



**Their sturdy rather than comfortable *Elizabeth G* is an old Norwegian rescue vessel captained by Rob Barlow that sleeps a dozen guests.**



itineraries on the waters of the Firth of Clyde, with the short cruising distances allowing plenty of shore stops. Our cruise circled around the fertile, scenic isles of Arran, Bute and Cumbrae, before rounding Ailsa Craig, a dramatic rock stac laden with seabirds that lies halfway between Scotland's largest city of Glasgow and Belfast in Northern Ireland.

Pushing further afield Argyll Cruises skipper Iain Duncan (an ex-Majestic Line man) is offering trips around the Inner and Outer Hebrides, as well as out to St

Kilda. Their adventures come themed around the likes of wildlife or villages and gardens. The small size of this vessel makes her an attractive charter option if you have a family group. As a family-run operation they understand the needs of families too and can tailor menus towards dietary preferences and itineraries.

All of the vessels I've been on offer superb local produce and a warm Scottish welcome, but the *Hebridean Princess* takes things to another level completely. This former ferry is more a grand floating country house hotel than a ship, with a level of luxury fit for royalty, perhaps why the British Royal Family charter her for their Hebridean escapes. For them she plays the role the former Royal Yacht *Britannia* used to. You literally get the chance to see what it is like to be a cruising royal.

**Above:** The *Elizabeth G* is a converted Norwegian rescue vessel captained by Rob Barlow.



Their Columba Restaurant is one of the finest restaurants I've come across on any ship. Superb wines are accompanied by boat fresh local lobster, lamb from the Scottish Borders and the best of Scotch beef. After the decadent lunches and dinners the Tیره Lounge awaits with its champagne and premium single malt whiskies, best enjoyed with another lingering Hebridean sunset. Or to accompany a ceilidh. On my last cruise with them this raucous traditional celebration erupted across the lounge much to the delight of the international guests who had never done any Scottish dancing before.

Quality is key with the *Hebridean Princess* even with the shore landings.