



VisitBritain®

Britain's waterways

Cruise ports, canals, lakes and islands

A guide for international media

March 2016



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BRITAIN



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Voyage of discovery - an introduction to Britain's coasts, cruise ports, islands and waterways

Britain has more than 19,000 miles of eclectic coastline; coastline that's home to cliffs and castles, wildlife and beaches, harbours and cities. Around the coast of England, Scotland and Wales lie more than 6,000 islands, each unique in its own way and truly destinations to treasure. Britain also has more than 3,000 miles of tranquil canals and rivers to explore plus a whole raft of lakes, lochs and loughs!



Britain's coastline is as diverse as it is beautiful - the coast off the port of Falmouth, Cornwall, south-west England is just one example. A cruise to one of Britain's major ports is one way to see as much of it as possible in one trip. ©VisitBritain Ben Selway

As an island nation Britain boasts a magnificent sea-faring, sailing and maritime heritage, all of which is captured in its major ports. If you're short of time but want to see the best of what Britain can offer, a cruise gives you the option to explore all of this within a couple of weeks. The rich variety of ports across the destination are called at by major cruise liners - ports that will be further enhanced when London City Cruise Port opens, located on the banks of the River Thames in Greenwich (date TBC). Within this mini guide for international media, we show how visitors to Britain can make the most of their shore leave when the ships docks at a variety of destinations, whether they've got three, six or nine hours to explore!

And, if you've got your sea legs sorted, why not take the opportunity to explore Britain's myriad of waterways. Embark on a journey along canals, rivers and lakes, go island-hopping and even discover water-based adrenaline sports.

Who sails to Britain?

From themed small-ship expeditions around the remote islands of Scotland to round-Britain cruises with butler service and champagne on tap, there are a wide range of cruise companies operating itineraries around the British Isles. It's time to set sail!



Cruise liners sailing around Britain visit ports across the destination, such as Fred Olsen sailing around Scotland's Isle of Mull. Credit: Fred Olsen Cruise Lines

For all-inclusive luxury laced with historical landmarks, jump aboard the ultra-luxe vessels of **Silversea**, **Crystal**, **Seabourn** or **Regent Seven Seas**. Gourmet dining, fine wines, champagne, butler service, complimentary in-suite bars and suites with private verandas provide pampering in style. Gratuities are also included in the price. **Silversea's 12-day Southampton to London cruise** visits England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; you'll take in ports such as Falmouth in Cornwall, at the south-western tip of England, Londonderry and Belfast in Northern Ireland, Glasgow on Scotland's west coast and Holyhead and Cardiff in Wales (www.silversea.com).

A ten-day Leith (near Edinburgh) to Greenock (Glasgow) cruise explores the wee islands of Lewis, Shetland, Skye, Mull and Iona, off Scotland's east and west coasts. **Crystal Symphony's 14-night Grand Britannia cruise** includes an overnight in Edinburgh so you can enjoy a flavour of Scotland's impressive capital and cuisine, whisky and more (www.crystalcruises.com).

Unlimited shore excursions are included in **Regent Seven Seas' ten-day round trip from Southampton** (www.rssc.com). You will find plenty to explore at the ports it calls at, including the city of Newcastle on the north-eastern coast of England, Edinburgh, Belfast and Plymouth on England's south coast.

The Isles of Scilly, an archipelago off the south western tip of England, and the Isle of Man, a British Crown dependency in the Irish Sea between England and Ireland, make an appearance on **Seabourn's 16-day Jewels of the National Trust cruise** out of Dover, south-east England (www.seabourn.com).

With just 30 cabins, **Hebridean Island Cruises'** offers an intimate house-party-style of cruising around the Scottish islands of St Kilda, Orkney and Shetland on Hebridean

Princess. Fine dining, wines, champagne, tour guides, entrance fees, Wi-Fi and even bicycles are included in the prices (www.hebridean.co.uk).

Mid-sized cruise liners **Saga**, **Fred Olsen** and **Cruise & Maritime** cruises also offer free transport to and from the port. **Saga** offers three round-Britain cruises; Land's End to John O'Groats, Rule Britannia and a 12-night Captain Dunlop Homecoming on Saga Pearl 11, which calls at the Lake District in north-west England, Newcastle and Southwold on England's east coast (www.travel.saga.co.uk).

Fred Olsen offers British cruises from Newcastle, Southampton and Falmouth, as well as Gaelic Myths & Legends, Land's End to John O'Groats. There is also the option for an 11-night round-Britain UK & Ireland cruise, which calls at the Scottish Shetland Islands, Liverpool and Falmouth in Cornwall, south-west England (www.fredolsencruises.com).

Cruise & Maritime's British Isles Discovery cruises, meanwhile, focus on Scotland and its islands, including Mull, Orkney and Hebrides on the west and north coasts. They also visit the Scilly Isles (www.cruiseandmaritime.com).

For larger-style cruises, **Princess Cruises'** 3,000-passenger *Caribbean Princess* offers a 12-day round-trip British Isles cruises from Southampton and visits Inverness on Scotland's north-east coast and Loch Ness, where the infamous lake monster is said to reside. A trip to Edinburgh's colourful Military Tattoo extravaganza is included in Princess Cruises' 14-day Irish Counties, Scottish Highlands & Edinburgh Military Tattoo on board the smaller Pacific Princess (www.princess.com).

Holland America's 14-night Irish & Scottish Explorer includes a stop at the lesser-visited Portland, Dorset, 120 miles south-west of London (www.hollandamerica.com), while nature lovers wanting to get close to wildlife will find knowledgeable guides on cruises offered by **Majestic Line** and **Noble Caledonia**.

Majestic's six-cabin traditional wooden fishing boats explore the Argyll coastline and the Hebrides, on the west coast of Scotland, with three-, six- and ten-night itineraries (www.themajesticline.co.uk). **Noble Caledonia's** expeditions include a Bird islands cruise, which visits Lundy, Skomer and Holy Island in Wales and Iona and St Kilda in Scotland,



P&O Britannia at anchor in New Haven Scotland
© Christopher Ison

Castles and Gardens of the British Isles, and Island Hopping in the Hebrides (www.noble-caledonia.co.uk).

P&O has two British Isles cruises on *Oriana* this year - an eight-night around the Scottish isles of Scrabster, Kirkwall and Stornoway and a 12-night cruise that includes visits to Belfast, Glasgow and the Isle of Skye (www.pocruises.com).

Shore Leave - England

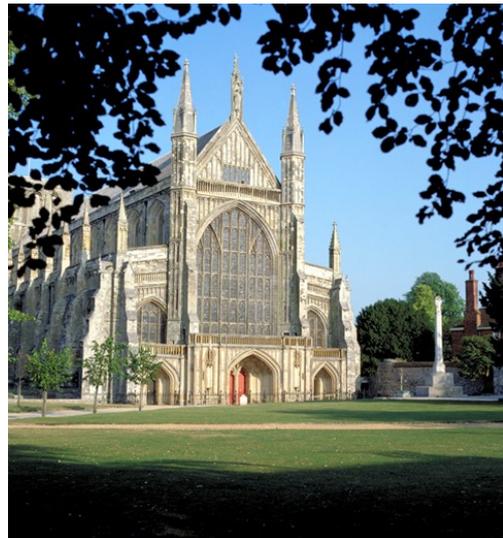
Sail into England's key cruise ports and watch as ancient ruins, castles and quaint fishing villages loom into view. England offers an array of attractions near key cruise ports, however much time you've got to spend exploring.

Sailing into... Southampton, south England

If you've got three hours...

Spending three hours in the city of Southampton, on the south coast of England, will give you the opportunity to explore the marked walking trail around its picturesque old town, discover a Tudor House and garden, and enjoy a visit to the **Solent Sky Museum**. Its spitfire and Sandringham Short Flying boat are a ten-minute walk from West Quays, where cruise liners dock.

If you're keen to go a little further afield, take the 17-minute train ride from Southampton Central station to **Winchester**, whose magnificent Gothic **Cathedral** lies at the heart of this historic city. At 557 feet, it is the longest cathedral in Europe. The cathedral you see today was founded in 1079 but its roots go back to the seventh century when England's pagan monarchy first became Christians (www.winchester-cathedral.org.uk). Admire the ornately carved choir stalls, 12th-century paintings, medieval carvings, manuscripts from the Middle Ages, and the grave of famous author Jane Austen. The remains of William II, son of William the Conqueror, and many Saxon kings are buried here.



Dock at Southampton and less than a 20-minute train journey later from its station, you'll be in the city of Europe's longest cathedral and Jane Austen's burial place in Winchester

Afterwards, take a stroll along the pretty bank of the River Itchen to **The Hospital of St Cross**, a lovely collection of a Grade 1-listed buildings dating from 1132 and home to 25 Brothers; or explore the boutique-filled narrow paved streets. www.visitwinchester.co.uk

If you've got six to nine hours...

This gives you a great opportunity to explore some of England's ancient heritage. Just under an hour east by road from Southampton, **Stonehenge**'s colossal 24-foot high stones are as fascinating today as they were 5,000 years ago. Pick up an audio guide from the visitor centre, learn about the stones' religious origins and immerse yourself in a 360-degree virtual experience at the prehistoric site's visitor centre (www.english-heritage.org.uk). Then drive to **Salisbury**, 20 minutes by car, to visit the 13th-century Gothic cathedral. Climb the 404-foot spire for great views and admire the original Magna Carta (1215AD) in the 13th century Chapter House.



With six hours on shore at Southampton you'll have time to head to the Queen's weekend residence, Windsor Castle

Windsor Castle, Her Majesty the Queen's weekend residence built by William the Conqueror, is certainly worth the one-and-a-half-hour car journey. Visit the 15th-century St George's Chapel, the elaborate State Apartments with their ornate ceilings, panelled walls and antique furniture and the ceremonial rooms, where visiting Heads of State are entertained. Marking the **Queen's 90th birthday** this year, the castle will host *Fashioning a Reign: 90 Years of Style from The Queen's Wardrobe* (September 2016 - January 2017), one of three exhibitions of more than 150 of her outfits at Her Majesty's official residences. Windsor Castle will contrast the Queen's magnificent evening gowns with the fancy dress costumes she wore for wartime family pantomimes. www.royalcollection.org.uk

Feeling hungry? Pop over the road to the **Duchess of Cambridge** pub for a steak and McMullen Ale pie and pint of Duchess Ale from the Whole Hop Brewery (www.theduchessofcambridgepub.co.uk/home). Then stroll around the town's charming cobbled streets filled with quaint shops before heading back to port.

You can explore Southampton and then jump on a train to London; many of London's historic attractions are situated within a short walk of Waterloo railway station, which is only 90 minutes by train from Southampton Central, and the **South Bank** of the River Thames. At the nearby **Southbank Centre**, you can enjoy free live music and a street food market, where aromas of Asia, South America and barbecued hog roast fill the air (www.southbankcentre.co.uk).

The South Bank is filled with street performers, particularly at weekends. Stroll eastwards along the River Thames pathway to the **Tate Modern** art gallery (entry is free), go behind the scenes at **Shakespeare's Globe Theatre**, go aboard the *HMS Belfast* museum ship and be greeted with 360-degree views of England's capital from the 72nd floor of the **Shard**. www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern, www.shakespearesglobe.com, www.the-shard.com

Alternatively, go north across Westminster Bridge to explore **Westminster Abbey** and the **Houses of Parliament** (www.westminsterabbey.org; www.parliament.uk). **Buckingham Palace**, the Queen's official London residence with its red-jacketed Royal Guards, is a 15-minute walk north of here.

If you want to be off dry land again, see the sights from the river with a hop-on hop-off cruise to **Greenwich** (leaving from the South Bank). Greenwich is home to the **Cutty Sark tea clipper**, the **Royal Observatory** and **National Maritime Museum**, and you can visit the **Tower of London** along the way.

Southampton's Ocean Terminal is a ten-minute taxi ride from Southampton Central station.

Sailing into... Liverpool, north-west England

If you've got three hours...

Once you've docked into the north-west England city of Liverpool, it's just a ten-minute stroll to charming **Albert Dock** and its array of attractions, restaurants and shops. Got the urge to shop? Head over to the nearby Liverpool One retail park, packed with luxury and high-street shops alike (www.albertdock.com).

You can also re-live 1960s Beatlemania on the Albert Dock at the **Beatles Story**, where a 4D audio-visual music experience will transport you from the Fab Four's early days in Hamburg to Liverpool's Cavern Club and their final break-up (www.beatlesstory.com).

As Liverpool has such a strong maritime heritage, head over to the Albert Dock's **Merseyside Maritime Museum** and the poignant **International Slavery Museum**, which provides a fascinating insight into the transatlantic slave trade between 1500 and 1865. The Maritime Museum's seafaring collections include objects from the Titanic and a ship model in a light bulb (www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk).



The Beatles Story is only a 15-minute walk from Liverpool's cruise terminal

A 20-minute walk from the docks will take you into Liverpool city centre where you'll discover its two inspiring cathedrals - the **Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King**, whose basilica is topped by a lantern tower bearing 25,000 pieces of stained glass, and the **Anglican Cathedral**, the largest in Britain (www.liverpoolmetrocathedral.org.uk).

If you've got six to nine hours...

Port Sunlight Museum and Garden Village, one of the finest surviving examples of early urban planning, is just 12 minutes by train from Liverpool James Street to Bebington, or 20 minutes by car. The 19th-century village, built to house factory workers from the Lever Brothers soap factory, was designed by 30 architects, so the 900 buildings display a contrast of styles (www.portsunlightvillage.com). The **Lady Lever Art Gallery** features 18th- and 19th-century paintings by Gainsborough, Turner and Constable, as well as tapestries, Wedgwood and Chinese porcelain, while the museum provides a fascinating insight into the background of the project.

Jump on a train at Liverpool Lime Street station and head out to **Chester**, 45 minutes' away - one of the finest examples of Britain's Roman past. Founded in 75 AD, the city features splendid Roman city walls, attractive 13th-century half-timbered buildings and Eastgate Clock, a local landmark. The 11th-century **Chester Cathedral**, with its monastic cloisters and wood-carved choir stalls, is where the composer, Handel, staged the first public performance of *The Messiah* in 1742. Outside the city walls, the **Roman Chester Amphitheatre** is one of Britain's finest Roman relics.

If you've travelled to Liverpool before and want to venture further afield, it's a two-hour train journey from Liverpool to the **Lake District**, and a two-hour journey back, but it's totally worth it for the gorgeous countryside. Explore the beautiful lakes and mountains on foot - there are numerous well-marked walking trails for however long you want to walk for - by vintage steam train on the **Lakeside & Haverthwaite railway**, or head back on to the water aboard the Ullswater steamer (www.lakesiderailway.co.uk, www.ullswater-steamers.co.uk). Another reason to visit the Lake District this year is that 2016 is the 150th anniversary of author **Beatrix Potter's** birth; there are many events taking place at her

17th-century home, **Hill Top**, near Hawkshead and at the **Beatrix Potter Gallery** nearby.
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hill-top

If you've got a glorious nine hours' shore leave, there's time to jump on a train from Liverpool Lime Street Station and take the 30-minute journey to **Manchester**. Manchester's thriving arts and culture scene has been identified as a key draw for visitors; projects such as the opening of the **Whitworth Gallery** (named Museum of the Year in 2015), **HOME** (a centre for international contemporary art, theatre and film that opened in April 2015), **Manchester International Festival** and the upcoming arts centre **The Factory**. But if sport is more your thing, head to the Old Trafford and Etihad stadia for behind the scenes tours of the grounds of Manchester United and Manchester City respectively.

Getting from the port: the Liverpool Cruise Terminal is a ten-minute walk from Albert Dock and a 20-minute walk/ten-minute taxi journey from Liverpool Lime Street station.

Sailing into... Newcastle, north-east England

If you've got three hours...

You'll find a warm welcome here from the local people, affectionately known as 'Geordies'. Snap up a bargain at one of Britain's largest shopping complexes, the **Metrocentre**, and mop up the laid-back vibe at the cafés, bars and restaurants at the city's lively **Quayside**. In summer, you'll find live music entertaining visitors and, on Sundays, a food market serving meaty German sausages and delicious South American chicken dumplings. While riverside, admire the feat of engineering at the iconic **Tyne Bridge**.



*Newcastle's Quayside, looking over to Gateshead, is a satisfying mix of contemporary and historic architecture. While away an hour admiring the scenery over a coffee before heading back to the cruise liner.
©VisitBritain/Andrew Pickett*

Bring history to life with a guided tour of the Victoria Tunnel, used as an air raid shelter during wartime and to transport coal in the 1800s. Stroll along **Grainger Town's** arcade with its early 20th-century architecture - almost half the 450 listed buildings there have historical significance. Pop into **St Nicholas Cathedral**, one of Britain's smallest and, if you get the chance to head outside of the city centre, the iconic **Angel of the North**, designed by artist Antony Gormley, standing at 66 feet tall, 177 feet wide and weighing more than 200 tonnes, is an unforgettable site (www.newcastlegateshead.com).

If you've got six to nine hours...

Board the train in Newcastle city centre and head out on a ten-minute journey to Wallsend; the start of the mighty **Hadrian's Wall**. Built in 122 AD as a defence between the Roman Empire in England and Scotland, it extends 84 miles from Wallsend on England's east coast all the way to the west coast. You can access the **Hadrian's Wall Path**, which runs alongside, at various places including Heddon on the Wall, eight miles west of Newcastle. Further west, you will find **Chester's Fort**, one of Britain's best-preserved Roman cavalry forts (www.visithadrianswall.co.uk).

South of Newcastle - 30 minutes by train - lies the spectacular **Durham Cathedral**. Built between 1093 and 1137, this fine example of Norman craftsmanship houses the shrine of St Cuthbert. Marry that with a visit next door to the 11th-century **Durham Castle**, one of England's largest Norman fortifications (www.durhamcathedral.co.uk, www.dur.ac.uk/durham.castle)

The surrounding county of **Northumberland** is breathtaking; sweeping beaches, historic castles and pretty fishing villages stretch along its entire coastline. **Bamburgh Castle** and **Alnwick Castle** are two of the largest inhabited citadels in England today and within easy reach of each other by car.



Only an hour's drive from Port of Tyne cruise terminal is Alnwick Castle, where you'll find 700 years of history... and a famous film location!

Alnwick Castle, a one-hour drive north of Newcastle, starred as Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in the first two Harry Potter films. Harry's first Quidditch lesson and the crash-landing of the flying Ford Anglia were filmed there. Admire the grandeur of the Italian Renaissance-styled state rooms, the art collections of Canaletto, Titian and Van Dyck, its First World War exhibition and the Fusiliers museum (www.alnwickcastle.com).

Sixteen miles north of Alnwick lies **Bamburgh Castle**; its thick sandstone walls having been witness to 2,000 years of royal rebellion, bloody battles and enthralling legends. It towers above a huge swathe of sandy beach (www.bamburghcastle.com).

For a memorable experience, cross the causeway at low tide to the **Holy Island of Lindisfarne**, inhabited by just 160 people. The causeway is located at Beal, near Berwick upon Tweed, ten miles north of Bamburgh. Saint Aidan founded a monastery there in 635AD and its religious spirit and tranquillity live on today. There are also churches, a 16th-century castle and Lindisfarne mead winery to explore - just make sure you check the tide tables to avoid getting stranded on the island (www.lindisfarne.org.uk).

Getting from the port: Newcastle city centre is around 30 minutes' taxi journey from the Port of Tyne.

Sailing into...Falmouth, Cornwall, south-west England

If you've got three hours...

Falmouth's picturesque **Fal Estuary** is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a delight for both boat and bird lovers. Ride the waves on an exciting Orca sea safari

and, if you are lucky, you will spot dolphins, seals, whales and basking sharks. Discover 450 years of history at **Pendennis Castle**, one of King Henry VIII's coastal fortresses, before taking the ferry over to **St Mawes**, where you can enjoy a tour of its sister castle (www.falriver.co.uk, www.visitfalmouth.com).

Cornwall's maritime heritage is portrayed through the stories of local people and a collection of 120 small and unusual boats at the **National Maritime Museum Cornwall** on Falmouth's **Discovery Quay** (www.nnmc.co.uk). Then head to picturesque **St Michael's Mount**, a 45-minute drive by car. The 12th-century castle complete with Great Hall and Library and 14th-century Benedictine priory is only accessible at low tide or by boat so you will need to time your crossings carefully (www.stmichaelsmount.co.uk).

If you've got six to nine hours...

The south coast of Cornwall is brimming with picturesque villages and quaint harbours. Two of the prettiest are **Fowey** and **Polperro**. Fowey (pronounced Foy) has a charming harbour and winding streets of lovely shops and traditional pubs, an hour's drive north-east of Falmouth.

Fifteen minutes further north, you come to Polperro, once a haven for maritime smugglers and now a fishing village with narrow, winding streets, craft shops, cafés and a thriving arts scene. Pop into a bakery or pub and try a traditional **Cornish pasty** - these meat and potato pastry-covered pies are delicious served piping hot.

For rugged countryside, dramatic cliffs and wonderful walks along the **South West Coastal Path**, head to the **Lizard Peninsula**, 50 minutes south of Falmouth by car. These spectacular cliffs in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are home to several of Britain's most rare plants. The coastal path from Church Cove to Cadgwith is a pleasant walk with lovely views (www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk).



*Land's End - the westernmost point in England and a must-see if you've got nine hours to explore after docking at the port of Falmouth.
©VisitBritain Jason Hawkes*

This gives you time to head to the westernmost point in England, **Land's End** - 36 miles south west of Falmouth - where you can take the perfect Instagrammable shot by the famous signpost that shows how far it is to New York and other destinations from Land's End. Admire stunning views of the Cornish coastline before shopping for souvenirs at the West Country Shopping Village's quirky shops.

home to the **Tate St Ives**, a gallery dedicated to contemporary art. Tour the studios and crafts shops for a locally-made souvenir and explore the winding cobbled streets (www.visitstives.org.uk).

Picture-postcard **St Ives** is a must-see on any itinerary. Once a fishing village that has attracted artists since the 19th century, it's now

Getting there: It's a ten-minute walk from the Port of Falmouth to the town centre, or you can take the complimentary shuttle bus.

Sailing into... Plymouth, Devon, south-west England

If you've got three hours...

Explore Plymouth's heritage with a walk along the Barbican waterfront. Pass by Elizabethan buildings, inns, cobbled streets and the **Mayflower Steps**, where the Pilgrim Fathers set sail in 1620, before continuing on to **Plymouth Hoe**, with its fascinating war memorials, **Smeaton's Tower lighthouse** and fabulous views over the Sound. Tuck into locally-caught fish and chips at Captain Jaspers or a Devon cream tea of warm scones and rich clotted cream (www.visitplymouth.co.uk).

A one-hour scenic and naval harbour cruise will take you around the Sound (a natural harbour), the naval dockyard with its warships and nuclear submarines, Plymouth Hoe, and Drakes Island (www.tamarcruising.com).



Plymouth has a rich maritime heritage

If you've got six to nine hours...

There are two stately homes within a short distance of Plymouth. **Mount Edgcumbe House and Country Park**, the former home of the Earls of Mount Edgcumbe, is set in beautiful Grade 1 Cornish Gardens and 865 acres of tranquil parkland. Ferries to the house operate from the Crymyll Quay and Admirals Hard, Storehouse, and take eight minutes (www.mountedgcumbe.gov.uk).

On the edge of Dartmoor National Park, ten miles north of Plymouth city centre, is **Buckland Abbey**, a 700-year-old gem (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/buckland-abbey). The last of the Cistercian monasteries to be built in medieval England and Wales, it was later sold to Sir Francis Drake, the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe, and remained in his family for around 400 years. Walk in the monks' footsteps through the Nave Gallery, Tudor chamber and Treasurers gallery, where Drake's drum is said to beat when England is in danger.

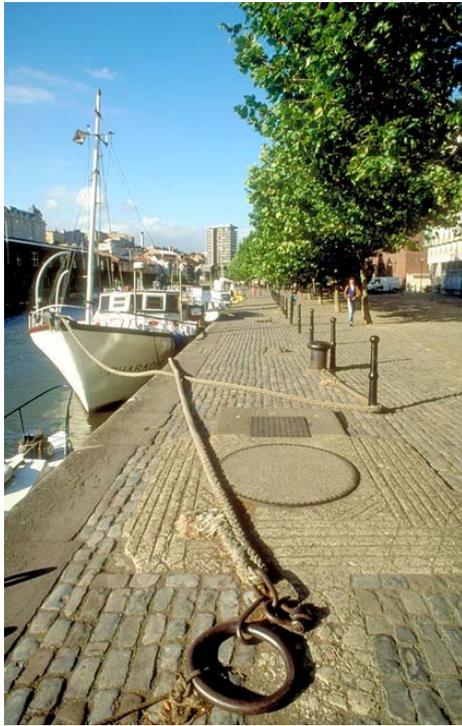
South Devon has some of the England's **prettiest villages**, so it's worth getting out into this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. **Newton Ferrers** and its neighbour, **Noss Mayo**, on the Yealm river, are 20 minutes south-east of the city by car (www.visitsouthdevon.co.uk).

Surrounded by ancient woodland and wildlife, Newton Ferrers was recorded in the Domesday book and boasts attractive thatched cottages and the cosy **Dolphin Inn**, complete with log fire and excellent pub grub including seafood pie, fish and chips and venison. Walk off the meal along the **South West Coastal Path** and sheltered Yealm estuary, its four-mile trail looping around the headland from Noss Mayo.

For Michelin-starred food, book a table at the **Treby Arms** in Sparkwell, ten miles east of Plymouth. TV's MasterChef winner, Anton Piotrowski, serves up masterful creations such as dill-crusted duck hearts and roast cocoa venison (www.thetrebyarms.co.uk).

Getting there: Plymouth cruise terminal is a 20-minute walk/ten-minute taxi journey from the town centre.

Sailing into... Bristol, south-west England



*Stroll along Bristol's picturesque waterfront and take in a raft of the city's attractions along the way.
©VisitBritain/Britain on View*

If you've got three hours...

It takes an hour to complete the **Bristol Harbour Walk**, longer if you stop off at attractions along the way. They include the **M Shed** free history museum of the city's trading past, the world's first ocean liner - **Brunel's SS Great Britain** - and the **Arnolfini centre of contemporary arts**. Or you can always linger over a coffee at one of the lively waterfront cafés and bars. A bus tour will take you to the dramatic **Avon Gorge**, **Clifton Suspension Bridge** and **Clifton Village**, packed with elegant independent shops. It takes around 90 minutes, longer if you hop on and off (www.visitbristol.co.uk, www.ssgreatbritain.org, www.arnolfini.org.uk, www.bristolmuseums.org.uk)

If you've got six to nine hours...

Head to Bristol Temple Meads station and, after a 12-minute journey, you'll arrive in the city of **Bath**. It's renowned for its elegant 18th-century Georgian architecture and hot springs, and a visit to the **Roman Baths** is a must. Admire the restored bathing facilities and Roman and Celtic objects found locally (www.romanbaths.co.uk).

Dine at the 18th-century **Pump Room**, or soak in Britain's only naturally warm mineral waters and open-air rooftop pool of the **Thermae Bath Spa** (www.thermaebathspa.com) before admiring the magnificent **Royal Crescent** and Circus, with their sweeping crescents of Grade 1-listed townhouses. Enjoy a cream tea at the luxurious **Royal Crescent Hotel** and visit the **Jane Austen Centre** to discover the effect the city had on her writing, before taking a stroll around the narrow alleyways of the city centre and browse quaint shops for souvenirs. www.visitbath.co.uk

With nine hours to play with you'll have time to experience mysterious caves and spectacular cathedrals near Bristol. Plunge the depths of **Wookey Hole**, one of Britain's most impressive cave systems near Wells, Somerset (less than an hour's drive from Bristol). Listen to Christian and pagan tales and legends during a tour of the **Witch's Kitchen and Witch's Parlour**, two spectacular limestone caves (www.wookey.co.uk).

Dine out at one of the bistros in the medieval city of **Wells**, three miles from Wookey Hole, before visiting the moated **Bishop's Palace** and the **12th-century Cathedral** with its impressive Chapter House, Cloisters, Scissor Arches and medieval 24-hour clock figures that ring a bell every 15 minutes (www.wellssomerset.com).

Head back to Bristol via **Cheddar Gorge**, whose audio guide reveals how the stalactite caves were formed. An open-top bus tour explores the dramatic 450-foot cliffs and gorge (www.cheddargorge.co.uk).

Getting there: Bristol Cruise Terminal is a half-hour taxi ride to the city centre and Bristol Temple Meads train station.

Sailing into... Dover, south-east England

If you've got three hours ...

The **White Cliffs** of Dover are one of the world's most famous landmarks and unmissable as you cruise into port. A ten-minute cab journey from here will take you to the Visitor Centre, where you can enjoy a walk along a well-maintained and wheelchair friendly footpath in the company of butterflies, birds and wildflowers. www.nationaltrust.org.uk

There is plenty to see along the way; two ship wrecks, the Fan Bay Deep Shelter, where you can take a hard hat torch-lit tour of the Second World War tunnels, the Victorian South Foreland Lighthouse and Mrs Knott's tea shop, a great place to relax over cream tea, home-made cake and stunning Channel views.

Dover Castle is the largest in England, the mighty medieval fortress towering over the town and harbour. A ten-minute journey by car from the cruise terminal, you will find centuries of history and secret wartime tunnels. Climb the Great Tower, experience living conditions in the World War Two underground hospital and burrow deep into the winding medieval tunnels built during the Siege of 1216. www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/dover-castle

If you've got six hours to nine hours...

With more time to spare, you can combine a visit to Dover Castle and **Walmer Castle**. Just 15 minutes by car north east of Dover, this Tudor coastal fortress built by King Henry VIII is the place to explore its cannons and battlements and lose yourself in the eight acres of manicured gardens. www.englishheritage.org.uk

Leeds Castle has been described as 'the loveliest castle in the world'. Situated on an island surround by a moat, the 900-year-old castle and 500 acres of gardens have been home to 1,000 years of royalty. Watch the free falconry displays, take a relaxing boat trip on the river and enjoy one of the many activities that take place there. Leeds Castle is 40 minutes by car north-west of Dover. www.leedscastle.com

Pilgrims have made their way to **Canterbury Cathedral** (597AD), a UNESCO World Heritage Site, since the Middle Ages, and it's a delight to explore today. Visit the Norman crypts and the tombs of King Henry IV and Edward The Black Prince, the site of Archbishop Thomas Becket's murder in 1170 and enjoy beautiful stained glass windows, peaceful cloisters and a manuscript-filled archive, including some from the 8th century. There are three guided tours every day except Sundays and audio tours in seven languages.

With more time, you can explore more of Canterbury than just the cathedral. Stroll around the city's cobbled streets, timber-framed houses and ancient walls, built by the Romans. Westgate Towers, the oldest surviving medieval Gateway, offers great views of the city. To the south is St Augustine's Abbey, England's first seat of learning. Take a punting tour on the River Stour or head to the 500-year-old Old Buttermarket inn for a pint of Kentish ale. Canterbury is 30 minutes by car or train from Dover Priory station.

Enchanting **Rye** may be small in size but its boasts some big names, including novelist Henry James and artists Paul Nash and John Ryan. An hour south of Dover by car, this arty town is one of the best preserved medieval towns in England. Explore the pretty, cobbled Mermaid Street, once the haunt of famous smugglers, the Norman church of St Mary's, Camber Castle, Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, Rye Museum and Lamb House, once the home of Henry James. Then 30 minutes south-west by car from Rye, you come to **Hastings**, famous for its Norman fortress ruins and dungeon, and six miles further north, **Battle**. The partially ruined Benedictine abbey here is believed to be on the site of the Battle of Hastings, where William of Normandy defeated King Harold of England's army. www.visit1066country.com, www.visitkent.co.uk

Shore Leave - Scotland

Ancient castles, royal palaces, whisky distilleries, lively cities, spectacular countryside scenery and a warm welcome greet the cruise passenger sailing into Scottish ports. From the treasure trove that is its capital, Edinburgh, to the wilderness of its isles, exploring the destination in and around Scottish ports will offer a varied landscape.

Sailing into... Edinburgh

If you've got three hours...

Scotland's capital is jam-packed with treasures to discover. Start your tour at the jewel in the city's crown, **Edinburgh Castle**. Take a tour of the formidable structure and see the oldest Crown Jewels in the British Isles. Time your visit right and you can witness the firing of the One O' Clock Gun, a tradition that dates back to 1861 when the blast allowed ships in the Firth of Forth to set their clocks correctly (www.edinburghcastle.gov.uk).



Royal Yacht Britannia is one of Scotland's top visitor attractions

The Castle sits at one end of **The Royal Mile**, the seam running through the heart of Edinburgh. Plenty of shops and cute cafés compete for your attention as you stroll along its length to the **Palace of Holyroodhouse** at the other end, The Queen's official residence in Scotland (www.royalcollection.org.uk/visit/palace-of-holyroodhouse). Gastronomes mustn't miss the fine food store **Cranachan and Crowdie**, about halfway down, for delicious shortbread and other gourmet gifts - it's loved by locals and visitors alike (www.cranachanandcrowdie.com).

Compare your on-board living quarters to The Queen's with a visit to the **Royal Yacht Britannia** in Leith, which sailed over one million miles for 44 years, and is now one of Scotland's top visitor attractions (www.royalyachtbritannia.co.uk).

If you've got six to nine hours...

If you've more time to play with, stick around in Leith for a leisurely 'celebration of the season' surprise tasting menu at **The Kitchin**, a Michelin-starred restaurant that makes the most of fresh Scottish produce (<http://thekitchin.com>). Or for a quintessentially British experience, head to the city's most historic hotel, **The Balmoral**, for their award-winning afternoon tea in the opulent Palm Court (www.roccofortehotels.com/hotels-and-resorts/the-balmoral-hotel).

Walk it all off with an energetic hike up **Arthur's Seat**. At 251 metres (824ft) high, it's a distinctive part of the city skyline. The views from the top are impressive - see as far as the Forth Bridges in the west. Descend the hill for a spot of culture at the National Museum of Scotland - from 10 March - 25 September 2016 you can catch **Celts**, an exhibition of more than 200 fascinating objects spanning 2,500 years. Look out for National Museums Scotland's new developments - 2016 sees the opening of ten new galleries, with three quarters of the new display not having been shown for generations (www.nms.ac.uk).

By this point, you've earned some more refreshment, so head to **The Scotch Whisky Experience** for a tasting session among the world's largest collection of malt whiskies (www.scotchwhiskyexperience.co.uk).

With an evening to spend in Edinburgh, make sure you catch some comedy - the city is famous for it! **The Stand Comedy Club** has something hilarious on every night of the week and is one of the hottest hangouts during the Edinburgh Fringe (www.thestand.co.uk). A ten-minute walk from there is Prohibition-style speakeasy **Panda and Sons**. Disguised as a barber shop, it's - quite literally - a hidden gem in the city that serves up fantastically inventive cocktails (<http://pandaandsons.com>).

If you've seen the delights of Scotland's capital before, spend your shore leave exploring **St Andrews**, which is roughly 1 hour 30 minutes' drive from Leith or a train journey from Edinburgh Waverley station, or just an hour if you're docking at Rosyth - the charming town was where young love first blossomed between the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. Free to enter, the ruins of the 11th century **Cathedral** are jaw-dropping in scale, giving a sense of the grandeur of what was once Scotland's largest church. Wander the cobbled medieval streets, stopping for an ice cream at **Janettas Gelateria**, a St Andrews institution (<http://jannettas.co.uk>). And, for golfers, **The Old Course** is a must-visit; take a 50-minute guided tour around the 1st, 17th and 18th holes, walking in the footsteps of icons of the game (www.standrews.com).



Reach the charming town of St Andrews in around 90 minutes from Edinburgh

Getting from the port: From the port of Leith, it is approximately 20 minutes by taxi or direct bus to the city centre; from Rosyth it's approximately 40 minutes by taxi to the city centre.

Sailing into... Glasgow

If you've got three hours...



*With three hours on shore in Glasgow, head to the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum to soak up some of the city's culture.
Credit: VisitBritain/Britain on View*

With a short time to spend in Glasgow, the **City Sightseeing** tour is one of the best ways to take in Scotland's largest city (www.citysightseeingglasgow.co.uk). The bus stops at 28 places of interest and you can hop on and off as you please. Prefer to stretch your legs? Take an award-winning walking tour led by students at the **Glasgow School of Art**, whose enthusiasm for their city is contagious

(www.gsa.ac.uk/visit-gsa/city-walking-tours). The school itself, like many of Glasgow's most elegant buildings, was designed by **Charles Rennie Mackintosh** - look out for his signature style all over the city.

If you can only step inside one of Glasgow's abundant cultural institutions, make it the **Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum**. The magnificent Victorian building features a giant organ in its atrium, which you may be lucky enough to hear being played. Within, art treasures such as Salvador Dalí's *Christ of St John of the Cross* and curiosities like Micronesian shark-tooth swords await discovery - and all for free.

Sweep through Glasgow's **Style Mile** before heading ship-wards; there's a huge concentration of high street shops and designer stores to give your cruise collection an update (<https://peoplemakeglasgow.com/things-to-do/shopping>).

If you've got six to nine hours...

From the Kelvingrove Museum, stroll up Argyle Street to discover the hip neighbourhood **Finnieston**, whose inviting independent boutiques and cute cafés and cocktail bars vie for your attention. If it's lunch or dinnertime, make a beeline for **Crabshakk**, a lively and compact seafood restaurant with a sister oyster bar just up the street (www.crabshakk.com).

The name Glasgow means 'dear green place' and there are plenty of beautiful parks to relax in. Enjoy fresh air and flora at the **Glasgow Botanic Gardens**, whose Kibble Palace glasshouse- designed by Victorian entrepreneur and eccentric John Kibble - recently reopened following refurbishment (www.glasgowbotanicgardens.com). Another impressive structure for architecture enthusiasts is **Riverside Museum**, which was designed by architect Zaha Hadid. It's not just pretty from the outside; within you'll find a fascinating display of vehicles, many centuries-old, and there is a fun recreation of a Glasgow shopping street from the early 20th century (www.glasgowlife.org.uk/museums/riverside).

For a spot of entertainment, head to one of Scotland's friendliest pub theatres, **Òran Mór**, located in a former parish church and home to an eclectic mix of music, theatre and comedy (<http://oran-mor.co.uk>). It's best known for 'A play, a pie and a pint': watch a 45-minute performance of new work with some hearty food and a beer. A winning formula!

Glasgow is a **UNESCO City of Music**, and there's something for every taste. Fancy a dance? Catch the next big thing at **King Tut's Wah Wah Hut**, where Oasis was first discovered (www.kingtuts.co.uk). Want to see a superstar? The **SSE Hydro** has hosted Prince, Justin Timberlake and Beyoncé; Mariah Carey, Adele and Janet Jackson are just a few of the acts playing there in 2016 (www.thessehydro.com). The **Glasgow Concert Halls** combine three fantastic venues for excellent classical, jazz and world music performances (www.glasgowconcerthalls.com).

Find out how Scotland's favourite drink is made at a whisky distillery - **Glengoyne** has been distilling for around 200 years, while the **Falkirk Distillery** will open up in October 2016; both are around 45 minutes from Glasgow by road (www.glengoyne.com, www.falkirkdistillery.com). Glengoyne is on the way to the beautiful National Park **Loch Lomond and the Trossachs**, an easy day trip from Glasgow. Take a **lake cruise** or fly in a **seaplane** and get a bird's eye view of one of Scotland's best beauty spots (www.sweeneyscruises.com, www.lochlomondseaplanes.com).

Less than 40 minutes from Glasgow by road, **Stirling Castle** whisks you back to the 16th century, when kings and queens held lavish celebrations there. Meet costumed characters,

take a guided tour and admire the turrets and towers of one of Scotland's most atmospheric castles (www.stirlingcastle.gov.uk).

Getting from the port: Greenock Ocean Terminal is approx. 40 minutes to Glasgow by road.



Explore the city of Inverness, from its castle and cathedral to galleries and botanic gardens. Credit: VisitBritain/Britain on View

Sailing into... Inverness/Loch Ness

If you've got three hours...

One of Scotland's prettiest cities, Inverness is compact enough to explore on foot. Start at rose-tinted **Inverness Castle**, which sits on a hill above the city centre (www.invernesscathedral.co.uk). From Easter 2016, scale its North Tower for incredible views over the city. Dip into the impressive **St Andrew's Cathedral** and tropical **Botanic Gardens** and then, for a taste of the countryside, stroll over to the **Ness Islands**, abundant with

Scots pine trees, birdlife and keen fishermen (www.morayepiscopalchurch.scot/inverness-cathedral, www.highlifehighland.com/inverness-botanic-gardens).

Learn about Highland life through the years at the **Inverness Museum & Art Gallery**, or, if you've always wanted to know what men wear under their kilts, pop into the informative **Scottish Kiltmaker Visitor Centre** in the Highland House of Fraser (www.highlifehighland.com/inverness-museum-and-art-gallery, www.highlandhouseoffraser.com/exhibition.asp). Admire the outfits worn by Mel Gibson in *Braveheart*, among other tartan curiosities!

Loch Ness is tantalisingly close to Inverness, so head straight there if you fancy trying your luck at spotting the famous 'monster' said to lurk within its waters. **Jacobite Cruises** runs a one-hour Inspiration Cruise: sail the Loch's deepest waters and gaze out at the atmospheric Urquhart Castle in the distance (the departure point is 15 minutes' drive from central Inverness www.jacobite.co.uk).

If you've got six to nine hours...

With longer to spend in the area, your search for Nessie can be more thorough. Spend some time at the fascinating **Loch Ness Visitor Centre**, whose seven themed rooms trace the mystery back 500 million years and showcase films, photos and recordings of eye-witness accounts of sightings (www.lochness.com). Another authoritative source is Steve Feltham of '**Nessie-Serry Independent Research**'. The man who holds the Guinness World record for 'Longest Continuous Vigil Hunting for the Loch Ness Monster' dispenses Nessie lore and souvenirs from his van, parked just up from the **Dores Inn**, a charming country pub where you can enjoy a delicious loch-side lunch (www.thedoresinn.co.uk).

Either as part of a Loch Ness cruise, or on its own, a visit to **Urquhart Castle** is a must. If walls could speak, the centuries-old structure would have plenty to say - and luckily the visitor centre brings to life the drama and excitement of Urquhart's invasions and battles as far back as the Scots' independence struggle of the 1300s. See the medieval treasures

that were found at the castle and take tea with a gorgeous loch view at the onsite café (www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/urquhartcastle).

Urquhart Castle is in Drumnadrochit, on the loch's north-western shore, which is also the start point for a bracing six-mile (nine-km) hill walk at **Meall Fuar-mhonaidh**. From the top, look out over the Great Glen as far as the mighty Ben Nevis. You can also get active on Loch Ness itself - **Boots n Paddles** runs white water sledging, canoeing and even walking on water (in a giant inflatable sphere!) (www.boots-n-paddles.co.uk).

Whisky fan? Head to the **Tomatin** distillery, just outside Inverness, for a tour, tutored tasting and the opportunity to bottle your own cask strength whisky (www.tomatin.com). If you've docked at the Port of Cromarty Firth, tour the **Glenmorangie Distillery**, approximately 20 minutes away by taxi; the well-known single malt is made here (<https://glenmorangie.com>).



A fine wall of examples to tempt your taste buds at Tomatin distillery just outside Inverness

A great day trip for history buffs out of Inverness starts at **Culloden Battlefield**, about six miles (ten km) from the city, where you'll be virtually transported back to the bloody 1746 battle at the very moor where combat took place; then head on to **Cawdor Castle**, built in the 14th century and with famous (though historically inaccurate) links to Macbeth, as well as beautiful gardens to explore (www.nts.org.uk, www.cawdorcastle.com).

Back in the city centre, dine with gorgeous castle views at **Rocpool**, then soak up theatre, dance and music at **Eden Court** or head to **Hootenanny** to take part in a *ceilidh* - a traditional - and extremely fast - Scottish dance (www.eden-court.co.uk, www.hootanannyinverness.co.uk).

Getting from the port: certain small ships dock at Inverness harbour, a short walk from the city centre; larger cruise ships dock at the Invergordon/Port of Cromarty Firth, approximately 30 minutes from Inverness city centre by taxi.

Sailing into...Dundee

If you've got three hours...

Dundee used to be known as the city of the three 'J's: jam, jute and journalism. The first is because marmalade was invented in the city and the second because Dundee built its fortunes on the production of jute from India in the 19th century. Find out about the creation of 'Juteopolis' at the fascinating **Verdant Works** museum. Journalism still thrives in the city that gave birth to much-loved cartoon characters like **Desperate Dan**, whose **statue** stands in the city centre; don't miss a photo opportunity with Dan, Dawg and *The Beano* prankster **Minnie the Minx**. It was also in Dundee that the **RSS Discovery** was built. The ship was the first vessel to be constructed specifically for scientific research and sailed to Antarctica in 1901. Visit **Discovery Point** in Dundee's Waterfront and learn about its historic voyages (www.rrsdiscovery.com for both Discovery Point and Verdant Works).

Named a UNESCO City of Design in 2014, Dundee will welcome the **V&A Museum of Design** in 2018. Culture vultures have plenty to amuse them before then at **The McManus Art Gallery and Museum**, housed in an impressive Gothic Revival-style building, and at the fantastic **Dundee Contemporary Arts** (www.vandadundee.org, www.mcmanus.co.uk,

www.dca.org.uk). Quench your thirst at the **Jute Bar** inside Dundee Contemporary Arts, a relaxed hangout with an ever-changing line-up of craft beers and a section on the cocktail menu devoted entirely to Edinburgh Gin (www.jutecafebar.co.uk).

If you've got six to nine hours...

With more time to spend exploring, visit **Broughty Ferry**, the seaside suburb just four miles (seven km) from the city centre. Savour delicious sweet treats - specifically homemade scones - at **Jessie's Kitchen**, a cute café in a garden centre presided over by the winner of the Scottish Baking Award (<http://jessieskitchen.blogspot.co.uk>). Refreshed, stroll 'The Ferry's' picturesque shoreline, edged with large villas built by jute barons and quaint little fisherman's cottages (www.cometobroughty.co.uk). There's a growing restaurant and pub scene in Broughty Ferry, or you could head over the Tay Road Bridge for dinner at **The View**, which has spectacular views looking back to the city across the water (www.view-restaurant.co.uk). The food is just as delightful as the setting, offering a seasonally changing Modern Scottish menu.

For an excursion slightly further afield, less than half an hour's drive from Dundee takes you to **Glamis Castle**, where the Queen Mother grew up (www.glamis-castle.co.uk). It's a quintessential Scottish castle experience, with suits of armour and swords on display, a link to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and spectacular gardens to enjoy. Back in the city, the **Dundee Rep** is home to a lively bar and brasserie, **Encore**, and if you've got time for a show, you can catch anything from ballet to Broadway musicals (www.encoredundee.co.uk, www.dundeerep.co.uk).



Take a tour of the Queen Mother's former home, Glamis Castle, less than 30 minutes from Dundee

Getting from the port: Dundee's port is a ten-minute taxi ride from the city centre and waterfront attractions.

Sailing into... The Isles

Skye

If you've got three hours...



Bring sturdy shoes off the cruise liner because you're going to want to explore some of this breath-taking terrain on the Isle of Skye; delight in views such as The Old Man of Storr. ©VisitBritain Adam Burton

The second largest of Scotland's isles, Skye is captivating and packed with things to do. With a seafront lined with pretty pastel-coloured cottages, **Portree**, the island's capital, is a quintessential Scottish coastal village - enjoy **fish and chips** on the beach then hire a **bike** to admire some of Skye's famed natural beauty while stretching your sea legs. Taking a **seaplane**

is one of the most exhilarating ways to see a lot in a short amount of time; the hour-long flight takes in Skye's rugged scenery from above, as well as The Skye Bridge, the small isles and the Outer Hebrides (www.lochlomondseaplanes.com).

Skye has incredible walking terrain, and within easy reach of Portree is one of the most iconic treks: **The Old Man of Storr**. The 'old man' is a large pinnacle that can be seen for miles around; the walk up and back down takes about 1 hour 15 minutes.

If you've got six to nine hours...

If you have time for a longer walk, take a taxi or tour bus north to **The Quiraing**, a stunning mountain range that recently appeared on the silver screen in *Macbeth*, or head in the other direction to **The Fairy Pools** for a magical waterfall walk that's a favourite with photographers. Both are approximately 30 minutes' drive from Portree.

The oldest continually inhabited castle in Scotland, **Dunvegan Castle**, is idyllically located, full of history and home to spectacular gardens (www.dunvegancastle.com). From April to September, you can board one of the castle's traditionally built clinker boats for a 25-minute boat trip on Loch Dunvegan to see the resident **seal colony**. Dunvegan is about 35 minutes' drive from Portree. If you have time before returning, take a short detour to Waternish and the headquarters of **Skyeskyns**, who create Highland hand-combed fleece rugs, throws and all manner of cosy clothing and footwear (www.skyeskyns.co.uk).

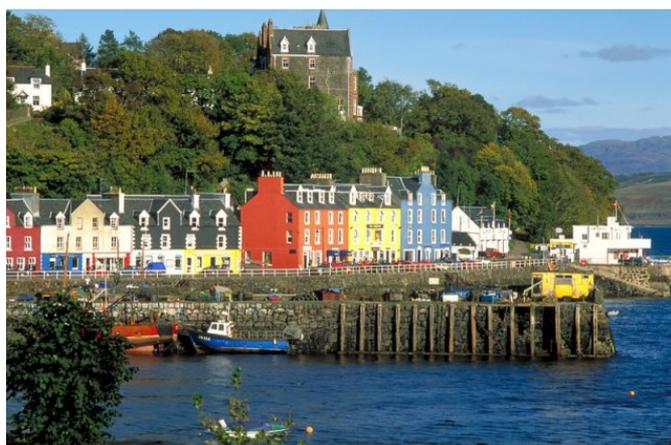
Getting there: Portree is where most cruise ships dock and is the starting point for all the above adventures on Skye.

Mull

If you've got three hours...

Most ferries dock at Craignure, and from there it's less than ten minutes by road to the ancient clan castle, **Duart** (www.duartcastle.com). Visit its 13th-century keep, the magnificent Great Hall and the exhibition dedicated to the history of the chiefs of the clan through the ages. Hungry? Try the tasty tearoom's cakes, which are made with ingredients grown in the castle's own gardens.

Just over 30 minutes by road from Craignure is **Tobermory**, the island's 'capital', and the docking point for some cruises. A cheerful town with brightly painted houses, Tobermory provides plenty of diversion with **quirky cafés** and **local arts and crafts shops**, as well as a fantastic **distillery** that's one of the oldest in Scotland; enjoy a tour and a taste while you're in town (<http://tobermorydistillery.com>).



The colourful town of Tobermory awaits you when you dock into the Isle of Mull

Pop into the **Mishnish**, Tobermory's favourite hangout for locals and visitors alike. Enjoy a pint of local ale or a wee dram of whisky in snug corner, or a find spot by the roaring fire (www.themishnish.co.uk).

If you've got six to nine hours...

Mull is a magnet to all manner of interesting **wildlife**. Nicknamed 'Eagle Island' by some - it's the best place in Britain to see White Tailed Sea Eagles and Golden Eagles. Take your binoculars to identify them or, better yet, take one of the many wildlife-watching tours and you may spot whales, dolphins, seals, red deer and the Eurasian otter (www.isle-of-mull.net/trips-and-tours).

From Craignure, it's an hour's scenic drive to Fionnphort and the striking peninsula the **Ross of Mull**. The landscape here is sheer drama, with black basalt cliffs contrasting with white sandy beaches. From Fionnphort, take the short ferry to the **Isle of Iona**, the 'cradle of Christianity' in Scotland; in AD 563, Columba and his followers arrived from Ireland to spread the gospel in Scotland and the north of England. Iona's Iron Age fort, nunnery, abbey and marble quarry give hints about the island's fascinating history, while the views out from tranquil **St Columba's Bay** are a photographer's dream.

Getting there from the port: ships usually dock at either Craignure or Tobermory, with distances detailed above.



The mysterious Callanish Standing Stones on the Isle of Lewis ©VisitBritain / Britain on View

Lewis

If you've got three hours...

Stornoway, where cruise ships dock, is the largest settlement on the Outer Hebrides and is brimming with charm, culture and history. Visit the futuristic looking **An Lanntair Arts Centre** where you're guaranteed to find an interesting exhibition or workshop to participate in (<http://lanntair.com>). Fabric is part of this area's identity - Harris is connected to Lewis - and you'll find plenty of **Harris Tweed** shops and

outlets to take away stylish souvenirs. Hungry? **Digby Chick** is a smart, seafood restaurant; look out for local speciality 'Stornoway black pudding' on the menu (<http://digbychick.co.uk>).

The **Callanish Standing Stones** are a must-visit, less than 30 minutes' drive from Stornoway. The group of almost 50 megaliths dates back to around 3000BC and experts guess they once served as a type of astronomical observatory. Whatever their purpose, the site incites a feeling of curiosity from afar, so wonder up close.

If you've got six to nine hours...

Extend your trip from the Standing Stones of Callanish, travelling approximately an hour along the north-west coast of Lewis up to **Ness**, a tiny parish that sticks out into the Atlantic. Stop along the way to admire pretty fishing villages and discover **local artists' studios and galleries** - there's a dense concentration of creative characters in this part of Scotland. **The Morven Gallery** is worth stopping off at for the coffee alone; however do also make sure to admire its displays of wild Hebridean landscapes and seascapes (www.morvengallery.com). Listen out for the Gaelic language in Ness, as it's the mother tongue of a large majority of locals. Further north still is the **Butt of Lewis**, which was mentioned in the *Guinness Book of Records* as the windiest place in Britain. It is home to

seabirds aplenty, and you can spot whales, dolphins and porpoises from here before returning to Stornoway.

Getting here from the port: most cruise ships dock in Stornoway and you can walk into the town from the port.

Oban

If you've got three hours...

Give your legs a workout as soon as you arrive into Oban, with a steep climb uphill to **McCaig's Tower**, Oban's answer to the Colosseum. The landmark, which was built in 1897, provides the ideal vantage point from which to capture an image of your ship in the port beneath you. Back down the hill, military buffs will be enthralled by the **War and Peace Museum** (free to enter), which also tells the story of the construction of McCaig's Tower (www.obanmuseum.org.uk). Next, stroll or take a five-minute taxi journey to **Dunollie Castle**, a small and captivating ruin that was once the stronghold of the Clan MacDougall (www.dunollie.org). The woodland walks and views out to Kerrera, North Lorn and to the islands beyond provide perfect onshore relaxation.

Back towards North Pier, head into the **Oban Chocolate Company** to watch master chocolatiers in action and pick up a gorgeous artisan bar or selection of their curious invention, 'fizzy drink chocs' (www.obanchocolate.co.uk).

If you've got six to nine hours...



A fine gift to take home - pick up a 14-year-old malt at the Oban Distillery. ©VisitBritain Rod Edwards

For something stronger, tour **Oban Distillery** and have a taste of the 14-year-old single malt, which you're given with a piece of crystallised ginger - a surprisingly delicious combination! (www.discovering-distilleries.com/oban). More into food than drink? You can't go wrong in the 'seafood capital of Scotland' - try the **Oban Seafood Hut**, which avoids fancy tablecloths and fussy waiters in favour of hearty platters of sumptuous scallops, salmon, oysters and more served right on the pier (www.obanseafoodhut.co.uk).

A half-hour drive out of town takes you to **Arduaine Garden**, an extraordinary 20-acre expanse of flowers from all over the temperate world, spectacularly located overlooking the Sound of Jura (www.nts.org.uk/Property/Arduaine-Garden). If you prefer sea life to plant life, head in the other direction from Oban to the **Scottish Sealife Sanctuary** and admire adorable seals, which the sanctuary rescues and rehabilitates, as well as otters, red squirrels and other local wildlife (www.visitsealife.com/oban).

Getting there from the port: Oban Ferry Terminal is a short walk from all the main attractions in the centre of town; McCaig's Tower is roughly 25 minutes on foot, while Oban Distillery is approximately 15 minutes.

Shetlands

If you've got three hours...

Lerwick, Britain's most northerly town, is home to the fascinating **Shetland Museum**, which tells the story of 5,000 years of the islands' culture and people (www.shetland-museum.org.uk). Next door, find **Mareel**, a stunning modern hotspot for all things cultural, and enjoy the architecture, tea, cake and views (www.mareel.org). The **Shetland Textile Museum**, housed in the charming Böd of Gremista (a restored fishing station) has more than 500 pieces of Shetland lace, Fair Isle and more, that date from 1880 to 2015, with daily knitting, spinning and weaving demonstrations; it's a half-hour walk or short taxi ride from Lerwick. Stretch your legs before returning aboard ship, with a picturesque stroll from the Shetland Museum down to the **Lodberries** - intriguing houses and a hotel built into the sea.



You'll find the Shetland Museum and the Shetland Textile Museum in Britain's most northerly town, Lerwick. ©VisitBritain / Britain on View

If you want to escape to another world entirely, take a ten-minute ferry ride from bustling Lerwick to **Bressay** and wander around seabird cliffs, tranquil bays and fascinating archaeological sites (www.shetland.org/plan/areas/bressay).

If you've got six to nine hours...

Who doesn't want to see **Shetland ponies** munching grass before a backdrop of heathery hills? Get your camera ready when you visit the West Mainland, where ponies can usually be seen grazing by the roadside. It's about 45 minutes' drive through stunning scenery from Lerwick to the village of **Walls**, popular with yachting and canoeing enthusiasts. The beaches on the west side are breath-taking, ideal for a bracing **coastal walk**.

Take a tour south of Lerwick, down a 25-mile long peninsula to the island of **Mousa**, home to the world's best-preserved 'broch' - a circular, double-walled Iron Age stone tower (www.shetland.org/plan/areas/south-mainland). The broch's original purpose is disputed, but these days it's a favourite nursery for Storm Petrel birds; you may also spot seals and other seabirds there, and Harbour Porpoises while on the ferry crossing. Continue south to see Iron Age village **Old Scatness** and the **Jarlshof** prehistoric and Norse settlement (www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/propertyresults/propertyoverview.htm?PropID=PL_162).

Getting there from the port: most cruises berth at Holmsgarth (less than a mile from the town centre) or may anchor in the harbour, in which case passengers transfer to a launch for the five-minute trip to Victoria Pier, in the heart of the old town of Lerwick.

Orkneys

If you've got three hours...

Discover the Heart of Neolithic Orkney UNESCO World Heritage Site, where a mind-blowing 10,000 years of civilization can be explored. From the capital of Kirkwall, you can reach the **Ring of Brodgar** by road in less than 20 minutes. Once there, get up close and even touch the spellbinding Neolithic stones that form a circle more than 100 metres wide. Next, head

to **Skara Brae**, Europe's best preserved prehistoric village, roughly ten minutes further north. You can see the nine surviving Neolithic houses and step 5,000 years back in time as you explore a replica house.

Back in Kirkwall, explore the town's majestic red sandstone centrepiece **St Magnus Cathedral**; 'the Light of the North' boasts some of Britain's best medieval architecture (www.stmagnus.org). Visit the nearby **Earl's and Bishop's Palaces** - the former dates back to the 1600s, while the latter is a contemporary of the cathedral, and was where great King Hakon, last Norwegian king to rule over the Hebrides, died (www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/propertyoverview.htm?PropID=PL_032).

If you've got six to nine hours...

With more time to spend, take an unforgettable 45-minute tour of **Maeshowe**, close to the Ring of Brodgar; the Stone-Age tomb was built around 5,000 years ago and is north-west Europe's finest chambered tomb (www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/places/propertyresults/propertyoverview.htm?PropID=PL_205&PropName=Maeshowe%20Chambered%20Cairn). In the 12th century, it was broken into by Vikings - look out for the dragon one of them graffitied onto the wall.

Just on the outskirts of Kirkwall you'll find the **Highland Park Distillery**, the furthest north distiller of whisky in Scotland, and one of the best loved (<http://highlandpark.co.uk>). Tours range from one hour to a whole day and all include the vital tasting session. Further south, the **Italian Chapel** on Lamb Holm is a beautiful Roman Catholic Chapel that was constructed by Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War using scavenged materials that were, nevertheless, ornately decorated. Learn the touching story of its creation and enjoy the tranquillity of its location.

Getting there from the port: most cruises ships call in at Kirkwall, a short walk from the centre of town.

Shore Leave - Wales

Sailing into... Cardiff

If you've got three hours...

See the capital of Wales in one go on a **Cardiff Cycle Tour**, which takes you past majestic big-hitter attractions and smaller hidden gems in roughly three hours.

Alternatively, there's plenty to explore under your own steam. Start off at **Cardiff Castle**, where you can climb up the 12th-century Norman keep for fantastic city views (www.cardiffcastle.com). Shopaholics should continue by exploring the alleyways that form the city's arcades. The **Morgan Arcade** shelters the treasure trove **Spillers**, the oldest record store in the world (www.morganquarter.co.uk, www.spillersrecords.co.uk); then, a few stylish steps away is **The Brogue Trader**, for men who like fine footwear, while fashionable females will



Discover amazing views of the city of Cardiff from the top of its 12th-century Norman keep

love **Renate** - and, for herbal toiletries, **St Kitts Herbery** (www.thebroguetrader.com, www.renatestore.com, www.stkittsherbery.co.uk). Out of the Arcades, all the high street and designer shops you could possibly desire are in the **St David's** shopping centre, including department store **John Lewis** (www.stdavidscardiff.com).

Rugby runs through the veins of most Welshmen and women, so make your way to the heart of the game at the **Principality Stadium**. Take a 40-minute tour, which could include spying on a live team training session or a rehearsal for one of the big-name music shows that regularly grace the hallowed ground (www.principalitystadium.wales/tours).

If you've got six to nine hours...

Find out why Cardiff is Wales' cultural hub at **National Museum Cardiff**, which has the largest collection of Impressionist art outside of Paris, as well as works by Monet, Rodin and Cézanne. There are also meteorites, volcanoes, dinosaurs and woolly mammoths in the Evolution of Wales gallery (www.museumwales.ac.uk/cardiff).

Factor in an excellent meal at an unexpected venue - Cardiff's prison. **The Clink** is one of the city's top-rated restaurants, where food is cooked and served by inmates. Their innovative approach to rehabilitation has garnered much praise for the restaurant (<http://theclinkcharity.org/the-clink-restaurants/cardiff-wales>). For local flavours, **Madame Fromage** in the Castle Arcade has an inviting range of cheeses from all over Wales, as well as a café serving up SLOW food (locally produced food and regional cooking) while the **Barker Tea House** in the High Street Arcade is the number one spot for afternoon tea (www.madamefromage.co.uk, www.facebook.com/barkerteahouse).

Heading ship-wards, spend some time exploring Cardiff Bay, dominated by the elegant **Wales Millennium Centre** (www.wmc.org.uk). Time it right to catch a lunchtime concert or take a tour of the impressive building. If you love nothing more than travelling through space and time, visit the **Doctor Who Experience**, which takes you on an immersive adventure with the Time Lord - played by Peter Capaldi himself - and where Doctor Who fans can explore costumes through the ages, and come up close to all the best baddies, from Cybermen to Daleks (www.doctorwho.tv/events/doctor-who-experience).

Getting from the port: the Port of Cardiff is adjacent to Cardiff Bay and just under one mile / 1.4 km from the city centre. It is approximately five minutes by taxi/20 minutes on foot to the Wales Millennium Centre or ten minutes by taxi to Cardiff Castle.

Sailing into... Newport

If you've got three hours...

Head straight off the ship and into the world of 'dark arts, riotous parties, war heroes, crocodiles and crucifixes' - that's what the National Trust promises you'll find at **Tredegar House**, a 17th-century mansion just on the edge of Newport (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/tredegar-house). Flamboyance is the keyword here, with one room decorated floor-to-ceiling in gold and dining rooms full of intricate carvings imbued with hidden symbols. Explore 'below stairs' too, then head out to the stunning formal gardens and have a walk in the peaceful parkland. It's less than ten minutes' drive from the port to Tredegar House.

Go even further back in time at **Caerleon Roman Fortress** and the **National Roman Legion Museum** - roughly 15 minutes from Tredegar House and both free to visit (<http://cadw.gov.wales/daysout/Caerleon-roman-fortress-baths>,

www.museumwales.ac.uk/roman). The former shows first-hand where the Second Augustan Legion and other Roman residents used to bathe and socialise, while over at the museum, explore a far-flung outpost of the Roman Empire, one of only three permanent fortresses in Roman Britain.

Back in Newport, walk over the magnificent **Newport Transporter Bridge** over the River Usk, a majestic monument to Edwardian engineering that is Grade 1 listed and one of only eight such constructions in use in the world (www.newport.gov.uk/heritage/Transporter-Bridge/Visit.aspx).



If you fancy a round of golf while docked in Newport, head to the Celtic Manor Resort and play on a championship course

If you've got six to nine hours...

Just a short drive from Caerleon is the magnificent **Celtic Manor Resort**, whose golf course hosted the greats of the game during the 2010 Ryder Cup. Play a round on one of their championship courses while any kids in tow enjoy the onsite treetop adventure Forest Jump (www.celtic-manor.com).

Kids and adults alike will be engrossed by the attractions at Blaenavon World Heritage Site, located partly in the Brecon Beacons National Park, roughly half an hour's drive from Newport. Awaiting discovery are **Big Pit National Coal Museum**, **Blaenavon**

Ironworks, the **World Heritage Centre** and **Blaenavon Heritage Railway** - all a few minutes' drive or walk from each other; learn about the area's important role as the world's major producer of iron and coal in the 19th century (www.visitblaenavon.co.uk).

Alternatively, take a scenic road trip east of Newport through the **Wye Valley** Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Less than half an hour's drive away is **Chepstow**, where you

can see Europe's oldest surviving castle doors - 800 years old, to be precise - at atmospheric **Chepstow Castle**, before continuing along the river to the marvellous **Tintern Abbey** (<http://cadw.gov.wales/daysout/chepstow-castle>, <http://cadw.gov.wales/daysout/tinternabbey>). Continue up to **Monmouth**, a quaint market town with a bustling main street to potter about in before returning to your ship, just half an hour's drive south.

Getting to the port: the Port of Newport is just over ten minutes' drive from Tredegar House and a ten-minute walk from the Newport Transporter Bridge Visitor Centre.

Sailing into... Swansea

If you've got three hours...

The birthplace of famous poet Dylan Thomas, Swansea is currently enjoying regeneration and has boomed in recent years. Visit Dylan Thomas's birthplace at **5 Cwmdonkin Drive** to explore his life and works, and hear velvet-voiced Richard Burton read the famous play *Under Milk Wood* at the **Dylan Thomas Centre** (www.dylanthomasbirthplace.com, www.dylanthomas.com/dylan-thomas-centre).

Another cultural hotspot is the **National**



Beach huts and ice-cream parlours in south Wales' Swansea Bay are part of its charm

Waterfront Museum, an attractive glass and slate construction with 15 hands-on galleries and a fantastic shop for souvenir-seekers (www.museumwales.ac.uk/swansea).

If the sun's out and your sea legs need a stretch, hire a bicycle - or a tandem if you're two - at **The Bike Hub** and whizz straight onto sweeping, scenic **Swansea Bay** (www.thebikehub.co.uk). It's about 20 minutes of leisurely cycling to reach the quaint village of **Mumbles**, whose pastel-coloured fisherman's cottages and a set of two piers sticking out to sea cry out for a little Instagram action. Locals switch between central **Joe's** and seafront-sited **Verdi's** for an ice-cream fix, or for something savoury in a stylish setting, you can't go wrong at **Patrick's** (www.joes-icecream.com/Mumbles-Parlour.html, www.verdis-cafe.co.uk, www.patrickswithrooms.com). Trek up to hilltop **Oystermouth Castle** for magnificent sea views and cycle out to **Mumbles Pier** to peer at the grand lifeboats poised and ready for action at the state-of-the-art new lifeboat station (www.swansea.gov.uk/oystermouthcastle, www.mumbles-pier.co.uk).

If you've got six to nine hours...

Mumbles is known as the 'Gateway to the Gower Peninsula', Britain's first-ever designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Find out why on a joyful journey ticking off South Wales's best beaches. On foot, you can walk the **Wales Coast Path** from Mumbles to pretty **Rotherslade**, **Langland** and **Caswell Bay** - stop off at sophisticated **Langland Brasserie** for a coffee with a view of surfers out to sea (www.langlandsbrasserie.co.uk). Travelling by car, venture out to **Rhossili Bay**, regularly voted in the top ten world's best beaches on TripAdvisor (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/gower-rhossili-shop-and-visitor-centre).

Seen enough of the sea? Choose a scenic road trip inland from Swansea. Heading north east for half an hour takes you to **Penderyn**, the Welsh whisky distillery that also produces the crisp and delicious Brecon Gin. Take a tour, have a tasting, then head into the nearby **Brecon Beacons National Park** for an atmospheric waterfall walk (www.welsh-whisky.co.uk, www.breconbeacons.org/waterfalls).

Half an hour's drive north west of Swansea in neighbouring Carmarthenshire is the **National Botanic Garden of Wales**, a dazzling collection of plants from all over the world, much of which is gathered under the UFO-like great glasshouse that was designed by Lord Norman Foster (www.gardenofwales.org.uk). Swing by **Wright's Food Emporium** before returning to port - a fabulous food store with an irresistible array of freshly baked cakes (www.wrightsfood.co.uk).

Getting there from the port: the Port of Swansea is less than 20 minutes' walk from the Dylan Thomas Centre, or a five-minute drive away.

Sailing into... Holyhead

If you've got three hours...

The Isle of Anglesey is undeniably romantic, which might be why the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge chose to spend early married life in sweet seclusion there. The couple lived in the diminutive Welsh-speaking hamlet **Bodorgan** and used to enjoy regular lunch dates at **The White Eagle** on Holyhead, just 15 minutes' drive from Holyhead Port (www.white-eagle.co.uk). Holyhead is also the jumping-off point for **South Stack** and its atmospheric **Lighthouse**, a magnet for thousands of seabirds including the cutest of them all - puffins (www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/seenature/reserves/guide/s/southstackcliffs). See it as part of a walk around **Holyhead Mountain** for some of the best and most

dramatic coastal scenery in Wales. The summit of the mountain is home to **Caer y Twr**, one of Wales' most impressive Iron Age sites.

A short walk from Holyhead Port takes you to **St Cybi's Church**, a mix of fourth century Roman walls and a Gothic church, parts of which date from the 13th century (www.stcybi.co.uk). Today, it's very much in use and visitors are most welcome - if you're lucky, you'll experience a moving performance from the local male voice choir. Don't miss the gorgeous stained-glass windows made by William Morris' workshop. And in case you're wondering, it's pronounced 'Saint Cubby'!

If you've got six to nine hours...

Hire a car or take a tour straight from the port and head for half an hour by road to **Beaumaris**, where you can inspect the 'most technically perfect castle in Britain'

(<http://cadw.gov.wales/daysout/beaumaris-castle>). Its perfect symmetry, round towers and square turrets, plus the surrounding mountain scenery, makes this a true gem among Wales' 641 castles - but there is one even more intimidating just 25 minutes across the Menai Strait on Wales' mainland: **Caernarfon Castle**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site (www.caernarfon-castle.co.uk).



Beaumaris Castle has been called the 'most technically perfect castle in Britain'.

Why not dive into Wales's adventure playground at **Zip World**, approximately 25 minutes from Beaumaris, where you'll zoom at speeds of up to 100 mph (160km per hour) over the world's fastest zip line (www.zipworld.co.uk)? If you prefer to have both feet on the ground - but still want a great view - head to nearby Llanberis, the start point of the **Snowdon Mountain Railway** (www.snowdonrailway.co.uk). Chug up to the 1,085 metre (3,560ft) summit with spellbinding views on either side, and enjoy the surreal experience of having tea at the top of Wales's tallest peak, at the fabulous visitor centre. On your way back to port, stop off for a panoramic shot at **Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch**, which boasts the second longest place name in the world!



Climb to the heights of Strumble Head and spot some amazing marine wildlife out at sea

Getting from the port: from Holyhead Port, it is about 15 minutes' drive to The White Eagle, and approximately ten minutes to where you can walk over to South Stack.

Sailing into... Fishguard

If you've got three hours...

Start exploring Britain's only coastal National Park as soon as you dock, with a bracing walk around **Strumble Head**, less than 15 minutes' drive west from the port. Take binoculars, as you might spy Common porpoise, dolphins, sunfish and even basking sharks (www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk). You're also likely to see walkers - the **Pembrokeshire Coast Path** is a National Trail (and part of the Wales Coast Path), winding for 186 miles (300km) along some of the most scenic coastline in Britain. Of course, you won't have time for all of it - explore the

rugged stretch around Strumble Head, then pick up the Strumble Shuttle back to Fishguard.

Alternatively, drive approximately 25 minutes from Fishguard to Britain's smallest city, **St David's**, which sits on the westernmost point of Wales (www.visitpembrokeshire.com/explore-pembrokeshire/towns-and-villages/st-davids). Head straight for the **Cathedral**, a pilgrimage destination for the past millennium and a half that was founded by St David in 550 (www.stdavidscathedral.org.uk). On the opposite bank of the river lie the brooding remains of **The Bishop's Palace**, a dramatic backdrop to open-air theatre in the summer months (<http://cadw.gov.wales/daysout/stdavidsbishopspalace>). Before heading back to port, pick up a scoop or two of artisan ice cream - made from organic milk, no less - at **Gianni's** on the High Street (www.giannisicecream.co.uk).

If you've got six to nine hours...

In the northern part of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park lie the **Preseli Hills**, providing a refreshing contrast to the seaside parts of the Park (www.visitpembrokeshire.com/explore-pembrokeshire/preseli-mountains). Walk through wild moorland in the footsteps of our ancient ancestors, treading the **Golden Road**, an eight-mile (13km) track that follows a route dating back to the Neolithic period, 5,000 years ago. Look out for the stunning Bronze Age remains **Foel Drygarn**, where stone ramparts and banks have merged with the natural landscape over time. Visit the village of Pontfaen for a pint of beer at historic 'Bessie's Pub', the **Dyffryn Arms**, where your beer is served by the jug through a sliding hatch.

For a different sort of liquid refreshment, try Pembrokeshire's most famous sporting activity, **coasteering**. Under 15 minutes' drive from Fishguard is the headquarters of **Preseli Venture**, who run all manner of outdoor activities in the National Park (www.preseliventure.co.uk). They're licensed by the National Trust to take groups out to their pretty, pristine stretches of coast to practise the adrenalin-pumping activity that will see you cliff-jump, swim and scramble your way around the coastline. Wetsuits and helmets are provided, and you can do a half-day session if you're limited on time.

Getting from the port: the Port of Fishguard is about five minutes' drive from Fishguard.

Sailing into... Milford Haven

If you've got three hours...

Explore the beautiful southern side of Pembrokeshire from Milford Haven, which is just a short distance from the gorgeous **Marloes Peninsula**. At the tip of the peninsula is the Deer Park, somewhat confusingly named as it has never been home to any deer. Instead, you can admire beautiful Welsh mountain ponies here and spot seals and their pups playing on the rocks below - in the distance, spot Skomer Island (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/marloes-sands/things-to-see-and-do). Just 20 minutes' drive from Milford Haven - about ten from the Deer Park - is the quaint seaside village of **Dale**, a watersports mecca, family-holiday haven and popular stop for walkers. Head to **The Griffin Inn**, whose award-winning seafood is caught in the pub's own boat, 'Griffin girl', while the views are worth a medal (www.griffinindale.co.uk).



Cobbled streets, artist shops and charming cafés await visitors to Tenby

Alternatively, around 30 minutes' drive from Milford Haven to the east is the picturesque walled town of **Tenby**, which attracts artists, craftspeople and creative types, so you're guaranteed to leave with a unique sea-inspired memento. Explore cute cafés and gorgeous beaches, wander the cobbled streets, and, if you're brave, discover the town's gory past on a ghost walk (<http://guidedtourswales.co.uk>).

If you've got six to nine hours...

Harry Potter fans should take a detour back from Tenby to **Freshwater West**, the beach that saw Harry, Ron and Hermione seek refuge at 'Shell Cottage' in the final films; it was also used in Ridley Scott's *Robin Hood* and *Snow White and the Huntsman*. Positioned overlooking the beach is quirky street food stall **Café Môr**, where lobster and burgers with a sea view are an unforgettable experience (www.beachfood.co.uk/cafemor.php). The **Pembrokeshire Beach Food Company**, who run the café, also organise seaside picnics and foraging.

If the timing's right, spend all your shore leave in the company of the cutest creature of them all - puffins. Thousands of the birds live on **Skomer Island**, a ten-minute boat ride from Martin's Haven. The flowers on the islands are just as special as the wildlife, with a rich carpet of bluebells in the spring and vibrant pink campion in summer - the colours are so bright, they can be seen from the mainland.

Or if you're a Dylan Thomas fan, drive less than an hour from Milford Haven to the seaside town of Laugharne. Visit **The Boathouse** where he lived and peer into his writing shed, perched over the Laugharne Estuary, where he wrote *Under Milk Wood* and other much-loved works (www.dylanthomasboathouse.com).

Getting from the port: from Milford Haven port, it's a short walk to the centre of Milford Haven.

Shore Leave - Northern Ireland

Sailing into... Belfast

If you've got three hours...

The capital of Northern Ireland is packed with things to do, see and learn. Start off by exploring the city's ship-building past and the most famous vessel to have been made here; **Titanic Belfast** tells the fascinating, tragic story of the ill-fated ship that set sail from Southampton in 1912 (<http://titanicbelfast.com>). Hear the stories of those who were on board, see recreations of the ship's cabins and virtually visit her wreck at the bottom of the North Atlantic.



The Titanic was built in Belfast - learn more about the history of the ill-fated ship at Titanic Belfast

If you're compelled by the story, continue exploring it at the immense **Titanic Dock & Pumphouse**, then venture on board the **SS Nomadic**, which is White Star Line's last remaining ship (www.titanicsdock.com, www.nomadicbelfast.com). Otherwise, head to the cultural hub of the city, the **Cathedral Quarter**, and pop into the dynamic **MAC**, a contemporary arts centre that always has an interesting exhibition to peruse and whose café is ideal for a quick caffeine hit (<https://themaclive.com>).

Spend your remaining shore leave where many sailors used to spend theirs - in the pub! **The Crown Liquor Saloon** is an original Victorian gin palace with snugs to cosy up in, ornate stained glass windows and, these days, fantastic food to enjoy. Wash it down with a pint of Guinness (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/the-crown-bar).

If you've got six to nine hours...

2016 is Northern Ireland's Year of Food and Drink, so don't miss the opportunity to treat your taste buds while in the city. Continuing with the Titanic theme, upmarket **Rayanne House** serves a sumptuous nine-course recreation of the last menu served in the first-class restaurant on board the ship (www.rayannehouse.com/titanic-menu). In the city centre, bustling **St George's Market** is a favourite among locals from Friday to Sunday, or enjoy Irish cuisine with waterfront views at friendly **Holohan's** (www.holohansatthebarge.co.uk).

Appetites sated, delve into Belfast's more recent history on a 90-minute Black Taxi Tour, which takes in some of the city's 2,000 murals documenting political and religious divisions, and forms the one of the world's largest outdoor galleries (www.westbelfastmuralstours.com). You can also tour the striking **Stormont Parliament Buildings** and beautiful surrounding grounds, or have a fresh air-fix at the lovely **Botanic Gardens**, located close to Queen's University and a fun, student-filled neighbourhood (www.niassembly.gov.uk/visit-and-learning/visiting/tours/, www.visit-belfast.com/things-to-do/member/botanic-gardens).

Fancy more fabulous flora? Approximately 40 minutes' drive from Belfast Port takes you to **Mount Stewart**, a National Trust property with extraordinary Mediterranean gardens designed by Edith, Lady Londonderry (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/mount-stewart). The neo-classical house reopened recently following a three-year restoration project; take a conservation tour and discover the fascinating story of how the house was restored to magnificence.

With more time on shore, explore Northern Ireland's beautiful **Causeway Coast** and take in some *Game of Thrones* locations while you're at it. Just over an hour's drive from Belfast Port takes you to the Giant's Causeway, where 40,000 interlocking basalt columns spread out into the sea (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/giants-causeway). Myths and legends surround these stones, and the excellent Visitor Centre brings these to life. Go on to follow in the footsteps of the popular series, visiting the quaint coastal town of **Ballycastle** - the native home of Lady Catelyn Stark and Varys - and **The Dark Hedges**, better known to fans as The Kings Road. Even if you're not a *Game of Thrones* fan, stop near Ballycastle at the **Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge** for a knee-trembling walk over the sea to Rocky Island (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/carrick-a-rede).

Belfast's nightlife options are many and varied. In the mood for music? Take your pick from musicals at the **Grand Opera House**, world-class classical at the **Ulster Hall** and DJ sets and unusual acts at the **Oh Yeah Centre**, also a recording studio (www.goh.co.uk, www.belfastcity.gov.uk/tourism-venues/ulsterhall/ulsterhall.aspx,

www.ohyeahbelfast.com). For a classy cocktail, **The Merchant Hotel's** 'Bert's Bar' takes you back to the Jazz Age with smooth live music in a suitably elegant Art Deco environment (www.themerchanthotel.com).

Getting from the port: from the Port of Belfast, it is less than ten minutes by taxi to Titanic Belfast or the MAC in the heart of the Cathedral Quarter.

Wind your way through Britain's waterways: the lowdown on canal boat holidays

With 3,000 miles of tranquil canals and rivers to explore across Britain, canal boat holidays are an easy way of exploring the destination's towns and countryside at a leisurely pace.

A holiday on water is a fully immersive experience in nature: from seeing otters play on the river bank, dragonflies hover next to you to or herons diving into the water, all while drifting along on a boat. There are more than 2,220 miles of canals to explore in Britain. Built during the Industrial Revolution, the irony is that they're now the perfect way to explore the countryside. Add in Britain's natural waterways, including the mighty Thames, and exploring by water is a timeless and inspired way to experience both countryside and city.

Norfolk Broads, east England

Reed-fringed and full of tiny inlets hidden from traffic, **the Broads** in the east of England are a much-loved system of rivers that were created in medieval times. You can rent cruisers to explore but if you want to do it under your own steam, **the Canoe Man** can help you navigate the tiniest and most hidden rivers by paddling around them. You can either camp overnight on the longer trips, or stay in Bed and Breakfasts en route. The Canoe Man is based in Wroxham, which takes just under three hours by train or car from London.

www.thecanoeman.com



The Kennet & Avon Waterway is a popular boating route, which treats passengers to some gorgeous scenery

Kennet & Avon Waterway, west England

The 87-mile long canal links London with the Bristol Channel in west England, and passes through some spectacular landscapes including the picturesque Cotswolds. Barging's hipster side comes out in **Topsy**, a narrowboat moored just outside the city of Bath. Inside there's a wood-burning stove, mid-century furniture, record player and stacks of vinyl. It's a gentle but popular boating route. Make time for **Bradford on Avon** and the **Lock Inn's** café for its famous Boatman's breakfast.

www.lazydazecruises.co.uk

Stratford Canal, west England

A great choice of route for 2016 to mark the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, this trip starts near **Rugby**, where the famous sport was born and around an hour from London by train. From there you travel through **Leamington Spa** and by **Warwick Castle** (and 84 locks) until you reach Shakespeare's birthplace at **Stratford-upon-Avon** where you can moor opposite the **Royal Shakespeare Theatre**, catch a performance and then return to your narrowboat. www.rose-narrowboats.co.uk

Scottish Lowlands

A spectacular feat of engineering, the **Falkirk Wheel** is world's first - and only - rotating boat lift that bridges the two canals between Edinburgh and Glasgow. Don't miss the **Kelpies** either. Unveiled last year, they're the largest horse sculptures in the world. It takes a week to explore both cities by canal and **The Seagull Trust** has a boat, the Marion Seagull, which has been specially adapted to allow wheelchair users and their families to experience boating holidays. www.seagulltrust.org.uk

The Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal, Wales

If you want a quiet life, head here; you can hire electric narrowboats that are quieter than diesel ones and you'll find plenty of charging points throughout the 33 miles of canals that travel through some of the beautiful areas of Wales, including the **Brecon Beacons** and **Usk Valley**. You can also pep your trip up with some adventure. The famous 21-mile circular Gap mountain bike trail covers a stretch of the canal. Great for active families. www.castlenarrowboats.co.uk

The Outer Pennine Ring, north England

Three miles of pitch darkness, the **Standedge Tunnel** is the longest underground waterway in Britain. As well as this experience, you'll also get a head for heights by rising 645ft through a series of locks; just one of the highlights of a 21-day trip that's high on an expert barger's bucket list and also takes in **Manchester**, **Leeds** and the dramatic **Pennine** scenery. www.shirecruisers.co.uk

The Thames

The African Queen is a hotel boat that sleeps just 12 people. A converted Dutch barge based just outside **Reading**, it travels on a gentle patch of the Thames in some considerable style with a shaded deck where, with a glass of champagne in hand, you can watch the scenery slip by. There are a variety of cruises on offer, including a five-day option that visits **Henley-on-Thames**, famous for its rowing regatta in the summer. www.african-queen.co.uk



The Caledonian Canal brings the romance of the glens of Scotland to passengers. Credit Peter Sandground

Caledonian Canal, Scotland

The mist-tipped hills and glens of Scotland are full of romance, and the **Scottish Highlander floating hotel**, marries this with tartan, leather sofas, fine Scottish food and single malt whiskeys. There are family, golf and honeymoon cruises available. Built between 1803 and 1822, the **Caledonian**

Canal links Inverness on the east coast with Fort William on the west coast using man-made canals to link with naturally-created Loch Ness, Loch Oich and Loch Lochy.

www.gobarging.com

The Llangollen Canal, Shropshire, west England, and Wales

Narrowboats were originally powered by horses walking along the canal towpaths and this canal network is one of the few places left in the world where you can still experience it on a day trip. Crossing between **Shropshire** in England and into Wales, one highlight is travelling through **Pontcysyllte**. Nicknamed 'the street in the sky', it is an aqueduct that is more than 100 feet in the air. www.horsedrawnboats.co.uk

Lough Erne, Northern Ireland

One of Britain's great wildernesses, there are more than 150 islands in this corner of Northern Ireland surrounding the **River Erne**. The town of **Enniskillen**, a 90-minute drive from Belfast, is at its heart and you can rent boats that allow you to explore the ruined castles and monasteries that dot the landscape and spot wildlife. Stop off at **Lusty Beg** - an island with its own restaurant - or **Belle Isle**, an award-winning restaurant with a cookery school. www.fermanaghlakelands.com

The Lancaster Canal, north England

There are no locks on this canal but the 42-mile waterway has a spectacular setting; from the coastline near **Morecambe Bay** on the north-west coast of England, through the **Forest of Bowland** to the **foothills of the Lake District**, and the wild landscape of the county of Lancashire interspersed with waterside pubs and wildlife refuges. A base just outside Preston, which is a 40-minute train journey from Manchester, will allow you to explore it at leisure. www.crabtreearrowboathire.com

Stourport Ring, central England

It's testimony to Birmingham's past as the manufacturing powerhouse of England's Midlands area that this city has even more canals than Venice and today they're a cherished part of the cityscape, lined with bars and cafes. Birmingham is part of the Stourport Ring, a classic canal journey that also takes in **Cadbury World**, a theme park celebrating the famous chocolate company, the cathedral city of Worcester and the **Tardebigge Flight** - a series of 30 locks that raises the water level 220 feet (67 metres). A good base is **Stoke Prior**, a two-hour drive from London and a 30-minute train journey from Birmingham. www.black-prince.com

Lakes - monsters, adventure sports and relaxation

There aren't many links between Romantic poetry, monsters, water skiing and gyrocopters, but all have a compelling connection with the magnificent bodies of water that are Britain's lakes. Whether they've been immortalised in some of the most famous poetry ever written, fostered a host of conspiracy theories as to whether a legendary monster lives in their depths, or are the perfect base for adrenaline-fuelled sports, lakes are a treasured part of Britain's landscape.

From England's Lake District to the celebrated lochs of Scotland, via lakes in the heart of the Welsh mountains, here are just a few of the highlights and why their attractions extend beyond boat trips.

Lake District, Cumbria, north-west England

Home of England's deepest and largest lakes, the lush natural environment of the Lake District in the north-west of England is one in which you can't fail to embrace the great outdoors. Hike around England's largest and second-largest lakes - Windermere and Ullswater respectively - set off on a fell walk around Grasmere Lake or take a gentler walk around some of the smaller lakes, including Derwent Water and Rydal Water.

Walking aside, the Lake District is renowned as **the ultimate adventure playground**. Enjoy views over Buttermere, Crummock and Loweswater with Via Ferrata Xtreme in Honister, an adventure activity destination that's highly rated by all those who've had a go. As well as experiencing vertical climbs and cliff-edge ladders, adventurers can walk along Europe's longest Burma Rope bridge, suspended 2,000ft/610m over the valley.

There are great views to be had on a spectacular **gyrocopter flight** over Derwent Water or Ullswater; take the controls of the gyrocopter or just look out of the window. This is a wonderful way to gain a birds' eye perspective of the Lakes.

Alternatively, swing through the trees at **Windermere's TreeTop Trek**, a ropes course built into the canopy of ancient oak trees with amazing views of the lake and the Langdale Pikes from 50ft/15m up. Avid hikers can climb **Scafell Pike**, the highest mountain in England and one of the **Three Peaks Challenge** mountains.

Once the daredevil in you has been satisfied, enjoy one of the many picturesque towns in the region - check out **Keswick**, **Bowness-on-Windermere** or **Ambleside**, all with close association to the Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. www.cumbriatourism.org, www.golakes.co.uk/adventure-capital

Getting there: The Lake District is under two hours by train from Manchester and there are direct trains from London Euston to Oxenholme (half an hour from Windermere) in just under three hours. Driving from London to Lake Windermere takes around five hours.



Ullswater Lake, the second largest in England, located in the Lake District. You can hike around it, sail on it or take a dip in it



Discover pure tranquillity at Bala Lake in Snowdonia National Park. ©VisitBritain / Lee Beel

Snowdonia National Park, north Wales

The largest natural lake in Wales - **Llyn Tegid** - lies in **Snowdonia National Park** - along with 100 others. The National Park is heaven for watersports enthusiasts, with sailing, canoeing, kayaking, rafting, wakeboarding and windsurfing all up for grabs. And, if you're looking to indulge a passion for outdoor swimming, check out **Gone Swimming** (www.goneswimming.co.uk).

The company specialises in adventure swimming holidays, some of which are in the lakes of Snowdonia. So grab your goggles and a wetsuit, and admire spectacular scenery while perfecting your strokes.

If you'd rather sit back and enjoy the tranquil scenery, Llyn Tegid is also ideal for fishing; the freshwater lake is packed with pike, perch, grayling and roach. And, like the Lake District, Snowdonia's terrain is perfect for fell walking. Head away from the busier parts of Snowdonia and enjoy a more tranquil walk on the footpaths around **Bala Lake**. Embark on the entire 14-mile circuit walk or split it into two and jump on board the Bala Lake Railway for return transport; either way, walkers will observe Snowdonia's spectacular lake views, farmland, moorland, mountains and forests.

www.visitsnowdonia.info, www.visitwales.com

Getting there: There are direct trains to Llandudno Junction and Bangor - the closest mainline stations to Snowdonia National Park. Journey time from London Euston is three-and-a-half hours; from Birmingham three hours; from Manchester two-and-a-half hours; from Cardiff four-and-a-half hours.

Scottish Lochs

Mystical legends, traditional songs and poetry have all found their inspiration on the banks of Scotland's lochs (lakes).

Bring your binoculars, your camera and a side order of optimism and set out to find 'Nessie', the fabled monster said to live in the depths of **Loch Ness** in the Scottish Highlands, south of Inverness. However, it's not just Nessie you should be looking out for; from on board a boat on this majestic stretch of water (37kms/22miles long) you can spot **Urquhart Castle**, as well as small villages and farms and watch out for leaping trout and salmon.

Not far from the bustling city of Glasgow is the serene **Trossachs National Park**, home of **Loch Lomond** (www.lochlomond-trossachs.org). Mountains loom to the north, while a scattering of islands can be found at the south end of the loch. Pretty villages such as **Luss** line the loch's western shores, all of which inspired the traditional Scottish song *The Bonnie Banks O' Loch Lomond*. The area was also much loved by Scottish writer and poet Sir Walter Scott, whose famous poem *The Lady of the Lake* was inspired by **Loch Katrine** in the National Park, which you can cruise on the steamship *SS Sir Walter Scott*.

www.visitscotland.com/about/nature-geography/canals-rivers-lochs

Getting there: Loch Ness is just over a three-hour drive from Edinburgh, or a 40-minute drive from the international airport at Inverness. Loch Lomond is less than an hour's drive from Glasgow.

The loughs of Northern Ireland

Where can you go if you're sports mad but travelling with a history buff? Head to the banks of **Lough Neagh** in Northern Ireland, Britain's largest inland lake with a shoreline of more than 145kms/90 miles. Not only is it a watersports fan's dream - canoe in its many bays and inlets around the lough or the huge expanse of open water, or powerboat, jet-ski,



Sailing on Loch Lomond, a beautiful lake in the Trossachs National Park, not far from Glasgow

water-ski and even learn to fly a light plane across it all. The shore is also sprinkled with ancient relics that will delight lovers of history. For a true sense of Northern Ireland's ancient past visit **Antrim round tower**, the remnant of a tenth-century monastic site standing 28m high, and **Ram's Island round tower**. www.discoverloughneagh.com

For a spot of five-star luxury on a lakeside shore, Lough Erne - two connected lakes in County Fermanagh - is home to the **Lough Erne Resort**. After indulging in the resort's luxury indoor facilities, it provides a great spot from which to explore the lake. Helicopter and seaplane tours can introduce the lake from up high, while cycling, horse-riding, watersports, caving and golf - the resort has two Championship courses - are all available. www.loughernerresort.com

Getting there: Lough Neagh is a 40-minute drive west of Belfast city centre and just 15 minutes from the city's international airport. Lough Erne is around a two-hour drive west of Belfast.

Water-based holidays

As an island surrounded by 12,000 kilometres of coastline and home to the dramatic beauty of the Lake District as well as canals that loop around scenic countryside, there is plenty of water-based fun to be had around Britain. Punt down calm Cambridge canals, learn to surf in cool Cornwall or wander through waterfalls in wild Wales - there's simply nothing as nice as messing about on the water.



Jump off and scramble up Wales' coastline for some adrenaline-pumping coasteering

Coasteering in Anglesey, north Wales

Coasteering is a daredevil's dream way of experiencing the coastline at close quarters. Pioneered in Wales, it is a blend of rock-hopping, shore-scrambling, swell-riding, cave-exploring and cliff-jumping for the ultimate aquatic adventure. An experienced guide will help adrenaline-junkies and families alike discover hidden coves among 125 miles of beautiful Anglesey coastline. www.coasteering-wales.co.uk

Wild swim in the Brecon Beacons, south Wales

In the south-west hills of the Brecon Beacons are some of the most amazing plunge pools in Britain. There are more than 20 pools along five miles of the **Fechan and Mellte rivers**, so you could try dipping in every one of them on a long day's walk. **Lower Ddwli Falls** is a huge open pool with a great arc of a waterfall where spray lifts up through the leaves and rainbows appear as if by magic. Just downstream is **Horseshoe Falls**, with a great jump and rope-swing too. Lower Ddwli Falls is around a one hour's train journey from Cardiff. www.breconbeacons.org

Water trampoline on Fermanagh Lakelands, Northern Ireland

This lush, aquatic portion of Northern Ireland is ribboned by rugged woodland and freckled with Lilliputian islands and watery coves. It provides an extraordinary backdrop for thrill-seekers to enjoy not one but three water trampolines, all connected by various walkways

and logs floating on the beautiful **Upper Lough Macnean**. Test your balance on the moonwalk, whizz down a four-metre high water slide and send your friends flying off from a catapult. Whether you accessorise your holiday with boats, canoes, kayaks, or even inflatables, it's a lakeland utopia. Belfast International Airport and Belfast City Airport are both approximately two hours' drive from Fermanagh. www.fermanaghlakelands.com

Cast off in Loch Lomond, Scotland

Scotland, with its huge number of lochs and rivers, offers anglers some of the best fishing in Europe. The largest surface area of fresh water in Britain, a huge variety of fish can be found swimming in Loch Lomond, making it an ideal habitat for anglers. Salmon and sea trout return up the **River Leven** into the Southern reaches of the Loch, while brown and rainbow trout, pike, perch, roach, chub and dace offer variety for every angler. A glorious surrounding to practice your sport, there's plenty of opportunity for casting off in glimmering waters. Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park are in central Scotland, approximately two hours by train or car from Glasgow. www.lochlomond-trossachs.org

Punt along the River Cam in Cambridge, east England

Punting (meaning 'to push') is a quintessentially British way to enjoy the River Cam, which runs through the heart of Cambridge. Enjoy fantastic views of the world-famous Cambridge College 'Backs', King's College Chapel, The Wren Library at Trinity College and the Bridge of Sighs while meandering along the river in a traditional **Cambridge Punt**. Take a picnic of strawberries and champagne to enjoy on the river for the full experience. Cambridge is around one hour by train from London.

www.cambridgebluepunting.co.uk



*A lovely way to see the sights of Cambridge University is by punting on the River Cam.
©VisitBritain/Britain on View*

Wander through waterfalls in the Lake District, north-west England

A tranquil haven of towering peaks, serene waters and undulating hills, **Ullswater Valley** is truly breath-taking, with its beautiful lake nestled among towering fells. There you'll find **Aira Force**, a tumbling waterfall dropping an impressive 65ft/20 metres, which can be reached by taking a stroll through ancient woodland and landscaped glades. It's no wonder that, while walking here, Wordsworth wrote 'I wandered lonely as a cloud'. The perfect place for a family walk and picnic, water-sports enthusiasts will be kept busy with canoeing, sailing, fishing and even swimming for the more intrepid explorers. Reach the Lake District in just under four hours by train from London, or two hours from Manchester. www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Escape to the magic of Mersea Island, south-east England

Mersea Island in the county of Essex, just under two hours' drive from London, has become a favourite haunt for day-trippers searching for Colchester native oysters. But there's more to this sleepy island in the **Blackwater estuary**, which is linked to mainland England by an ancient causeway. Enjoy crabbing from the pontoon, atmospheric walks across the saltmarshes with their wading birds and weather-boarded fishing huts, sailing, and, of

course, be first in the queue at the **Company Shed** in West Mersea for one of its famous seafood platters. www.visitessex.com; <http://thecompanyshed.co>

Fulfil teenage surfer dreams on the Cornish coast, south-west England

The golden sands of **Harlyn Bay near Padstow** - a safe, sheltered crescent-shaped beach - are the perfect place for teenagers to become a surfer dude or chick. **Harlyn Surf School** runs surf camps every summer for teenagers and children; and offers private, improver and group lessons too - so there's no excuse for even the biggest 'barney' (an inexperienced surfer) to not hit the waves and cry "Cowabunga!". Cornwall is under six hours by train from London. www.harlynsurfschool.co.uk

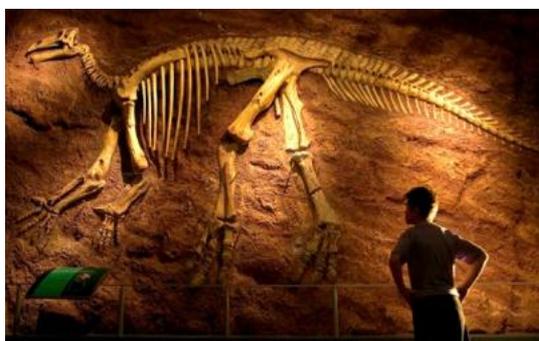
Small is beautiful - Britain's Islands

Around the coast of England, Scotland and Wales lie more than 6,000 islands - 140 or so inhabited. Each unique in its own way, Britain's quirky assortment of islands are truly destinations to treasure.

ENGLAND'S SOUTH COAST

Isle of Wight

Dinosaurs, festivals, regattas... there's more to the Isle of Wight than its glorious beaches and bays. Anyone with a passing interest in palaeontology will be thrilled with the 'dinosaur capital of Britain', so named because the island is one of the richest areas of dinosaur fossil discovery in Europe. This prehistoric wonder is documented in museums such as the **Dinosaur Isle**, while there are also fossil



The Isle of Wight is home to prehistory - discover dinosaur bones and fossils

hunts and footprint tours. Visit **Brook Beach**, where one unmissable feature is the **fossilised forest of trees** that appear from beneath the waves at low tide, as well as a sandstone ledge containing fossilised dinosaur footprints. Britain's oldest theme park, **Blackgang Chine**, has further marked the island's rich dinosaur heritage with its dinosaur attraction Restricted Area 5.

www.blackgangchine.com

The Isle of Wight has also gained a favourable reputation as a festival island. June sees thousands of people stream over by ferry to attend the **Isle of Wight Festival** - it's always an impressive line-up of bands and 2016 alone has confirmed Queen with Adam Lambert, the Stereophonics and Faithless. Come September, it's **Bestival** time! This festival has more of a boutique flavour, and fancy dress is heartily encouraged. Foodies might be interested in the island's **Garlic Festival** - cookery demonstrations, children's entertainment, live music and, of course, huge garlic marquees, all take place at the bulb-inspired festival every August. www.isleofwightfestival.com, www.bestival.net, www.garlic-festival.co.uk

The summer months also make it a popular time to visit the island during **Cowes Week** - a sailing regatta that, since 1826, has played a major part in Britain's sporting summer calendar, staging up to 40 daily races for around 1,000 boats. It's certainly one way to experience the island's stunning heritage coast, but if you don't have sea legs, why not explore this island - half of which has been recognised as an Area of Outstanding



Beautiful views at Freshwater Bay on the Isle of Wight

Natural Beauty - during May's two-week **Walking Festival**? Featuring more than 250 walks for all ages and abilities, there are more than 500 miles of footpaths on which you can amble and ramble.

www.visitisleofwight.co.uk

How to get there: ferry services leave from Portsmouth, Southampton and Lymington, with up to 350 crossings per day. Travel time from London to the ports is just under two hours.



Exotic blooms and plants at sub-tropical Abbey Garden on the Scilly Isles

Isles of Scilly

Would you be surprised to hear that Britain has its very own tropical islands? It's true. Nestled in a Gulf Stream, 28 miles south of Cornwall, the five inhabited islands and countless uninhabited islands in the archipelago of the Isles of Scilly experience a sultry climate. The warmer climate has resulted in a stunning array of flora and fauna on the islands. **Tresco** - the second largest isle, which boasts white sandy beaches - is home to the exotic, outdoor **Abbey Garden**. Walk among palm trees, flame trees and tropical flowers in the brightest colours.

As well as the sheer diversity of the tropical vegetation, the largest island - **St Mary's** - is peppered with ancient monuments, ranging from Neolithic chamber tombs to Civil War fortifications. And why not hop on board a boat for a day trip to the third-largest island, **St Martin's**, where, after a day on the stunning beaches, you can fortify yourself with a glass of white wine from the island's vineyard.

www.visitislesofscilly.com

How to get there: passenger ferries leave from Penzance in Cornwall on a regular basis or you can experience a bird's eye view of the island by taking the Skybus to the islands from Land's End, Newquay and Exeter airports.

Lundy Island

If you're holidaying in north Devon, take a day trip to the unspoilt wilderness of Lundy Island, 11 miles off the coast. Immerse yourself in its wilderness on snorkelling safaris or rock pool rambles, wildlife and seabird walks. Spot grey seals, the Lundy ponies and the island's Sika deer, as well as the diverse flora and fauna and the 'Lundy cabbage', endemic to the island.

And if you're in search of refreshment after all the exploring, you'll be pleased to know you can order a pint at **The Marisco Tavern**, one of England's most isolated pubs. You can also spend the night right by the island's **castle**, built in 1244 by Henry III; the ruinous keep was renovated into cottages by The Landmark Trust. Or you can stay in the **disused lighthouse** - built by Bristol-based merchants in the 18th century to stop the many shipwrecks on the island, the keepers quarters have been transformed into flats with spectacular views. www.lundyisland.co.uk, www.landmarktrust.org.uk

Getting there: Either on board the island's own boat the MS Oldenburg, which departs from Bideford in north Devon, or by helicopter during good weather. Bideford is just over an hour's drive from Exeter International Airport or two hours from Bristol International Airport.

ENGLAND'S NORTH-EAST COAST

Holy Island and Farne Islands

For thousands of years Holy Island in the North Sea, a tidal island off the coast of Northumberland, has been a beacon for visitors, once attracting pilgrims to the Benedictine Priory, which was later destroyed by Henry VIII in the 16th century to build **Lindisfarne Castle** with the monastery stone. This romantic fortress is now looked after by the National Trust and underwent renovation by the architect Edwin Lutyens in the early 1900s, although some of the Tudor fort can still be seen.



The atmospheric Lindisfarne Castle, looking out to sea from Holy Island

Keen ornithologists should take a boat out to the nearby **Farne islands**; witness 37,000 pairs of puffins that call the islands their home as well as more than 20 varieties of birds including guillemots and razorbills. Also keep your eyes peeled for the large grey seal colony and enjoy fantastic views back to **Bamburgh Castle**, which looms over the Northumberland coast, and the Cheviot Hills.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lindisfarne-castle,
www.visitnorthumberland.com/coast/farne-islands

Getting there: The nearest rail station is Berwick-upon-Tweed, around 45 minutes from Edinburgh or Newcastle. From there, take a bus, with times depending on the prevailing tide. Holy Island is linked to the mainland by a long causeway.

ENGLAND'S NORTH-WEST COAST

Isle of Man

There are some outstanding beauty spots on the Isle of Man, located in the Irish Sea, just west of the Lake District in north-west England. More than 40 per cent of the land is unpopulated and there are 18 coastal or mountainous glens to discover. In addition to wild natural beauty, there are beautifully maintained gardens on the island; the **Tynwald National Park and Arboretum** consists of 25 acres of picturesque countryside, while the **Milntown Estate** - parts of which date back to the 16th century - boasts wonderful blooms in its 15 acres of gardens and woodlands.

History buffs should head to the island's capital, **Castletown**. Visit the imposing **Castle Rushen**, one of the most impressive medieval castles in Britain, or you can join a **Story of Mann trail**, which will take you to **Peel Castle** - believed to be the first place Christianity was brought to the Isle by St Patrick in the early 13th century. Take a ride on the **Douglas Horse Trams** - on the island since 1876, even Royal visitors to the island such as the Queen and the late Queen Mother have been carried on the tramway. www.visitisleofman.com

Getting there: Flights to the Isle of Man operate from Birmingham, Bristol, Edinburgh, Glasgow, London Gatwick, Luton, Liverpool, Manchester and Southampton international airports. Alternatively, there are ferry services from Liverpool and Belfast.

SCOTLAND'S WEST COAST

The Inner Hebrides

There is a real sense you're getting away from it all on the islands of Scotland's Inner Hebrides. Contrasting landscapes - from countryside to mountains to beaches, can be found across the islands. Enjoy a flavour of the Highlands on the largest of them, the **Isle of Skye**; it boasts lochs, moors and 20 Munros (mountains over 3,000ft/914.4m) so there's plenty of scope for walking and climbing. Key sights on the island include **Loch Coruisk**, which lies under the mountain **Black Cuillin**, the sea cliff of **Kilt Rock** and rock pinnacles such as the **Old Man of Storr**.



You'll find lochs, moors and mountains galore on the Isle of Skye

Adventurers might like to try gorge walking on the **Isle of Arran**. Explore hidden waterfalls, plunge pools and natural slides, or climb up the rugged peaks and

coastal crags. For that extra challenge, climb Arran's highest peak, **Goatfell**, which stands at 2,866ft/874m. Looking for a gentler stroll? Head to **Brodick Castle, Gardens and Country Park** - the only island-based country park in Britain.

The **Isle of Mull** is a haven for visitors with a penchant for gorgeous beaches, and its largest town, **Tobermory**, is picture-postcard pretty, with an attractive port and multi-coloured houses, while the nearby island of **Staffa** is home to the dramatic vertical basaltic columns and **Fingal's Cave**, the inspiration behind works of art such as Turner's painting of *Staffa, Fingal's Cave* and Mendelssohn's Hebrides Overture. Or head on a boat trip around the **Argyll Islands** and chances are you'll catch a glimpse of minke whales, porpoises and dolphins in the water.

www.visitscotland.com

Getting there: There are passenger ferries to the islands from the mainland Scotland ports of Oban and Kennacraig in Argyll, and Mallaig and Ullapool in the Highlands.



St Kilda, part of Scotland's Outer Hebrides, is part of a UNESCO Dual World Heritage site

The Outer Hebrides

Wildlife enthusiasts will be enthralled with the sheer scale of species and habitats that are dotted through the Outer Hebrides. Take a cruise around the **Uists, the Barra Isles, and Eriskay**, and spot whales, seals, dolphins and basking sharks in their natural habitat, while seabird colonies and gigantic sea cliffs will greet visitors on the remote volcanic archipelago of **St Kilda**. A National Nature Reserve, these islands are a UNESCO Dual

World Heritage site with the secluded islands of the **Rona and Sula Sgier National Nature Reserve**. www.visitscotland.com

Getting there: Fly from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness to the Outer Hebrides or take passenger ferries from ports on islands in the Inner Hebrides.

SCOTLAND'S NORTH COAST

Shetland Islands

Sandy beaches, rocky inlets, heather-clad hills and sea caves - the landscapes of the Shetland Islands are as varied as it gets! Shetland's northerly location means some of Britain's rarest plants grow there. The **Isle of Feltar** alone, known as 'the garden of Shetland', is home to 300 species of flowering plant.

<http://visit.shetland.org>

Getting there: There are daily flights to Shetland's Sumburgh airport from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness, or you can take passenger ferries from Aberdeen.

Orkney Islands

Eighteen hours of daylight during summer - the islands' position high up in the northern hemisphere means the sun doesn't set until 22.30 - ensures plenty of opportunity to explore the 600 miles of coastline, sandy beaches and dramatic sea stacks (the giant 450ft/137m **Old Man of Hoy** is one of the most impressive).

www.visitorkney.com

Getting there: Fly to the Orkneys from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness, or you can take passenger ferries from Aberdeen.

WALES' NORTH COAST

Anglesey

'Majestic' sums up the island of Anglesey, lying off the north coast of Wales. With its mountains - such as the stark beauty of **Parys Mountain** - and vistas as far as the eye can see, beautiful coastal walks, romantic gems, the village with the longest name in Britain

(**Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlilliantysiliogogoch** - give pronouncing it a go!) and royal connections thrown in for good measure.

Once the former home of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge before their son Prince George was born in July 2013, Anglesey has long had a strong royal heritage. Back in 1295 Edward I ordered work to begin the last of the 'iron ring' of castles in north Wales, designed to be a perfectly shaped fortress on the 'beautiful marsh' (*beau marais* in Norman French) - **Beaumaris Castle**. Although it wasn't completed, the medieval fortress is one of the island's most magnificent sights.

Explore the burial chambers at **Barcloddiad Yr Gawres**, while **Llys Rhosyr**, the site of what was once the royal court of the most powerful and charismatic Welsh medieval princes, Llywelyn Fawr, Prince of Gwynedd, has been discovered near the village of **Newborough**. Learn about the many shipwrecks that occurred off Anglesey's coast at the maritime museum in **Holyhead**, the island's largest town.

Even the island's romantic appeal is deep-rooted in history. The beautiful **Llanddwyn Island**, off the tip of Anglesey, is the home of St Dwynwen, the Welsh patron saint of love, who lived in the 5th century. The ruins of **St Dwynwen's chapel**, built in the 16th century, can still be seen today. www.visitanglesey.com

Getting there: London to Holyhead by train takes around four hours, while Liverpool and Manchester in England's north-west are around a two-hour drive.



Caldey Abbey on Caldey Islands, where monks whip up perfume, chocolate and shortbread

WALES' WEST COAST

Caldey Island

Buy perfume, chocolate and shortbread made by... monks! This picturesque island off the coast of Pembrokeshire has been home to various orders of monks since

Celtic times. It is now owned by the Cistercian Order and the monks make these goods to sell. Wander through the **Old Priory** and attend one of the chanted services in the **Abbey church**, plus explore the medieval churches of **St David and St Illtud**. Why not finish up your trip with a walk up the island's lighthouse, where you'll get fantastic views of the Pembrokeshire Coast, the Gower Peninsula and Lundy Island? www.caldey-island.co.uk

Getting there: Take the boat from Tenby harbour. Tenby is just under two hours by road or rail from Cardiff.



Boats head out for puffin-spotting at 'puffin paradise' Skomer Island © Crown copyright (2013) Visit Wales

Skomer Island

Skomer is puffin paradise. Thousands of puffins make their home on this small scenic island - which, in May, is blanketed in bluebells and pink campion - as do many other bird species. Along with its sister island, Skokholm, the waters around Skomer are rich in marine wildlife that shelter in the bays and inlets, all which can be spotted on special safaris. www.visitpembrokeshire.com

Getting there: Take a ferry from Martin's Haven on the Pembrokeshire coast, around a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Cardiff.

CHANNEL ISLANDS

Jersey

100 miles south of mainland Britain, Jersey - the largest of the Channel Islands - is the most southerly island of the British Isles. While the island is packed with heritage attractions - the well-preserved **Mont Orgueil Castle**, the **Jersey War Tunnels** (the Channel Islands were occupied during World War II), and the Neolithic dolmen **La Hougue Bie** - Jersey is also famed for its delicious food. It has an enviable natural larder - renowned Jersey Royal potatoes, Jersey Jewel tomatoes, Jersey black butter, and tasty seafood - and visitors to the island during six weeks of autumn can enjoy it for purse-friendly prices during **Tennerfest**. More than 100 restaurants in Jersey (and almost the same number in neighbouring Guernsey) can enjoy wonderful meals created from the islands' natural produce for fixed prices. www.jersey.com

Guernsey

A pretty harbour and cobbled streets make the capital of Guernsey, **St Peter's Port**, an appealing town to visit. But its attractions go much deeper; visit the **Guernsey Literary Festival**, which draws big names from the literary world - past speakers have included Louis des Bernières (*Captain Corelli's Mandolin*) and Michael Morpurgo (*War Horse*). For a sportier adrenaline rush, Guernsey's

spectacular coastline is ripe for coastering, climbing, diving, kayaking, surfing, windsurfing and sailing. Or to enjoy the island's great outdoors in a more gentle way, book a local guide and embark on foraging for natural produce.

And if you're really looking for peace and tranquillity? Head to the neighbouring islands of **Herm, Sark and Alderney**. Herm (20 minutes by ferry) and Sark (50 minutes by ferry) are both traffic-free. Explore the beautiful coastal views and unspoilt beaches from the saddle of a hired bicycle. www.visitguernsey.com

Getting there: Flights to the Channel Islands operate from many British airports. Regular ferry services operate from Portsmouth, Poole and Weymouth on the south coast of England to Jersey and Guernsey; depending on which port you depart from journey times vary between four and ten hours. All these ports are within two- to three-hours' drive from London.