



2024 Shetland Sheep-to-Shawl Tour May 10-19, 2024 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 Islands! 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. I look forward to traveling with you!

Pre-trip:

- **What are the physical requirements for the tour? 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 such as cobblestone and brick and farm pasture, 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 lodging rooms. (You will not need to carry your large suitcase up stairs, but will need to carry your hand baggage.) Our tour van does not have a lift, so travelers must be able to mount steps into the van unassisted. 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 about COVID and health protocols?** To ensure the safety of those traveling in our group and those in Shetland we will visit, **please be advised that you will be required to be fully vaccinated, with at least one booster within 12 months of the tour. Current CDC guidelines will be followed for anyone testing positive for COVID during the tour.** If the COVID situation changes or any other significant health threats arise requiring additional protocols, these will be addressed as the tour gets closer. To participate in this tour, you must be willing to adhere to any COVID or other health protocols in place at the time of our travel. Anyone showing any signs of illness during the tour (not only COVID), will be required to wear an N95 or KN95 mask at all times.
- **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. **Making a reservation is a two-step process!** Once you go to the reservation page for the event, you will complete the form to "request a space on this tour". This allows the Fiber Garden to review your initial information, make sure that travel companions do not get separated, and review single vs. shared lodging requests against our room allocations. If a space is available for you, you will receive a notification from Deb at the Fiber Garden informing you of the space and providing a link for you to submit the remainder of your information to complete the reservation.
- **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. Tour costs for single and shared rooms are listed on the tour webpage.. Here is what's included in this price:
 - Aberdeen food and beverage walking tour.
 - 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 and travel care package.
 - 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. 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 \$1,500 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 sometimes 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. Porterage fees are included in your tour fee. 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. In summary, about \$110 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.
 - ***Final payment of the remainder of your trip balance will be due on March 15, 2024.***
 - 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. Payment for your Northlink Ferry booking will be made by the Fiber Garden on your behalf directly to the ferry. You will need to have a credit card on file with the Fiber Garden for these payments. MasterCard and VISA are generally accepted everywhere. AMEX is sometimes accepted. **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:
 - Cancellations 60 or more days prior to travel. Cancellation fee is \$250
 - 59 - 30 days: Cancellation fee is 50% of trip cost
 - 29 - 8 days: Cancellation fee is 75% of trip cost
 - 7 - 0 days: 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.

- **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](https://www.state.gov). **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 because of any prior criminal convictions. It is your responsibility to check with the appropriate embassy to assess your situation.
- **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, including a packing list. 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".

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 will 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 and your preferred home air gateways and will recommend flights that will coordinate your arrival into Aberdeen with others in the group. Although The Fiber Garden can book your flights, during this time of airline industry challenges, it is recommended that travelers book their own flights directly through the airlines (*NOT* through a third party!) so you have direct access to your air reservations. We will discuss air booking during our tour orientation Zoom in January.

- **How do I get from the airport to our Aberdeen hotel upon arrival?** You will need to take a taxi from the airport to the hotel which is only about a 5-minute drive. Since you will likely be arriving into Aberdeen with others in our group, you can share taxis for a very reasonable fee.
- **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. **There will be two Zoom meetings**, that will be recorded, to help you prepare. The first Zoom will be in early January 2024 before any deposits are paid. I will talk you through the steps over the next few months including how payments will be made, air reservations, etc. The second Zoom will be about 3-4 weeks prior to our departure where we will go through the final details of preparing to travel to Shetland.

The Fiber Garden will work with you all 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.

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 readily 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 through your bank, 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 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, or if you have U.S. Dollars to exchange, that can be done at the post office in Lerwick. 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.

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! All the Shetland tours have 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.

Deb Jones, Owner, Fiber Garden LLC

e-mail (preferred communication method): deb@fibergarden.com

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, or who have demonstrated a lack of consideration toward group members during previous tours.

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