

Wild Coasts of the British Isles

Cruise along the magnificent coastline of the British Isles, visiting the Hebrides, Northern & Southern Ireland, the Isle of Man, and the Jurassic Coast of England, on this 15-day expedition cruise aboard the hybrid-powered MS Maud.



Day 1: Dover

Your voyage departs from Dover this evening. Board the MS Maud in the afternoon, settle into your cabin, and get to know the ship and its facilities, before setting sail at approx. 6pm. As you leave Dover, relax and enjoy the views of the famous white cliffs and Dover Castle!

Day 2: At sea

Today is a relaxing day at sea. Sit and read, enjoy the sea views, and meet your expedition team, who will be on hand to discuss your forthcoming adventure with you and to answer any questions you may have.

Day 3: Fishguard, Wales

The first stop of your voyage will be in Fishguard, an idyllic Welsh fishing village that sits between the Pembrokeshire coast and the Preseli Hills. An attractive village surrounded by beautiful countryside, Fishguard is split into two halves by a steep winding hill, which separates the new town – situated on the cliff top with spectacular views – from the lower town and original harbour.

Fishguard has a long and storied history dating back as far as the 10th century Viking raids. It has been the site of several invasions, including what is sometimes referred to as “the last invasion of

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mainland Britain”, led by France at the tail end of the eighteenth century. Much of this history is still visible in Fishguard’s harbour and main street, which are a delight to explore.

Beyond its history, Fishguard also serves as a gateway to several nature walks along the Gwaun Valley, which you can choose to explore today either independently or on a guided excursion. Plant lovers might also like to explore the lovely Dyffryn Gernant Garden with its interesting mix of wild and cultivated planting, or Penlan Uchaf gardens, which is set around a working farm with views over the valley.



Day 4: Rathlin Island, Northern Ireland

Today will be spent exploring Rathlin Island, which is situated just off the coast of Northern Ireland.

Rathlin is a small, sparsely-populated island – only six miles long by one mile wide – that can be easily explored on foot or by bike (bikes can be hired locally during the summer months). Flanked by high cliffs, it offers fabulous ocean views. Bird lovers will enjoy a visit to the seabird centre for close up views of a variety of birds, including the endangered corncrake and Ireland’s only pair of breeding choughs. Colonies of seabirds make their home here from April to July, including puffin, guillemot, kittiwake, razorbill and fulmar.



Day 5: Isle of Iona, Scotland and Staffa Scotland

Today your voyage reaches the island of Iona, located off the west coast of Scotland in the Inner Hebrides.

The tiny island of Iona is believed to be the birthplace of Christianity in Scotland, where the Irish monk St. Columba settled and founded Iona Abbey in the 6th-century AD. The island is still a place of pilgrimage to this day, and the restored Abbey is one of Scotland's foremost historical sites, its ancient graveyard serving as the resting place for 48 of Scotland's kings. Iona is also an island of great scenic beauty, and a walk to Iona's highest point this morning will reveal fabulous views, including to the distant islands of the Outer Hebrides.

Returning to the MS Maud this afternoon, you'll enjoy a "scenic sail-by" of the Isle of Staffa (weather conditions allowing), one of the most immediately recognisable of the Inner Hebridean islands. Staffa is honeycombed with caverns and caves, the centrepiece of which is the enormous, cathedral-like Fingal's Cave, immortalised in Mendelssohn's famous 'Hebrides Overture'. Fingal's Cave is best viewed from the sea, from where the rising basalt columns (an extension of the Giant's Causeway in northern Ireland) and the contrasting colours of the water within the cave appear at their most impressive.

Day 6: Hirta Island, St Kilda (Scotland)

Today, if the weather permits, you will have the opportunity to explore St Kilda, a wild and remote archipelago famous for its dramatic sea stacks and sea cliffs.



The St Kilda archipelago has many natural attractions. The outlying islands and vertical stacks – remnants of a volcanic crater – provide ledges for thousands of nesting seabirds, while the surrounding waters are home to minke whale, sharks and dolphins. There are no trees on the islands, but plant life flourishes and more than 130 flowering plants may be found, several of which are endemic.

St Kilda also hides some interesting history. The largest of the St Kilda islands, Hirta, was once home to Britain's most remote community until it was evacuated in 1930. Some of the homes have since been restored, and a tiny museum, maintained by the National Trust for Scotland, provides a fascinating record of life on these exposed islands.

Day 7: Stornoway and Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides

Continuing your exploration of the wild Scottish coast, today will see you stop in Stornoway, on the Outer Hebridean island of Lewis.

Stornoway is the capital of Lewis, which is the most northerly and largest island of the Outer Hebrides. Originally a Viking settlement, the town is now a vibrant capital with art galleries, museums, a working harbour and a bustling waterfront. It is also where the famous Harris tweed

is woven! Overlooking the town is Lews Castle, built in 1847 by Sir James Matheson, who bought the entire island having made his fortune from the Chinese opium trade. Other island treasures include the Callanish Standing Stones, which archaeologists date to around 3000BC, and Carloway Broch, the remains of a pre-Roman fortification.



Day 8: Fort William, Scottish Highlands

This morning the MS Maud will sail into the spectacular Loch Linnhe, with its backdrop of mountains, lakes and estuaries, and its spectacular views of Ben Nevis. One of Scotland's largest sea lochs, Linnhe is richly endowed with marine life, and with a bit of luck you may spy a dolphin, seal or porpoise as you cruise through its waters. Keen birders will also enjoy spotting for many different sea birds, as well as the rare golden eagle and white-tailed eagle.

Using Fort William as a base, you'll have the opportunity to explore this most scenic region of the Scottish Highlands. There are a number of local points of interest. Within Fort William, the town museum, the Old Fort, and the churches of St. Andrew & St. Mary can be explored independently. Within easy reach of Fort William is Glenfinnan (with its fantastic 1000ft long viaduct), the Caledonian Canal, the pretty village of Glencoe, and the remains of Urquhart Castle, on the shores of Loch Ness.



Also within easy reach of Fort William, Glen Nevis offers a short walking trail through Nevis Gorge to Steall Falls, which drops 120 metres into the open valley below. The Nevis Distillery at the foot of the mountain is the perfect place to stop and enjoy a "wee dram"!



Day 9: Islay, Scotland

This morning the MS Maud will dock at the Hebridean island of Islay.

Islay was once the seat of the MacDonal clan, Lords of the Isles, ensuring its prominent place in Scottish history. Today, Islay is best known as a centre of whiskey production, home to several distilleries producing fine single malt whisky. Joining a whiskey tour, taking in several distilleries, is a great way to explore the island and learn more about its history.

For those less inclined towards whiskey, Islay also has many natural attractions! One of the largest of the Hebridean Islands, it has superb cliff-top walks and is a stop off point for migratory birds, making it popular with bird watchers.

The small settlement of Bowmore is the de facto capital of Islay, and a friendly place with a small selection of shops and a round church.

Day 10: Douglas, Isle of Man

Continuing south, today will see you dock at Douglas, capital of the Isle of Man.

With more than 100 miles of stunning coastline and rugged cliffs, the Isle of Man has been designated a Biosphere Reserve in recognition of its coastal and marine ecosystems. Inland, the island's scenery of rolling hills and moorland is spectacular, especially in spring and summer when wildflowers are abundant.

Disembarking in Douglas, you'll have the day to explore the island, learning about its Celtic and Viking heritage, and enjoying its natural attractions. There is much to see and do: discover the island's medieval castles and abbeys; take a ride on the steam train; or just enjoy strolling through the town of Douglas at your leisure.

Day 11: Waterford, Ireland

Today you dock in Waterford, on the south eastern coast of Ireland.

Ireland's oldest city, Waterford was founded by the Vikings in the 10th century. Much evidence of this era survives to this day. Visitors to Waterford may explore the Viking Triangle, named for the ancient Viking walls which once surrounded the area. Other historic treasures include Reginald's Tower, a remnant of the era of Viking settlement on Waterford; the French church, a former Franciscan friary built in the 13th-century; and the Mayor's Wine Vault, the oldest wine vault in Ireland. Also of interest is the Waterford Copper Coast (so named because of the old copper mines

in the area), a UNESCO Geopark which stretches for 25kms encompassing beautiful beaches, cliffs and coves.



Day 12: Isles of Scilly

The Isles of Scilly are an archipelago of islands and islets off the coast of Cornwall, five of which are inhabited. The Isles are most famous for their abundance of beautiful beaches and vast stretches of heathland, which in spring and summer are carpeted in bracken and wildflowers.

Today you'll have the option to explore Tresco, the second largest of the Isles of Scilly. Tresco is home to the famous Tresco Abbey Garden, with its huge collection of over 20,000 plants, spread over 17 acres of sub-tropical paradise. Also within the garden is the Valhalla Museum, containing figureheads from early steamships and sailing vessels which were wrecked on the rocks surrounding the islands. If time allows, you might also like to participate in a clean-up of the local beach.

Another option is a cruise around the islands, giving you the opportunity to observe puffins alongside many other seabirds and old shipwreck sites.

Day 13: Fowey, Cornwall

Today's stop will be in the historic harbour town of Fowey, which sits on the Fowey estuary.

There are so many walks to choose from here, including the "Hall Walk" along Pont Pill creek with views of picturesque Fowey harbour, or a stroll along the esplanade to the sandy beach at Readymoney Cove. From here, you may continue the 1-mile walk (please note that the last section is steep) to St Catherine's Castle, which is one of a pair of artillery forts built by Henry VIII in the 1530s. The views from the castle are fabulous!

Day 14: Portland and Portland Bill, Jurassic Coast

The Jurassic Coast of England is a UNESCO heritage site renowned for its historical heritage and natural beauty. Today will see you explore part of this scenic stretch of coast starting from the Isle of Portland, which is tied to the southernmost part of Dorset by Chesil Beach.

Portland has a long history. Evidence of Roman occupation can be seen in the stone 'bee-hive' chambers and sarcophagi scattered around the island, though even more visible is Portland's medieval era history, which can be seen in Rufus Castle and St. Andrew's Church on the eastern cliffs, and in 16th-century Portland Castle, which was built during the reign of Henry VIII. Also of

note is the early 20th-century lighthouse on Portland Bill, which still functions. All of these heritage sites welcome visitors.

Coastal walks on Portland are a delight, with lovely scenery to enjoy. The island is home to almost 300 species of birds, including rare migratory birds, as well as 30 species of butterfly.

Day 15: Disembark in Dover

Your journey ends where it began, as you sail once again past the white cliffs of Dover to dock in the city's harbour. Enjoy a final breakfast on board the MS Maud before disembarking in Dover.

Your vessel: the MS Maud

The MS Maud will be re-launched in the Summer of 2021 as a refurbished, hybrid-powered, environmentally-friendly vessel with dramatically reduced CO2-emissions and fuel usage. Part of the Hurtigruten fleet, MS Maud can carry 530 passengers in a choice of four cabin/suite categories, including polar inside, polar outside, Arctic superior and expedition suite. All categories include ensuite bathroom, double beds (some rooms can be converted to twin beds), and TV. The polar cabins have outside views, while the Arctic superior suites located on the middle deck have a large seating area and the spacious Expedition suites have seating areas, coffee-making facilities and mini-bars.

The MS Maud has a choice of three restaurants all serving excellent food. Restaurant Anne is the main dining room, Fredheim Restaurant offers light meals and fast food, while the Lindstrom serves gourmet meals for both lunch and dinner.

Onboard facilities include an observation deck with enormous windows to make the most of the views, a fitness centre with outdoor gym and hot tubs, a well-stocked library, and a science centre with interactive learning tools. There is also a playroom for children.

Booking Information:

Please see the price guide on our [Wild Coasts of the British Isles overview page](#) for a list of available departure dates and rates. Alternatively, contact us directly on 01822 600 600 or info@ganeandmarshall.com for the latest availability, departure dates, and for information on any currently-available special offers.

Includes:

- 15-day cruise on the MS Maud
- All meals while aboard the ship
- A selection of included excursions, during which you will be accompanied by an English-speaking expedition team
- Programme of lectures by experienced expedition staff and an onboard photographer

Excludes:

- International flights
- Pre- and post-travel arrangements
- Transfers to / from the vessel at itinerary start and finish
- Meals ashore
- Some activities are at additional cost
- Insurance
- All items of a personal nature
- Tips

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