

Take the Maid of the Forth to Inchcolm this summer

As we are travelling out from the Hawes Pier skipper Duncan takes a little time to explain that the boat will call at Inchcolm Island, where there is not only an Abbey but also a visitor centre, and let some passengers off.

He also explains that there are two people employed by Historic Environment Scotland who live on the island for the summer. There is no internet there apparently, but they have regular visitors when the boat calls several times a day, and they also get a day off each week to go and do their shopping.



Christopher Barron, Captain Duncan MacRae and Andrew Reid of Maid of the Forth

Duncan MacRae is captain of [Maid of the Forth](#) which is a family business that he runs with his father-in-law and brother-in-law. He is accompanied on today's trip to Inchcolm by Christopher and Andrew, but the surprise was that another member of the team who was on a day off had come along with a friend to explore Inchcolm. On the way to the island you will be able to wave at the grey seals, guillemots, razorbills and

sometimes the odd puffin or Minke whale.

There are two different trips to Inchcolm. One is a ninety minute sightseeing cruise round the island which returns to the Hawes Pier passing under all three bridges. The second trip offers the option to get off and walk round the island for a further ninety minutes. There is shelter as most of the abbey is actually covered and there is a small visitor centre which is heated, so visitors can get out of the weather. It was a grey day when I travelled out on the boat, but it is easy to keep cosy inside.

Other sailings at weekends and evenings involve [jazz bands](#), folk bands, discos and an optional BBQ ribeye steak supper. You can also [charter](#) the boat for private events.

[Maid of the Forth](#) also operate Seafari Adventures from the Scottish Seabird Centre at North Berwick where they run fast ribs and a 55 passenger catamaran called Seafari Explorer round the Bass Rock or to the Isle of May where passengers can get off and go exploring too.



The company runs a ferry across the Forth to Anstruther from North Berwick with their catamaran and they welcome cyclists who perhaps want to travel one way on the boat and then cycle

home.

It's easy to get to the Hawes Pier to get on the [Maid of the Forth](#). You can take [Lothian Buses](#) service 43 from St Andrew Square either to Dalmeny Station or to the other end of South Queensferry and then take a brief stroll to the pier, or you can take the [train](#) to Dalmeny and walk down the steps to the Hawes, or indeed (as I did) you can cycle out from Edinburgh.

The route to take is either the [National Cycle Network 76](#) which goes through Dalmeny Estate or simply follow the cycle route along the north side of the A90.

The boat trips run from Easter to October. Check the [timetable](#) for the boat times which become more frequent in the summer.

We leave the final word with Duncan. He said : "It is my 22nd year doing this, and I just love it."

You might like it too. You have to be mobile enough to get on the boat using the short gangway, but then there are seats inside or upstairs on the upper deck you can get the sun or take the sea air. Again when you get to Inchcolm you will have to be mobile enough to walk up the path to the Abbey.

And if you make it to the Abbey could you perhaps share your photos with us? Either email them for publication in our newspaper or share them on [Facebook here.](#)

