



Fair Isle



Your Journey to Fair Isle

Travel to Fair Isle is by ferry or 7-seater Loganair Islander plane. Because of the possibility of weather-related delays, travel insurance is recommended.

The ferry *Good Shepherd IV* carries 12 passengers and leaves from Grutness Pier at the southern tip of Shetland. The trip takes about 2½ hours. In summer, the ferry sails three times a week, including a fortnightly sailing from Lerwick. Fair Isle is also a popular destination for cruise ships and cruising yachts.

The plane leaves from Tingwall Airport, outside Lerwick, and takes about 25 minutes to reach Fair Isle. On certain days in summer there is a connection from Sumburgh Airport. Loganair also run summer excursions from Kirkwall Airport in Orkney.

Please follow the Countryside Code

Though you're free to walk almost anywhere on the island, some crofters prefer you not to cross their land at lambing time (April-May). Please follow the Countryside Code. Close gates, use the stiles and walk round crops – including the hay and silage fields.

Fair Isle's cliffs offer dramatic scenery and seabird watching but they can be very dangerous. Please take care – and tell someone where you're going, and when you plan to be back.

The North lighthouse



Fair Isle

A jewel in the ocean

Some Useful Information

- Accommodation:** VisitShetland, Lerwick, Tel: 01595 693434
- Ferry Booking Office:** Tel: 01595 760363
- Ferry information:** Tel: 01595 743978
- Air Booking Office:** Tingwall Airport, Tel: 01595 840246
- Neighbourhood Information Point:** Fair Isle Bird Observatory, Tel: 01595 760258
- Shop and Post Office:** Stackhoull Stores
- Public Toilets:** Airstrip and Stackhoull Stores
- Places to Eat:** Fair Isle Bird Observatory
- Public Telephone:** Shirva
- Museum:** George Waterston Memorial Centre and Museum
- Churches:** Church of Scotland, Methodist Chapel
- Medical Assistance:** District Nurse, North Shirva, Tel: 01595 760242



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Fair Isle from the North East



The Fair Isle Bird Observatory



Ragged-Robin thrives in meadows and marshes

A Jewel in the Ocean

Fair Isle, a tiny jewel of an island, is known worldwide for the warmth of its welcome to visitors. Lying halfway between Orkney and Shetland, it is one of Britain's most successful remote communities, pioneering projects in wildlife tourism, sustainable management of the environment and use of wind power.

The 70 or so islanders live in traditional crofts on the more fertile southern third of the island, the remaining land being rough grazing and rocky moorland, rising to Ward Hill. Most of Fair Isle's coastline boasts impressive cliffs including the spectacular Sheep Craig.

While the island's oceanic climate brings stormy but fairly mild winters, summer visitors may encounter rapid changes in the weather – a day of sparkling sunshine and incredible visibility followed by one of mist-enshrouded cliffs.

Several of the crofters welcome paying guests into their homes. Self-catering accommodation is also available.

Island of Birds...

For more than 50 years the internationally renowned Fair Isle Lodge and Bird Observatory has done scientific research on bird migration and the island's magnificent seabird breeding colonies.

All guests are most welcome, many dedicated birdwatchers coming to see the spring and autumn migrations. Lying on the intersection of major flightpaths from Scandinavia, Iceland and Faroe, Fair Isle can produce impressive numbers of common species but is also famous for the rarities that can appear. Visitors are welcome to accompany the wardens on early morning rounds of the bird traps, and to contribute to daily observations.

The island is an internationally important seabird breeding site. From April to August the cliffs are busy with the sound (and smell!) of thousands of Fulmars, Kittiwakes, Razorbills, Guillemots, Black Guillemots, Gannets, Shags and Puffins, while skuas and terns fiercely defend their nests on the moorland. Fair Isle is one of the best places in Europe to view Puffins as they waddle to within feet of a quiet observer.

Grey and Common Seals are frequently seen, with Harbour Porpoises mostly sighted in summer. Whales and dolphins sometimes cruise close inshore, White-beaked, Atlantic White-sided Dolphins, Killer Whales (orcas) and Minke Whales are often spotted from the mailboat *Good Shepherd* on passage to and from Shetland.



Drawings by school children for a locally produced post card

Island of Flowers

Thanks to traditional crofting methods, the island has over 250 species of flowering plants. In summer the wetter areas are dotted with the bright yellow of Bog Asphodel, the deep purple of Northern Marsh Orchids and, perhaps rarest of all, the Frog Orchid. From late May the cliff-tops are awash with the delicate blue of Squill, which gives way in June to a bright carpet of Sea Pinks, with the cliffs draped in curtains of yellow Birds-foot Trefoil and white Sea Campion.

Prostrate Juniper – rare in Shetland – is abundant on the heather moorland, with alpine species like Least Willow and Alpine Bistort on the summit of Ward Hill. A wide variety of more familiar plants thrive in the hay fields, cultivated rigs, grazing lands and along the roadsides.

Real Fair Isle Knitwear

For hundreds of years islanders traded with passing ships, bartering their hand knitted hosiery and fresh produce for goods they couldn't make themselves. Worn in the past to beat the bitter cold of the Antarctic and Everest, today the only source of the genuine article is still the island. A small co-operative – Fair Isle Crafts – produces on hand-frame machines quality knitwear labelled with Fair Isle's own trade mark, either in the traditional bright colours or the natural Shetland wool shades of brown, grey, fawn and white.

North Haven, home to Fair Isle's mailboat *Good Shepherd*



White-beaked dolphins seen from the mailboat



Taamie Norie (Puffin)



Traditional knitwear featuring the age-old Fair Isle patterns



