



2022 Shetland Sheep-to-Shawl Tour

Frequently Asked Questions

You are about to embark on a wonderful travel experience that will take you from "sheep to shawl" as you travel throughout the spectacular Shetland! Friends and family who have not yet become yarn lovers are also welcome! Whether you are a first-time international tourist or a more experienced traveler, these FAQs have been assembled in hopes of providing you with answers to questions that might be on your mind. This is not an exhaustive list of information but is intended as a guide in helping you plan for your trip and avoid unexpected "surprises". I am here to help and am happy to answer other questions you may have. E-mail me at deb@fibergarden.com, or phone 715.284.4590. Please note that email is my preferred method of communication. It's not that I don't want to talk with you! It is simply easier to reach me via email and I can respond more promptly. I look forward to traveling with you!

Pre-trip:

- **What about COVID protocols?** Let's talk about the "tough stuff" first. To ensure the safety of those traveling in our group and to meet likely travel requirements to enter Scotland, ***please be advised that you will be required to be fully vaccinated to participate in this tour.*** There will also likely be COVID testing requirements, possible mask mandates, etc. that we will address as the tour gets closer. To participate in this tour, you must be willing to adhere to any COVID protocols that might be in place at the time of our travel. The Fiber Garden will keep you updated on COVID-related requirements for travel. ***The Fiber Garden reserves the right to refuse any reservation for their tours, including from individuals who have been non-compliant with health and safety protocols during previous tours.***
- **How do I reserve a space on this tour?** Please review the webpage for this tour to find the date and time reservations will open. The link to register will be on the page. Once you go to the reservation page for the event, you will "***join waitlist***". I will release spaces to people on the waitlist until tour spaces are filled. This process has changed from previous tour reservations. **Everyone** is now required to get on the waitlist first. This allows the Fiber Garden to review the list and make sure that travel companions do not get separated. (Each traveler must complete a separate registration.)
- **Are the reservation and payment dates negotiable?** It is VERY important that you adhere to all stated deadlines for making reservations and payments to secure your space. There are a limited number of spaces available, and they will be confirmed on a first-come, first-served basis.
- **Can the price of the trip ever increase?** Land prices include local government value added taxes (VAT). The exchange rate is guaranteed for our tour, so there will be no price increases in the land portion of the trip.
- **What do I need to include when planning my budget for the trip?** Trip cost is of interest to most of us. I am providing some guidelines here of some known and optional costs to assist you in developing a realistic budget for the trip.
 - Let's start with the basic trip costs. If you plan to share a room with another traveler, the tour price is \$3,600. If you want single accommodations, the cost will be \$4,100. This is a GREAT value! This trip cost also reflects that the group size will be limited to 12 travelers, insuring a more intimate and "up close and personal" tour. Here is specifically what is included in this price:

- Three meals a day beginning with dinner on the day of arrival in Aberdeen, through breakfast on our departure day. The food is wonderful, and you will not go hungry!
- Eight nights lodging (one-night Aberdeen, six nights Lerwick, one-night Northlink ferry)
- Airport transfer from Aberdeen hotel to airport for flight to Shetland
- Flight from Aberdeen to Sumburgh, Shetland
- All tour fees, guide services, transportation while we are on the Islands.
- Overnight ferry from Lerwick to Aberdeen with an outside (window) cabin, including dinner and breakfast.
- Transfer from Aberdeen ferry terminal to airport for return flight home.
- Tour rain jacket.
- Other expenses to plan for:
 - Travel insurance. Travel insurance is recommended but not required. You should consider how it may help protect your investment and provide peace of mind should an illness or accident occur during your trip or if something outside of your control forces you to cancel your trip. The Fiber Garden will provide you with a price quote which varies by the age of the traveler. Insurance premiums typically average 5-8% of the trip cost, more if you are over the age of 70. To receive the full coverages offered by the policy, including pre-existing conditions, all non-refundable parts of your full trip must be covered (air and land). After receiving your quote, if you have specific questions regarding the policy and its coverage, you should contact the insurance company directly at the number you will be provided. Insurance is non-refundable.
 - Air transportation and airport parking. For budgeting purposes, you can estimate \$1,200 round trip to Aberdeen. This is dependent on prices at the time of booking and your selected air gateway. Airfare can be lower than this, but you want to budget adequately! Actual airfares may be higher or lower. If you are going to park your vehicle at your home airport, add that cost to your budget.
 - Gratuities. There are some suggested gratuities for our tour guide. Our guide in Shetland is Sarah McBurnie. Budget \$100 (£10 per day = £70). Sarah typically hires a colleague to transfer our luggage from the airport to the hotel and back to the airport. We offer him a gratuity also which you can budget about \$5-7 for. Portage fees are included in your tour fee. I do like to leave £2 per day in my hotel room for the housekeeping staff. This is not expected by them, but it is appreciated. Gratuities are always at your discretion, both in terms of whether you offer a gratuity and the amount. All gratuities for our meals on the tour have been included in your tour fee. At the end of our stay on the Islands, I will pass a packet around to collect gratuities for Sarah and Gordon (luggage guy). In summary, about \$120 for gratuities.
 - First payment will be \$250 upon notification by the Fiber Garden that the minimum group size has been met. (Remember...book early!) This deposit is deducted from your total tour cost.
 - Airfare must be paid for at the time it is booked. I will need a valid passport on file for you to book international air.
 - ***Final payment of the remainder of your trip balance will be due on March 1, 2022.***
- Be sure and budget for those treasures you'll want to purchase to remember your trip. There will be lots of fiber shops, full of temptations, to explore all throughout our trip!
- This list is not all-inclusive but should provide the major expenses you need to consider when planning the budget for your trip.
- ***What forms of payment can I use?*** Payments for our Shetland tours differ from our tours to other destinations. You will pay your tour deposit and final payment directly to our tour operator through her PayPal account. You will be able to do this using a credit card, or you can use your PayPal balance. You will be required to have a PayPal account

to make these payments. If you do not already have an account, you will need to set one up. Once you have made your final payment, you can close the account if you wish. Payment for your roundtrip air to Aberdeen and insurance will be made by the Fiber Garden on your behalf directly to the airlines and insurance company. You will need to have a credit card on file with the Fiber Garden for these payments. ***The Fiber Garden cannot accept any payments directly.***

- ***What is the refund policy if I need to cancel my trip?*** The following schedule applies to individuals who must cancel their trip reservation:

Land cancellations (\$3,600 or \$4,100):

- Cancellations 100 or more days prior to travel. Full refund less a \$50 administrative fee
- 99 - 65 days prior to departure: Cancellation fee is \$250
- 64 - 46 days: Cancellation fee is 25% of trip cost
- 45 - 8 days: Cancellation fee is 35% of trip cost
- 7 - 1 days: Cancellation fee is 50% of trip cost
- May 7 (day of departure): Cancellation fee is 100% of trip cost

Air cancellations. Cancellation penalties will apply based on the policies of the airline your flight is booked with.

Reservations may NOT be transferred to another individual if you need to cancel. If you purchased travel insurance, check your policy for trip cancellation coverage.

- ***Is there a minimum group size to conduct the tour?*** Trip price is based on a minimum group size of 10. If this minimum is not reached, those registered may have the option to either cancel their reservation and receive a full refund (except insurance which is not refundable) or pay an additional \$300 to travel with a smaller group.
- ***Do I need a passport?*** Yes, you will need a passport that is ***valid for at least six months past the date of your trip.*** If you need to apply for a passport or renew your passport, you can do so through the [U.S. Department of the State.](#) ***If you need to apply for a passport or renew your passport, please do this immediately!***
- ***What if I have a criminal conviction?*** You may be denied entry into your chosen destination as a result of any prior criminal convictions. It is your responsibility to check with the appropriate embassy to assess your situation.
- ***I have some limited mobility and difficulty walking. Will this be a problem for me?*** Please be advised that travel in Shetland can sometimes involve uneven terrain, rough walking surfaces, short to medium walking distances during tours, and some stairs which can be challenging for those with mobility issues. Our hotel in Lerwick has stairs you must climb to the sleeping rooms. Motor coaches and vans do not have wheelchair lifts, so travelers must be able to mount steps into the coaches and vans. Tour company guides and drivers are unable to provide individual mobility assistance to passengers. Please contact the Fiber Garden prior to registering for the tour to discuss any concerns.
- ***What should I pack?*** Several weeks prior to the trip, you will receive a packet of information that includes a comprehensive guide to help you prepare for your trip. The information here is just to get you started.

You are limited to one suitcase weighing a maximum of 20 Kg (44 lbs) for the Loganair flight to Sumburgh. For your flights to and from Aberdeen, you should follow the luggage guidelines of your airlines (typically suitcases must weigh less than 50 pounds. Casual clothes are fine for both day and evening. Don't overpack!! Plan your wardrobe so you can wear a few shirts and pants in multiple outfits. (After all, you need to have room left in your luggage to stash all those treasures you'll be bringing home!!!) Comfortable walking shoes are a "must". Other items that you might want to tuck in your suitcase include a travel alarm, converter/adaptor plugs for your electronics. Leave expensive jewelry or other valuables at home!

To help discourage overpacking, your hotel bathroom will have a towel warmer which comes in handy if you need to wash out a few pieces of clothing and get them dry.

The hotel will have hairdryers in the room. Do NOT bring any type of curling iron or straightening iron as they will be destroyed if you use them on UK power. If you need one of these items, you should plan to purchase one once you have arrived in Scotland.

- **What is the weather in Shetland?** Average temperatures in mid-May on Shetland are low 50's during the day and low 40's in the evenings. You can expect it to often be windy. Beyond that, you never really know what to expect with the weather! 😊 When planning your wardrobe, think "layers" that you can easily put on and take off.
- **How will air be booked? Do I need to book my own air to Aberdeen?** The Fiber Garden will review where travelers will be coming from throughout the United States, your preferred home air gateways, and will work hard to coordinate everyone's arrival in Aberdeen within a reasonable window of time. I will try and route as many of you as possible through the same connecting airport to Aberdeen, so you hopefully can make the flight into Aberdeen with others in our tour group. Of course, you are welcome to book your own flights (and you would be required to do so if you wish to book a flight using frequent flyer points, etc.) The Fiber Garden requests that if you book your own flights, you do so in coordination with Deb so your arrival into Aberdeen matches with times the remainder of the group is arriving. If you plan to arrive in Scotland in advance of our group, or extend your stay following our tour, you will need to book your own flights or request the Fiber Garden book these separate flights for you.
- **How do I get from the airport to our Aberdeen hotel upon arrival?** For those arriving on May 8 with air booked by Deb, we will have a group transfer. We will be met at the airport by a taxi service and taken to our hotel. If you are arriving earlier than the rest of the group, the easiest way to transfer to our hotel would be by taxi. Aberdeen is not a large city and cab fares are reasonable. Once you arrive at the hotel, all other transportation, including group airport transfers, are included for the remainder of the tour.
- **What else do I need to know to prepare for the trip?** There is a lot of information that could be shared here, but these are the very basics. As mentioned above, you will receive further guidance to assist you in preparing for the trip. The Fiber Garden will work with you every step of the way guiding you through the pre-trip preparations, tour documents, etc. Once you make your reservation for the tour, please be sure to thoroughly read any information e-mailed or sent to you by Deb and the Fiber Garden. It is your responsibility to thoroughly review all information sent to you.

About one month prior to departure, I will schedule a Zoom meeting for our group to connect with each other and go through the nitty-gritty of preparing for the tour.

During the Tour:

- **Can I use my cell phone?** It depends. You will want to check with your cell phone provider to see if your phone can be used when traveling internationally, and what the rates are. Personally, I purchased an unlocked smart phone and a T-Mobile account. It is very cost-effective and provides reliable service while traveling in Europe. It will be far more economical to rely most heavily on Wi-Fi for communications as it is more available and less expensive. You can use apps such as WhatsApp or Skype to make calls using Wi-Fi.
- **Is there internet access?** Yes! Our hotels have free Wi-Fi, so you can keep in touch back home as we travel the Islands. Wi-Fi at the Kveldsro has been very good in my experience there. You will also be able to access Wi-Fi at some local cafes, etc. Internet speeds can be unreliable at times but should be available in most of the locations we will visit.
- **Currency.** Shetland's currency is the British Pound Sterling. You can exchange currency at your U.S. airport or at the airport on arrival in Aberdeen. You will get the best exchange rates once you arrive in Scotland. ATMs, available at the Aberdeen airport, will also dispense cash in the local currency. Once in Shetland, there will be other opportunities to exchange currency if needed. Downtown Lerwick, which is within walking distance of our hotel, has an ATM. It is best to carry smaller denominations of U.S. dollars as most places will not accept \$100 bills for exchange.

Post-tour:

- **How do I get from the ferry terminal to the Aberdeen airport?** We will have a group transfer with a vehicle and driver waiting for us when we arrive at the Northlink Ferry Aberdeen terminal. Because the entire group will

transfer to the airport at the same time, be sure you have plenty of reading material or a knitting project to help pass the time if you have a long wait prior to your flight. As in the transatlantic flights at the beginning of the trip, every effort will be made to get group members on the same flights headed home.

I'm Ready! How do I register?

Reservations will open on a specific date and time as stated on the tour webpage and via an e-newsletter sent to those on the Fiber Garden's travel list. (If you are reading this and are not on this mailing list, please [email Deb](#) and request to be added!) A word to the wise...if you wish to participate in this tour, be at your computer on the date and time reservations open! The first three Shetland tours filled in a day; the 2019 tour filled in 15 minutes!

Please contact me if there are other questions that you need answered. I'm here to help you have the best of travel experiences! I will continue to update this document and will remain in communication with each traveler as the date of our trip approaches.

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