

ORKNEY

See you at the weekend

STROMNESS: SAFE HARBOUR

A day exploring Stromness and its stories

The regular arrivals and departures of **NorthLink's ferry**, MV Hamnavoe, give daily life in **Stromness** a distinctive rhythm. The small town has been a safe and welcoming harbour since Viking times.

Visitors who take time to linger, find themselves immersed in the fascinating stories of **Stromness** and its connections to the sea: from the proud ships of the **Hudson's Bay Company** to the rugged whalers and busy herring boats of times past, and from modern fishermen harvesting delicious seafood to dive boats exploring historic shipwrecks.

Stromness has inspired artists, writers and craftspeople. You'll encounter their work in the **Pier Arts Centre**, in the town's galleries and shops, and in the work of the late poet and novelist **George Mackay Brown**, who lived here.

OUTLINE

- 1 STROMNESS HARBOUR**
A HARD-WORKING, BUSY HARBOUR AND THE HEARTBEAT OF THE TOWN
- 2 THE STATUE OF DR JOHN RAE**
ARCTIC EXPLORER WHO DISCOVERED THE FATE OF THE FRANKLIN EXPEDITION
- 3 THE PIER ARTS CENTRE**
SITTING AT THE HEART OF A CREATIVE COMMUNITY INSPIRED BY ITS SURROUNDINGS
- 4 THE HISTORIC TOWN**
EXPLORE THE FLAGSTONE STREETS AND NARROW CLOSES
- 5 STROMNESS MUSEUM**
UNIQUE COLLECTIONS BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE
- 6 LOGIN'S WELL AND THE CANNON BEYOND**
SIGNALLING PAST ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES



Brinkie's Brae, Stromness



Creel Fisherman, Stromness



Stromness

YOUR ITINERARY

AUTUMN

TIME: 1 DAY'S

MEANDERING ON FOOT

1 THE BUSY HARBOUR

Hamnavoe, as the Vikings called **Stromness**, has always been a hard-working harbour. For decades, the **Hudson's Bay Company** sailing ships collected supplies and enterprising young men here, before crossing the Atlantic. Throughout the heyday of the whaling industry, sturdy whaling ships were regular visitors, and during the **herring boom** of the late 19th century the harbour teemed with fishing boats. The main herring curing station was at the Point of Ness, where the **campsite** is today.

Today, as you explore the harbour, you'll see dive boats departing and returning, carrying scuba divers to explore the remaining **wrecks** of a sunken wartime fleet. Alongside, industrious fishing boats land their fresh, tasty, catches. Nearby you'll see the **Stromness lifeboat**, her volunteer crew always ready to risk themselves to save lives at sea.

2 DR JOHN RAE, ARCTIC EXPLORER

The **statue** overlooking the harbour commemorates the Arctic explorer **Dr John Rae**, who was born at the **Hall of Clestrain** in Orphir. His father was an agent for the **Hudson's Bay Company** in Stromness, and young Rae was one of many Orcadians who worked for the company in Canada, where he became a celebrated and successful explorer. In 1854, he found evidence of the fate of **Sir John Franklin's** lost expedition in search of the Northwest Passage.

Near the statue is another monument: an ornate fountain commemorating **Alexander Graham** who, in the 18th century, won a long legal battle against the requirement for Stromness to pay taxes to Kirkwall. He won the case but at huge personal cost.

3 THE PIER ARTS CENTRE, STROMNESS

Just a short walk south along Victoria Street is the **Pier Arts Centre**. It has an international reputation, attracting visitors and artists to enjoy the collection and take inspiration for their own work. The Centre was established in 1979, to house one of the finest collections of 20th century art in the UK, including work by Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson in the permanent collection. There is a year-round programme of exhibitions and events.

The Centre's original building dates back to the 18th century and was occupied by an agent of the **Hudson's Bay Company** in the 19th century. The complex of buildings now includes an award-winning new extension on the waterfront.

4 A MEANDER THROUGH THE HISTORIC TOWN

When you leave the **Pier Arts Centre**, depending on the time, you might want to enjoy **coffee or lunch** at one of the many nearby cafés and bars serving delicious local food.

Suitably refreshed, follow the winding flagstoned road southwards. Please keep an eye on traffic because this is a two-way road, much to the alarm of the unwary! As you walk, take the opportunity to explore the small galleries and shops on the street, and discover the narrow closes running to right and left. Much of the character of the town lies in the small details – the commemorative plaques on the walls and the unexpected street names, for example. Who'd have expected to encounter the Kyhber Pass in Stromness?

"The streets uncoiled like a sailor's rope from North to South."

"The boats drove furrows homeward, like ploughmen in blizzards of gulls."

Stromness is an international centre of excellence in marine renewables. Find out more **here**.



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5 STROMNESS MUSEUM

Your meandering route will soon bring you to **Stromness Museum**. Mayburn Court across the road from the museum was the home of Orkney's poet and storyteller **George Mackay Brown**. It stands on the site of Stromness Distillery, which produced a popular single malt called Old Orkney until it closed in 1928, when Stromness became a 'dry' town until after World War II.

Inside the museum you'll learn much more about Stromness and Orkney. The museum's opening hours are restricted from Monday to Saturday in the winter months, so you should **check before visiting**.

6 LOGIN'S WELL, AND THE CANNON BEYOND

A little further on from the museum and visible through a glass cover is **Login's Well**, one of the town's understated treasures. The ships of the **Hudson's Bay Company** drew water from the well for more than two hundred years, and in 1845, **Sir John Franklin's** ships *Erebus* and *Terror* called here before sailing across the Atlantic in search of the Northwest Passage, only to be lost in an Arctic winter.

The final stopping point on your walk is the nearby **cannon** standing guard over a fine view of Stromness harbour. The cannon, reputed to have been salvaged from an American privateer in 1813, used to fire a salute to passing **Hudson's Bay Company** ships.

OTHER PLACES TO VISIT IF YOU HAVE MORE TIME

Opening times are sometimes restricted outside the main tourism season so always check before visiting.

Ness Battery, part of Orkney's wartime heritage, is just to the south of Stromness. Scheduled **guided tours** take place during the summer months and by special arrangement at other times. If you are interested in Orkney's wartime history generally, there is a special self-guided itinerary available **here**.

Stromness Library in the attractive Warehouse Buildings opposite the ferry terminal offers comfortable surroundings and internet access. The **George Mackay Brown** room has a good collection of local historical material.

If you'd like to get active, **Stromness Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre** is open daily, as is **Stromness Golf Club**. There are some great walks from Stromness, including up to **Brinkie's Brae** with its spectacular viewpoint, and routes to the west shore and **Warebeth beach**.

If you have time, stay longer, and explore all the places and stories using the excellent town guide and accompanying atmospheric **audio trail**.

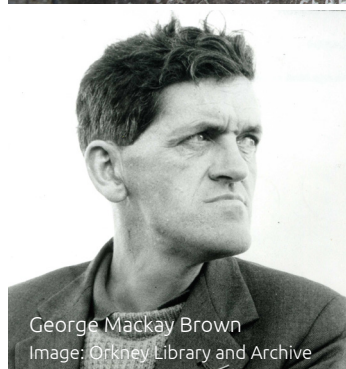
"And threw dark nets on sudden silver harvests."



Stromness Museum



Login's Well



George Mackay Brown
Image: Orkney Library and Archive







Cannon

FINDING OUT MORE

There is lots of information about all of Orkney in guide books, magazines and websites such as **Orkney.com** to help you decide what to see and do and where to **eat**. Look out for the iKnow logo for information and advice at the following **iKnow Partner** sites.

Our one day itineraries are designed to give you a taste of Orkney. We hope that your short break will inspire you to come back for a longer stay and further explore Orkney.

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