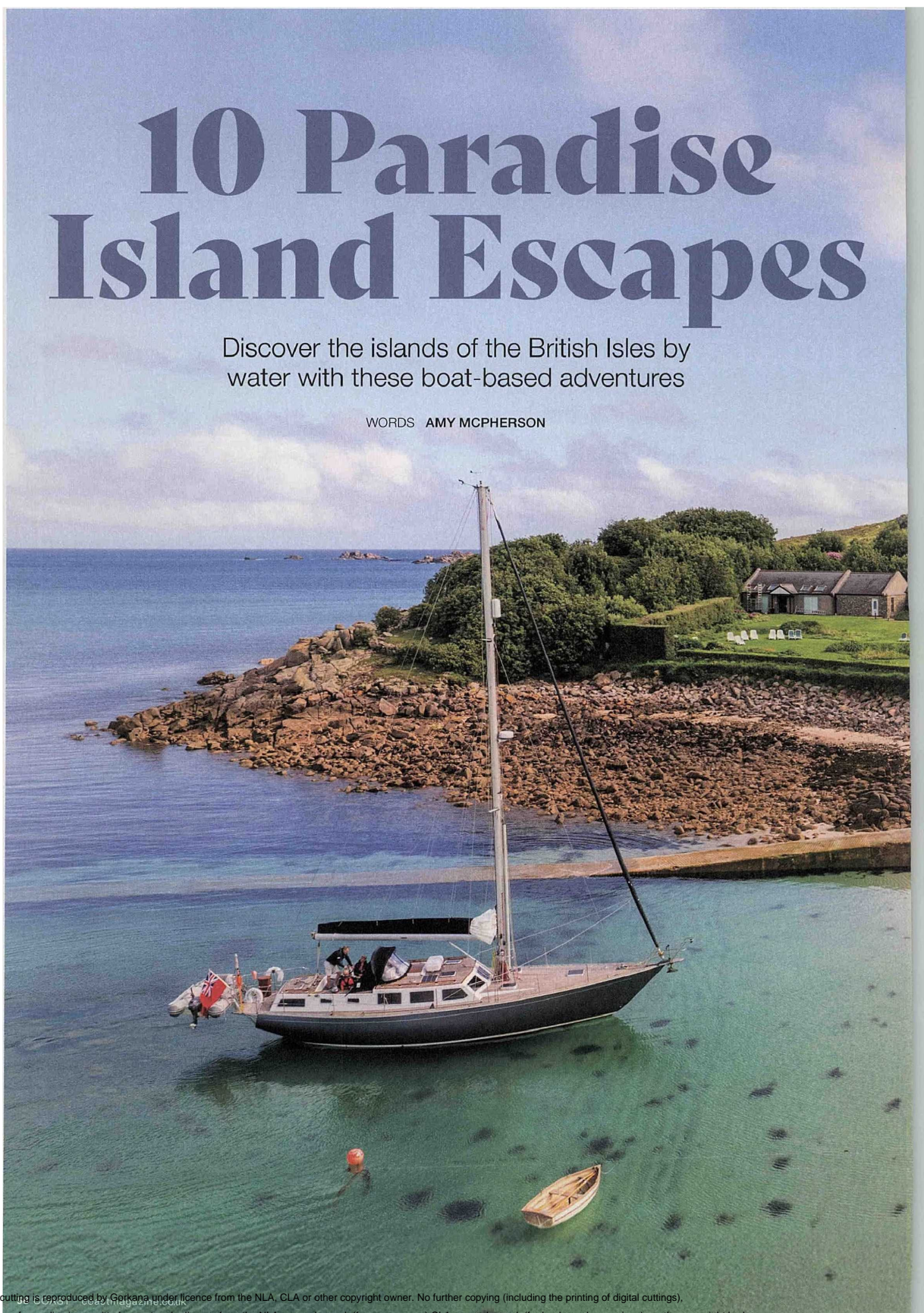


10 Paradise Island Escapes

Discover the islands of the British Isles by water with these boat-based adventures

WORDS AMY MCPHERSON



coast ISLAND SPECIAL

Our coastline is scattered with beautiful islands – many are brimming with nature and wildlife, or are rich in culture and history just waiting to be explored. From the archipelagos north of Scotland and the Hebrides to its west, to the Channel Islands and Isles of Scilly south of England, there's a myriad of gorgeous locations to discover – and you can enjoy some of the best views of them from the water.

Whether you are planning a short break lasting a couple of days, or looking to take a longer journey, here are 10 trips that will whet your appetite for an adventure at sea.

1 LIVE THE HIGH LIFE IN THE ISLES OF SCILLY

Scilly Yacht Charters lets land visitors to the Isles of Scilly enjoy life aboard a luxury yacht. You'll sail around the archipelago on *Jekamanzi* – a 50-foot Bruce Roberts Design Bermudan cutter. It is available for private charter, with a tailored itinerary: you might enjoy a day of sailing between islands, picking up from any of the islands for a Sunset Sail with canapés and drinks included, or a stop at the Karma St. Martin's Hotel for a luxurious lunch. From £95 per person for a three-hour Sunset Sail. A maximum limit of four or six persons applies, depending on the cruise. Visit scillyyachtcharters.co.uk.

t ISLAND SPECIAL

2 LEARN ABOUT MULL'S MARINE WILDLIFE

The Isle of Mull is known for its natural environment and abundance of wildlife, and The Majestic Line's Around Mull: Wildlife Explorer itinerary lets you experience sightings up close. This includes a half-day tour with an award-winning wildlife expert, whose keen eye and educational commentary will have you spotting all the beautiful creatures in the area. You'll also get to visit the Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust's headquarters in Tobermory to learn about its conservation work.

The focus changes with the season: spring is the best time to view nesting puffins and other seabirds on the offshore islands, and in summer, you may spot basking sharks and whales. In early autumn, you might even hear the stags roar as rutting season gets underway. From £2,645 per person for six nights, full board, based on two sharing a double or twin cabin. Visit themajesticline.co.uk.



3 SAY AHOY TO SHETLAND AND ORKNEY

New from VentureSail this year is Sailing the Shetland Islands and Orkney – a chance to join its beautiful tall ship *Flying Dutchman* for an adventure through the natural beauty of our northernmost isles. The itinerary begins in Shetland, with its dramatic landscapes, vibrant wildlife and Norse heritage. The vessel makes a stop at Fair Isle, the UK's most remote inhabited island, famous for its patterned knitwear and wild seabird populations. The journey continues to Kirkwall in Orkney, for Neolithic sites and whisky tasting, before reaching its end at picturesque Ullapool in the Scottish Highlands. This is a voyage for the adventurous with a keen mind for ancient history and a love of tall ships. From £1,445 per person for nine nights, half board, for a single berth in a twin ensuite cabin. Visit venturesailholidays.com.



4 CRUISE THE ISLANDS WITH ENTERTAINMENT

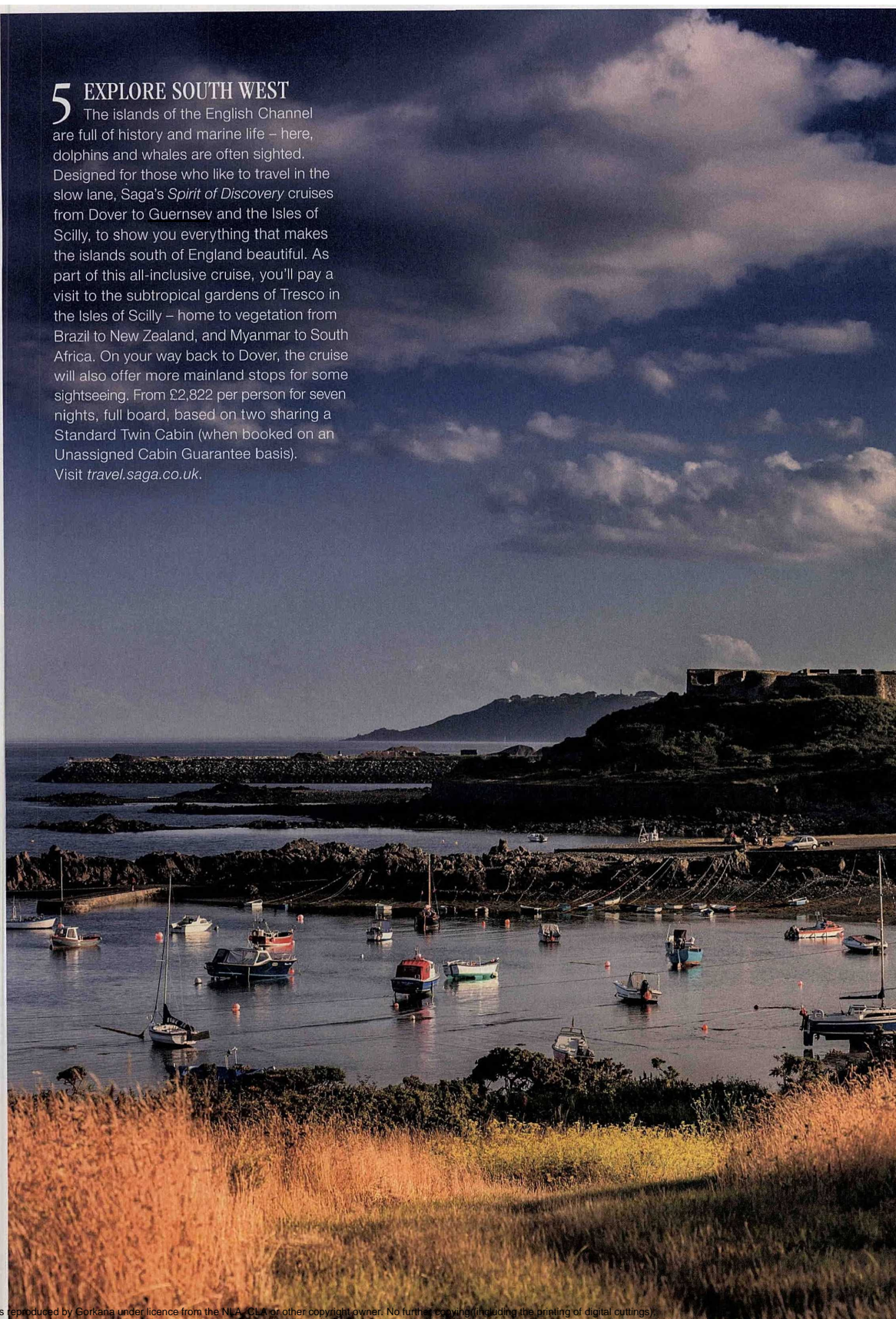
One for those who simply enjoy being on board a cruise ship, while still having the opportunity to visit great ports of call. Ambassador Cruise Line's Gems of the English Channel voyage departs from London Tilbury and visits the Isles of Scilly and Guernsey, with stops in Cornwall and on France's Normandy coast. Stroll scenic nature trails around St Mary's in the Isles of Scilly, and visit Castle Cornet and Victor Hugo's Hauteville House in St Peter Port, Guernsey. You'll also spend full days at sea, enjoying the traditional cruise entertainment and facilities onboard Ambassador's *Ambience*. From £849 per person for seven nights, full board, based on two sharing an inside cabin. Visit ambassadorcruiseline.com.



PHOTOGRAPHY [PREVIOUS SPREAD] SCILLY YACHT CHARTERS [THIS SPREAD] THE MAJESTIC LINE, STUART BRUNTON VISIT SCOTLAND, AMBASSADOR CRUISES, VISIT GUERNSEY

5 EXPLORE SOUTH WEST

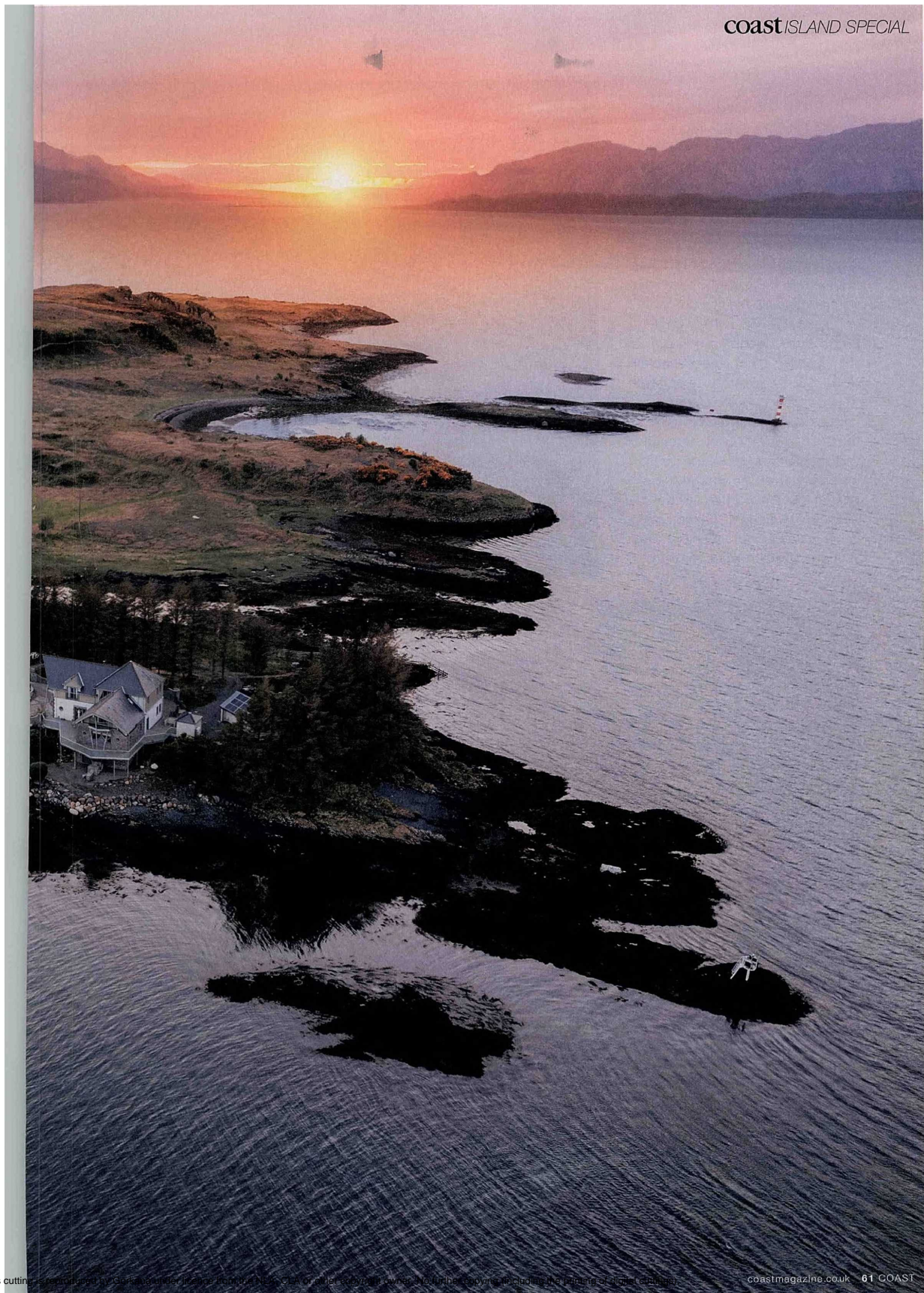
The islands of the English Channel are full of history and marine life – here, dolphins and whales are often sighted. Designed for those who like to travel in the slow lane, Saga's *Spirit of Discovery* cruises from Dover to Guernsey and the Isles of Scilly, to show you everything that makes the islands south of England beautiful. As part of this all-inclusive cruise, you'll pay a visit to the subtropical gardens of Tresco in the Isles of Scilly – home to vegetation from Brazil to New Zealand, and Myanmar to South Africa. On your way back to Dover, the cruise will also offer more mainland stops for some sightseeing. From £2,822 per person for seven nights, full board, based on two sharing a Standard Twin Cabin (when booked on an Unassigned Cabin Guarantee basis). Visit travel.saga.co.uk.





6 SAIL FOR WILD SWIMMING

For those seeking idyllic cold water swimming opportunities, Guided Wild Swimming and Sailing in Scotland is another new trip from VentureSail for this year. *Stravaigin* – a fully crewed modern sailboat with private double cabins, a spacious saloon and outdoor eating areas – will depart from the harbour town of Oban and take you to hidden coves and hard-to-reach but safe wild swimming locations for energising dips. You'll also have time to walk local trails for wildlife spotting. Perfect if you love nature and being active in the great outdoors. From £1,675.80 per person for six nights, full board, based on two sharing a double cabin. Visit venturesailholidays.com.



t ISLAND SPECIAL

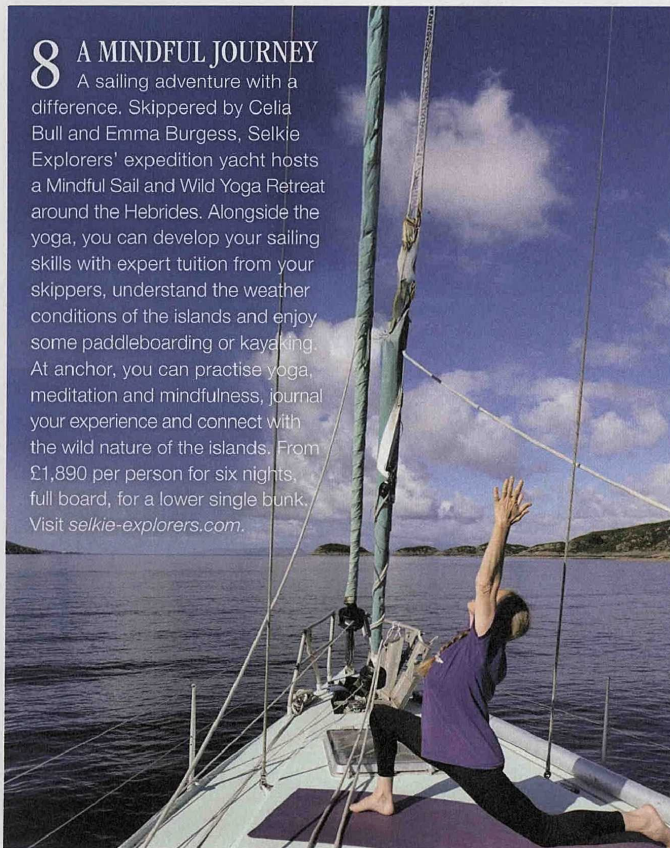
7 FIND TRANQUILITY

Much of the Hebrides' fame lies in its string of outer isles, yet there is so much to love about the lesser-visited Islay, Jura, Luing and Shuna. These islands lie among the tranquil Sounds – narrow sea channels or inlets – of the Inner Hebrides, where silence is golden. St Hilda Sea Adventures' Southern Hebridean Wild Isles sailing will take you into the heart of these still, tranquil waters, where you'll cruise surrounded by mountains and wild scenery which is occasionally decorated by a lighthouse or castle. Active cruisers will also be able to kayak, paddleboard and swim from the boat, and join a walk through this spectacular landscape on a shore excursion. From £1,400 per person for seven nights, full board, based on two people sharing a twin cabin on the former tall ship *St Hilda*. Visit sthildaseaadventures.co.uk.



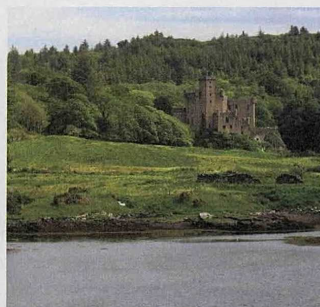
8 A MINDFUL JOURNEY

A sailing adventure with a difference. Skippered by Celia Bull and Emma Burgess, Selkie Explorers' expedition yacht hosts a Mindful Sail and Wild Yoga Retreat around the Hebrides. Alongside the yoga, you can develop your sailing skills with expert tuition from your skippers, understand the weather conditions of the islands and enjoy some paddleboarding or kayaking. At anchor, you can practise yoga, meditation and mindfulness, journal your experience and connect with the wild nature of the islands. From £1,890 per person for six nights, full board, for a lower single bunk. Visit selkie-explorers.com.



9 EMBRACE THE CULTURE OF THE HEBRIDES

The Hebrides are not just teeming with wildlife – they are communities that have preserved Gaelic cultures and traditions. Take a Highland and Island Heritage Cruise on the *Hebridean Princess* and sail in style and luxury through the Sounds for the landscapes of the Inner and Outer Hebrides. Each day, you can also go ashore and visit makers and producers, such as tweed weavers and distilleries, along with museums and pubs where you can hear the stories of these communities and learn about their heritage. From £6,290 per person for seven nights, full board, based on two sharing a twin cabin. Visit hebridean.co.uk.



PHOTOGRAPHY HEBRIDEAN ISLAND CRUISES

10 STEER A DRAMATIC SOUTHERN COURSE

The British coast and its islands offer a diverse range of landscapes, from the dramatic cliffs of the north to the gentler, equally impressive hills of the south – and you'll get to cruise through it all on board Fred. Olsen's *Balmoral*, if you take its Scotland, Scilly Isles & the West Country itinerary. Departing from Edinburgh, the ship sails north to Shetland and Orkney then heads west towards the Hebrides. Then it's straight down south to explore the Isles of Scilly before completing your voyage along the south coast towards Portsmouth. A new, but similar itinerary will be introduced in 2026 should you miss your chance this year. From £1,099 per person for 10 nights, full board, based on two sharing an interior cabin. Visit fredolsencruises.com.

PHOTOGRAPHY (PREVIOUS SPREAD) VENTURESAIL (THIS SPREAD) ST HILDA SEA ADVENTURES, SUE KIE EXPLORES, FRED OLSEN

