



Tour Information



Prehistoric Orkney and Beyond





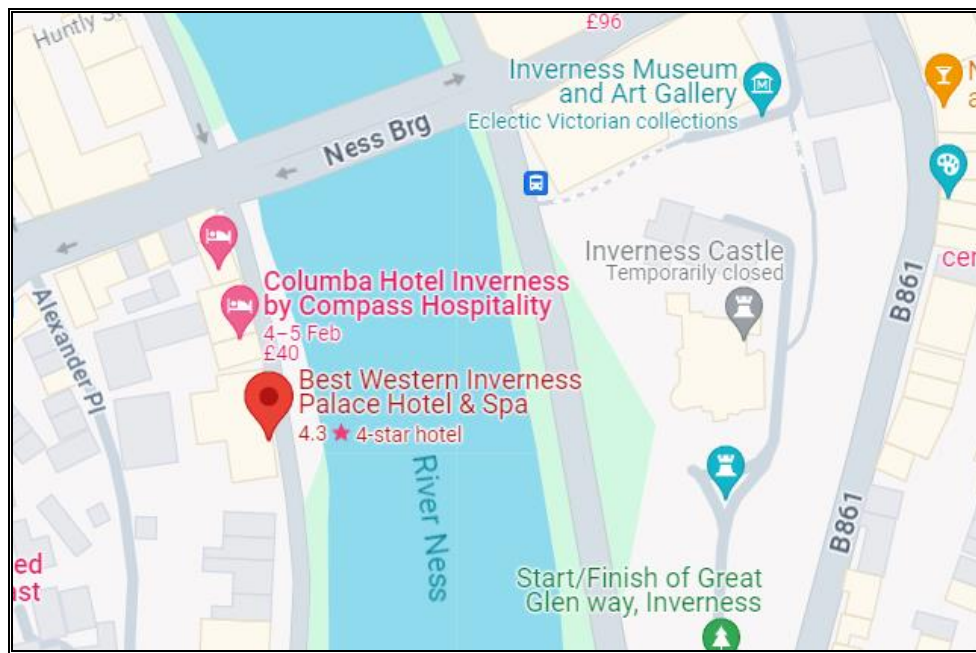
The tour commences and concludes at **The Best Western Palace Hotel and Spa, Inverness**

Palace Hotel & Spa,
8 Ness Walk,
Inverness,
IV3 5NG

Tel: 01463 223243

Transport

Please note that transport to the hotel is not included in the price of the tour.



Directions provided by the hotel

If you are travelling by car:

From Perth A9 On entering Inverness continue on the A9 towards the Kessock Bridge following the signs for Fort William (A82). On reaching the roundabout before Kessock Bridge stay in the left lane and take the 1st exit left. Staying in the left lane at all times follow the signs for Fort William, which will take you through 2 roundabouts. At the third roundabout take your first left (the graveyard will be on your left hand side), follow the road round to the left. Move in to the right hand lane and at the traffic lights take the right turn and head down the hill toward the river. Follow the road round to the left (the river will be on your right hand side) and follow the road all the way to the bridge. Again make sure you are in the right hand lane to make the right turn over the bridge, when crossing the bridge move into the left hand lane to take the first left as you come off the bridge. The Palace is 100 yards on the right hand side directly opposite the Castle. The car park entrance is on the right just after the main entrance at the front of the Hotel.

From Aberdeen A96 You will arrive at the roundabout, which you will leave at the 3rd exit left. This will take you up onto the A9 and approach again the Kessock Bridge. Follow the directions as if coming from Perth.

From Fort William A82 Follow the A82 into Inverness until you come to the river. Make sure you are in the right hand lane so you can turn right before the river onto Ness Walk. The river will then be on your left. The hotel is on the right.

From Wick or Thurso A9 Going over the Kessock Bridge make sure you are in the middle or right hand lane. You want to take the 3rd exit left and then follow the instructions as if coming from Perth.

If you are travelling by train:

The closest railway station is Inverness. Scotrail operates the trains to Inverness so for times, tickets and routes use this link. The station is approximately **8 minutes' walk** from the hotel.

Accommodation

The Best Western Palace Hotel and Spa, Inverness

Recently renovated, the four-star landmark hotel is located near the centre of town with restaurant, bar, spa and indoor swimming pool. Bedrooms are individually styled and comfortable with all modern amenities including en-suite bathroom, TV, telephone, free wifi, hairdryer and tea/coffee making facilities.

Please note if you choose to travel to Inverness by car, the hotel does not have car parking space to leave your vehicle for the duration of the tour. It is recommended by the hotel to park at the Cathedral Car Park which offers long stay parking from £5 per 24 hours payable directly at the car park.

Albert Hotel, Kirkwall

Four-star hotel with boutique-style rooms in the centre of town with restaurant and popular local "Bothy" bar. Bedrooms are comfortable with all modern amenities including en-suite bathroom, TV telephone, wifi, hairdryer and tea/coffee making facilities.

[Hotel Website](#)

Check-in and departure from the hotel

On the day of arrival, you will be able to check-in at the hotel from 15.00, and the tour manager will meet you in the evening at the welcome reception.

On the last day, the tour will not finish until approximately 17.00 so you should check with your tour manager, or the hotel reception, where luggage should be stored until your departure.

Extra nights

If you have booked to stay an extra night at the hotel, this is on bed and breakfast basis and check out from the hotel is at 11.00.

Dining

On the first night, second night and fourth night, a private **3-course** dinner with wine is served. On day 6 a lunch is included. Breakfast on all days of your stay is included in the price but meals other than these stated are not included.

Special requests

If you haven't already done so, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.

Places Visited

The island of Orkney is covered with archaeological remains of the people, who first came here over 5000 years ago and many of their remains survive. New archaeological sites are discovered every year and offer a fascinating insight into the lives of our forebears, especially when explored in the company of Dr David Saunders, whose knowledge of pre-history is matched only by his love for it and his enthusiasm to share his insight. Highlights include Skara Brae, Italian Chapel, Maeshowe; the finest chambered tomb in Western Europe, the Ring of Brodgar, Standing Stones of Stenness and Ness of Brodgar, where excavation is due to end in 2024, so this tour represents a last chance to visit the site.

Skara Brae

The Neolithic village of Skara Brae lies on the southern shore of the Bay o' Skail, in the West Mainland parish of Sandwick. It is one of Orkney's most-visited ancient sites and regarded by many as the most remarkable pre-historic monument in Europe. In the winter of 1850, when yet another storm battered Orkney, the combination of wind and extremely high tides stripped the grass from a large mound, then known as "Skerrabra" which revealed the outline of numerous stone buildings. The local laird, William Watt, of Skail, was intrigued and embarked on an excavation of the site, unearthing the remains of four ancient houses in 1868. However, the settlement was to then remain undisturbed until 1925, when another storm damaged some of the previously excavated structures. Further excavations followed between 1928 and 1930, when the dwellings we see today were revealed from their protective cocoons. The settlement has been dated to the late Neolithic period and appears to have been inhabited for approximately 600 years, between 3200BC and 2200BC. Today eight of the dwellings, which are linked together by a series of low, covered passages survive at Skara Brae as it has become known. The sand that covered the settlement for over 4,000 years, also preserved both the buildings and their contents. Not only are the walls of the structures still standing, but the alleyways are still roofed with their original stone slabs where the interior fittings of each house give a glimpse of life in Neolithic Orkney. But the elements that exposed Skara Brae to the world are also its greatest threat. The village remains under constant threat by coastal erosion and the onslaught of both sand and sea, but for now it is undoubtedly one of the key sights on Orkney.

[Skara Brae](#)

Skail House

Leaping forward some 5,000 years, our next visit is to Skail House, the finest 17th Century mansion in Orkney, overlooking the spectacular Bay of Skail. It was the home of William Graham Watt, the 7th Laird of Breckness, who unearthed the World-famous Neolithic village of Skara Brae in 1850. Originally built by Bishop George Graham in 1620, it has been added to by successive generations over the centuries, by 12 successive related Lairds, who have each added their contribution to the house and its fascinating contents – from Neolithic and Iron Age finds, to Captain Cook's dinner service, the Bishop's bed, and Stanley Cursiter paintings

[Skail House](#)

Broch of Gurness.

The Broch of Gurness is one of the most outstanding surviving examples of an Iron Age settlement that is unique to northern Scotland. Archaeological excavations in the early 20th century date the village to about 500-200BC. It comprises an entrance causeway, a circular broch tower and a settlement of small stone houses, with attached yards and sheds. Sometime after AD 100 the broch appears to have been abandoned where the site thereafter continues as a single farmstead until around the 8th century. In the 9th century, a Norse woman was buried at the site in a stone-lined grave with two bronze brooches and a sickle and knife made from iron. Other finds suggest that Norse men were buried here too. The broch is now in the care of Historic Environment Scotland.

[Broch of Gurness](#)

Stones of Stenness

The mysterious Stones of Stenness are thought to date to at least 3100BC. The complex is one of the earliest stone circles throughout Britain, reaching a maximum height of six metres. Although only four of the ring's 12 stones remain standing, the scale of the megaliths ensures the monument is visible for miles around. The focus of the interior was a large hearth. The stones were encircled by a large ditch and bank, the form of which has been lost over time by ploughing. The Stones of Stenness are part of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site, a series of important domestic and ritual monuments built 5000 years ago in the Orkney Islands.

[Stones of Stenness](#)

The Ring of Brodgar and The Ness of Brodgar

The Ring of Brodgar was discovered in 2003. The Ness of Brodgar site has been under excavation since 2004, revealing a massive complex of monumental Neolithic buildings dating from the centuries around 3000BC. Without parallel in Atlantic Europe, the Ness of Brodgar's three hectares are filled with huge stone structures containing spectacular finds. These have made the Ness one of the most important archaeological excavations in the world today, changing our understanding of the culture and beliefs of Neolithic Orkney and shining a new light on the prehistory of northern Europe.

The Ness of Brodgar is the thin strip of land that separates the lochs of Harray and Stenness. We will visit the dig site and have a guided tour with Dr David Saunders (please note direct access to the excavation is not possible). 2024 will be the final season of the digging taking place at the Ness of Brodgar.

For our 2025 departures we will include a guided, virtual tour of the Ness of Brodgar dig headquarters, led by the project director or another senior member of the team. The visit will include a walking tour around the site and with the aid of photographs etc all aspects of the discovery and excavation of the site will be explained as will its place in the wider context of other Neolithic sites and the surrounding World Heritage Area. A selection of some of the amazing artifacts discovered over the past 20 years will also be on show.

[Ring of Brodgar](#)

Maeshowe

Maeshowe is a chambered tomb that was built sometime before 2700BC. It is recognised as one of the most spectacular Neolithic buildings throughout Britain and one of the finest chambered tombs in Europe. During the Winter Solstice, the setting sun shines down the entrance passage (12m long) illuminating the central chamber. It also reveals the largest collection of runic inscriptions anywhere in the world, having been raided by Vikings in the mid-12th Century, who left their mark forever.

[Maeshowe](#)

Scapa Flow

Scapa Flow is a body of water about 120 square miles in area and with an average depth of 30 to 40 metres. The Orkney Mainland and South Isles encircle Scapa Flow, making it a sheltered harbour with easy access to both the North Sea and Atlantic Ocean. The name Scapa Flow comes from the Old Norse Skalpafloi, meaning 'bay of the long isthmus', which refers to the thin strip of land between Scapa Bay and the town of Kirkwall.

Scapa Flow has been used as a harbour since Viking times although it was not until the Napoleonic wars of the early 1800s that the Admiralty first took an interest in area. The harbour's extensive sheltered waters were selected as a suitable base from which the British fleet could patrol the North Sea. The Grand Fleet was based there from 1914 for much of the war and again, during World War II, the British fleet was stationed at Scapa Flow. In 1939 the battleship Royal Oak was sunk, with a loss of 833 lives, by a German submarine. New defensive measures were rapidly installed. Airfields were also constructed, and the islands on the east were joined to Mainland by concrete emplacements known as the Churchill Barriers. The base was finally closed in 1956.

[Scapa Flow](#)

Italian Chapel

The Italian Chapel is a beautiful, ornate Roman Catholic chapel on Lamb Holm in the Orkney Islands. It was built during World War II by Italian prisoners of war, who were housed on the previously uninhabited island while they constructed the Churchill Barriers to the east of Scapa Flow. Only the concrete foundations of the other buildings of the prisoner-of-war camp survive. The chapel was not completed until after the end of the war. It was restored in the 1960s and again in the 1990s and now a category A listed building.

[The Italian Chapel](#)

Kirkwall

Kirkwall is a bustling town, with an historic centre full of character. Officially a Royal Burgh since 1486, Kirkwall's name comes from the Norse 'Kirkjuvagr', meaning 'Church on the bay', and a Viking spirit still runs through the town, focused on the magnificent St Magnus Cathedral. Close to the cathedral you'll find the Bishop's and Earl's Palaces, and the Orkney Museum. It's a fascinating warren of exhibitions and artefacts, helping join the dots of thousands of years of history in these islands. Kirkwall's harbourfront is lovely spot to stop and watch the local fishing fleet heading in and out of Kirkwall Bay.

[Kirkwall](#)

Stromness

The captivating old town of Stromness is located on the shore of Hamnavoe, an inlet of Scapa Flow, and is the main ferry port on Orkney. The burgh of Stromness, on the west of Orkney's mainland, is the islands' major seaport. It first attracted sailors for the fine anchorage provided by Hamnavoe. It has been a haven for mariners for centuries, being the last port of call before many a transatlantic voyage. Now it is the arrival point for NorthLink Ferries from mainland Scotland.

[Stromness](#)

Scrabster

The origins of Scrabster date back to the age of the Vikings. Its natural harbour was perfect for their longships, and the seafaring Norsemen frequently landed there in the 11th century. Despite centuries of use as a port, it wasn't until the early 19th century before a proper pier was built. To provide deep water anchorage, Scrabster Harbour was constructed in 1841 by Thomas Telford. Further alterations and improvements to the harbour continued over the years. A major expansion to the harbour and construction of new fish market took place in the 1990s as Scrabster grew in importance as a fishing port. The most recent expansion to the harbour was in 2002 to accommodate the car-ferry Northlink service to Stromness, Orkney. It is by far the quickest way to get to the Orkney Mainland – the passage taking only 90 minutes. Apart from its role as a ferry terminal, Scrabster remains a top landing port in the fishing industry. Around 1000 vessels use the port annually.

[Scrabster](#)

Inverness

Inverness is a city on Scotland's northeast coast, where the River Ness meets the Moray Firth. It's the largest city and the cultural capital of the Scottish Highlands. Its Old Town features 19th-century Inverness Cathedral, the mostly 18th-century Old High Church and an indoor Victorian Market selling food, clothing and crafts. The contemporary Inverness Museum and Art Gallery traces local and Highland history. It was granted city status in 2000.

[Inverness](#)

Your Guide

David Saunders will be your guide and lecturer during the trip. David has an interest in all areas pre-historic. He undertakes archaeological excavations at Stonehenge and Marden Henge and has lectured throughout the UK. He has just published a book on animal movement across the Stonehenge landscape, "The Cursus Enigma." He has led several tours for Travel Editions in recent years which have been extremely well received.

David will give the following lectures during the tour: *'Prehistoric Orkney'* and *'Living in Neolithic Orkney'*.

Practical Information

Tour manager - Your tour manager will be on hand throughout the tour to ensure that everything operates according to plan. If you have any problems or questions, please see him or her immediately – it is often possible to resolve complaints or problems very quickly on the spot, and do everything to help you enjoy your holiday.

Tipping –To keep our tours affordable, we do not increase the tour price by adding in tips. However, in the tourism industry, there is a certain level of expectation that when receiving a good service, one does award with a tip. Tour Managers, Representatives, Guides and Drivers appreciate a tip at the end of their involvement with the tour, but this is entirely at your discretion. We believe in allowing you to tip according to your level of satisfaction with their services.

Grading – This tour has been graded as **Demanding**. This is due to the amount of walking at the sites visited, drop off points of the coach to the entrances and the uneven ground at the sites included on the tour.

Insurance

Although this is a UK holiday, please note that, should you cancel your holiday, the amount paid is non-refundable. For this reason, you may wish to take out insurance just in case an unforeseen event caused you to have to cancel the tour. As well as covering cancellations, your travel insurance will also cover your baggage and personal belongings in case they are lost or stolen.

Emergencies

Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:

020 7251 0045

Outside office hours (Mon-Fri 0900-1700), telephone our emergency staff on:

07841 023807 or 07831 133079

PLEASE USE THESE NUMBERS ONLY IN THE EVENT OF A GENUINE EMERGENCY.

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