Iceland, Shetland, and Faroe Islands
Sample Shore Excursions
Lerwick, Shetland Islands: Options Available

Archeological Site of Jarlshof: The remarkable archaeological site of Jarlshof, located near Shetland’s southern tip, was first uncovered by a violent storm in the winter of 1896/7, revealing an extraordinary settlement embracing at least 5,000 years of human history. The site contains a remarkable sequence of stone structures - late Neolithic houses, a Bronze-Age village, an Iron-Age broch or circular stone tower, wheelhouses, several Norse longhouses, a medieval farmstead, and the 16th-century laird’s house, which our guide will take us around.

On the way to Jarlshof we shall also pass through the rural townships of Fladdabister and, conditions permitting, pause to admire the view of the magnificent Mousa Broch, the tallest and best preserved broch in the world. We will then continue south down the west coast of the island, passing St. Ninian’s Isle, where the famous Pictish hoard of silver dating from the 9th century was found in 1958.

Castles and Ponies: We drive west to the old town of Scalloway, the original main town and second largest settlement on the island. On arrival in Scalloway, we will stop to visit the now roofless castle, which was built around 1,600 by the tyrant Earl Patrick Stewart, who used forced labour to build his residence and was executed in Edinburgh in 1615. You will then visit the fascinating local museum, which has a special display devoted to the “Shetland Bus” boats which travelled between Shetland and Norway to help the Norwegian Resistance during World War II. Or if you prefer, you may wander through Scalloway’s Main Street and view the waterfront at your leisure. Leaving Scalloway, we will travel through the Tingwall Valley, with its Norse heritage, pausing for a photo stop to view a small herd of Shetland ponies, hearing more of Shetland’s culture and heritage from our experienced local guide, on our way back to Lerwick.

Lerwick Walking Tour and Shetland Museum:
Starting from Victoria Pier, in the heart of the Old Town, we will be transported through the centuries with lively tales of Lerwick’s growth, merchant trading, fishing and shipping fleets, and smugglers. Visit the Old Tolbooth, built in 1770 and recently restored; it is used today as the RNLI station. Then see one of Shetland’s famous Lodberri - houses and warehouses on piers that were designed to allow the loading and unloading of goods from boats. In the 18th century, when Lerwick was the premier herring town in Northern Europe, these unique structures would have filled the shoreline. Today, we will visit one of the most picturesque left in the town, with its thick sea-battered walls, slipway, pier and fish-drying shed. We will then continue along the Hillhead to see the town’s narrow lanes (or ‘closses’) which run down to the waterfront and, subject to availability, visit Lerwick Town Hall, built in 1883, with its beautiful stained glass windows representing a pictorial narrative of Shetland’s history since Viking times. Finally, we will visit the Shetland Museum to learn more about the island’s heritage and culture. This award-winning museum has over 3,000 artefacts featuring a wealth of beautifully displayed exhibits.

Heimaey, Iceland: Options Available

Highlights of Heimaey: We will journey past the ruins of some old farmhouses in the Herjólfssdalur Valley to the scenic western part of the island, for an opportunity to view some of the outer islands of the archipelagos, including the youngest of them all, Surtsey, formed during a volcanic eruption in 1963 and now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The peninsula of Stórhöfði offers magnificent views whatever the weather, but on a clear day you may also catch a glimpse of some glaciers on the Icelandic mainland. We will also explore both of the island’s volcanoes: the five thousand-year-old Helgafell or “Holy Mountain”, and the considerably younger Eldfell or “Fire Mountain”, which erupted in 1973 making it necessary to evacuate the islanders to the mainland. A drive over the Eldfell lava field to the fort of Skansinn includes a traditional wooden stave church, donated to the people of Vestmannaeya by the state of Norway, to commemorate the millennium of Christianity in Iceland. The tour then concludes with a drive through the harbour town on our way back to the ship.

Skansinn and the Lava of Eldfell on Foot: Heimaey is the largest and only populated island in the Vestmannaeya archipelago, but its modest size makes a walking tour an ideal way to explore its rich history and natural beauty. The island’s recent past is especially notable for the enormous volcanic eruption of January 1973, which almost destroyed the naturally formed harbour (where our tour begins) forcing almost all of its 5,000 inhabitants to be evacuated to the mainland. From the harbour it’s just a short walk to Skansinn, site of an old fort built by orders of the Danish king in the 17th century to protect the Vestmannaeya islands from theft and foreign trade. Near to the fort is a traditional wooden stave church donated by Norway to commemorate the millennium of Christianity in Iceland. From here the walk continues across the lava fields of Eldfell (‘Fire Mountain’) formed a little over 40 years ago by the dramatic volcanic eruption. The edge of Eldfell provides a wonderful view over the harbour town, including the remains of some of the houses buried under lava and ash. Finally, the crater is the perfect place to learn more about how the power of nature has influenced the fate of this picturesque island over the millennia, before we walk back through town to our ship.

Reykjavik, Iceland: Options Available

Blue Lagoon: It’s not hard to see why National Geographic named the healing, tranquil waters of the Blue Lagoon one of the top 25 wonders in the world. On the way to this relaxing destination, the day will begin with a drive through Reykjavik, for some views of the city’s landmarks, including the domed-glass Perlan, known as the Pearl, and the more recently built concert and conference centre of Harpa. Leaving Reykjavik behind, the ride will continue through the lava fields of the Reykjanes peninsula to the Blue Lagoon, located amidst a beautiful lava field, seemingly in the middle of nowhere. The Blue Lagoon owes its existence to a nearby geothermal power plant that makes use of geothermal seawater replenished every 40 hours from a mile beneath the earth’s surface. The water is warm, mineral rich and is known to soothe and rejuvenate the skin. The aquamarine colour of the water, the steam and the lava landscape surrounding the Lagoon combine to create a unique and memorable atmosphere.

Discover Reykjavik: Beginning with Laugardalur Valley, the city’s main sports and recreational area, where
the Olympic sized open-air swimming pool is filled with geothermal water we will explore the city. The Árbaer open-air museum boasts more than 20 historic buildings, most of which have been relocated from central Reykjavík to form a town square, a village and a farm, making it a pleasant place to enjoy a walk. The museum was founded due to growing concern that “old Reykjavík” was disappearing forever, prompting the city council to create this public park. After the Árbaer Museum we will move onwards to one of the city’s most architecturally interesting buildings, Perlan (“The Pearl”) which features a huge dome of reflecting glass panels on a hollow steel frame. Perlan has a viewing platform on top of its hot-water tanks that extends full circle, offering splendid views over the city. The National Museum is dedicated to preserving Iceland’s cultural heritage from the time of its pioneering settlement right up to the present day. From here we will drive to the old quarter of Reykjavík to see some of its charming colourful houses, on our way to Hallgrímskirkja Church, one of the city’s most recognised landmarks.

Golden Circle Route: This full day journey begins with a drive across the ancient undulating lava fields of Mosfellshéð on the way to the UNESCO World Heritage site of Thingvellir National Park, situated in a rift valley with incredible views of the Reykjanes Ridge. Thingvellir is the only place in the world where any part of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, separating the Eurasian and North American plates, is above sea-level. This was where the settlers of Iceland first became a unified nation when its legislatice parliament, the Althing, was founded there in the year 930. In a country renowned for its numerous waterfalls, the Gullfoss Waterfall, or “Golden Waterfall”, is certainly the most famous. Here, a huge amount of water can be seen cascading down the rocks into a deep ravine, creating a powerful spectacle. Finally, the last of the “big three” attractions of the day will be the Geyser geothermal area, from where the word “geyser” originates. Strokkur is an explosive geyser that erupts every few minutes. Then finally, back in Reykjavík, there will be time for one last stop at the Perlan, or the Pearl, which has a viewing deck offering great panoramic views over Reykjavík, perfect for taking photos or just relaxing and enjoying the view.

Isafjordur, Iceland: Options Available
Vigur Island by Boat: This tour begins with a forty-minute boat ride around the coast of the island for an opportunity to see some of its abundant birdlife in their natural environment, before switching to a walking tour around some impressive man-made relics from Vigur’s traditional farming past. The island is home to Iceland’s oldest windmill, which was built in 1840 and used for the grinding of wheat imported from Denmark. Despite being decommissioned in 1917 the windmill has been carefully maintained – and has a two hundred-year-old, eight-oared rowing boat, which is still being used to ferry sheep to the mainland today. Another notable house was built in 1884 by a young priest, the descendants of whom still populate the island. Prior to returning to the mainland, coffee and cakes will be served in a mid-19th century cowshed that has been restored into a beautiful and welcoming reception area. Please note that after mid-August the sighting of sea birds cannot be guaranteed, due to fluctuations in seasonal weather.

Culture in the Westfjords: Bolungarvík and Ósvör Fisherman’s Hut is our first destination. This museum is housed in a series of traditional turf-and-stone shacks where the guide, dressed in a typical sheepskin outfit, will explain the history of the area and local methods for salting fish. Not far from the museum is the church of Hólskirkja or “the church on the hill”, built in 1908 and containing several interesting pieces, including two grand bells used to drive away the phantoms that supposedly still reside on the nearby heath. Tungudalur Valley is home to a beautiful waterfall and meadow where we will stop for some photo opportunities. After a leisurely stroll around Ísafjörður’s historic buildings, our last destination will be the Maritime Museum, which features an array of artefacts and information about the region’s fishing industry throughout the centuries. Here you will be able enjoy a snack of Icelandic refreshment - schnapps, dried fish or shark - whilst browsing the exhibits.

Akureyri, Iceland: Options Available
Jewels of the North: A popular tour encompassing the highlights of Northern Iceland, this journey begins with a drive along the picturesque coastline of Eyjafjörður Fjord to the Godafoss Waterfall or “Waterfall of the Gods”, referring to an important historical event in the year 1000, when Iceland officially became a Christian nation. Lake Mývatn is a magical location that is home to tens of thousands of birds, including, most notably, thirteen species of ducks. The area surrounding Mývatn is of tremendous geological interest and is one of the few places in the world where Marimo, also known as Cladophora ball, grows. The bubbling mud-pots and fumaroles of Námaskarð are a striking geothermal field full of sulphur deposits and boiling springs. With its incredible colours, vents blasting steam from the earth and the loud popping of air bubbles in the mud-pots, the experience is truly otherworldly. A short ride onwards is the mystical lava landscape of Dimmuborgir, a dramatic place where the strange formations of volcanic rock have provided inspiration for many Icelandic folktales. The name itself means “dark fortress”, an appropriately mystical epithet for this peculiar terrain. Finally, before heading back to Akureyri, we will visit the pseudo-craters of Skútustaðir, formed by explosions of gas during the cooling of boiling lava over the wetlands near the lake. These craters are a popular site for birdwatchers and are protected as a natural conservation area.

A Walk Through History: The tour begins with a leisurely stroll through the cultural centre known as “Art’s Alley” to the Church of Akureyri. Consecrated in 1940, Akureyrikirkja enjoys a prominent position at the edge of the hill overlooking the fjord. Inside are many interesting artefacts, including a stained glass window from England’s Coventry cathedral that was brought over to Akureyri for safekeeping during World War II. After leaving the church we will continue to explore the town’s distinctive architecture, which bears witness to Akureyri’s past as a trading post for Danish merchants during the colonial age. Our last stop will be a visit to Akureyri Museum, housing interesting and unique artefacts related to the town’s history.
Húsavík, Iceland

**Whale Watching:** Before heading onto the water, we will have time to visit the Húsavík Whale Museum for more information on the history, biology and habitat of these remarkable creatures. This popular non-profit attraction opened in 1997 as a trial exhibition, but has since been transferred to a permanent location inside an old slaughterhouse, providing 1,600 square metres of space for its displays, including the complete skeletons of several species of whale. After finishing at the Museum, we will join our friendly whale-spotting crew who will be able to provide many more details on the various species of whales and dolphins that we hope to spot during our boat trip into the wide waters of Skjálfandi Bay. Like all wild-nature experiences, sightings cannot be guaranteed, but given Húsavík’s reputation, the potential here is always excellent.

**Rosyth, Scotland, UK:** Options Available

**Stirling Castle:** Dramatically perched atop a 250-foot extinct volcano, Stirling Castle dates from the 15th and 16th centuries, when it was the principal residence for Scotland's monarchs. The castle's turbulent history is populated with a host of celebrated figures in Scotland's history, such as Robert the Bruce, William Wallace and Mary Queen of Scots. A great symbol of Scottish independence, this royal residence and fortress affords magnificent views from its rocky cliff. A self-guided tour takes you into the vast Great Hall, which dates to the Middle Ages and has been restored to its former glory. See the central turreted gatehouse, the great Parliament Hall, and the Royal Chapel, one of the earliest Renaissance buildings in Scotland. Photo opportunities abound as you immerse yourself in Scotland’s history; there are excellent views of the town of Stirling and the site of the battle of Bannockburn.

**The Royal Mile:** Alive with culture and history, the capital of Scotland is a thriving UNESCO World Heritage Site. This walking tour of the Royal Mile, Edinburgh’s oldest and most historic street, will take you from the Edinburgh Castle Esplanade to the Palace of Holyroodhouse, a route rich with medieval buildings, statues and monuments lining both sides of the street. The city’s dominant landmark is the 12th-century castle atop its rocky, extinct volcanic perch, which affords magnificent views of the city. From here we will walk to Castle Hill, which has a unique collection of ruins, before continuing down Royal Mile to see beautiful Gladstone’s Land, a superb example of early 17th-century architecture featuring an outside staircase, arcaded ground floor, oak shutters, leaded glass windows and crow-stepped gables. The charming Lady Stair’s House, also constructed in the 17th century, was once a private home, but today houses a literary museum devoted to the works of Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson. We will then walk through the elegant district of Canongate, with its quaint Tolbooth that is now a museum detailing life in 18th-century Edinburgh. The design on this building has a delightful series of small, delicate turrets. Finally, standing proudly at the end of Royal Mile, is the magnificent Palace of Holyroodhouse, the official residence of Our Majesty the Queen while in Scotland. This ornate, baroque palace is famously known as the home of Mary Queen of Scots and within its walls many dramatic episodes of her turbulent reign unfolded.

**SHORE EXCURSIONS:** Information on included and optional excursions is still pending. There are normally at least two options of included excursions available in each port of call. Some ports may also have optional excursions that can be purchased at additional cost.

**Torshavn, Faroe Islands:** Options available

**Torshavn:** This tour of Torshavn will take you to a scenic viewpoint overlooking the city, before visiting the Historical Museum to learn more about the Faroese from Viking to modern times. You will also take a stroll around the beautiful open-air museum “Hoyviksgardur” which includes a traditional farmhouse and outbuildings, before walking through the colourful warehouses, 18th-century cathedral and iconic turf-roofed homes of Tinganes’ old town.

**Kirkjubour:** The tiny ancient village of Kirkjubour is home to the late Middle Ages Saint Magnus Cathedral that dominates the landscape. Built in a Gothic style common to west Norway, its construction has puzzled many visitors. The large building was constructed from logs believed to have drifted to the island from Norway some 700 years ago(310,603),(664,736), while its turf roof and interior reflect the traditional lifestyle of a Faroese farm. Looking out from Kirkjubour, to the west of the island, we will also have magnificent views of Koltur, Hestur, Sandoy and Vágar, on our way to and from this important historical site.

**Kirkwall, Scotland, UK:** Options Available

**Ancient Treasures:** Passing the Standing Stones of Stenness, we will stop at the Ring of Brodgar - a huge ceremonial circle of stones dating back almost 5,000 years - before continuing to the similarly ancient village of Skara Brae, which was occupied from roughly 3180 BC to about 2500 BC. Here we will see the remarkable dwellings that were revealed from beneath sand dunes by storms only 150 years ago. There are eight in all, making it the most complete Neolithic village in Europe that also has a beautifully interpreted visitor centre for you to explore.

**Spirit of the South Isles:** Here we will drive over the first of the Churchill Barriers, built during the Second World War to protect Scapa Flow. We will then visit the beautiful, hand-painted Italian Chapel, built by Italian prisoners of war who were interned on the island during World War Two. The chapel stands as a lasting memorial to peace but also to the ingenuity and skill of the prisoners. Finally, we continue our journey to Highland Park to discover Orkney’s highly acclaimed 12-year-old malt whisky at the world’s most northerly whisky distillery, where there will be an opportunity to tour the distillery and try a wee dram!