Welcome to the Williams GeoAdventures Scotland Orkney/Shetland Rocks! 2019 Trip. The Northern Isles of Scotland are wild and beautiful archipelagos with unique prehistoric cultural landscapes that allow us to understand life in these remote regions stretching back some 6,000 years. These are islands where there is a strong connection between the geology, landscapes and people and you get a sense for how people lived in the past, deeply connected to the land and the climate. Although at first sight the two island groups are very different, there is a common thread both in geology and culture that runs through this area from the north of Scotland to Scandinavia.

The Neolithic ancestry of Orkney is evident in the many ancient monuments, stone circles and tombs that are testament to its UNESCO World Heritage Site status. The rapid spread of Neolithic culture up the western seaways brought early Megalithic culture and farming settlements such as the village at Skara Brae. There are numerous chambered cairns, including the magnificent Maeshowe passage grave, and the standing stones at the Ring of Brodgar. The geology of the Orkney Islands is dominated by Devonian-age Old Red Sandstone, containing fossil fish and eroding to spectacular coastal scenery.

The same rocks are found in the south of the Shetland islands, but overall the geology of Shetland is more varied: dominated by a wide range of different metamorphic rocks, linked to the Lewisian, Dalradian and Moine of the Scottish Highlands, but compressed and juxtaposed in narrow slices and accompanied by granite, sandstone and volcanic rocks from the Devonian period. In Unst in the far north, we'll find a unique assemblage from the Iapetus Ocean floor.

Overall, the wide variety of rocks that is reflected in the different character of every Shetland island and every view. These rocks and scenery would be enough to entertain and delight on their own, but are accompanied by many other features of interest, including rich archaeology and culture, and world-famous bird life.
Scotland Orkney/Shetland Island 2019 Itinerary

Day 1, Monday 3 June: Meet in Aberdeen early afternoon and drive to Inverness. Overnight at the Glen Mhor Hotel in Inverness. Included welcoming dinner.

Day 2, Tuesday 4 June: Travel from Inverness to Scrabster to take the ferry over to Orkney for afternoon arrival (ferry is 1.5 hours). Afternoon visit to the St. Magnus Cathedral, if time allows. Overnight at the Ayre Hotel in Kirkwall for two nights. Included breakfast and dinner.

Day 3, Wednesday 5 June: Visit the Ring of Brodgar, a unique stone circle that rivals Stonehenge in both mystery and beauty. Explore some of Europe's greatest 5,000 year-old Neolithic sites at Skara Brae, Stromness, and the Druidic standing stones of Stenness and Maeshowe. Hike the Yesnaby cliffs for some coastal scenery and stromatolite fossils. Overnight at the Ayre Hotel in Kirkwall. Included breakfast and dinner on your own.

Skara Brae

Day 4, Thursday 6 June: Full day on Orkney exploring the ancient Norse town of Kirkwall, including the Orkney Fossil and Heritage Center on Burra and the Italian Chapel. Morning visit to Rousay to see the archaeological sites at Westness and Midhowe Broch. Ferry back to Orkney mainland with a visit, time permitting, to The Gloup/Mull Head nature reserve, before boarding the ferry to Shetland. Overnight ferry from Kirkwall to Lerwick, Shetland with premium cabin accommodations. Included breakfast at the Ayre Hotel. Dinner on your own.

Day 5, Friday 7 June: Morning arrival in Lerwick, touring to south of Shetland mainland: Jarlshof prehistoric settlement for an overview of 4,500 years of the human story, Sumburgh Head/Lighthouse, Loch of Spiggie, St Ninians Isle, and Scalloway. Overnight at the Lerwick Kveldro Hotel or Eddlewood Guest House for four nights. Included dinner.
Day 6, Saturday 8 June: Tour of Northmaven, Shetland mainland: Esha Ness Volcano Trail, fantastic coastal scenery with a walk along the Esha Ness cliffs and a visit to one of Shetland’s key fault lines, the Walls Boundary Fault. Overnight at the Lerwick Kveldro Hotel or Eddlewood Guest House. Included breakfast and dinner on your own.

Day 7, Sunday 9 June: Flexi-day around Lerwick: time to visit the museum, take a boat trip and explore the town; optional morning trip to the island of Bressay for a walk at Noss sound to explore volcanic breccia and sandstone. Overnight at the Lerwick Kveldro Hotel or Eddlewood Guest House. Included breakfast and dinner on your own.

Day 8, Monday 10 June: Trip to Mousa with stops at Gulberwick and Quarff on the way, trip over to Mousa to explore this island, on returning back to Lerwick make a stop at the fishing village of Fladdabister. Overnight at the Lerwick Kveldro Hotel or Eddlewood Guest House. Included breakfast and dinner on your own.
Mousa Broch

Day 9, Tuesday 11 June: Travel north via ferry to Unst, walk across the exposed ophiolite rocks of the Keen of Hamar National Nature Reserve. Visit Saxa Vord Hill for views of Muckle Flugga. Overnight at the Unst Saxovord Resort and included breakfast and dinner.

Muckle Flugga Lighthouse

Day 10, Wednesday 12 June: Ferry from Unst to Fetlar, walk from Funzie to Staves Geo and a visit to the famous Funzie conglomerate. Overnight at the Unst Saxovord Resort and included breakfast and dinner.

Day 11, Wednesday 12 June: Day on Unst, visiting the oceanic/continental divide at Norwick beach, the Skaw granite and Hermaness National Nature Reserve. Overnight at the Unst Saxovord Resort and included breakfast and dinner.
Day 12, Friday 14 June: Depart Unst, ferry back to Yell to begin the journey back to Shetland Mainland. Overnight ferry from Lerwick, Shetland to Aberdeen, Scotland with premium cabin accommodations. Included breakfast at the Saxovord Resort and dinner on your own.

Day 13, Saturday 15 June: Arrive Aberdeen 7am. Trip ends. Optional coach transport to Inverness included.

Full Scottish breakfasts are included, except after the overnight ferries on Days 5 and 13. Six dinners are included. All lunches are on your own.

Web Links to Accommodations:
Glen Mhor Hotel in Inverness, Scotland – https://www.glen-mhor.com/
Ayre Hotel in Kirkwall, Orkney - http://www.ayrehotel.co.uk
Northlink Overnight Ferry Premium Cabin - http://www.northlinkferries.co.uk/on-board/accommodation/
Eddlewood Guest House in Lerwick, Shetland - https://eddewood.wordpress.com/
Saxovord Resort in Unst - https://www.saxavord.com/