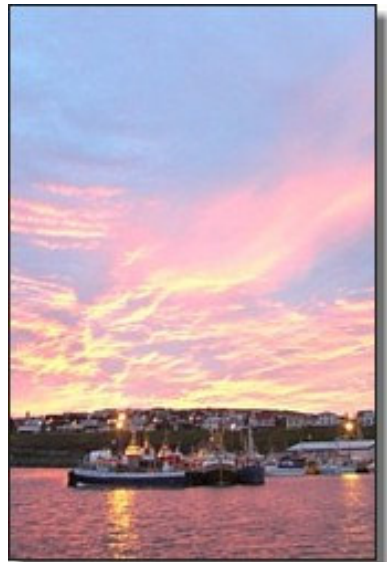


This newsletter has been designed to enable you to get an idea of what kind of experience you will have should you join us on one of our cruises.

Tue 2 Aug | Welcome home Hjalmar Bjorge arrived back home today, travelling straight to her mooring at Corpach on the Caledonian Canal. The vessel had been at sea for 4 weeks, taking two weeks to travel to Isafjordur, NW Iceland, via the Faroes and two weeks to travel back, a journey of 2205 miles. The outward guests were whale-watching and bird-watching enthusiasts whilst the return journey saw divers aboard. Highlights included lots of humpback whales around Iceland and bow-riding killer whale off the Butt of Lewis. The weather was mostly good and none of the guests were sea-sick! The crew are enjoying a couple of days off before setting sail for three back-to-back St Kilda trips starting on Saturday 6 August. Here are three more evocative photos. Left: humpback with the Zodiac inflatable behind. Photo: Alan Lester Middle: Raufarhofn. Right: Husavik sun set. Photos: Jill Bullington



Wed 3 Aug | WHYW WHY? West Highland Yachting Week What Have You?! WHYW or "Tennent's Week" as it is better known is a famous sailing event around Oban, Croabh Haven and Tobermory during the last week of July and first week of August each year. Northern Light Charters has been involved in WHYW for some years with Chalice acting as one of the two Committee Boats this year. Not much time for watching wildlife with all the race management tasks to attend to, but plenty of fun to be had for all involved!

Mon 8 Aug | Fab phalaropes Chalice is on charter this week with Speyside Wildlife, experts in birding holidays. Lucky them, then, to see two grey phalaropes off Muck at the Small Isles. These birds, distinguished by their "panda eyes" are usually seen in the Northern Arctic and are extremely rare visitors to the UK.

Tue 9 Aug | Sea eagle: Red 5 Chalice guests had a number of rewarding sightings today. The sea eagle seen at Canna had the ID "Red 5" on its wing-tags. We've been told this means it is a chick from this year. An otter was seen at Loch Scavaig and a big minke yesterday off Muck. There are rumours of two Orca near Rum so guess the boat is heading now...?

Wed 10 Aug | Kilda Puff Out Qinetiq HQ on Benbecula continue to deny public access to the Puff Inn on Hirta, St Kilda. Reasons that were initially given as "insurance" have mysteriously been repackaged as "security"... surely not taking advantage of people's fears following the London bombings?! Hjalmar Bjorge guests decided to set up an alternative pub, "The Puff Out", on the grass beside the base. Drinks were brought ashore from the boat and the divers and crew were joined by people staying on Hirta for a fun evening although I haven't yet heard whether the divers or the guys from Qinetiq won the al fresco pub quiz... Photo: Tom Maguire



Sat 13 Aug | Hi ho, hi ho... ...it's off to St Kilda we go. Again. Hjalmar Bjorge and Elizabeth G both set off today for St Kilda; the former with a dive charter; the latter with cruise guests. It seems like we have at least one boat out there every week during the summer. Come to think of it, we DO have at least one boat out there every week during the summer!!!

Tue 16 Aug | Who Kilda..atmosphere? That would be Qinetiq. Still refusing public access to the Puff Inn the island of Hirta feels like a very different, and somewhat unwelcoming, place these days. Guests aboard Hjalmar Bjorge opted not to even bother going ashore this time. That's a shame for them and a shame for the coffers of the National Trust for Scotland. Charter boat guests spend a lot of money in the shop but not this time. Why, we wonder, if guests aren't allowed on Qinetiq premises, are they encouraged into the shop to spend their hard earned cash? After all these two premises are located within the same building!

Mon 22 Aug | It's wild out there Guests on Elizabeth G, following behind Hjalmar Bjorge today, might have wished they were keeping pace in order to more quickly escape the wild weather as they crossed back from St Kilda. However, they, and not their faster moving companions, were rewarded by an encounter with three killer whales plus a sighting of an unusual ocean sunfish. Guest on both boats also saw "loads" of dolphins before they made their way to the shelter of East Loch Tarbert.

On Saturday Hjalmar Bjorge and Elizabeth G welcomed a full complement of guests aboard in beautiful sunny weather. Even Cameron waving his dire weather forecast around could not put a dampener on high spirits but how right he turned out to be! Both vessels shot out to St Kilda and guests got to walk on Hirta before they headed back to the Outer Hebrides earlier today. Seas were undeniably lumpy and due to get worse before they get better. Imagine...bad weather in Scotland in August. Unthinkable...

Fri 26 Aug | Excitement ends A wild week ended today for the intrepid guests who had booked into a Western Isles Odyssey; Elizabeth G and Hjalmar Bjorge had planned to follow the same itinerary. Unfortunately the storm force winds which whipped up during the week meant some destinations, such as the Flannan Islands, were impossible targets. However they all managed to get to St Kilda and the Shiant Islands, as well as some Inner Hebridean islands, which was pretty impressive considering the conditions.