

SCOTTISH ISLANDS CRUISE: WILDLIFE, HISTORY & CULTURE ABOARD THE M.S. QUEST MAY 14 – 23, 2011

© 2011

Effusing a mysterious and often raw beauty, the landscapes of Scotland evoke the imagination in a way that is perhaps unequalled by those of any other European country. Rocky, wave-washed beaches, isolated island clusters, and rolling moorlands characterize a land that has hosted some of Europe's most significant historical events, given rise to some of its most beautiful cities, and engendered the rich culture we think of as distinctly Scottish.

For this departure we offer a cruise to the scenically spectacular and historically rich islands of Scotland. Our voyage is designed to take you around the country from the west coast to the east coast, visiting an array of Scotland's outstanding wildlife, historical, and archaeological sites. Our itinerary includes some of the most famous place names in Britain, such as the Inner and Outer Hebrides, fantastic St. Kilda, the Orkney and Shetland Islands, and Fair Isle, before ending the journey in the "Granite City" of Aberdeen on the North Sea coast.

For this adventure VENT has reserved space aboard the 50-passenger M.S. Quest, a small-size expedition cruise ship.

Embarking in the picturesque harbor town of Oban, on Scotland's west coast, we'll sail west to explore the Inner Hebridean islands of Mull—a stronghold for nesting White-tailed Eagles; Iona and its abbey—where Corncrakes rasp their interminable songs from rich flower-filled meadows that have remained unchanged since St. Columba traveled here 1,400 years ago; and Staffa, with its columnar basalt cliffs and Fingal's Cave, an inspiration for Mendelssohn's "Hebrides Overture." We'll then venture northwest to the Outer Hebrides, visiting the island of Lewis. Here, we'll lay eyes on rugged mountains and exquisite coastal scenery while touring the rebuilt villages of "blackhouses," the traditional low dwelling places of the Gaelic peoples in the 16-19th centuries.

A highlight of the tour will be a visit to the faraway St. Kilda archipelago, once Britain's remotest inhabited outpost, but abandoned since 1930. This is a land of splendid natural history and remarkable scenery. Highlights of a visit include the world's largest Northern Gannet colony, Europe's largest Northern Fulmar colony, and Britain's highest sea cliffs.

Turning east we'll 'round the top of Scotland and arrive at Stromness in the Orkney Islands, where some of the best-preserved archaeological sites in Europe await. Places we'll visit are the Ring of Brodgar, the largest Stone Circle in Scotland; Skara Brae, a finely excavated Neolithic village; and more "recent" delights, such as the fine town of Kirkwall, with its early Norse-influenced cathedral,

and the World War II-era Churchill Barriers. We'll cruise past 1,000-foot sea cliffs and the pinnacle of Hoy, where breeding seabirds—including Great Skuas—darken the skies.

From here it's off to the Shetland Islands, where we'll view a fine Iron Age broch; learn of the strong Viking and Norse influences in these northerly outposts; and explore the large complex of Jarlshof, occupied since the Bronze Age. Passing many spectacular seabird colonies halfway between the Shetlands and Orkneys, we'll also have a morning on lonely Fair Isle—famous for its distinctive knitting designs and long-established bird observatory. We'll also pay a visit to even more remote Foula.

We think this trip offers something for everyone, and throughout the voyage your VENT leaders and the ship's expert staff will provide interpretation and presentations on a range of themes associated with the Scottish Islands, including thousands of years of human history, and birds and other wildlife. While at sea you will have opportunities to watch for seabirds and marine mammals from the ship's viewing decks or take in a lecture in the lounge; on land we'll enjoy guided interpretive history tours while keeping an eye out for breeding and migrant waterfowl, shorebirds, and landbirds.

The birdlife of the North Atlantic is more limited than in other destinations, yet what we lack in diversity is compensated for in spectacle. At sea we'll often have birds around the ship, and this will certainly hold true when we approach nesting colonies. Among the many possibilities are Northern Fulmar, Manx Shearwater, European and Leach's storm-petrels, Northern Gannet, Great Skua, Black-legged Kittiwake, Razorbill, Atlantic Puffin, and Black Guillemot. During shore-based excursions we may find a variety of nesting waterfowl, shorebirds, and landbirds including Graylag Goose, Common Eider, Eurasian Buzzard, Northern Lapwing, Eurasian Curlew, Common Redshank, Sky Lark, Pied and Western Yellow wagtails, Northern Wheatear, Hooded Crow, Twite, and others. Late May is a good time to visit the North Atlantic region as a broad variety of migrating birds may be found at almost any location. Our last Scottish Islands cruise recorded such migrant species as Lesser White-fronted Goose, Greater and Lesser whitethroats, Spotted Flycatcher, Song Thrush, and many others.

The Quest is an ideal vessel for this voyage—stout enough to perform well in any condition while maintaining maximum comfort at all times. Fully refurbished in 2008, she is well decorated inside and out. All cabins have outside views, climate controls, and private bathrooms. Her public areas include a lounge, bar, library, and outside viewing decks. A window-lined dining room accommodates all passengers in a single seating and offers excellent cuisine

Those wishing to experience more of Scotland country are strongly encouraged to take our Scotland in Style tour, offered as a post-trip extension. This tour spends six full days in the Scottish Highlands and combines birding and other natural history activities with visits to prime historical sites such as castles, forts, and Scotch whisky distilleries. Highlights include looking for Eurasian Capercaillie, Black Grouse, White-tailed Eagle, Red Kite, Ring Ouzel, and Scottish Crossbill while visiting such significant historical sites as Cawdor Castle, Culloden, and Fort George.

May 14-15, Days 1-2: Depart United States for Glasgow, Scotland; arrival in Glasgow and transfer to Oban; embark M.S. *Quest*.

Cruise participants may depart home anytime today (May14) for the international flight to Glasgow, Scotland UK (airport code GLA). Please be sure your flight arrives Glasgow (GLA) no later than 12:00 noon on May 15, 2011 as our transfer to Oban will depart Glasgow Airport at 1:00PM. We strongly recommend that all cruise participants arrive a day early and overnight in Glasgow on the night of May 14 (unless you are on the Scotland in Style Pre-trip) to ensure you'll make the transfer to Oban.

Please note that all cruise participants will board the ship in the port town of Oban at 4:00 p.m. on May 15. A pre-arranged group transfer from Glasgow to Oban will depart Glasgow International Airport (GLA) at 1:00p.m.

Participants may also be interested to know that Scotland has a well-developed commuter rail system, with trains departing for Oban on a regular schedule. Anyone opting to take the train should know that it arrives in Oban very close to the location where the ship is docked.

The overland transfer to Oban takes about three hours. The route winds northwest from Glasgow and will see us passing through a tremendously scenic Scottish countryside filled with lochs, moorlands, and rugged mountains. Oban is a small and cozy harbor town in western Scotland that serves as the jumping off point for ferries travelling to the Inner Hebrides and Western Isles.

We will board the *Quest* at 4:00 p.m. and use the remainder of the afternoon for settling into our cabins, attending a welcome orientation, and participating in mandatory safety drills. We will set sail at about 6:00 p.m. and travel a short distance west before anchoring off the Inner Hebridean islands of Mull and Iona.

NIGHTS: Aboard international aircraft (May 14)
Aboard M.S. *Quest* (May 15)

May 16, Day 3: The Inner Hebrides: Mull, Iona, and Staffa. Consisting of four major islands (Skye, Mull, Jura, and Islay) and dozens of smaller islands, the Inner Hebrides are a lengthy archipelago off Scotland's west coast. Collectively, they are situated southeast of the Outer Hebrides and northeast of Ireland. Archaeological work has revealed evidence of habitation since at least the middle Stone Age, about 6,500 B.C., but it wasn't until the Celts appeared, in the 6th century A.D., that any written records of the islands or its people were made. The onset of the Christian period began with the Celts, and the next 500 years was marked by successive infusions of Celtic, Norse, and Scottish influences, accompanied by substantial periods of warfare from the 8th-13th centuries.

We will spend most of the day in the Inner Hebrides focusing on the island of Mull, second largest of the group, and Iona, lying a short distance away. Mull, where we'll begin, is a largely rugged island characterized by a mountainous interior and extensive moorlands. Much of the island is lightly inhabited and largely unspoiled. A beautiful coastal landscape includes a diverse mix of sandy beaches, rocky shorelines, protected harbors, and flooded tidal zones. Inland, the island's interior features Ben More, the highest peak at 3,169 feet.

The feature activity of our morning on the island includes a visit to a "hide" or blind, to view nesting White-tailed Eagles. This species, once found throughout the region, was essentially extirpated as a breeding species. Reintroduced to the island of Rhum, the bird recolonized Mull on its own. Golden Eagle, another powerful predator native to the region, is also resident here and we will stay vigilant for this species as well. With any extra time we'll detour to view some of the scenic countryside and any cultural highlights along the way. Back at the harbor we'll keep an eye out for Gray and harbor seals, which may be seen year-round.

In the afternoon we'll make the short transit to Iona—a tiny offshore island that served as the center of Celtic Christianity for over 400 years. It is here where St. Columba, exiled from Ireland, first set foot on Scottish soil. Establishing a monastery in 563 A.D., he set out to bring Christianity to the pagan tribes of Scotland and

Scottish Islands Cruise, Page 4

northern England. Through his remarkable success in his endeavors, Iona gained renown throughout Europe as a center of Christian learning. The monastery became a major site of pilgrimage and is the burial home of many kings of Ireland, Scotland, and Norway. The original monastery was abandoned part way through the 9th century, but reclaimed as part of a Benedictine convent in the early 13th century.

Today Iona Abbey is the island's primary attraction. Built on the site of the original monastery, the Abbey is considered the finest example of a medieval ecclesiastical structure surviving in the "Western" Isles. The excellent condition of the Abbey, in combination with the long religious tradition of the site, continues to draw people from all over the world each year.

We will have the afternoon to tour the Abbey and attend a guided interpretive walk with local experts.

Despite its small size, Iona is home to some interesting wildlife. The peace and tranquility of the island is broken only by the noisy rasping calls of nesting Corncrakes! Surprisingly, European Otters occur here, too and may make a nice addition to our mammal list. Common Chaffinch, House Martin, Sky Lark, and several species of pipits and wagtails are possible.

Later in the afternoon we hope to cruise past the tiny island of Staffa, famous for its amazing columnar basalt geologic formations and the dramatic sea cave known as Fingal's Cave. Over 60 feet high and almost 250 feet across, the cave is an astonishing sight on the island's south face. The composer, Felix Mendelssohn, visited here and was so moved by the sound of the waves crashing in the cave that he was inspired to produce his *Hebrides Overture*. Large colonies of Atlantic Puffins nest on Staffa as well.

Late in the day and through the evening we will head westward toward St. Kilda. Amid the long daylight hours of late spring, we can stay up on deck, sea watching and taking in the scenery. Those who choose to stay out late may be treated to the sight of the beautiful Inner Hebridean island of Canna, one of the "Small Isles" of the Inner Hebrides, with its tiny agricultural and cattle-rearing community; and Rhum, home to the world's largest Manx Shearwater colony. We'll pass through the Sea of the Hebrides, and weave through some of the more southerly islands of the Outer Hebrides. Mingulay, Berneray, and Pabay, may all be visible to the south of South Uist.

NIGHT: Aboard M.S. *Quest*

May 17, Day 4: St. Kilda. The volcanic archipelago of St. Kilda, the remotest part of the British Isles, lies 41 miles west of the Outer Hebrides. So remote, St. Kilda has its own sub-species of birds, mice, and even a sheep—the hardy and primitive Soay sheep. On the very edge of the open ocean, exposed to the full blast of the Atlantic, St. Kilda was inhabited from Stone Age times, about 5,000 years ago, until 1930, when it was voluntarily evacuated and abandoned by its tiny remnant population. The island's geographical isolation and incredible human history make it a unique and awesome place, and one of only 24 sites in the world to be awarded "mixed" World Heritage status for its natural and cultural significance. The islands, with the highest cliffs and sea stacks in Britain (1,400 feet), form the most important seabird breeding station in Northwest Europe, including the world's largest colony of Northern Gannets and the largest colony of Northern Fulmars in the British Isles. We'll cruise and circumnavigate around these remarkable steep-sided, uninhabited islets.

St. Kilda has one of the most extensive groups of vernacular building remains in Britain. The layout of the 19th-century village remains to this day, and over 1,400 stone-built cleitean (huts) for storing food and fuel are scattered all over the islands. Weather-permitting, we'll have plenty of time ashore to take a guided walk through this remarkable historical location and learn about the St. Kildans—how they survived and how they finally succumbed. Seabirds formed a major part of their diet—in 1876 it was said that the islanders took 89,600 puffins for food and feathers.

The British naturalist James Fisher wrote in 1947, “Whatever he studies, the future observer of St. Kilda will be haunted the rest of his life by the place, and tantalised by the impossibility of describing it, to those who have not seen it.”

Time permitting, we may circumnavigate the island of Boreray.

Among the birds possible today are Northern Fulmar; Northern Gannet; European Shag; Common Eider and a variety of other waterfowl; Eurasian Oystercatcher; Great Black-backed, Lesser Black-backed, Mew (Common), and Black-headed Gulls, Black-legged Kittiwake, Great Skua, Parasitic Jaeger, Razorbill, Black Guillemot, Atlantic Puffin, Meadow Pipit, Pied Wagtail, and Northern Wheatear.

Our next destination is the Outer Hebrides, and we will get there by cruising east through the night from St. Kilda.

NIGHT: Aboard M.S. *Quest*

May 18, Day 5: The Outer Hebrides. By morning we’ll be at the northernmost Outer Hebridean Isles of Lewis and Harris, the largest island in Scotland. Despite the name, Lewis and Harris are actually one island, 60 miles long and 30 miles wide. The northern part of the island is Lewis, while the southern third is Harris. Steep mountains rise to over 2,500 feet, but much of the interior is dominated by peat bog. Harris means “high land,” and Lewis means “marshy place.” Not surprisingly, the island’s population is spread around the coast.

Ruled by the Norse until 1263, the “islands” fell under the control of the Highland clans of MacCleods of Harris and Lewes (Lewis), respectively. Lewis and Harris are famous for tweed cloth. Harris Tweed must be made in the Outer Hebrides from virgin Scottish wool, woven on hand looms in the weaver’s own home.

There are extensive areas of Machair in the Outer Hebrides—a rich coastal grassland unique to the Western Isles, which, apart from the special bird life, (nesting Corncrake, Northern Lapwing, Eurasian Curlew, Dunlin, and Eurasian Oystercatcher) is extremely rich in wildflowers.

We’ll go ashore to visit Gerrannann Blackhouse Village with its reconstructed blackhouses. These were the traditional crofting houses of the Western Isles for centuries; some archaeologists trace their ancestry back to Viking longhouses. These structures were built from local materials and designed to withstand the harsh environment. Aspects of their design include a long, low, rectangular layout; rounded corners to reduce wind resistance; constructed of hollow drystone walls filled with earth; and a thatched roof held down by netting and rocks. Until last century, most had only a hole in the roof to let out smoke from a central hearth—hence the name “black house!”

Depending on time, tides, and weather, we may visit nearby Callanish Stone Circle—one of the finest Neolithic ritual monuments in the world (dated to c. 3000 B.C.). The Standing Stones are a ring of monoliths thought to have been connected to religious ceremonies.

If the weather is cooperating we may drive to The Butt of Lewis, the island’s northern-most point, for a chance to experience the countryside of the Outer Hebrides. At this northern outpost we will watch for a variety of waterfowl and shorebirds, many of which are still migrating toward breeding grounds located farther north.

A sampling of some of the other birds we may see today includes Great Cormorant, a variety of waterfowl, Common Snipe, Great Black-backed Gull, Sky Lark, Rock Pipit, Eurasian Blackbird, and Hooded Crow.

Back at sea in the afternoon, we may have an opportunity enjoy zodiac-cruising around seabird colonies on the island of North Rona, located 44 miles from the tip of Lewis.

We’ll cruise northeast around the top of the Scottish mainland in the evening as we make our way toward the Orkney Islands. At some point we’ll pass by the remote sea stacks of Sule Skerry and the immense seabird

Scottish Islands Cruise, Page 6

colonies that adorn the sheer cliff faces. Northern Fulmar, Great Skua, Black-legged Kittiwake, Razorbill, Common Murre, and Atlantic Puffin are all found here. This stretch of water also provides chances to spot harbor porpoises, white-beaked and Atlantic white-sided dolphins, Orca, and northern minke whale.

NIGHT: Aboard M.S. *Quest*

May 19, Day 6: The Orkneys. We should be docked at the pretty fishing harbor of Stromness on Orkney's main island by early morning, allowing for a full day ashore.

The Orkney archipelago comprises over 70 widely spread islands. The island group's historical sites are some of the richest in Europe. We'll have much of the day on Orkney to explore these riches and visit the most significant landmarks. Among the places on our itinerary today are:

- Skara Brae – Located along the coast, Skara Brae is the best-preserved Neolithic village site on Orkney. Many artifacts discovered during the excavations of this site are on display in the excellent visitor center, which has a replica house built behind it. Covered in sand for thousands of years, the remains of Skara Brae are a complex village where the houses and their internal structures are remarkably well preserved.
- Scapa Flow – Protected, wide, and shallow, Scapa Flow is considered one of the world's great natural harbors. The spaciousness of this broad body of water has been an irresistible attraction to navies for over a thousand years. The Vikings were known to have anchored their ships here, while more recently, the British Navy used the flow as its main base in both world wars.
- Churchill Barriers - The Orkney mainland is joined to the four southern islands by a quadruple segmented causeway constructed over the tops of the so-called Churchill Barriers. The Barriers, boulders and giant blocks of concrete up to 10 tons in weight, were constructed under the order of Winston Churchill, who was reacting to the sinking of a British warship in Scapa Flow by a German submarine in 1939. The Barriers were meant to prevent entry into the Flow from the North Sea.
- Italian Chapel - One of the most remarkable structures in all of Scotland, the Italian Chapel is located on a hillside of the tiny island of Lamb Holm and overlooks the most northerly of the Churchill Barriers. It was constructed by Italian prisoners of war from 1943-1945. The chapel, sanctuary, and statue of St. George all highlight the artistic genius of one of the prisoners, Domenico Chiocchetti, who oversaw most of the project.
- Kirkwall – The capital of Orkney, Kirkwall is a small picturesque fishing port that also happens to be the United Kingdom's most northerly city. The massive structure known as St. Magnus Cathedral dominates the skyline. The story of the cathedral's founding and construction is one of intrigue, masked intentions, and grim deeds. Briefly, Rognvald Kolsson overthrew the existing earl of Orkney, Paul Hakonsson, and, as part of the deal for his acceptance as the new Earl of Orkney, promised the Orcadians a new cathedral dedicated to Saint Magnus, Rognvald's uncle, and a widely revered figure in Orcadian history. Building began in 1137 and was completed over a period of 300 years. Created from yellow and red sandstone, it is one of the finest ecclesiastical buildings in Britain. Close by, the Earl's and Bishop's palaces are among the finest examples of Renaissance architecture in Scotland.

With so much time on the island we are bound to discover a number of birds that are new for the trip. Possibilities include Red-throated Loon, Little Grebe, Gray Heron, Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasian Coot, Common Ringed Plover, Common Wood-Pigeon, Winter Wren, Common Raven, and an array of northbound migrants.

By evening we'll set sail north towards Foula, passing the westerly Isle of Hoy—the highest point on Orkney. We may have a chance to see the famous sea stack, "The Old Man of Hoy," with its spectacular cliffs towering to over 1,000 feet over the sea. This whole stretch of coastline is full of nesting seabirds.

NIGHT: Aboard M.S. *Quest*

May 20, Day 7: Foula & South Shetland. After cruising northward through the night, we'll arrive at Foula in the early morning hours. Westernmost of the Shetland Islands, Foula is Britain's most remote, permanently inhabited island. Apart from a narrow coastal strip of fertile croftland, Foula is an expanse of peat and moorland rising steeply to five dramatic peaks, all with wonderful Norse names: da Noup, the Daal, da Sneug, da Kame, and Soberlie. Sheer 1,200 foot cliffs form a natural barrier on the island's western side, and compose a raw and wild landscape that is among the most spectacular in the North Atlantic.

Foula's natural heritage is exceptionally rich and diverse for such a small area. Designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its flora, fauna, and geology, it is also a National Scenic Area and a Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds. The world's largest colony of Great Skuas (locally known as Bonxies) competes fiercely with Parasitic Jaegers for breeding territories. Many small lochs are occupied by nesting Red-throated Loons. Common Murres, Razorbills, European Shags, and Black-legged Kittiwakes perch rowdily on cliff ledges, wheeling and haggling in a vast slum of evenly spaced nests. The mixed aroma of guano and salt air is unforgettable!

Like Fair Isle on the eastern side of the Shetlands, Foula has attracted many rare or out of range birds through the years; we will stay ever-hopeful of finding something particularly unusual.

NOTE: Inclement weather is always a possibility in a northern location such as this. If difficult conditions prohibit a landing on Foula, we'll cruise some of the smaller western islands of the Shetlands, and perhaps enjoy some zodiac-cruising around the spectacular geological features of Papa Stour.

We'll cruise over to the main island of Shetland early this afternoon.

Shetland, known as "Land of the Simmer Dim," is the most northerly outpost of the British Isles. Here, over a million breeding seabirds are spread around many thousands of miles of coast and hundreds of islands. Sumburgh Head is the most southerly point on the Shetland mainland, and we'll anchor here for an afternoon visit to Jarlshof Ancient Monument and Sumburgh Head. Jarlshof is one of Shetland's best-preserved and most complex archaeological sites. The site became exposed in the late 19th century, after a series of severe storms washed away the protective cover of sand. The Old House was all that could be seen on the site before the storms. Built in the 17th century, it was named "Jarlshof" by Sir Walter Scott in his novel *The Pirate*, and the name has stuck with the entire site ever since. Excavations show the site to have been occupied since the Bronze Age, about 4,200 years ago, through the Iron Age, the Pictish Age, and on into the Norse and Medieval periods. The site is a layered cake of history, spanning thousands of years, and illustrating a complex and ongoing community of farming and fishing people living in a wide range of house styles.

Sumburgh Head, the southernmost tip of the island offers a chance to find other northbound migrants.

The Shetland Islands are true oceanic outposts. Many of the birds found here are migrants that stop to feed and rest before continuing north, while others stay to breed. During our time at Foula and Shetland, we'll stay vigilant for a variety of waterbirds and landbirds. Common Shelduck and Black Scoter are regularly occurring waterfowl, and more than a dozen types of shorebirds may be found as passage migrants or nesting species. Eurasian Oystercatcher, Northern Lapwing, Common Ringed Plover, Eurasian Curlew, Common Greenshank, Common Redshank, and Little Stint are all possible. Of the many kinds of landbirds we may encounter are some of Europe's more widespread species including Common Swift; Pied and Western Yellow wagtails; Song Thrush; Ictertine, Willow, and Garden warblers; Greater and Lesser whitethroats; Spotted Flycatcher; Northern Wheater; and Twite.

NIGHT: Aboard M.S. *Quest*

Scottish Islands Cruise, Page 8

May 21, Day 8: Mousa & Fair Isle. Our next destination is Mousa, a tiny island just off the mainland coast. Departing the ship immediately after breakfast, we'll take Zodiacs to shore before exploring the finest example of an Iron Age broch (a superbly built drystone circular tower).

From Mousa, we'll make the short transit to Fair Isle, a speck of an island owned by the National Trust for Scotland.

Famous for its birds, knitwear, and historic shipwrecks, Fair Isle is a jewel of an island halfway between Orkney and Shetland and 20 miles or more from anywhere else! Just three miles long and two miles wide, the isle boasts impressive cliffs that rise to almost 750 feet. Upon arrival we'll be greeted by some of the island's 70 or so residents. Our first activity will be a walk to the renowned Fair Isle Bird Observatory. The observatory has researched bird migration and the island's immense seabird colonies for over 55 years. Many keen birders visit in spring and fall to witness impressive migrations and to search for rare and out-of-range birds.

From April to August, the island is filled with the din of thousands of nesting Northern Fulmars, Black-legged Kittiwakes, Razorbills, Common Murres, Black Guillemots, Atlantic Puffins, Great Skuas, Parasitic Jaegers, and Arctic Terns. We'll take a guided interpretive walk of the facility and learn of the work going on here. During our tour we'll be able to walk right up to nesting Atlantic Puffins. Time permitting, there will be options for hiking or participating on a cultural tour.

After our visit to the observatory we will receive transportation to the community hall and local museum where we can see (and buy) various locally-made handicrafts, including the famous Fair Isle knitwear, designed and originated right here, on tiny Fair Isle, hundreds of years ago.

We will depart Fair Isle around 6:00 p.m. and set a course for Aberdeen.

NIGHT: Aboard M.S. *Quest*

May 22, Day 9: Disembark in Aberdeen. *Quest* will arrive in Aberdeen this morning. Located on Scotland's North Sea coast, Aberdeen is famed as the "Granite City" and many times a winner of the "Britain in Bloom" competition. Our main entrance into the harbor will see us pass by Girdle Ness Lighthouse, a 121 foot structure designed by the grandfather of Robert Louis Stevenson.

We will disembark the ship at **9:00 a.m.** and transfer to the airport as a group. We will arrive at Aberdeen International Airport (ABZ) in time to catch flights departing at 1:00PM or later. **PLEASE DO NOT BOOK ANY FLIGHTS DEPARTING ABERDEEN PRIOR TO 1PM ON MAY 22, 2011!**

Our Scottish Islands cruise concludes this morning with our arrival at the airport in Aberdeen. At this point you are free to depart Scotland or extend your vacation by spending more time in Aberdeen or visit other parts of this remarkable country. Please note that flights to the United States may require a transfer in a European city which may require you to spend the night before continuing on the next day (May 23).

Those continuing with the Scotland in Style extension will depart from the airport.

May 23, Day 10: Arrive home. Depending on each passenger's flight itinerary, those forced to overnight en-route will arrive home today.

Our Scottish Islands Cruise is a program that requires a degree of flexibility and spontaneity. Every effort will be made to follow the published itinerary, but please note that this voyage is subject to change at the discretion of the ship's captain, based on sea and weather conditions.

TOUR SIZE: The Scottish Islands Cruise will be limited in size to 20 passengers.

TOUR LEADERS: The tour leader for this cruise will be **Andrew Whittaker**.

Andrew Whittaker's passion for birding and natural history started at the early age of seven in the UK. Since 1982 Andy has worked and studied birds worldwide in Canada, Israel, Borneo, and the UK before moving to Brazil where he has remained based in Amazonian Brazil for the last 23 years. Research work in the Brazilian rainforest for the Smithsonian Institution has made Andy an authority on Amazonian birds and the region's natural history, and he has authored many technical publications on the region. He was a consultant for the prestigious *Life of Birds* series by David Attenborough, and is a research associate of the Museum Goeldi, in Belém. At present Andy is working with Kevin Zimmer on a comprehensive field guide to the birds of Brazil. Andy has led VENT tours for 19 years throughout South and Central American countries, the UK, and the Antarctic. He immensely enjoys sharing his fascination and knowledge of Neotropical birds, animals, and their conservation with others. Andy's special interest is bird vocalizations; his knowledge of Neotropical voices has enabled him to make several important ornithological discoveries, including species new to science, the rediscovery of species thought lost to science, and the addition of 19 species to the Brazilian list. Andy is a member of the Brazilian Ornithological Committee, and lives in Manaus, Amazonas with his children Steven, Luana, and Suzana.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Prices quoted are based on double occupancy. **Cabins:** There are 26 passenger cabins located on two decks and are priced according to size and location. All have outside views, individual climate controls, fitted wardrobe with hangers, a mirror, writing table and chair, hairdryer, plug socket and bin, small personal safe and private bathroom facilities with shower. The cabins in category A, B and C on decks three and four are more spacious and have a seating area. The owner's cabin on deck four has two large picture windows and is the prime location on the vessel. Sole occupancy cabins are available in Category E only. Those single travellers who wish to share their cabin will be guaranteed the double occupancy fare, whether or not a cabin-mate is available.

<u>Per Person based on Double Occupancy</u>		<u>Single Occupancy</u>
Category A	\$11,600	Not Available
Category B	\$9,500	Not Available
Category C	\$8,500	Not Available
Category D	\$8,000	Not Available
Category E	\$7,500	\$10,800
Category F	\$7,500	Not Available

Please Note: Register by March 15, 2011 and receive a \$1,000 per person early sign-up discount on the person cabin prices listed above.

Included in your cruise package:

- Seven nights of accommodation aboard the M.S. *Quest*, May 15-21
- Meals beginning with dinner on Day 2 (May 15) through breakfast on Day 9 (May 22)
- Non-alcoholic beverages
- Land transfers as outlined in the itinerary including Glasgow to Oban on Day 2; all land transfers for shore excursions during the cruise; and harbor to airport in Aberdeen on Day 9
- Entrance fees to all sites shown in the itinerary
- All port charges and service taxes
- Services of the VENT leaders and local guides
- Gratuities to local guides and drivers
- Gratuities to crew of the *Quest*, including housekeeping, dining room service, maintenance workers, and deckhands

Not included in your cruise package:

- International roundtrip airfare from your home to Scotland
- Transfers or accommodations other than those mentioned in the itinerary.
- International or domestic departure taxes
- Passport expenses
- Tour fee for Scotland in Style Post-Trip
- Insurance for baggage loss, accident, evacuation, or cancellation
- Items of a personal nature including laundry, postage, internet usage, and alcoholic beverages
- Emergency evacuation charges
- Fuel surcharges
- Gratuities to the Expedition Leader and/or Cruise Director
- Gratuities to VENT leaders

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this cruise, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$1000**. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 90 days prior to the tour departure date.

PLEASE NOTE: This cruise is intended for persons in reasonably good health. By forwarding the cruise deposit, you certify that you do not have any physical condition or disability that would create a hazard for you or other passengers. Victor Emanuel Nature Tours reserves the right to decline, except, or detain you or any other passenger should your health, actions, or general deportment impede the operation of the expedition or the rights, welfare, or enjoyment of other passengers.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Cancellation penalties and refunds are based on the following schedule: If cancellation is made 90 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$1000** per person will be charged. If cancellation is made between 60 and 89 days before departure, a penalty equal to 50% of the full per person cruise rate will be assessed. If cancellation is made fewer than 60 days before departure date, no refund is available. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
90 days or more before departure date	Any funds paid above the \$1000 deposit
60-89 days or more before departure date	50% of the full cruise fare
Fewer than 60 days before departure date	No refund available

Due to the nature of the expedition, weather conditions or government regulations may require changes to be made to the itinerary and/or the cancellation of certain shore excursions. Every attempt will be made to adhere to the itinerary described within the limits of safety and time. In the event of changes, passengers have no right to any refund or other compensation. Expedition fees are based on group participation. Should you choose not to take part in any activity or make use of services provided, no refund will be made.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: If you choose to arrive Glasgow prior to May 15, and/or extend your stay in Aberdeen beyond May 22, VENT is able to book hotel accommodations for you. Please refer to your Participant Packet (mailed to you after making your initial tour deposit) where you will find an "Accommodation Request Form."

We strongly recommend that cruise participants arrive in Glasgow one day early (i.e. on May 14). The land transfer to Oban departs at 1:00PM on May 15, and those passengers not yet in Glasgow may have a very difficult time arriving in time to take the transfer.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Our prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

TRIP CANCELLATION AND MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE: A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. VENT recommends Travel Insured International as our preferred insurance provider.** Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. **Contact Travel Insured International prior to registration for details.** Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than Travel Insured International, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Medical Insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the voyage is MANDATORY for participation in this cruise. This coverage is included in the Worldwide Trip Protector plan offered by Travel Insured International. If you do not choose to purchase the insurance through Travel Insured International, you will need to do so through another insurance provider. A good website for information and acquisition of emergency evacuation/repatriation insurance is: www.insuremytrip.com.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

AIR INFORMATION: We will be happy to assist you in making air arrangements. Airline tickets carry restrictions due to the airfare used. You may find that your ticket cannot be reissued or exchanged for another air carrier or routing. Cancellation penalties and change fees may be assessed for any changes to the ticket. These charges are solely your responsibility. First and business class travel may be available on some flights. **All requests for travel assistance (air tickets, additional hotels, etc.) must be received no later than 60 days prior to departure date. Within 60 days, arrangements must be made on your own.**

CONDITIONS:

Overview: This cruise offers exposure to the considerable natural beauty, millenias-old human history, and rich birdlife and other natural features of the Scottish Isles. Regardless of whether birding and wildlife viewing is of primary concern, this trip will appeal to those with a diversity of interests, as well as those with “non-birding” spouses or companions. We offer a multi-themed program in which nature-oriented field trips are balanced with

visits to renowned historical and cultural attractions. Our shore-based excursions feature a mix of activities that includes witnessing colonies of nesting seabirds; visits to fascinating archaeological wonders; and participating in guided tours of ancient brochs, cathedrals, and blackhouses. While at sea there will be plenty of opportunities for watching for seabirds and marine mammals from the ship's viewing decks or taking in lectures themed to our itinerary. Depending on sea conditions, we may be in position to offer one or more Zodiac cruises. The VENT staff includes a geologist, historian, and two experts on bird identification.

The Ship: *Quest* features 26 passenger cabins located on two decks. All have outside views, individually controlled heating and air-conditioning, and private bathroom facilities. The public areas include the spacious Panorama Lounge, located on the top deck, with large windows for optimal viewing; a bar; a library containing books on birds, wildlife, and history; and outdoor viewing decks for sea watching. The captain maintains an open-bridge for the benefit of those interested in the ship's navigation and operations. Passenger email service are available for an extra charge.

COMMUNICATIONS NOTE: There is NO internet service aboard ship. All communications to/from the ship are via either satellite telephone or email to mvquest+purser@gmn-usa.com. Each passengers may also be assigned an email account onboard for receiving and sending emails (this can be arranged once you're aboard ship). The cost of each received or sent email will automatically be added to your final bill which is settled at the end of the expedition. Please note that no attachments can be received or sent via email. Since all communication by phone or email is done over a satellite system, coverage and availability can vary throughout the voyage, depending on satellite signal.

Dining: An attractive dining room seats all passengers in a single sitting. The head chef and his staff present a multitude of delicious dishes, including vegetarian plates, on menus that change nightly. **Please advise of any special dietary needs at the time of registration.** *Quest* is well-stocked with a range of complimentary drinks including water, soft drinks, and juices; while a range of spirits, wines, and beers are available at extra charge.

While at sea: While cruising, you'll have options to join your leaders on the viewing decks for sea watching, or remain inside and relax in the passenger lounge or your cabin. Presentations on the birds, history, and geology of the North Atlantic region will be held during some of our lengthier transits, and all passengers are encouraged to attend. While we always hope for smooth, tranquil seas, the North Atlantic is capable of producing very rough conditions. Wind is an unpredictable variable. The mornings are typically calmer and the afternoons breezy to windy. If we are cruising into the wind, participants should be prepared for rougher conditions than anticipated, including rolling seas and flying sea spray. Participants should prepare for a mix of conditions.

While on land: Walking conditions on land are generally not difficult, yet it is always important to pay close attention to footing and terrain. Our historical and cultural activities will involve easy walks on established roads, paths, and trails, while visits to more natural areas, such as at St. Kilda and Fair Isle, may require some easy walking over wet, grassy moorlands. Over all, walking conditions are easy throughout the trip with light physical demands the norm.

Zodiac landing craft: Expedition cruise ships carry fleets of Zodiac landing craft. Developed as a means for gaining access to places where larger vessels cannot go, Zodiacs are employed to bring greater intimacy to your travel experience. Each craft is constructed of high performance plastimer fabrics and outfitted with a powerful motor, and designed to withstand the conditions of the near-shore environment. Depending on timing and weather conditions, we hope to offer one or two Zodiac cruises in the vicinity of a couple North Atlantic islets known for their colonies of breeding birds. Each craft holds as many as 10 passengers. Although flat-bottom design allows for direct on-shore landings, most of the Zodiac cruises we offer will require that everyone remain in the boat.

The Program – Our routine for most days will involve breakfast on board between 6:00-7:00 a.m., followed by disembarking the ship for land transfer, or walking to historical/archaeological sites. For morning and afternoon disembarkations, we want to arrive at the sites as early as possible to maximize our time at each of the places we

visit. We will tour many of the sites and bird colonies with expert local guides and return to the ship for lunches and dinners. Some afternoons (late) will be reserved for cruising, seabirding, and presentations by VENT staff. On most nights, dinner will be between 6:30-7:00 p.m. Birding opportunities will occur at sea, on land, and even while touring the historical sites. Our itinerary includes visits to several major seabird nesting colonies. Some transits will occur during the evening.

CLIMATE & WEATHER: Weather at these northerly latitudes can be highly variable. In late May temperatures may range from the upper 40s (F) in the mornings to the upper 60s during the day. Air temperatures and wind chill will often seem colder and stronger while at sea, particularly if we are cruising into the wind. A mix of sun and overcast are expected. Dry conditions may prevail but you should come prepared for rain. The springtime is a transition period from winter to summer, which means that we might encounter beautiful sunny weather, or blustery conditions with cold wind and rain.

BAGGAGE: As space is somewhat limited in your cabins, we recommend you pack as efficiently as possible and avoid bringing an unnecessary items that will only take up space and make your bags heavier. As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack essential toiletries, medications, a change of clothing, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag.

The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. **Please consult your pre-departure materials and airline to find out specific weight restrictions.**

Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to fight terrorism, we strongly recommend that you check the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items:

<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

CLOTHING: As this trip combines birding activities with interpretive walking tours and expedition-style cruising, you will want to pack a mix of clothing that prepares you for all activities and conditions. The following items are recommended:

- **Pants:** A couple pairs of pants are recommended. Many people prefer lightweight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable. Pants made of denim, cotton, corduroy, or wool are acceptable in dry conditions, such as when birding from the ship's decks, and for evening recaps, social hours, and dinners.
- **Shirts:** Several cotton t-shirts, (long and short-sleeved), in addition to other comfortable styles suitable for wearing under your warmer apparel.
- **Field Clothing:** You may wish to pack "field clothing" for warmer conditions or for shore-based excursions. Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular and more reasonably priced than in the past.
- **Warm Clothing:** While on deck and in Zodiacs, you will want to bring a few items that will keep you warm in the event of cool temperatures and rain. Examples include turtlenecks, flannels, warm sweaters, and polar fleece. Packing a warm coat or jacket is also recommended in case of unusually cold or windy conditions.
- **Waterproof Outer Garments:** Waterproof outer garments, such as **rainpants** and **parkas** are a good idea for protection against rain, ocean spray, and cool early morning temperatures. Rainpants are not required, but do make a very effective. Your rainpants should fit comfortably over your regular pants. Some types feature a zipper on the outside of the lower pantleg, enabling you to pull your pants on and off without removing shoes or boots.
- **Socks** – Thin cotton or polypropylene socks are a good choice, in combination with a few pairs of wool socks. It is important to have clean, dry socks through the duration of the voyage. Pack accordingly.
- **Gloves and Mittens** – A pair of warm, waterproof gloves or mittens are essential. Thin glove liners are also a good choice when trying to using your fingers for taking pictures or using binoculars.

Scottish Islands Cruise, Page 14

- **Hats, Scarves and Gaitors:** You will need a cotton, knit, or wool pull down cap at the least, while a warm scarf or gaitor comes in handy when exposed in windy conditions. A hat, especially a broad-brimmed one, provides good protection from the sun.
- **Evening Wear:** The atmosphere aboard *Quest* is casual, but women and men should consider Smart Casual attire for the few dressier occasions, such as the Captain' Welcome and Farewell dinners. For women this includes casual dresses or skirt/slacks ensembles. For men this includes khakis/slacks and open-collared shirts. Men may choose to wear a sports jacket for these occasions. The degree of dress is always in accordance with your personal preference.

FOOTWEAR: Comfortable, non-slip walking shoes, or deck shoes are sufficient when onboard the ship. A lightweight hiking boot or trail shoe is recommended for birding outings and when walking among around towns and historical sites. Please keep in mind that some of the birding sites may require walking in wet grass. Rubber boots are not required, but may be preferable for those who are most concerned about keep their feet absolutely dry. Waterproof lightweight boot coverings that can be worn over hiking boots or shoes, such as NEOS Performance Overshoe, are a good choice for this trip. Some places to find different styles of waterproof boots include Cabela's, REI, L.L. Bean, Defender Industries, and Rocky Boots. Dress shoes will be appropriate for some evenings.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Please note that there are NO laundry services aboard the MS *Quest*.

EQUIPMENT: One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is being prepared with proper equipment. The following items will come in handy during your Galapagos adventure:

- **Backpack** – Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all landings and excursions
- **Ziploc bags** – Excellent for keeping small items or any items of value dry; bring several different sizes
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Travel alarm clock**
- **Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection**
- **Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**
- **Personal toiletries**
- **Cameras, lenses, film, memory cards, and extra batteries**
- **Collapsible walking stick** (favored by some)
- **Tissue packs**
- **Binoculars** – We strongly recommend good binoculars of at least 7 x 35, 8 x 42, 10 x 40, or 10 x 42 magnification. We recommend that you do NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. Trying to find a bird in your binoculars using minis is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binoculars before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that 7 x 35 or 8 x 42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes - Since most wildlife viewing will take place on a moving ship or zodiac, or among the birds and animals at very close range, you do not need to bring a spotting scope. Your tour leaders will have one available for group use on the occasions where it is necessary to have one.

PASSPORTS AND DOCUMENTS:

PASSPORTS

A valid passport is required for entry into the United Kingdom. Please check the expiration date on your passport. **If it is not valid for at least six months after your trip return date, you will need to get it renewed.** You will also want to make sure that you have at least two blank pages in your passport for stamps.

If you need a passport, you should get it well in advance of your trip departure date. For additional fees, a passport can be issued on an expedited basis. In the United States this can be done at the nearest passport office, most post offices, or the county clerk's office. You may also visit www.state.gov/travel/ for information on how to get or renew a passport.

As a safety measure, photocopy the first two pages of your passport. Keep the photocopies in a safe place, so if your passport is lost you will have proof of identification. Your passport should be signed and easily available at all times. You will need it for check-in at the airport on your first day of departure, so **do not pack it in your checked luggage.**

VISAS

Citizens of the United States and Canada do not need tourist visas to enter Scotland.

Rules and regulations pertaining to non-U.S. citizens may vary; please check with the consulate or embassy of the United Kingdom for information on entry requirements. If you are not a citizen of the United States or Canada and are required to have a visa to travel in Scotland, we recommend Pinnacle Travel Document Systems (www.traveldocs.com on the web or 888-838-4867 by phone), a company which handles visa procurement.

Visa requirements can change without notice, and you should check the latest requirements as far in advance as possible in order to allow time to obtain a visa in your home country should that be necessary.

Americans can check http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1108.html.

Canadians can check www.voyage.gc.ca/dest/report-en.asp?country=79000#4.

CURRENCY AND MONEY MATTERS: Your trip to Scotland includes most necessary expenses, including all meals aboard the ship. You will want to bring enough cash to cover personal or extra expenses not included in the cruise, such as taxi rides (if you come early or stay after the program), gifts, laundry, gratuities, meals on your own, and personal items (including alcoholic beverages). The standard currency aboard ship is the U.S. Dollar. Shipboard accounts can be paid with cash or credit cards. Visa, Mastercard and American Express are accepted. Debit cards are not accepted.

Cash and credit cards are recommended for meeting personal expenses during the cruise. For cash transactions, it is best to carry small denominations as the ship, or any places we visit, may be unable to provide change for large bills.

While U.S. dollars may be accepted in more heavily visited tourist areas, it is best to have a supply of local currency for the purchase of personal items and gifts. Local currency may be acquired before leaving your home country or in the United Kingdom, where it is readily obtained.

The official currency of Scotland (United Kingdom) is the United Kingdom Pound (GBP), which is divided into 100 pence.

As of August 23, 2010, the conversion rate is:

1 US dollar = .644 GBP; 1GBP = 1.553 US dollars

Should you extend your vacation in Scotland beyond what is offered in the cruise program, you'll definitely want to consider carrying pounds, and in small denominations. Visa, MasterCard, and American Express are widely accepted, and Travellers Checks are accepted in all areas frequented by tourists. They are best taken in Pounds to avoid additional charges. ATMs are widely available on the Scottish mainland. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

TIME: The United Kingdom (U.K.) is 5 hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) from the end of March through the end of October. In the U.K., British Summer Time (BST) is in effect during this time. BST is figured by adding an hour to Greenwich Mean Time (GMT).

ELECTRICITY: 220 volts/30 to 50 cycles, AC with European-style plug (two-round pin holes). Please bring a current converter and adapter if you wish to use a charger for such items as laptop computers, camera batteries, toothbrushes, electric razors, etc. **NOTE:** When considering the use of a current converter, always check the recommended equipment safety guidelines that appear in the owner's manual or printed instructions that come with all electronics.

HEALTH: As of this writing no major vaccinations are required for entry into the United Kingdom; however, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases, including:

- The so-called **Routine Vaccinations** (if you are not up-to-date), which are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine; diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine; and poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers who have received a primary series with either inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) or oral polio vaccine (OPV); they should receive another dose of IPV before departure).
- **Hepatitis A** or Immune Globulin (IG)
- **Hepatitis B**

If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

There is a doctor and a first aid station on board.

Motion Sickness – The North Atlantic Ocean, including the North Sea, is a region where sea conditions can change quickly. Late May is a transition time between the winter and summer seasons, meaning that our voyage could either be blessed by calm seas and beautiful conditions from start to finish, or challenged by rough water associated with a spring storm. We will likely experience the calmest seas when closer to shore, such as in the Inner Hebrides and Orkney Islands; and the greater likelihood of turbulent water while farther offshore, such as at St. Kilda and the Shetland Islands. Minus a significant storm, we should expect mild to moderate conditions; however, those travelers especially sensitive to motion sickness should be prepared. Most cruise ships typically carry a supply of anti-motion sickness medication for general availability to passengers. We recommend that you consult your physician on an appropriate medication.

Sun Exposure – The sun's ultraviolet rays are potent at higher latitudes; anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. Severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

Please consult your physician well in advance of the cruise for advice about these and other health precautions, and visit the website of the World Health Organization (WHO) or CDC for updates.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

SUGGESTED READING: Please visit our website, www.ventbird.com, which offers an affiliated online store carrying a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. You can also visit such other online stores such as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com, or www.buteobooks.com which specializes in ornithology books.

Birds

Mullarney, Killian and Lars Svensson and Dan Zetterstrom. *Birds of Europe*. Princeton Field Guides. Princeton University Press; Princeton, NJ, 1999.

This is the most important natural history book for this trip. It is probably the best all around field guide to the birds of Europe.

History & Culture

There are many books available on the remarkable history and culture of Scotland. The titles that appear in this section are among the more highly regarded books on these topics, but this selection is by no means definitive, and anyone with more than a passing interest in that country will have no problem locating other valuable sources of information.

Bruce, Duncan A. **The Mark of the Scots: Their remarkable contributions to History, Science, Democracy, Literature.** Citadel Publishing, 2000.

Devine, T. M. **The Scottish Nation.** Penguin Publishing, 2001.

Mackie, J.D. **A History of Scotland.** Penguin Publishing, 1984.

Tranter, Nigel. **The Story of Scotland.** Nigel Wilson Publishing, 1999.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, and local guides) is included on all land portions of this tour. Gratuities for the ship's crew are also included in your tour fee. **Note:** To avoid confusion, the ship's crew generally consists of housekeeping, dining room service, maintenance workers, and deckhands. The Cruise Director and/or Expedition Leader are **NOT** considered part of the main crew. **If you decide to tip the Cruise Director and/or Expedition Leader, you should hand it to them directly.** Gratuities are a personal decision and the amount extended should be based on the quality and manner of the service you receive.

If you feel one or all of the VENT staff has provided exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect January 20, 2011, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour.

Scottish Islands Cruise, Page 18

Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.