

# CLIA DESTINATION FACTSHEET

## BRITISH ISLES & CHANNEL PORTS



Durdle Door, Dorset, Jurassic Coast

### BEST TIME TO GO/WEATHER

Summer is prime time for cruising around the UK, with most sailings between May and October, though some boutique companies start their seasons in early spring and continue into November.

The peak months of June, July and August are generally more reliable for settled sunny weather and warmer temperatures, though conditions can be changeable. Cruises in the English Channel tend to run for a longer season than those in the North Sea or Irish Sea, helped by the Christmas market season that kicks off in December.



The Giant's Causeway is an area of about 40,000 interlocking basalt columns, in County Antrim on the north coast of Northern Ireland

### 10 REASONS TO CRUISE HERE

**Step straight aboard** – as sailings depart from around the UK there's no need to fret about airport queues or luggage limits, because it's easy to drive to ports or take the train.

**Coastal contrasts** – Britain's shores stretch for approximately 11,000 miles with sweeping bays of golden sands, towering cliffs, bustling seaside towns and picturesque fishing villages where tiny cottages cling to steep slopes that tumble down to the sea.

**Heaps of history** – starting millions of years ago with the riches of the Jurassic Coast to prehistoric sites and Roman remains. Imposing castles and statuesque cathedrals tell Britain's story while grand palaces and stately homes are a legacy of centuries of regal heritage.

**Islands galore** – from the escapist allure of the Scilly Isles and the Channel Islands' nostalgic charm to the rugged isolation of the Shetlands and Orkneys, plus the remote beauty of the Scottish Hebrides.

**Maritime draws** – Britain's seafaring soul comes alive in Plymouth and Falmouth amid centuries of history, while Belfast brims with tales of Titanic, Glasgow plus Newcastle add shipbuilding heritage and Liverpool proudly salutes its mercantile past.

**Irish ayes** – reap Hibernian flavours on the island of Ireland with Dublin's irrepressible craic; Blarney Stone kissing at Blarney Castle near Cork; Galway's famous festivals and the legends of Northern Ireland's natural wonder, Giant's Causeway.

**Nature's bounty** – Britain's coastline is home to thousands of seabird colonies, including puffins, gannets and kittiwakes, while its waters throng with nearly 30 species of dolphins and whales, including fin, humpback, minke and orca.

**Foodie flavours** – traditional favourites of fish 'n' chips and Cornish pasties, Welsh laverbread and Scottish haggis bring out the taste of the British Isles, while French cheeses along with Belgian beers and chocolates inject continental cheer.

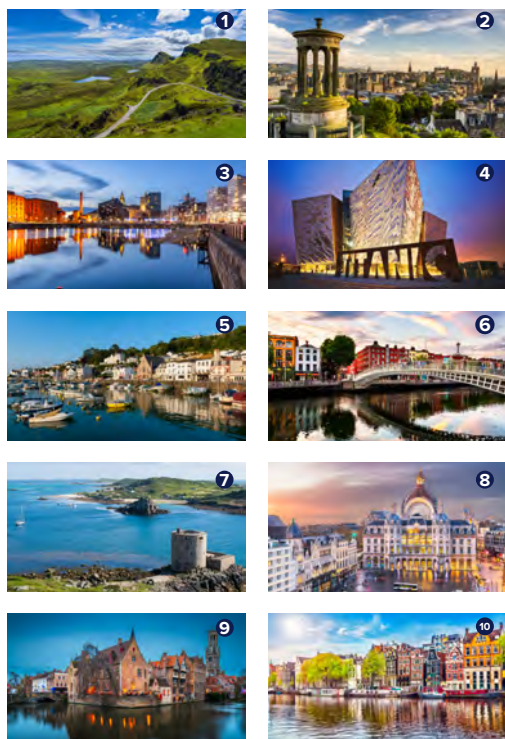
**Cultural bonus** – four distinctive cultures rolled into one British nation with English ceremonies and traditions, Scottish kilts and bagpipes, jaunty Irish ballads and Welsh legends and language.

**Continental divide** – the cobbles and canals of medieval Bruges contrast with the ultra-modern metropolises of Le Havre and Rotterdam, while Antwerp and Amsterdam balance their medieval hearts with vibrant modern cityscapes.

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### 10 KEY ATTRACTIONS



**1. Highlands & Islands** – Scotland’s Hebridean isles are dotted off its jagged western coast, guarding the mainland’s spectacular mountainous interior, while further north lie the Shetland and Orkney islands whose past is entwined with Norse and Viking ancestry.

**2. Edinburgh** – the venerable Scottish capital captures hearts and minds with an intoxicating cultural mix and striking hilly setting, crowned by its 12th century castle and perfectly showcasing the Old Town’s labyrinthine streets and wide Georgian boulevards of its New Town.

**3. Liverpool** – famed as the home of The Beatles, this dynamic city rocks to the distinctive beat of its musical heritage, plus a roll-call of grandiose buildings such as the Three Graces and Royal Albert Dock, harking back to its past as a global trading powerhouse.

**4. Belfast** – forever linked to legendary liner Titanic which was built here (don’t miss the excellent Titanic museum), and natural wonder Giant’s Causeway, a two-hour drive away, Ulster’s capital has absorbing reminders of its turbulent past, but has reinvented itself as a lively cultural hub.

**5. Channel Islands** – boasting an intriguing Anglo-French culture, this archipelago sitting just off the Normandy coast is big on old-world charm and pastoral diversions. Cruise ships mainly stop at Guernsey’s capital St Peter Port, while small sister isles Sark and Herm are visited on excursions.

**6. Dublin** – Ireland’s capital is its cultural beating heart with a colourful medieval past, squares of elegant Georgian houses, top-notch museums, art galleries and streets full of foot-tapping rhythms where pints of the Black Stuff (Guinness) are served with Celtic bonhomie.

**7. Isles of Scilly** – this cluster of pin-prick outposts 28 miles from Land’s End are famed for their sleepy way of life. St Mary’s is the capital and main port, though the Abbey Gardens at Tresco and drop-dead gorgeous beaches of St Martin are popular draws.

**8. Antwerp** – the cobbled squares and medieval half-timbered houses of the Belgian city are reminders of its 16th century heyday as a trading colossus and diamond trading centre, when it was also home to Flemish painter Pieter Paul Rubens, whose works can be seen in local museums.

**9. Bruges** – this picture-perfect medieval Belgian city, reached from Zeebrugge, piles on the romance with beautifully-preserved buildings, cobbled streets and dreamy canals while hallmark Belgian chocolates and beers make it all the sweeter.

**10. Amsterdam** – an oasis for exploring with its laid-back coffee culture, bohemian vibe and pretty Dutch gabled houses lining the network of canals. This city overflows with history, hipster bars and world-class museums and art galleries.

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### 10 THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

**Remember your passport** – even if cruises only visit UK ports, passports are still compulsory and so is travel insurance, which is currently required to include Covid-19 cover.

**Plugs and Pounds** – sailings may be close to home, but travel adaptors are still needed on many ships as they have US and/or European plug points. Aside from British lines, onboard currencies remain in dollars or euros.

**Way to go** – take your pick from circumnavigations of Britain; itineraries that focus on the Scottish Isles and/or Ireland; return-trip cruises starting and finishing at the same port; or those departing from the UK, but ending elsewhere.

**Don't miss out** – make the most of wildlife-spotting opportunities both at sea and ashore by taking binoculars. Some smaller cruise companies provide them in cabins, but not all larger mainstream lines do.

**Come rain or shine** – as it's the British climate, be prepared for variable conditions, from blazing hot sunshine to freezing fog and rainy downpours, so bring layers aplenty and waterproofs.

**Pick 'n' mix** – from mini-cruises of a few nights visiting the likes of Amsterdam, Le Havre (for trips to Paris), Rotterdam and Zeebrugge (for Bruges) to one-week voyages or longer that encircle Britain and call at its islands too.

**Little and large** – former fishing boats, converted barges, a former car ferry and historic schooners are among smaller craft that sail into the craggy corners of Scotland and the Cornish coast, while mainstream lines with ships of around 3,000 passengers serve larger ports.

**Christmas shopping** – get into the festive spirit with English Channel sailings in December that serve a seasonal treat by visiting Yuletide markets, including those in Bruges, Antwerp and Amsterdam.

**Here comes the sun** – as cruise ships are effectively moving hotels or resorts, sea days bring the opportunity to sail off (within reasonable limits) in search of better weather.

**Pick a theme** – bring out the best of British on voyages that focus on gastronomy, horticulture and glorious gardens, while wildlife cruises, photography sailings and walking-themed itineraries showcase another side of the UK.



Neist point Lighthouse, Isle of Skye, Scotland