, once united lovers who clasped hands through its pierced hole and pledged eternal vows.

Love and hope in the Italian chapel

On Lamb Holm, Italian POWs built a chapel during WWII. Among them, blacksmith Giuseppe Palumbi fell for a local girl, Barbara, despite being married. Before returning to Italy, he left behind a tiny iron heart embedded in the chapel floor—a quiet symbol of love and loss.

Walking the wild edge at Yesnaby Cliffs

Follow cliff paths to a sea-stack. From May to July, spot the rare, lilac Primula Scotica—a symbol of beauty and resilience.

Under the stars at Rackwick Bay, Hoy

A secluded beach of pink boulders and towering cliffs feels like the world's edge. On clear nights, the sky fills with stars—perhaps even the Northern Lights.

Go island adventuring

Discover Orkney's smaller isles, from Hoy's cliffs to Sanday's sands and Rousay's archaeological treasures.

Watch the waves for selkies - Orkney's old tales speak of selkies who shed their sealskins, taking human form to steal the hearts of those who wander too close to shore. Keep your eyes open... your seal-spotting might turn into an unexpected love story.

SHETLAND

Book a romantic getaway

Imagine you and your beloved in the beautiful 16th-century Busta House Hotel, offering warm hospitality, a whisky-laden bar, roaring fires... and a ghostly love story.

Once home to the wealthy Giffords, tragedy struck in 1748 when four sons were lost at sea, leaving no male heir. An orphaned cousin, Barbara Pitcairn, claimed a secret marriage and child with the eldest son. Barbara was banished and her son raised as the heir, and she's reputed to haunt the hotel seeking them both.

Chase the sunset

Thanks to Shetland's northern latitude, sunsets here linger in a golden glow. Why not pack a picnic and chase a summer sunset at Eshaness, Minn Beach or Deepdale.

Book a private sauna

For the ultimate romantic retreat, book a private session at Haar Sauna. With views of St Ninian's Isle, the gentle heat and scent of woodsmoke create an intimate atmosphere.

Cool off with a dip in the Atlantic or sip something warm wrapped in a blanket for a rejuvenating experience.

Elope to Mousa Broch

Mousa Broch, the best-preserved Iron Age broch in Scotland was a bolthole for eloping Viking lovers.

In AD 900, two shipwrecked lovers from Norway eloped here and later settled in Iceland. Another story, in AD 1153, tells of Margaret (mother of Earl Harold) eloping to Mousa with her lover, Earl Erland Ungi. Earl Harold tried and failed to besiege the broch before eventually blessing the couple.

Seek out the stars

Few things are more romantic than stargazing – especially under Shetland's skies. If you're lucky, you might even see the aurora borealis (known locally as the mirrie dancers).

Coastal Escapes in Aberdeenshire

The Aberdeenshire coastline offers the perfect escape for a relaxing day trip or weekend getaway. From hidden gems to well-loved favourites, here are some spots we think you'll love to visit.



Collieston

Set around a picturesque harbour, Collieston is a small community tucked into a sheltered bay between Newburgh and Cruden Bay.

Collieston thrived as a fishing village during the 16th and 17th century becoming famed for its 'Collieston Speldings' (salted, sun-dried fish once sold throughout the UK). By the late 1700s, the region gained notoriety for smuggling, with contraband hidden in nearby caves and coves.

Today, the breakwaters built to protect fishing boats has inadvertently formed a sheltered golden beach ideal for families. Just north of the village is Forvie National Nature Reserve, a popular spot for walking and birdwatching.



Cruden Bay

Cruden Bay sits at the northern end of a long pink sandy beach – often praised as one of Scotland's best! Next to the beach is an excellent 18-hole golf course consistently ranked within the top 100 worldwide.

Cruden Bay is a good base for exploring the surrounding coastline. A short 1km walk from the village leads to the striking ruins of Slains Castle and less than 2 miles north is the Bullers of Buchan – an impressive stretch of cliffs with a large collapsed sea cave.

With a charming harbour, lovely beach, shops and places to eat, Cruden Bay makes for a perfect day out!



Crovie

Clinging to a narrow ledge between cliffs and the sea, Crovie (pronounced Crivvie) is one of Scotland's most distinctive coastal villages. With a single row of houses leaving just enough room for a footpath, it's the only village in the UK where driving is impossible!

Founded in the 1700s, Crovie was once a fishing community until a storm in 1953 ended its commercial activity. The village has remained mostly untouched since then, making it feel as though you are stepping back in time.

Crovie is a peaceful place to wander or admire from the viewpoint above, with panoramic views across the North Sea.



Gardenstown

Just along from Crovie, Gardenstown (known locally as Gamrie) is a charming cliffside village established in 1720 as a fishing port. It has evolved into a hub for artists with galleries and craft workshops to visit.

Gardenstown has expanded vertically from its harbour. Steep roads wind up into newer developments offering spectacular sea views.

Be sure to visit the small yet fascinating heritage centre to learn about the area's history. There are also lovely coastal walks, including a clifftop path linking Gardenstown to Crovie.



Pennan

Similar to Crovie, Pennan is another tiny village with a single row of whitewashed cottages nestled between cliffs and the sea.

Pennan rose to fame in the 1980s as the filming location for 'Local Hero' and the iconic red telephone box, which featured heavily in the movie, remains a popular photo opportunity for visitors.

Today, Pennan is a peaceful retreat with a welcoming inn, a quirky coffee shack, an art gallery as well as great opportunities to spot wildlife, with dolphins and grey seals often seen nearby.



Portsoy

Located between Cullen and Banff, Portsoy is one of the oldest harbours along Aberdeenshire's north coast, dating back to 1550.

Portsoy is best known for hosting the annual Scottish Traditional Boat Festival, which attracts thousands of visitors with restored sailing vessels, food and craft stalls, live music and entertainment.

The village has a great range of shops and places to eat. Enjoy award-winning ice cream, stroll along one of its two harbours or visit the Salmon Bothy Museum to explore Portsoy's maritime history.

The best hikes in Orkney and Shetland

The Orkney and Shetland Islands are truly magical - and sometimes the best way to appreciate them is to put on your hiking boots and explore them at a slower pace. Here is a quick guide to some of our favourite walks!

ORKNEY



1. The hills of Hoy

After arriving on Hoy, catch the bus or hike to the lovely Rackwick valley. Follow the hillside path past the Old Man of Hoy and St John's Head, one of the UK's tallest sea cliffs! Climb up the Culags - the 435-metre-high sister slope to Ward Hill - before descending and heading back to the ferry.



2. Swatland Drover's Road, West Mainland

One of the gentlest walks on this list, Swatland Drover's Road begins near the Merkister Hotel and leads through beautiful farmland. Once used to take cattle to market, the grassy path passes the Loch of Harray, the former Decca Station, an old church, Skeabrae (a wartime airfield) and ruined crofts.



3. Mull Head, Deerness

This fine circular hike begins at the Gloop, a collapsed sea cave. From there, hike to the Brough of Deerness. This low and wide grassy seastack can be climbed to explore the remains of a Norse chapel. Continue along the coast to Mull Head and the Covenanter's Memorial, before following the path inland back to the Gloop.



4. Walk around Graemsay

Take the ferry to this small green island, which most days you will have all to yourself! Follow the signposted coastal path past attractive beaches like Sandside, an old church, wartime gun emplacements and the Hoy High and Hoy Low Lighthouses.



5. Yesnaby to Skara Brae

Starting at Yesnaby car park, head north towards the Broch of Burwick - a dramatic Iron Age building situated on the cliff edge. Other highlights include Ramna Geo (a deep ravine), the rocky summit at Row Head and the Hole o' Rowe, before ending at the lovely beach at the Bay of Skail.



SHETLAND

1. The Knab, Lerwick

Starting at Market Cross, follow Commercial Street to Da Lodberries (famous as Jimmy Perez's house in Shetland). Continue along Twageos Road and head uphill via Gressy Loan or through the kirkyard to reach the Knab - a low cliff with fantastic views of Bressay and its lighthouse.



2. Culswick Broch

Drive to Culswick and park by the signpost to Culswick Methodist Chapel. Follow a farmer's track through sheep-dotted hills to reach the striking Culswick Broch, accessed by a causeway over a small loch. The surrounding coastline here is spectacular - many walkers extend their hike to take in more of it!



3. Hermaness, Unst

Park at Burrafirth and cross 2-miles of vast moorland to the Hermaness cliffs. The jagged coastline and sheer cliffs are home to a blizzard of birds. Don't miss Muckle Flugga - a series of shards rising from the ocean with a lighthouse built on top - or Out Stack, the UK's most northerly point.



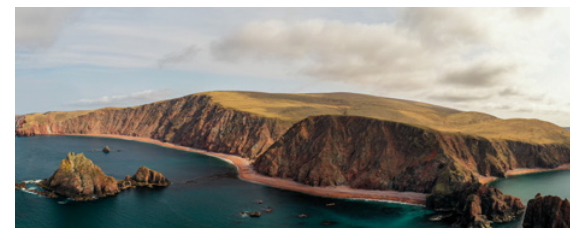
4. Ness of Burgi, South Mainland

One of our favourites for its dramatic scenery, this 1.5-mile walk near Sumburgh Head leads to the Ness of Burgi - one of just three Iron Age blockhouses in Shetland. To reach it, walkers must clamber over a series of jagged rocks - thankfully, there are posts and chain links to hold onto!



5. Ronas Hill and Da Lang Ayre

For adventurers, we recommend scaling Ronas Hill, the tallest point in Shetland at 450m with incredible panoramic views. Continue northwest following the Burn of Monius to Ketligill Head where you can access Da Lang Ayre - a 1,500-metre-long pink beach backed by massive cliffs. Don't forget to take a picnic along for this amazing 10-mile round trip!





Helpful information when travelling with NorthLink Ferries

We are here for you

NorthLink Ferries' passenger service team are dedicated to ensuring your sailing experience is safe and comfortable. Please don't hesitate to reach out to our crew, who are available to assist with any needs throughout your journey.

Supporting passengers with accessibility requirements

NorthLink ships and ports are built with accessibility in mind, offering specially designed cabins, lifts, accessible toilets and Changing Places facilities.

If you have any specific accessibility requirements, why not use WelcoMe to communicate your needs to NorthLink staff in advance? Find out more about this disability-aware customer service platform at <https://www.wel-co.me/northlink-ferries>

Travelling with pets

We are happy to accommodate pets on our ferries to Orkney and Shetland. Animals can either travel in your vehicle, in one of our pre-booked kennels, with you in a pet-friendly cabin or in the dog lounge on MV Hamnavoe.

Entertainment on board

There is plenty to keep you entertained on board including a games zone and cinema (MV Hrossey and MV Hjaltland), the Vikling's Den play area, and a shop stocking a range of Shetland and Orkney crafts and produce.

Relax with a drink in the midship bar or enjoy a delicious, locally sourced meal from the Feast Restaurant – view our menu at www.northlinkferries.co.uk/menu

Did you know?

- The MV Hjaltland and MV Hrossey travel the equivalent of almost three and a half trips around the world each year!
- The MV Hjaltland and MV Hrossey are named after the Old Norse names for Shetland and Orkney respectively. MV Hamnavoe is the Old Norse for Stromness, which means 'home port' or 'safe haven'.



www.northlinkferries.co.uk
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