



Down to Earth

"Earth science learning for all"

Shetland - the North Isles

June 16-25 2026



A deep geo on the coastline of Eshaness

A word from your leaders...

Wow, it will be five years since we last visited the magical Shetland Isles by the time we set foot on the ground! We have visited Shetland many times over the years, but this is, for me the best! We will be taking in the northern part of Mainland and then spending the rest of our time taking in the Northern Isles of Yell, Unst and Fetlar. We are basing almost all of the trip split between the St Magnus Bay Hotel in Hillswick and the Baltasound Hotel on Unst. In both cases we should be able to enjoy comfortable lodgings and good food prepared by experienced, often local people.

Shetland is a very special place, where the UK meets the Nordic lands and it's geology is pretty special too. It is crossed by the Great Glen fault in a north-south line which brings in slivers of metamorphic rocks from the Lewisian, Moinian and Dalradian. These rocks are overlain by sediments and volcanics from the Devonian. We'll take in much of the rich variety that make up this Geopark.

To get around, we'll make use of the public bus service, supplemented by the use of a hired vehicle, which we are both greatly looking forward to. We expect this trip to book up fast, so don't delay in getting back to us.

Chris Darton & Colin Schofield
Course Organisers/Leaders

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Getting to Shetland

Getting to Shetland is an adventure in itself, and can be part of your 'Shetland experience'. The quick and easy way is to fly from Aberdeen with Loganair). Add-on flights with Loganair from other parts of the UK, can work out very reasonable. But be warned the flight is quick, but the airport in Shetland suffers from fog from time to time and can be closed. The leisurely route is to book a cabin on board the comfortable NorthLink Ferry that leaves Aberdeen at 17.00 on the evening of June 16 and arrive into Lerwick at 07.30 the following morning. At the end of the trip, there's a departure from Lerwick at 19.00 on the Thursday evening. Naturally you can choose to return via either plane or boat to suit yourself. If you come by ship, there's a bus from the ferry terminal up to Baltasound on Unst. Those of you coming by air will be staying at Glenorchy House in Lerwick on the night of June 16.

At this stage you are advised to explore the options, but not to make any firm bookings.

Departure

Our bus from Hillswick will get us back to Lerwick by about 10.00 and then there's an onward bus to the airport. For anyone wishing to fly home, go for an afternoon flight and there should not be any problem. For those coming back on the ferry the bus will drop you at the terminal, where you can check in your luggage and then have a free day to explore Lerwick before sailing at 19.00.

Getting Around

For this trip we will be making use of a combination of public buses to get us to and from North Mainland and Unst and a hired local minibus for our use on most days.

Walking

Everything should be within the capabilities of all of the party. We will always try to get as close as possible to the sites, but this will still mean that there are some walks of a couple of miles, to see the best exposures. This is especially true of the island of Papa Stour, where there is a round walk of around 5 miles.

However, if at any time you wish to 'opt out' that will be fully acceptable and understood. In view of the uncertainties of the weather you are strongly advised to bring all waterproofs and walking boots – particularly as you will be walking over rough ground.

The Shetland Isles & their Geology

The Shetland Islands are situated some 50 miles north of John 'o Groats and comprise a group of islands, around a dozen of which are inhabited. They are surprisingly large, around 80 miles from Sumburgh Head in the South to the Muckle Flugga lighthouse in the north. Over the 30 plus years that we've been visiting, the islands have seen massive improvements to infrastructure as the oil and gas industry has continued apace. That said, the people are still the same as they ever were, friendly and unhurried - welcome to Shetland!

Shetland is crossed by a northerly extension of the Great Glen Fault and has a collection of metamorphic and igneous rocks that relate to the Lewisian, Moinian and Dalradian. This basement is overlain by a variable suite of Devonian rocks that include classic Old Red Sandstone, but also a thick sequence of volcanics, including rhyolites and basalts.

With some quite long distances to travel across different islands, we'll be sampling some very different parts of the Shetland Geopark. Our base in North Mainland at Hillswick will allow us to visit the amazing rocks of Fetherland with their mica schists and talc. We'll take in the Devonian rocks of Eshaness and the Walls Peninsular. From our base in Unst, we'll take in the Hermaness National Nature Reserve and the Muckle Flugga lighthouse, Britain's most northerly point. Also on Unst we'll take in its serpentine, talc and chromite. The Shetland Islands roll-on, roll-off ferries are quick, efficient and sometimes free!

Itinerary

The following is not intended to be prescriptive, but to give you an idea of what we might want to cover during the tour.

- Metamorphic and igneous rocks of North Fetherland
- Devonian rocks of the Walls Peninsular
- The Eshaness volcanics - mugearite, rhyolite and andesite with vent agglomerate
- Down in the basement on the island of Unst
- The Hermaness National Nature Reserve and Muckle Flugga
- The Moine rocks of Yell
- Thrusts and conglomerates on Fetlar
- Strange rocks along the Walls boundary fault
- The granites of West Shetland and the Hillswick area

St Magnus Bay Hotel in Hillswick, our base for half of the trip.



Accommodation & Food

Good food and a good night's rest are important elements on our tours and so we always try to use small, family run, hotels and guesthouses that offer en-suite or private facilities.

For this tour we will make use of two different hotels. For the first half of the trip we will be based at the comfortable Baltasound Hotel on Unst, where most of the accommodation is in comfortable log cabins in the hotel garden. Our Hillswick base is the historic wooden St. Magnus Bay Hotel set in the small community of Hillswick. For both hotels, rooms are en suite and both offer home cooked food, with some Shetland specialities. For those of you coming by air the first night will be spent in Glenorchy House, a comfortable guesthouse on the outskirts of Lerwick.

As you may be aware, Unst is home to a space launch pad and at this point the Baltasound accommodation cannot be confirmed, in the event of it not being available, we would do the northern part of the trip from Hillswick.

Single accommodation is available, but is limited and subject to a modest supplement. We are happy to help anyone looking for someone to share a twin bedded room - see booking form.

Cost

For 2 people sharing a double or twin room, the cost of this 8-night tour will be £1895.00 per person. For single occupancy the cost will be £2195.00 per person.

If you flying up and wish to have the extra night at Glenorchy House at the beginning, there is a cost of £175.00, per person including evening meal.

What's included in the cost?

- The services of Chris Damon & Colin Schofield as tutors who will be available to you at all reasonable times
- Accommodation and meals as specified in the brochure
- Packed lunches for each field day
- All internal ferry fares on Shetland
- Admissions to museums and archaeological sites as visited by all of the group



What's excluded from the cost?

- The cost of travel between your home and Shetland
- Travel insurance
- Incidental expenses.

Insurance

Everyone booking a place and paying a deposit is strongly advised to take out holiday insurance. This can cover you against loss of money in the event of cancellation etc. Cover is often included in with many bank accounts and credit cards.

Booking

Your booking will be confirmed upon receipt of either a deposit of £300.00 per person or the full payment and a completed booking form. The balance will be payable not later than March 31st 2020. The trip will run subject to a minimum of 12 people signing up by January 31st 2026,

Your money...

Upon receipt, all monies paid for these tours are placed in a specific 'client trust account' where it cannot be drawn by us until after completion of the tour. This is in accordance with EU Directives and ensures that your money is safe in the unlikely event of corporate failure by Geo Supplies.

What happens next?

As soon as we are in a position of confirming that the trip will run - we will let you know. You will then be free to start making your own travel plans and to take advantage of any early deals on train/air tickets.



Please don't make any such arrangements until we have been in touch with you.

Also see information contained in our 'Residential Field Trips 2025/6'

Any Questions?

Please ring Chris Darmon on 0114 2455746 or email: downtoearth@geosupplies.co.uk

if you have any questions or queries. I'll do my best to help you.

If you have any questions or queries - contact Chris Darmon as follows:-

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