

Western Mysteries Summer School 2026

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# Exploring Orkney





# Highlights

- The famous stone circles Ring of Brodgar and Stones of Stenness.
- Neolithic settlements like Scare Brea.
- Several cairns like Maeshowe and others, as well as the Darfie Stane on Hoy (see front picture). We will climb into some of them.
- Amazing nature and wildlife like the Old Man of Hoy, beautiful beaches and wild seas. Powerful landscape impressions.
- 7 different islands of the archipelago.
- Sites of Celtic Christianity like the Brough of Deerness.
- Day trips to special sites during the day and seminars in the evenings about the Western Mysteries, including the topics of standing stones, stone circles, cairns, the power of perception, Celtic Christianity, nature observation as a path to the spiritual, and karma research.
- Schooling in sense perception and sharing circles.

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# Mainland Orkney, Rousay and Hoy

## Stone circles and Cairns. The ritual landscape of Orkney.

The major sites like Maeshow, the Ring of Brodgar and the Stenness Stones are all on mainland Orkney. We will visit them several times in different moods of weather and time of day. We will also crawl into the darkness of the Cuween chambered cairn.

We will spend a day on Hoy, hiking to the sea stack Old Man of Hoy at one of Europe's highest cliffs and visiting the fascinating Dwarfie Stane (front picture).

A day on Rousay will allow us to experience the different variations and expressions of cairns and how they are situated in the landscape.

We will visit the magical, dreamy peninsula Brough of Deerness and the ruins of a Celtic Christian chapel, as well as the tidal island Brough of Birsay to watch seals and catch a glimpse of Viking Orkney.

We will visit a quarry from where the Neolithic people took the stones for the great circles.





# Papa Westray and the Northern Isles

## The hidden gems of the archipelago

Papay is the most northerly island of Orkney. It feels very much like the Iona of Orkney. It is packed with history and has a wonderful light and crystalline atmosphere. We will visit “the Holm”, a small “island of the dead” next to it with one of the most impressive long barrow cairns. We will have a day of walking to the north tip, a nature reserve, to watch out for birds, Orcas, and other sea life and will try to spot the very rare native *Primula scotica*. Papay also shines with one of the most remarkable neolithic houses (pictured left) and two major Celtic Christian sites. From here, we will have a day trip to the neighbouring island of Westray, visiting the Westray Boy in the Pierowall Museum, one of the oldest sculptures depicting a human being. One day we will spend on North Ronaldsay, famous for its seaweed-eating sheep. Here, at the Stan Stane (Menhir), we will celebrate a closing ritual. We will have two nights in Kirkwall to conclude the trip, but they will be in a different character- for journaling, spending the day as one wishes to revisit a site one wants to spend more time with by oneself or to go to the pub for a traditional folk music night, to buy some souvenir in the quirky shops of the town, visit the museum or the stunning St. Magnus Cathedral.

# Details

Dates: 14 days: End of July 2026

This offering costs £1800 and is limited to 8 participants.

Register until Christmas 2025.

All accommodation in twin- or shared rooms in simple, but well-chosen hostels. We will cook ourselves in self-catering kitchens.

Included are accommodation, entry tickets to sights, ferry and flight tickets between the islands, breakfast and dinner. Pub meals or entertainment outside the schedule are not included.

We will use public transport on the islands and private cars. The expenses for the cars,

hired or private, will be shared among all participants.

You make your own travel arrangements to arrive on time and for after the trip.

This trip requires some mobility to make the most out of it and resilience regarding all kinds of weather, as all sites are outdoors, and some of them require up to an hour of walking to reach them and crawling into them through the passage. There are two whole days of (moderate) walking.

There is a second offering on the Isle of Mull and Iona beginning Easter Sunday 2026.

Further details:  
[www.knowyourself.land](http://www.knowyourself.land)



## The tour guide:

Dr. Renatus Derbidge, born in 1979 in Frankfurt/Main, Germany is a Goethean biologist. He moved to the Isle of Mull near Iona in Scotland in 2018 to study the Western Mysteries at the places where they can still be experienced today. He has published his research extensively. He is the founder of the Iona Summer Schools that have happened since 2016 every year. He offers travel experiences and seminars about the topic. He currently works as a land manager and researcher at Fairhill Rise, a Ruskin Mill provision for young adults with learning disabilities near Edinburgh. He will guide the day trips, the shared observations and the sharing circles. In the evenings he will embed the day's experiences in a wider anthroposophical and archaeological context.