

Join Mark Carwardine

on a very special North Atlantic Adventure from

Scotland to Svalbard

visiting Scotland (Fair Isle, North Rona, Sula Sgeir & Rockall),
Iceland (Westman Islands, Faxaflói Bay, Snæfellsnes
Peninsula, Skjálfandi Bay & Grimsey Island),
the Greenland pack ice, and Norway (Jan Mayen & Svalbard)

2-18 June 2024



“This is a rare opportunity to see some of the best wildlife of the North Atlantic and the high Arctic - bowhead whales, blue whales and an impressive variety of other whales and dolphins, several of the biggest seabird colonies in the world, polar bears, walruses, harp seals, and much more - all in a single trip. We leave from Aberdeen, yet visit some of the most remote and seldom visited wildlife-rich hotspots in the region.”

Mark Carwardine

Wildlife Worldwide has exclusively chartered the *M/V Ortelius* for this wonderful 16-night wildlife expedition cruise from Scotland to the icy realms of Svalbard. We'll visit prime sites in the North Atlantic, the Greenland Sea, and the Arctic Ocean and, along the way, will have loads of time ashore and plenty of opportunity to enjoy the fabulous variety of wildlife and wild places. We hope to visit the world-renowned bird paradise of Fair Isle, explore Iceland's moon-like landscape, sail through one of the best places in the world for blue whales, stand on the Arctic Circle, visit the home of the last breeding pair of great auks, explore the most remote and mysterious island in the North Atlantic, cruise along the Greenland pack ice, and look for polar bears in the high Arctic.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Travel on our exclusively chartered, very comfortable and safe, ice-strengthened polar expedition ship – the *Ortelius* – with plenty of deck space.
- Good-sized and exceptionally stable ship for comfortable sea crossings (ships that are too small take considerably longer and give a rougher ride).
- All cabins have private bathrooms.
- Wonderfully varied journey with superb wildlife-watching in spectacular settings.
- Join Mark and award-winning landscape photographer Joe Cornish, and Mark's project manager Rachel Ashton.
- A full 16 nights on board the ship – with long hours of daylight – giving maximum time to explore.
- Join the ship in Aberdeen, saving the cost and trouble of an international flight.
- Wildlife we hope to see includes huge colonies of Atlantic puffins, little auks, gannets and other seabirds, ivory gulls, king eiders, polar bears, walruses, seals (harp, hooded, bearded, grey, common, ringed and others), and a wide variety of cetaceans (including bowhead whales, blue whales, fin whales, sei whales, minke whales, humpback whales, sperm whales, belugas, long-finned pilot whales, killer whales, white-beaked dolphins, Atlantic white-sided dolphins, Risso's dolphins and harbour porpoises).



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- Explore Iceland's Westman Islands, and Grimsey Island which is cut in half by the Arctic Circle, as well as the remote and rarely visited Jan Mayen.
- Cruise along the northeast Greenland pack ice – where few people get to go – to look for polar bears, bowhead whales, harp seal haul-outs, and lots more.
- Exciting cruises in inflatable Zodiacs for up-close encounters with wildlife and wild places.
- We will give you a link to the comprehensive slideshow presented on the last night, together with marine charts and wildlife checklists.
- Fabulous photographic and video opportunities.

ITINERARY

Sun 2 June: Make our own way to **Aberdeen** (please bear in mind that we strongly advise you to arrive a day early, just to be safe). Embark the *Ortelius* in the afternoon and set sail early evening.

Mon 3: We explore tiny **Fair Isle**, a beautifully rugged island roughly halfway between Orkney and the Shetland Mainland and home to just 60 people. This is the most geographically remote inhabited island in the UK, best known as a critically important breeding ground for seabirds and a stopping-off point for migrant birds (including frequent rarities that get twitchers seriously twitching). Early June is the perfect time to visit, with the breeding season in full swing, and we hope to see Arctic terns, gannets, puffins, common guillemots, black guillemots, razorbills, European storm petrels, Arctic skuas, great skuas and kittiwakes. From a migration point of view anything can turn up at this time of year, with scarcities almost guaranteed. We also have a good chance of seeing the island's endemic



sub-species of wren – the Fair Isle wren. We could also see minke whales, killer whales, white-beaked dolphins and Atlantic white-sided dolphins, which live in the area. There'll even be an opportunity to buy a famous Fair Isle sweater.

Tue 4: In the morning, we head westwards towards the remote British island of **North Rona**, which is 70km away from mainland Scotland. If the conditions are right, we will make a landing to enjoy the spectacular wilderness of the island and watch the wildlife that could include great skua, fulmar and Leach's petrel. In the afternoon, we head off to another extremely remote British island – **Sula Sgeir** – which is famous for its northern gannet colony.

Wed 5: At sea, looking for a wide variety of seabirds and whales, dolphins and porpoises, and enjoying entertaining illustrated talks and workshops. We sail to the small granite islet of **Rockall**, which is 300km west from Scotland and continues to be the subject of sovereignty claims from a number of nations.

Thu 6: At sea, heading towards Iceland across the North Atlantic Ocean, looking for a wide variety of seabirds and whales, dolphins and porpoises, and enjoying entertaining illustrated talks and workshops.

Fri 7 This afternoon we begin our exploration of **Iceland**, the land of ice and fire. Most people's first impression of this wonderful country – with its dark lava fields, rugged mountain slopes and imposing volcanoes – is of landing on the moon. With more uninterrupted elbow room than any other European country (bar Greenland) it is a naturalist's paradise. We reach the southern coast, and visit **Heimaey**, the largest and only inhabited island in the **Westman Islands**. This is an excellent place to encounter Atlantic puffins, and killer whales. Later that day, we circumnavigate the rocky islet of **Eidey**, home to the largest northern gannet colony in Iceland, and where the great auk (*right*) officially became extinct, in 1844.

Sat 8: We wake up this morning in **Faxaflói Bay**, overlooked by Reykjavik, which is a hotspot for whales and dolphins, including white-beaked dolphins, minke and humpback whales.

We continue around the bay towards the **Snaefellsnes Peninsula**, and the **Snæfellsjökull Volcano** (made famous by Jules Verne in his classic *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*); once again there are whale-watching opportunities as we make our way around the peninsula. We finish the day with a Zodiac cruise at the **Látrabjarg Sea Cliffs** – the westernmost point in Iceland – which is one of the finest birdwatching locations in Europe and home to hundreds of thousands of seabirds, including puffins, northern gannets, guillemots and razorbills.

Sun 9: We continue sailing around the north-west coast of Iceland, and you can either enjoy lectures and presentations of head out onto the deck to watch wildlife along the shoreline.

Mon 10: We explore the north coast of Iceland, in particular **Skjalfandi Bay** – June is the peak time for encountering blue whales in the bay, as well as white-beaked dolphins, minke whales and harbour porpoises. We then visit **Grimsey Island** for another landing. This small island, home to fewer than 100 people and more than a million seabirds, is cut in half by the Arctic Circle – and we will get a chance to stand astride it.

The chorus of kittiwakes and fulmars never stops during the long hours of daylight here, but it is the puffins that are the highlight. Grimsey is home to one of the largest puffin colonies in Iceland. It also has one of the country's largest Arctic tern colonies, and there are black guillemots, common guillemots, Brunnich's guillemots and razorbills galore. And that's not to mention all the other birds, from snow buntings to wheatears.



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Tue 11: We leave Iceland behind and continue our adventure northwards. As before, lectures, presentations and scanning for wildlife from the deck will be the order of the day.

Wed 12: Today we explore the breathtakingly beautiful volcanic island of **Jan Mayen**, home to a small Norwegian meteorological station, as well as king eiders, little auks, fulmars and Brunnich's guillemots. Few people get to visit this incredibly remote island in the middle of the Arctic Ocean.

Dominated by the still active glacier-covered Beerenburg Volcano, it has no indigenous population and is only accessible by ice-strengthened ships (though supplies are flown in a few times every year by Hercules military transport planes – hairy flights that involve landing on a lava airstrip).

Thu 13: We head northwest in search of the spring pack ice, which congregates along the east coast of **Greenland**, and then plan to sail along its edge.

Fri 14 - Sat 15: We spend a couple of days exploring this unique pack-ice habitat looking for a variety of Arctic wildlife, including polar bears, bowhead whales, harp seals and a variety of Arctic birds from ivory gulls to king eiders. We will head out in the Zodiacs where we can to really immerse ourselves in the breathtaking scenery.

Sun 16 - Mon 17: We head northeast to Spitzbergen and have two full days in wonderful **Svalbard**, to look for polar bears, walrus, Arctic foxes, beluga whales, bearded seals and all the other Arctic wildlife for which this spectacularly wild and beautiful archipelago is so famous. We'll cruise among magnificent icebergs, in front of towering glaciers and into dramatic fjords in search of wildlife, and go ashore for short hikes in the land of the midnight sun. This is truly the high Arctic – halfway between northern Norway and the North Pole – and is one of the greatest wilderness areas in the world.

Tue 18: We disembark in Longyearbyen, capital of Spitzbergen, at 78 degrees north, and transfer to the airport for our flights home.

Please note: this tour is highly weather-, sea- and ice-dependent. Although we will stick to the itinerary as closely as possible, it may change to make the most of local conditions. It's part of the fun of remote exploration!



Greenland ice edge.



Grimsey Island, Iceland, which is cut in half by the Arctic Circle.

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LEADERS

Mark Carwardine will be hosting the trip and will also give lectures and run workshops. He will be accompanied by Britain's best-known landscape photographer, Joe Cornish (owner of his own photographic gallery and author of many books). They will share their extensive knowledge, expertise and stories during the trip. There will also be a highly experienced resident expedition team on board, and Rachel Ashton (Mark's project manager since 2004, and trip administrator) who will produce a film and slideshow of the trip for everyone.

WHY THIS TRIP?

We've designed what we believe to be the ultimate island-hopping trip across the North Atlantic to the high Arctic. In two packed weeks you'll get to see the very best wildlife and wild places the region has to offer. As with all our trips, the aim is to make it good value for money, informative and fun. We also plan to pack in as much as possible, so we'll spend maximum time wildlife watching and going ashore (you don't have to do every landing, of course, and you don't have to stay for the whole time, but we believe in giving you the opportunity to see and do as much as possible). Since we've chartered the whole ship – and we are hosting the trip – we have the flexibility to make the best use of outstanding wildlife sightings or weather. It also means that we can start in Aberdeen, thus saving all the time and hassle of an international flight.

WEATHER AND SEA CONDITIONS

The weather where we're going is highly variable – we're likely to get a bit of everything (bright sunshine, cloud, rain and possibly even snow). Temperatures in early June typically range from 3°C to 11°C (but could be colder or warmer). With appropriate clothing, this can be exhilarating and not at all uncomfortable. It is very warm on the ship – many people wander around in T-shirts.

We'll have quite a few days at sea. Sea conditions are hard to predict, of course. Mark has done similar journeys through the North Atlantic many times: one (many years ago, much earlier in the season) was bad, a few have been rough enough to make a small number of passengers feel sick, many have been with a swell but perfectly comfortable, and quite a few have been glassy calm.



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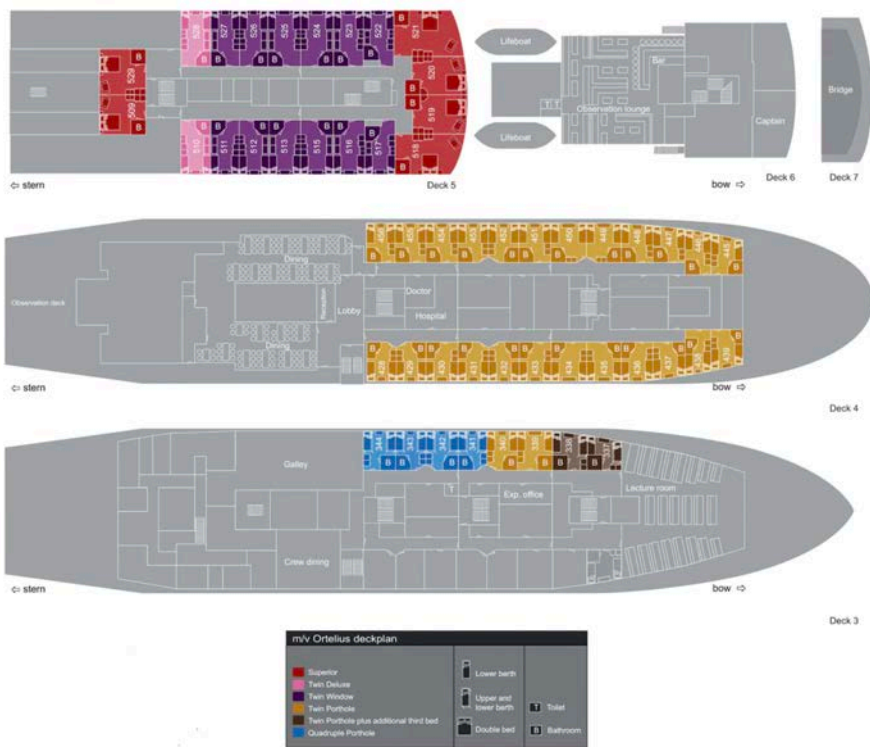


SHIP DETAILS

The *Ortelius* (91.24m in length) is a modern, safe, comfortable, ice-strengthened vessel, like a floating wilderness lodge. It is ideally suited for remote and polar exploration. Originally named *Marina Svetaeva*, she was built in Poland in 1989, and served as a special purpose vessel for the Russian Academy of Sciences. The *Ortelius* makes a great expedition vessel for polar expeditions with lots of deck space and a large bridge open to passengers. As the number of passenger and our own leaders is limited to 108, flexibility assures maximum wildlife opportunities.

ACCOMMODATION & PRICES (excluding flights)

All the cabins are pleasantly decorated and furnished, with a writing desk and chair, and storage. All of them have opening windows or portholes, with some of the most spectacular views in the world!



Quadruple share with portholes (4 available): two bunk beds, private bathroom/shower, hairdryer and TV. **£6,495 per person**

If you would like to book as a Triple share, please contact us.



Twin share with portholes (28 available): two single beds, private bathroom/shower, hairdryer and TV **£7,995 per person**



Twin share with windows (12 available): two single beds, private bathroom/shower, hairdryer and TV **£8,495 per person**



Twin deluxe with windows (2 available): a corner cabin so with better views; two bunk beds, private bathroom/shower, hairdryer, TV and fridge **£9,795 per person**



Twin superior (6 available): 1 double bed and sofa bed, private bathroom/shower, hairdryer, TV, fridge and separate lounge **£10,995 per person**

If you would like to book a cabin to yourself, please contact us.

Price includes: 16 nights' accommodation in comfortable cabin on the *Ortelius*, with daily housekeeping; all breakfasts, lunches and dinners, tea and coffee, throughout the voyage; guide services of Mark Carwardine, Joe Cornish and Rachel Ashton from embarkation at Aberdeen; leadership throughout the voyage by the resident Expedition Team; all shore landings and excursions during the cruise; comprehensive pre-departure advice and information; all miscellaneous service taxes and port charges throughout the voyage; ship-to-airport transfer post-voyage; loan of Wellington boots.

Price does not include: transport to Aberdeen; Aberdeen-to-ship transfer pre-voyage; flights from Longyearbyen to the UK; airport/government arrival and departure taxes; hotels, transfers and other land arrangements pre- and post-voyage (ie not listed in 'Price includes'); passport and visa expenses; polar gear; excess baggage charges; cancellation, baggage and travel insurance (compulsory); meals on shore; alcoholic and soft drinks; items of a personal nature such as laundry and telecommunications charges; medical expenses; crew and resident expedition staff gratuities (we suggest about US\$10 per day – it's usually collected just prior to the end of the cruise).

OPTIONAL FLIGHT PACKAGE

Wildlife Worldwide offers a flight back from Longyearbyen to Heathrow (via Oslo) for £500 economy per person (contact us if you wish to fly back to another UK airport).

PAYMENT SCHEDULE PER PERSON:

- Non-refundable 20% deposit due on booking.
- 10% instalment due 22 May 2023.
- 10% instalment due 22 September 2023.
- 10% instalment due 22 January 2024.
- Final balance due 2 March 2024.



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