

Isle of Staffa, Inner Hebrides, Scotland

A 59-million-year-old volcanic jewel in the Inner Hebrides, Staffa's cathedral-like Fingal's Cave and geometric basalt columns inspired Mendelssohn's Hebrides Overture — and still stop visitors in their tracks today.

Tender only (no pier for large ships)

Typical call: 2-3 hrs ashore

GBP — no facilities on island

English (Scottish Gaelic heritage)

Puffins: May–early August

MY DAY IN PORT

Ship/Date:	Arrive:	All aboard:
Excursion:	Notes:	

GETTING ASHORE

Docking: Tender / Zodiac from anchor — highly weather-dependent
Best For: Geology, wildlife (puffins), photography, Hebrides scenery

Walk to Fingal's Cave: 250 m from landing jetty along basalt causeway
Don't Miss: Walking into Fingal's Cave mouth; puffin colony on the plateau

Getting around: Rideshare not available

TOP THINGS TO DO

- Fingal's Cave** — Walk the basalt causeway from the jetty to the mouth of this 20-metre-tall sea cave.
- Puffin Colony Walk** — Climb the steep staircase to the grassy plateau, then walk 800 m to the eastern cliffs at Ruanaich.
- Geology & Clamshell Cave** — Just beside the jetty, Clamshell Cave displays warped basalt columns bent into curved, ship-rib shapes — a stark contrast to Fingal's straight...
- Boat Wildlife Spotting** — The crossing to Staffa passes prime waters for harbour porpoises, minke whales, basking sharks, and grey seals.

BEST WALKS

- Jetty to Fingal's Cave & Back** 0.5 km return | 30-45 min | Moderate — From the landing jetty, follow the natural basalt causeway south along the cliff face to the mouth of Fingal's Cave.
- Plateau & Puffin Cliff Loop** ~2 km loop | 1 hr | Moderate — Climb the steep metal staircase from the jetty to the island's grassy top.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Footwear is non-negotiable. Waterproof hiking boots with aggressive grip are essential. The basalt columns are slick with algae and sea spray — smooth-soled shoes are a slip-and-fall waiting to happen.
- Dress for Scottish weather at sea. Layers, a windproof/waterproof jacket, hat and gloves — even in July. Conditions change fast and the boat crossing is fully exposed.
- No toilets on the island. Use facilities on the ship or tour boat before landing. There are also no bins — carry out everything you bring.
- Check the jetty status before you sail. The NTS periodically closes the jetty for works (most recently Sept 2024–June 2025). Confirm landings are open with your cruise line or tour operator.
- Puffins are only here May to early August. Outside that window, the colony has departed — still worth the visit for the cave and columns, but plan accordingly if puffins are your goal.
- Protect your gear from spray. Bring a dry bag or waterproof case for camera and phone. The Zodiac or tender ride can be wet, and sea spray inside the cave entrance is real.

Isle of Staffa, Inner Hebrides, Scotland — Port Map

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Red = walkable sights · Amber = excursions farther out · P = cruise terminal. Numbers match the order you'd typically visit.



1 Fingal's Cave A vast sea cave formed from hexagonal basalt columns, famous for inspiring Mendelssohn's 'Hebrides Overture'.

2 The Colonnade A striking row of hexagonal basalt columns forming natural cliffs along Staffa's southern coast.

P Cruise port / terminal