

Directions

Directions given as if driving from Lerwick. Many roads are single track — please use passing places provided. For information on public transport routes, timetables and fares contact VisitShetland.

South Mainland

Catpund Head south from Lerwick, and pass through Cunningsburgh. Just south of village, note parking on left. Immediately after, turn right onto lay-by and park below burn.

Old Scatness Broch Follow signs to Sumburgh. Old Scatness Broch on left, after airport runway. Parking on right. Disabled visitors can park next Visitor Centre on left, adjacent to site.

Jarlshof Follow signs to Sumburgh. Jarlshof on right, before airport. Park at Sumburgh Hotel.

Central Mainland

Law Ting Holm Head north from Lerwick. At Tingwall turn left to Law Ting Holm and Tingwall Loch. About 1 mile from junction, near north end of Tingwall Loch, is passing place with interpretive panel. Park here.

Lerwick Town Hall Distinguished building with clock tower on Hillhead. Follow signs to Shetland Library, Town Hall is across the road. Car park available along Hillhead.

Up Helly Aa Galley Shed Follow signs to Up Helly Aa Exhibition up Burgh Road, and on to St Sunniva Street. Galley Shed on your right.

Viking Unst sites

A970 north. At Voe turn right onto A968 to Toft. Yell ferry from Toft to Ulsta ferry terminal. Follow A968 to Gutcher. Bluemull Sound ferry from Gutcher to Belmont.

Belmont longhouse Park at lay-by opposite sign to Belmont. Site on right side of main road. Follow beaten track up hillside. Short but steep climb over moderate ground. Boggy in places but wooden boardwalks provided. 45 minute visit.

Hamar longhouse Follow signs to Baltasound and Haroldswick. After Baltasound turn right to Littlehamar. Park at end of road. Go through gate and follow wall to top of hill, then veer south (right), until site comes into view. 500m walk over steep hillside. Moderate ground, but muddy in places. 1 hour visit.

Underhoull longhouse Turn left to Westing. Site at roadside, 1 mile from junction. ½ hour visit.

SKIDBLADNER longship Follow signs to Haroldswick. Longship at roadside. ½ hour visit.

Sandwick longhouse and farmstead Drive through Uyeasound, past school. Follow signs to Muness. Pass standing stone on hilltop, then turn left to Hannigarth. Drive to end of road and park. 700m walk from car park. Gentle slope, moderate ground but muddy/boggy in places. Stiles to cross. 2-3 hour visit.

Distances by road from Lerwick	Miles	Journey		Miles	Journey
Catpund	10 (17km)	15 mins	Ting Holm	6 (10km)	10 mins
Old Scatness Broch	22 (35km)	30 mins	Town Hall	—	—
Jarlshof	23 (37km)	35 mins	Galley Shed	—	—
			Unst	45 (72km)	2 hours

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To ensure you get the most from your visit:

- Be safe
- Shetland weather can change very quickly! Always take warm and waterproof clothing.
 - Be responsible for your own actions.



- Be prepared
- Not all areas of Shetland have a shop or a fuel station — check relevant area leaflets.
 - If you’re heading to Unst, North Isles ferries can be busy. Booking is recommended.
 - If you’re unsure about access, contact the site operator or Visit Shetland.
 - Allow plenty of time for your route.



- Be considerate
- Respect people’s privacy.
 - Use stiles and gates if provided, and leave all gates as you find them.
 - Use a path or track if there is one.
 - Leave the environment as you found it — do not leave litter, or pick flowers.
 - Keep your dog under control, and dispose of dog dirt. Dogs may not be allowed at all sites.
 - Be careful not to disturb wildlife or livestock.

Know the code before you go! Find out about the Scottish Outdoor Access Code at www.outdooraccess-scotland.com, or contact Scottish Natural Heritage for further details.

Viking Unst

www.vikingshetland.com



For a complete Norse experience head to Unst, Britain’s most northerly island! Viking Unst is a multinational project, run by Shetland Amenity Trust, to excavate and reconstruct Viking life. There are many sites of interest, so why not take few days to explore this incredible island. Don’t miss the excavated farms and longhouses at Belmont, Hamar, Underhoull and Sandwick. Also look out for the Viking longship SKIDBLADNER, and get involved in Viking events and activities!



Useful contacts

Disability Shetland
Market House, 14 Market Street, Lerwick, Shetland, ZE1 0JP
☎ 01595 743920

Emergency Services
☎ 999

Jarlshof (Historic Scotland)
☎ 01950 460112

Lerwick Town Hall (Shetland Islands Council)
☎ 01595 693535

North Isles Ferries
☎ 01957 722259

Old Scatness Broch
☎ 01950 461869 (site)
☎ 01595 694688 (SAT)

Scottish Natural Heritage
Stewart Building, Esplanade, Lerwick, Shetland, ZE1 0LL
☎ 01595 693345

Shetland Museum and Archives
Hay’s Dock, Lerwick, Shetland, ZE1 0WP
☎ 01595 695057

Viking Unst Coordinator
Shetland Amenity Trust
☎ 01595 694688

VisitShetland
Market Cross, Lerwick, Shetland, ZE1 0LU
☎ 08701 999440



SHETLAND HERITAGE TRAILS

Vikings!

Explore our exciting Viking past today.

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A voyage of discovery

Vikings – warriors, explorers, merchants, pirates. A powerful people with clear ideas and solutions. A people who broke boundaries, and took Shetland by storm.

The Vikings landed here around 1200 years ago, and decided to stay. They brought their own laws and language, and introduced new methods of farming, fishing and building. They replaced Shetland's place names with their own. Fragments of their language still survive here today.

About this guide

This trail guide will help you select places to visit, and reveal how the Vikings impacted on our identity and culture.

As you travel around the islands keep your eyes and ears open to the language and words around you.

Over 90% of today's place names are rooted in the Old Norse language.

The names describe features in the landscape, and will point you to former farms, landing places, local parliaments and mineral sources.

Fragments of spoken language also survive — the names of many everyday objects come from Viking times.

Further interpretation is available at each site. Look out for the  symbol — it indicates topics that can be further explored at Shetland Museum and Archives.

Look, listen and explore!



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Many place names in Shetland are of Viking origin, but Jarlshof was named by a Scot after he visited the islands in 1614. The name means 'earl's hall'.



Before the Vikings arrived, Shetlanders usually made their bowls and containers from pottery. But the Vikings used soapstone, and it became so popular that pottery temporarily fell out of fashion.



Shetlanders learned how to fish deep waters from the Vikings. Before then, people mainly fished inshore. The Vikings had bigger and better boats, and more sophisticated equipment.


South Mainland

Catpund Quarry | A cut above!

Catpund is the largest soapstone outcrop in Britain — Vikings quarried the rocks here to make bowls. See their chisel marks and the large bowl shapes still left on the rock faces.

The Vikings made many soapstone objects for their homes. But they also exported thousands of objects all over Europe.

Site is up the hill, beside the burn.

 30 minute walk.
Moderate climb, steep in places over uneven ground.
Access is difficult — stiles and barbed wire fences to cross.




Old Scatness Broch | Living history!

Meet Viking and Iron Age craft workers at Old Scatness Broch! The living history team and guides bring this 2000 year-old site to life.

Learn how Vikings re-used this Iron Age settlement, and discover where we think they lived.

A great family day out.

Open May to September, Sunday to Thursday, 10am to 5pm.
Please also check programme of events.

 1 to 2 hour visit.
Full disabled access to Visitor Centre only.
Uneven ground, gentle slopes and gravel path and steps in places.



Jarlshof | Why the longhouse?

At Jarlshof you can see the remains of several Viking longhouses, and discover how the settlement evolved over hundreds of years.

Life at Jarlshof changed slowly — people lived and worked here for 5000 years. But when the Vikings settled 1200 years ago they made dramatic changes, and introduced their own style of houses. See the differences with your own eyes, and learn about their lifestyle and society.

Open April to September, 9.30 to 5.30 daily (closed 12.30-1.30).

 1 to 2 hour visit.
Paved and gritted paths provided.



Map



Central Mainland

Law Ting Holm | Tough at the top!

Take a trip down the peaceful Tingwall Valley and learn more about how this small tongue of land was once the powerhouse of Shetland!

Shetland's lawthing (Viking parliament) was based at the Law Ting Holm, at the north of the Tingwall Loch. Justice, law and order were all administered from here.

View from interpretive panel.

 10 minute visit.




Lerwick Town Hall | Meet the ancestors

The Victorian inhabitants of Lerwick built a new Town Hall in 1882. Local scholars decided to decorate it with stained glass windows illustrating Shetland's Viking past.

The beautiful art work, open to the public, portrays the overlords and adventurers who dominated Shetland in saga-time.

Open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.
Head upstairs to the main hall.
Disabled access by arrangement.

 15 minute visit.
Steps at front door. Access to main hall by staircase or lift.



Up Helly Aa Exhibition | Flaming brilliant!

If you've missed out on our famous 'Viking' fire festival, why not go to see the exhibition at the Lerwick Up Helly Aa Galley Shed.

Each year a Viking galley boat is built, and burned following a spectacular torch lit procession. See costumes and a full size galley, and learn more about this fascinating festival!

Open May to September. Contact VisitShetland for opening times.
Lerwick Up Helly Aa occurs on the last Tuesday in January every year.
There are also a number of community Up Helly Aa's from January to March. Check local press for details.

 30 minute visit.



Up Helly Aa's predecessor was rowdy Yule-tide and New Year celebrations in the 1820s. It was only in the 1870s that it was named Helly Aa. The name Up Helly Aa was first used, and even later when the Viking theme emerged.

From the tenth century until 1200 the islands were under the control of the earls of Orkney. The earls were sometimes semi-royal rulers, who sometimes went on raiding expeditions.

Shetland's earliest surviving written document was drawn up by the court of the lawthing in 1299. It details a dispute over rents on the island of Papa Stour.