

Travelling to Foula

Foula lies about 32 kilometres (20 miles) to the west of the Shetland mainland. The small harbour is exposed, and the airstrip can be affected by crosswinds or fog, making both sea and air travel to Foula completely dependent on suitable weather conditions. Delays are sometimes unavoidable – it is strongly recommended that you check with the ferry or airline before you travel to the terminal.

By Sea

The Foula ferry *New Advance*, currently operated by Atlantic Ferries, is based in the island. The ferry crosses to Waas (Walls) at the Westside of Shetland. Please note that summer and winter timetables differ and all sailings are weather permitting. Buses going to Waas leave from the Viking bus-station in Lerwick. Please check with VisitShetland for accurate timetables.



The *New Advance* lifted from the water for safety

By Air

The local council provide flights between Tingwall Airport and Foula. Flights change schedule between winter and summer months and are very dependent on good weather conditions – please phone the airport booking office for up-to-date information. Some buses pass Tingwall Airport – a taxi is often the only option. There are no taxis or public transport in Foula.

View from outside Da Sneck ida Smaallie



Welcome to Foula

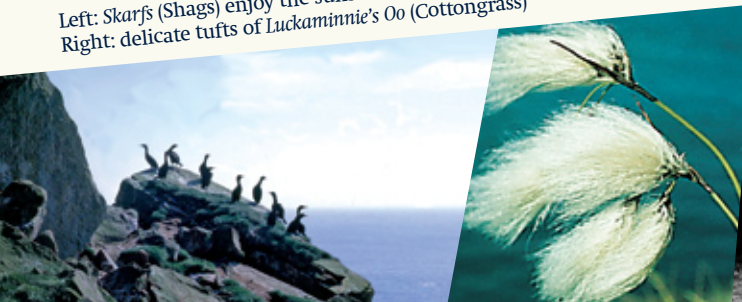
Your journey has brought you to Foula, one of Britain’s most remote inhabited islands. The crofting townships are situated in the narrow eastern coastal strip with the expanse of peat moorland rising steeply to Foula’s five dramatic peaks at the West of the island – Da Noup in the south is divided by the glacial valley of Da Daal from Hamnafield, Da Sneug, Da Kame, and Soberlie, which stretch westwards until they drop sheer to the sea in breathtaking cliffs ranging from 150 metres (492ft) to over 370 metres (1214ft).



Ultima Thule – the farthest land of ancient Romans

Foula leaves a lasting impression on everyone who visits, for there is something very special about the island – it may be the quality of light, the natural beauty and remoteness, the wide range of wildlife, the community way of life or a combination of these. It is difficult to explain this intangible quality; we hope you find it for yourself.

Left: Skarfs (Shags) enjoy the sunshine.
Right: delicate tufts of Luckaminnie’s Oo (Cottongrass)



Foula

Some Useful Information

Accommodation:	VisitShetland, Lerwick Tel: 08701 999 440
Ferry Booking Office:	Tel: 07781 823 732, Ferry update Tel: 01595 743 976
Air Booking Office:	Tingwall Airport Tel: 01595 840246
Foula Ranger Service Shops:	Tel: 01595 753233, 753236 No general store, but postcards and small souvenirs are available from rangers and the Post Office
Public Toilet:	Airstrip shelter
Places to Eat:	Leraback, bookings only Tel: 01595 753226 South of pier Tel: 01595753236
Post Office:	Airstrip shelter
Public Telephone:	Top of airstrip road
Church:	Resident Nurse
Medical Assistance:	Tel: 01595 753238, Waas Doctor Tel: 01595 809352



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Foula

heritage
Shetland
culture

The edge of the world



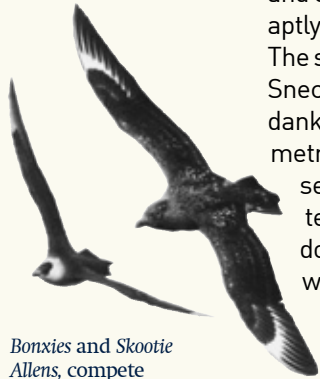
A lighthouse was erected to guide oil tankers and other shipping safely past Foula’s South Ness. It now runs on solar and wind power

Foula’s Natural Heritage

Foula’s natural heritage is exceptionally rich and diverse for such a small area. The island has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – both for its flora and fauna, and for the geomorphology of its dramatic coastline – and it is also a National Scenic Area, and a Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds.

Wrecks

There are many interesting shipwrecks surrounding Foula. One being the *RMS Oceanic* owned by the famous White Star Line. Launched in 1899 the ‘Queen of the Ocean’ was called into the Navy shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, but unfortunately, within a fortnight of its maiden voyage of naval duty the vessel was run aground on da Shaalds approximately 5 km (3 miles) East of Foula.



Bonxies and Skootie Allens, compete fiercely for territories

Geology

The action of the sea on Foula’s layered sandstone has given rise to a number of dramatic and interesting features. The breathtaking 376 metre (1233ft) sheer drop at the back of Da Kame competes with Conachair in St. Kilda as the highest sea-cliff in Britain. Gaada Stack’s three pillars tower 40 metres (131ft) over the rugged north coast of the island with its stacks, steep-sided geos, and curving storm beach aptly named Da Stanes. The sheer sides of Da Sneck ida Smaallie, a dank, dark rock fault over 30 metres (98ft) deep, cut down towards the sea at the west end of Da Daal, giving access to teeming seabird colonies under the cliffs. The way down is treacherous and should not be attempted without an experienced guide.



Da Sneck ida Smaallie

The entrance to Da Lum a Liorafield, on the other hand, has long been lost – superstition and tales of strange happenings surround Da Lum, which was mentioned by Sir Walter Scott in his novel ‘The Pirate’. Folklore also tells of the healing properties of Da Watter ida Sneug, a little spring under the north shoulder of Da Sneug.

Da Logat



Simmer Dim at the North end





Flowers and Plants

In the long midsummer days, Foulas wildflowers provide a glorious burst of colour. Sea-pinks carpet the areas of short maritime grass, and blue Vernal Squill and golden-eyed Tormentil make bright sweet-scented patches beyond. Marsh Marigolds and orchids blossom gold and purple in drains and wet lush areas, with white-tufted cottongrass, Sphagnum Sundew and Crowberry making patterns across the moorland. Greater Tussock Sedge can be found in the Nort Toons, which, along with the abundant woodrush in the hills, may be a remnant of plants associated with ancient woodlands.



A close look at Foulas rich and beautiful flora

Birds and Animals

Foula has great variety and numbers of sea and moorland birds. The worlds largest colony of Bonxies (Great Skuas) competes fiercely with Skootie Allens (Arctic Skuas) for breeding territories. Every suitable small loch in the island is occupied by a pair of nesting Red-throated Divers, and the cliffs teem with Puffins, Guillemots, Razorbills, Shags, Fulmars, Kittiwakes and Gannets. Leach’s Petrel, Storm Petrel, and Manx Shearwater have also bred. Many shore and moorland birds, including the dainty Ringed Plover, nest in the stoney places and amongst the bog grasses. During migration periods unusual birds from as far away as America and Siberia can



The Raingos (Red-throated Diver) or raingoose is much-loved and figures largely in local weather lore

be seen. Foula is home to a unique sub-species of field-mouse and an island variety of house-mouse. Both Atlantic Grey and Common Seals haul up around the shore, and can be watched at close quarters in the Voe. Schools of Killer Whales are sometimes seen close inshore and porpoises often follow the ferry. The sheep in Foula are the hardy native Shetland breed. Their great variety of coloured fleeces are much in demand by hand-spinners, ranging from the predominating moorit (brown) to fawn, grey, creamy white and black, and many have attractive markings.



Foulas cliffs are unsurpassed for variety and numbers of nesting seabirds

Livelihood

Strong winds and salt spray make crofting difficult in Foula - the crofts themselves average 2-2.5 hectares (5-6 acres). The hill grazing is good, but severe weather can prevent stock reaching market. Islanders seize every opportunity to wrest a livelihood from sea and land and any ancillary activity which offers. Most people keep sheep, and some islanders have Shetland ponies, cows and pigs. Tourism provides seasonal income, along with some craftwork. The Foula Ranger Service is available mid-April to October and can arrange guided walks and provide information for self-guided walks.



Traditional crofting practices remain

Multi-coloured native Foula sheep are nimble and hardy, grazing in the cliffs and eating seaweed when grass is scarce



History and Folklore

Neolithic field systems, Bronze age burial cairns, burnt mounds and a mysterious stone circle testify that Foula has been inhabited for millennia, despite its remoteness. Some time after 800AD, the Norse settled here and, although they left little visible trace, their presence can still be felt in the wealth of descriptive Norse place names. On Da Broch, a stack at the north end, an ancient stone wall was thought to be a monk’s cell, indicating the early spread of Christianity from Scotland. The island continued to be under Norse ownership until 1572, when Gorvel Faddersdatter, gave all her land in Shetland, including Foula, to Robert Cheyne, who was of Scottish descent. During the 18th Century, a time of bad famines, Foula was devastated by three successive plagues of smallpox and only six persons were said to be left to bury the dead. The island was repopulated by new families from the Shetland Mainland, and most of the Old Norse language and oral history was lost. By the end of the 19th Century, the population had risen to 267, but this was unsustainable and many islanders emigrated. The Foula mailboat Island Lass was lost in a storm in 1962. The fire in the last inhabited blackhouse went out in 1964. By the early 70’s the population had dropped to about 30, but the remaining islanders were so determined to stay, they built their own airstrip. Since then the population has remained relatively stable.



Ling or Cod drying on the coast at Ham

Families of seals can be observed at close quarters in the Voe



Culture & Folklore

Foula’s rich culture is evident in the Norse dialect and a strong tradition of folklore, music and special festivities. Foula folk celebrate Christmas and New Year according to the feast-days of the old Julian calendar, Yule on January 6th and Newerday on January 13th. The whole way of life in the island is based on a strong tradition of caring community values.

Film

The evacuation in 1930 of another Atlantic island, St Kilda, was immortalised in Michael Powell’s famous film, ‘The Edge of the World’ made in Foula in 1936, with many islanders taking part. A book and video about the film are available in Shetland. The splendid new community school is proof that Foula is not ‘another St. Kilda.’



A souvenir map was presented to the film-makers in 1936 by the people of Foula

The mailboat ‘Advance’ at the Ham pier

