

ISLAND DAYS,

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Frequently found travelling the island on two wheels, Orkney-based **Mark Ferguson** finds the archipelago's unpolluted skies and ever-shifting light an infinite muse

Sunlight sensation:

The light catches the headland at Windwick Bay with the Clett of Crura in the distance.



When you think of Orkney, what do you see? Is it the weathered cliff-faces that break the angry seas? The wartime relics that have shaped the island's history? Or the Neolithic stone circles that have borne witness to centuries of life? For Mark Ferguson, a professional landscape photographer who has lived on the archipelago for 23 years, it is the island's unpolluted skies and ever-shifting light patterns that render this remote corner of the world unique.

'Because of my background in meteorology and air traffic, I have always been fascinated with light and the sky,' begins Mark, who now works in a bike shop in Kirkwall and finds it more inspiring to travel through the landscape on two wheels than on four.

'I try to take pictures with different skies, looking at star trails or the aurora borealis, or a stormy sky or a sunset. For that reason I tend to go out at odd times of the day. You won't find me going out in the middle of the day in the summer. I'll go out in the middle of the night, or when it's snowing and blowing a gale. That's when you get the best pictures.'

Of course, no great Scottish adventure would

be complete without the requisite flask of tea, which Mark assures me is the key to survival when embarking on a five-hour round-trip of the island's much-loved heritage sites, cliffs, or his personal favourite – Warebeth Beach near Stromness, where the green seaweeds contrast beautifully with red sandstone rocks against the backdrop of Hoy.

Though Mark's first love will always be Orkney, he is beginning to shift his attention to mainland Scotland, more specifically to Caithness, Wester Ross and Sutherland. One of his favourite moments in the Highlands came when a surprise weather front blew in over the Duncansby Stacks. 'I went out there in the autumn to take some pictures of the sea stacks, and then all of a sudden this glorious rainbow appeared right over them. Things like that make you think, "That was just meant to happen".'

'I know there are some great places to photograph across the world, like Iceland and Norway, but because I've got no connections with these places it feels different. Whereas in Scotland, it's a place I've lived all my life and I've cycled loads of times through the Highlands – it's a place I'm connected with. I don't think I would go anywhere else to take pictures.'

Above: Star trails over the Ring of Brodgar. **Right:** Rainbow over Duncansby Stacks.



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Clockwise from top left: Panorama of Harray with hills of Hoy behind, taken from Lyde Road; interior of the Italian Chapel on the tiny island of Lamb Holm; this 1950s Bedford bus lies abandoned near Lyness on the Island of Hoy; Noup Head Lighthouse on the island of Westray.





FIELD FACTS

To view more of Mark's work, please visit his website at www.markfergusonphotography.co.uk or follow him @wildscotlandphoto on Instagram.



Top: Mark couldn't resist the opportunity to capture the contrasting colours at Warebeth, one of his favourite locations in Orkney. **Above:** The Yesnaby cliffs take a pounding from the sea.