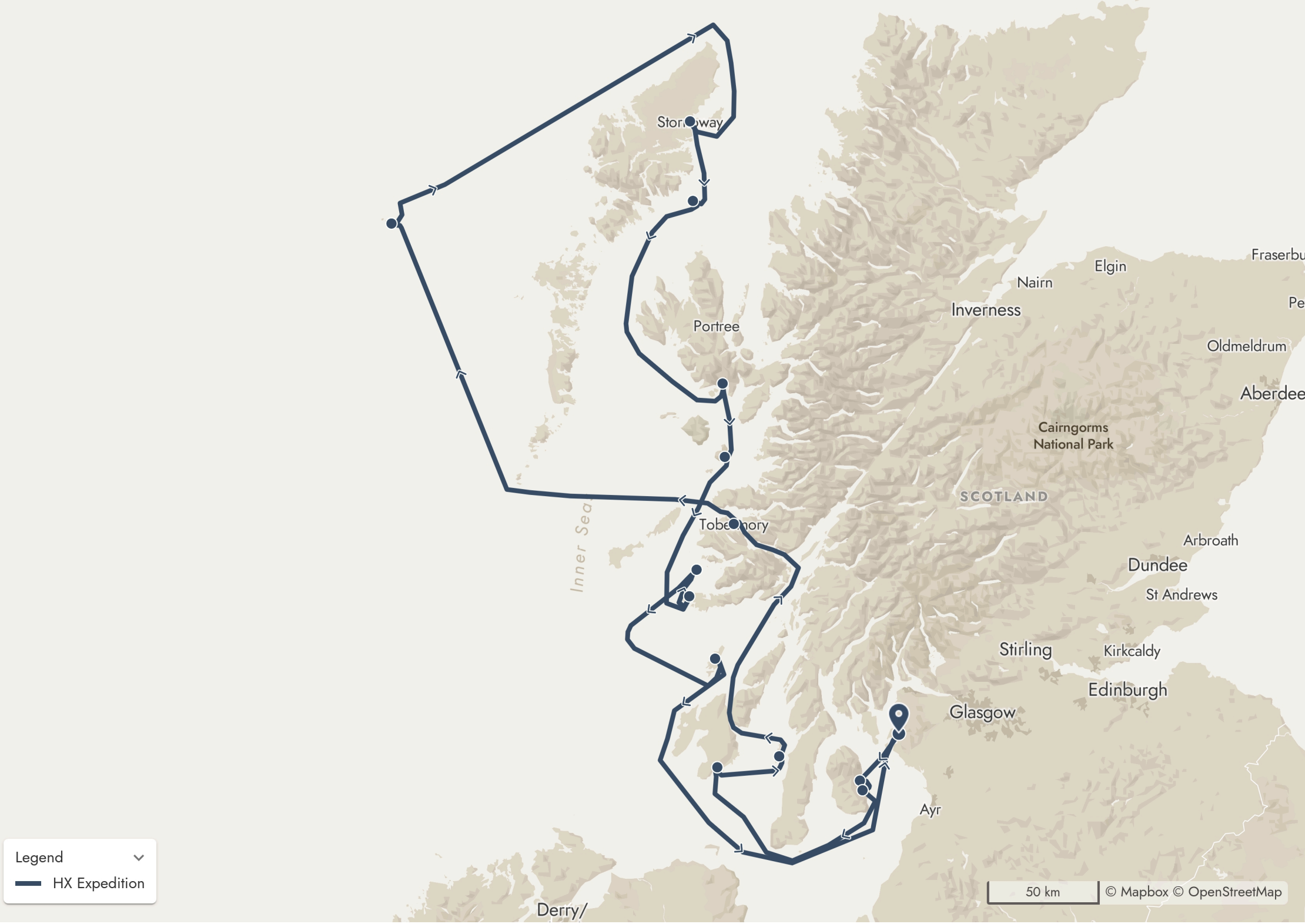




MS Spitsbergen

2025.04.18 - 2025.04.28



Day 1 - Embarkation in Fairlie

Our journey through the British Isles began in true Scottish fashion—with rain, wind, and the unmistakable sound of bagpipes. We boarded MS Spitsbergen in the afternoon at the port of Fairlie, near Glasgow, and began to settle into our new home for the days ahead. After exploring the ship and finding our cabins, we collected our bright blue expedition jackets and started to get a feel for life on board. The mood was one of quiet excitement as we prepared to cast off.

As Spitsbergen pulled away from the pier, a group of pipers played a stirring farewell tune from shore, their music echoing across the harbour despite the drizzle. The wind tugged at our jackets, but spirits were high. With rain falling and the bagpipes fading into the distance, we set off—ready to explore the history, nature, and charm of the British Isles, one island at a time.





Largs

Fairlie

Fairlie

Millport

Kilwinning

Irvine

Kilm...

Prestwick

Ayr

Firth of
Clyde

Brodick, Isle of Arran

Lamlash, Isle of Arran

Legend

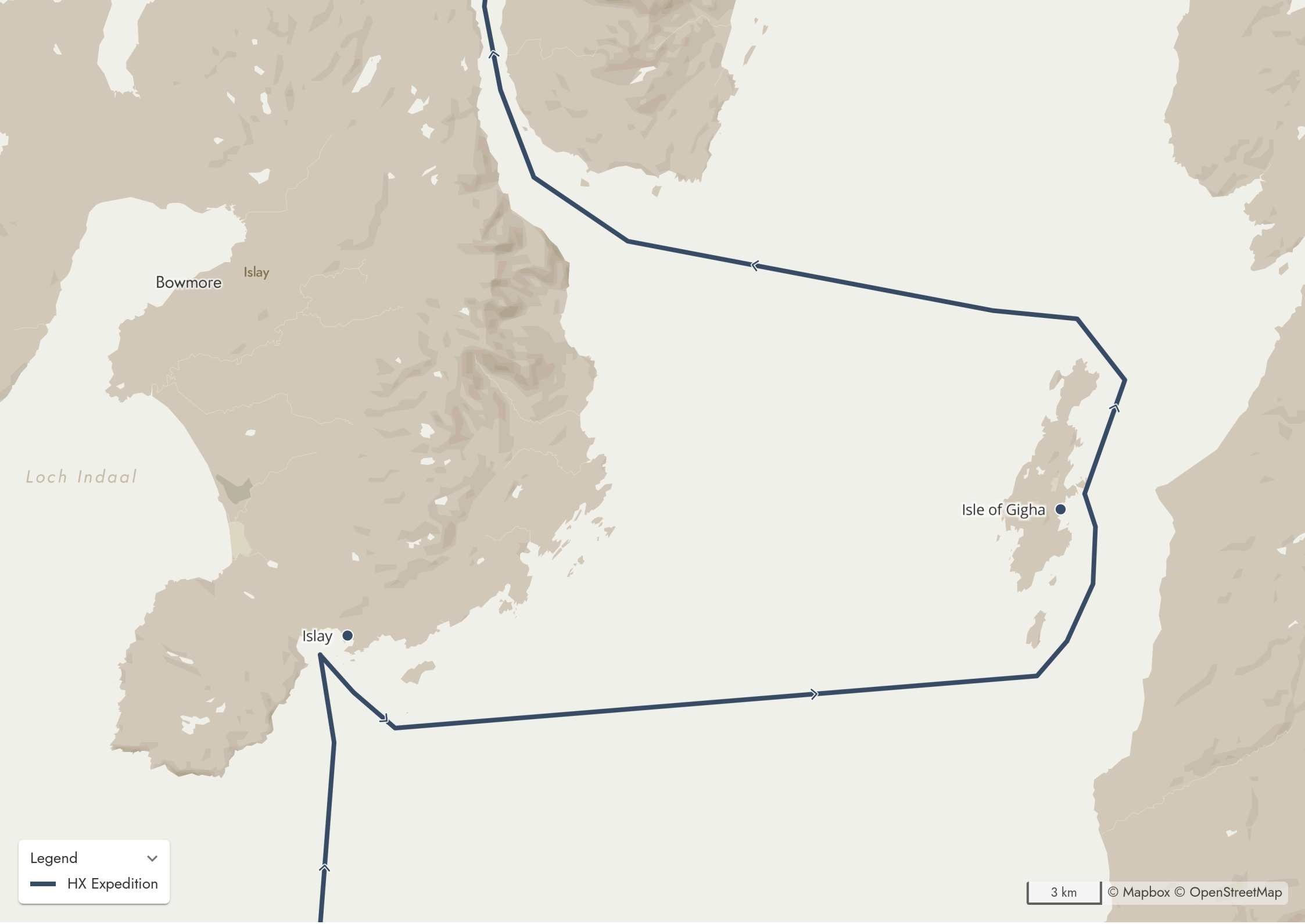
— HX Expedition

Day 2 - Isle of Arran

Our second day brought us to the Isle of Arran, often called “Scotland in miniature” for its blend of coastal charm and rugged highlands. We arrived in the morning to find the weather living up to expectations—windswept and wild. The swell made our original landing site at Brodict inaccessible, so we adjusted course and anchored further south off Lamlash. With conditions still unsettled, the morning was spent onboard with our first programme sessions. We gathered for an introduction to the Science Centre and learned more about the optional hikes and kayak excursions available later in the voyage.

Patience paid off. By the afternoon, the winds had eased just enough to allow us to go ashore, and we finally landed for our visit to Brodict Castle. Nestled among woodlands with views across the bay, the castle and its grounds offered a chance to stretch our legs and soak in the atmosphere of one of Arran’s most iconic sites. Back on board in the evening, we joined the Captain’s Welcome in the Explorer Bar—raising a glass together to celebrate the beginning of our adventure, and a successful landing despite the moody Scottish weather.





Bowmore Islay

Loch Indaal

Isle of Gigha

Islay

Legend
HX Expedition

3 km

© Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

● Lamlash, Isle of Arran, United Kingdom - Apr 19, 2025

● Islay, United Kingdom - Apr 20, 2025

Day 3 - Islay

We arrived this morning in Port Ellen on the Isle of Islay, a place famous for its bold whiskies, dramatic coastal scenery, and rich cultural heritage. The skies were slightly overcast, and there was a bit of swell offshore, but that didn't stop us from getting ashore and making the most of our day.

Once on land, we split off into different adventures. Most of us joined local guides for heritage walks through town, uncovering Islay's stories and its deep connection to the sea. Others made their way to

the nearby Lagavulin distillery for a tour—and, naturally, a tasting of one of the island's most iconic single malts.

For those craving a bit of fresh air, the Expedition Team led a coastal hike to Carraig Fhada lighthouse. The route offered sweeping views and a chance to take in the island's wild beauty up close. Later, back on board Spitsbergen, we continued our learning and creativity with a photo composition workshop, an open microscope session in the Science Centre, and a Tiny Talk dedicated to—what else?— whisky.



Day 4 - Isle of Gigha

Today we visited the Isle of Gigha, a small island with a big sense of charm, known for its gentle landscapes and the peaceful beauty of Achamore Gardens. The weather reminded us we were still in Scotland—showers came and went through the day, but by afternoon, the skies began to open and let a bit of sunshine through.

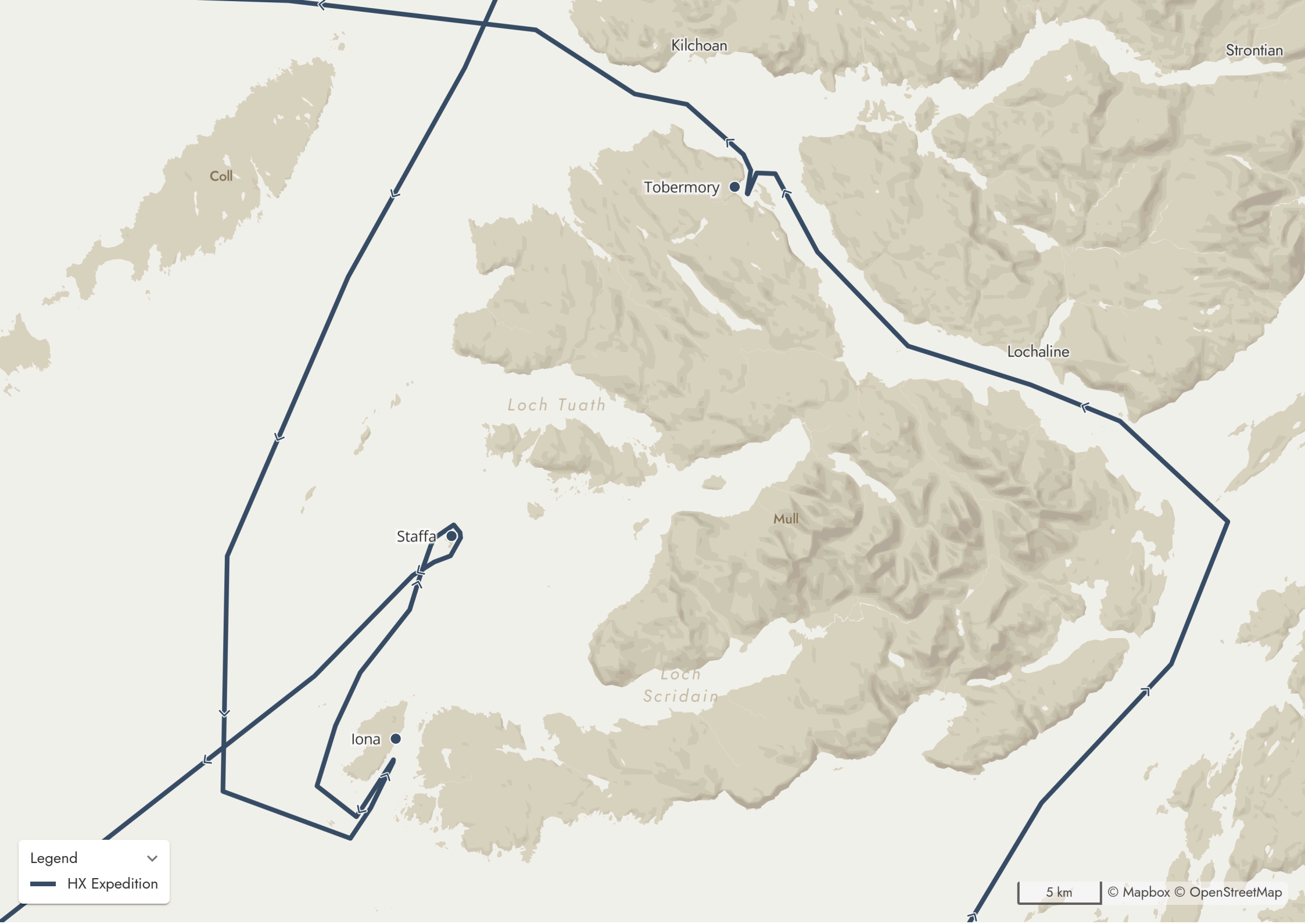
We spent the day exploring at our own pace. Many of us wandered through the winding paths of Achamore Gardens, admiring the colourful blooms, exotic plants, and the elegant presence of the old house nestled among the greenery. The fresh scent of rain mixed with

the garden's flowers added to the experience, giving the island an almost storybook atmosphere.

Beyond the gardens, a group of guests set out on a longer hike to the southern end of the island. The walk offered beautiful coastal views, rolling hills, and the chance to enjoy Gigha's peaceful atmosphere from a different perspective.

As the weather cleared, the island seemed to stretch out even wider before us—lush, calm, and welcoming.





Kilchoan

Strontian

Coll

Tobermory

Lochaline

Loch Tuath

Mull

Loch
Scridain

Staffa

Iona

Legend

HX Expedition

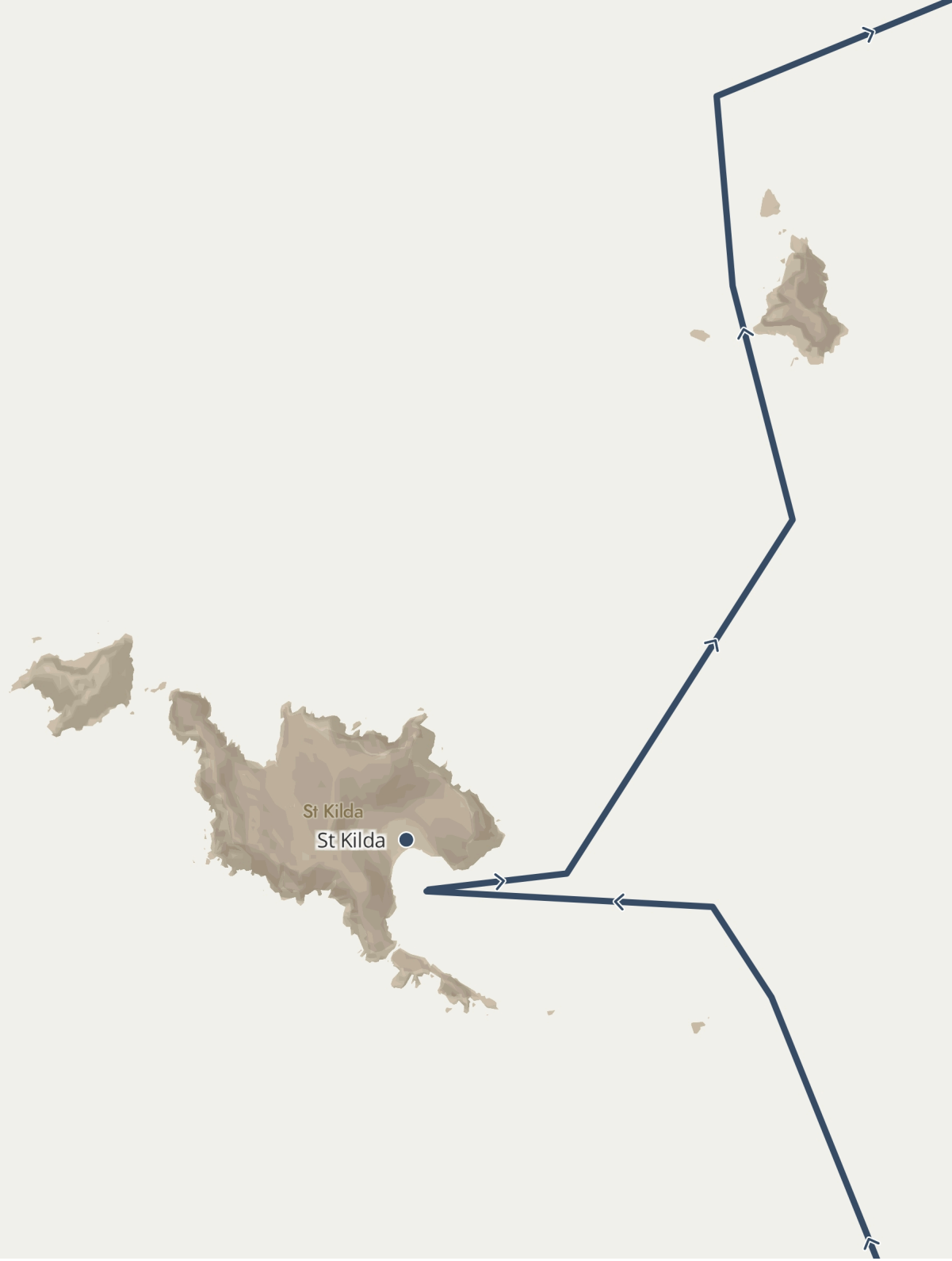
Day 5 - Tobermory, Isle of Mull

We arrived early this morning in Tobermory, one of the most picturesque towns in the Inner Hebrides, with its row of brightly painted buildings lining the waterfront. The weather was on our side, with clear skies and sunshine from the start—perfect for a day of exploration. Most of us joined a local guide for a walking tour through the town, learning about its history, charm, and deep connections to the sea. Others ventured out to visit Duart Castle, a proud stronghold perched dramatically on the coast, steeped in the tales of Scotland's clan past.

Thanks to calm winds and ideal conditions, we were also able to send

a group of kayakers out on the water in the morning—a fantastic way to experience the scenery from sea level. Later in the afternoon, another group set off on a guided hike, while many guests made their way to the Tobermory Lighthouse, enjoying the walk and the stunning views along the way. The day ended on a high note with a very special visit from the Mull Gaelic Choir. They came aboard Spitsbergen in the evening and shared a beautiful, heartfelt performance that resonated with everyone on board. As we sailed away, the music lingered in our minds—a perfect farewell to a place rich in culture, nature, and island spirit.





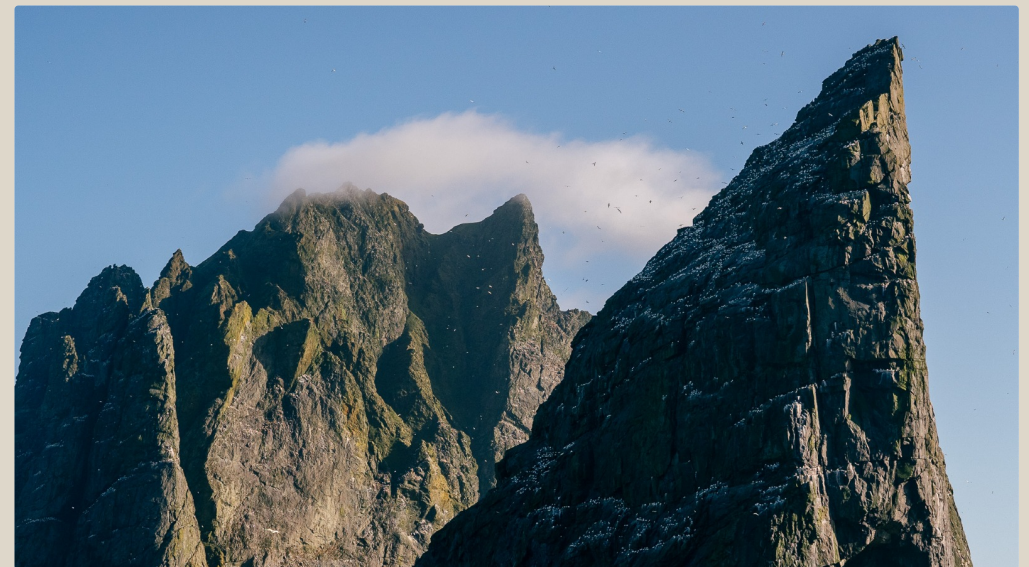
Legend

— HX Expedition

Day 6 - St Kilda

Today, we reached one of the most remote and extraordinary destinations in the British Isles: the St Kilda archipelago. With clear skies and calm seas, we arrived early in the morning—Spitsbergen becoming the first ship of the season to anchor off the island. We welcomed local ranger Sue aboard to greet us and give a briefing on this World Heritage Site, rich in natural beauty and cultural history. Then, we stepped ashore to explore the hauntingly beautiful Old Village of Hirta, where stone houses and storage cleits stand as a powerful reminder of the island's once-thriving community. Throughout the day, we experienced St Kilda in many ways. Some of

us took part in guided walks focused on the island's unique history, its dramatic birdlife, or the striking photographic opportunities around every corner. Others hiked to some of the island's highest viewpoints, where breathtaking panoramas of sea cliffs and open ocean awaited. As we departed in the evening, Spitsbergen sailed slowly through the towering sea stacks—Stac an Armin and Stac Lee—where thousands of seabirds soared around us, filling the sky and surrounding cliffs with life and sound. It was a day none of us will forget—remote, wild, and deeply moving.





Newmarket

Stornoway

Hebrides

West Loch
Tarbert

Harris

Tarbert

East Loch
Tarbert

Shiant Isles

Legend



— HX Expedition

5 km

© Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

Day 7 - Stornoway

We arrived in Stornoway early this morning, docking smoothly alongside in bright, sunny weather—a rare and welcome treat in the Outer Hebrides. With calm waters and clear skies, the day was perfect for exploring both the town and the landscapes beyond. Many of us enjoyed a leisurely walk to Lews Castle, taking time to wander through its grounds and visit the museum that shares the rich cultural history of the island. Others set off on a tour of the Blackhouse Village, where traditional stone homes and thatched roofs

offered a glimpse into Hebridean life from centuries past. For those looking for a bit more adventure, a guided hike to the Cnoc Na Croich Viewpoint provided sweeping views across the town and the surrounding coast. With plenty of time in port, we also had the chance to stroll the streets of Stornoway, sampling local shops, cafes, and the easy-going atmosphere that defines life on the Isle of Lewis.



Day 7 - Shiant Isles (PM)

After our departure, we made our way toward the Shiant Isles for a scenic ship cruise. From the decks of Spitsbergen, we watched puffins, guillemots, and even sea eagles soaring above the dramatic

cliffs and rocky outcrops. As the sun set over calm waters, painting the sky in soft golds and pinks, it was the perfect ending to another unforgettable day.







Loch Scavaig

Elgol

Loch Eishort

*Sound
of Sleat*

Mallaig

Morar

Loch Morar

Arisaig

Isle of Eigg

Rùm National
Nature Reserve

The Small Isles
National Scenic Area

Legend
HX Expedition

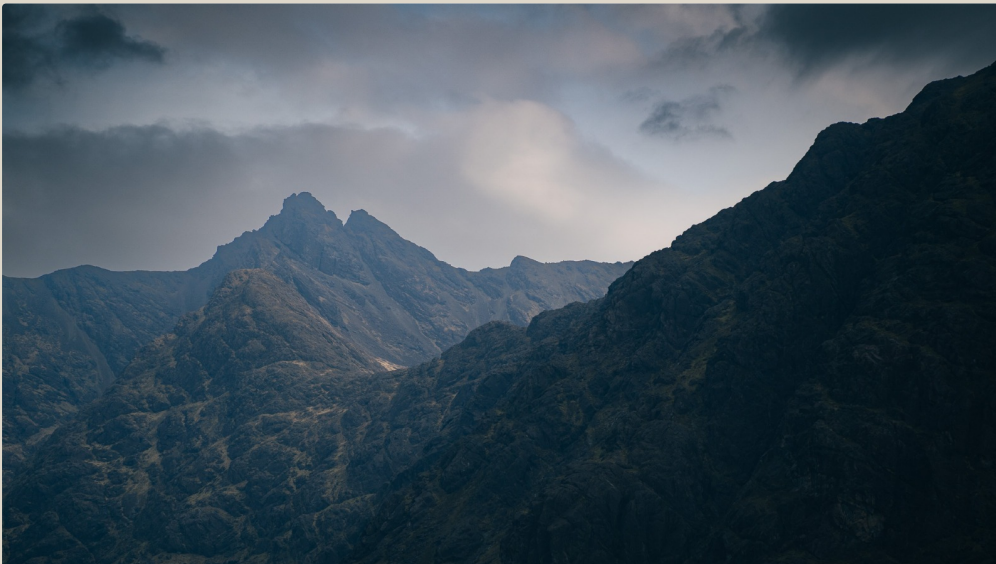
5 km

© Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

Day 8 - Loch Scavaig

Today we found ourselves in the remote and rugged beauty of Loch Scavaig on the Isle of Skye. Overcast skies greeted us as we arrived, adding to the dramatic atmosphere of this wild and peaceful corner of Scotland. After landing, we set out to explore Loch Coruisk - a stunning freshwater loch surrounded by jagged peaks and rocky shores. Some of us took on the full hiking loop around the loch—an

8-kilometre trek that offered breathtaking views at every turn. Others opted for a more relaxed pace, joining a small boat cruise through the surrounding waters, where we spotted seals lounging on the rocks, undisturbed by our presence.



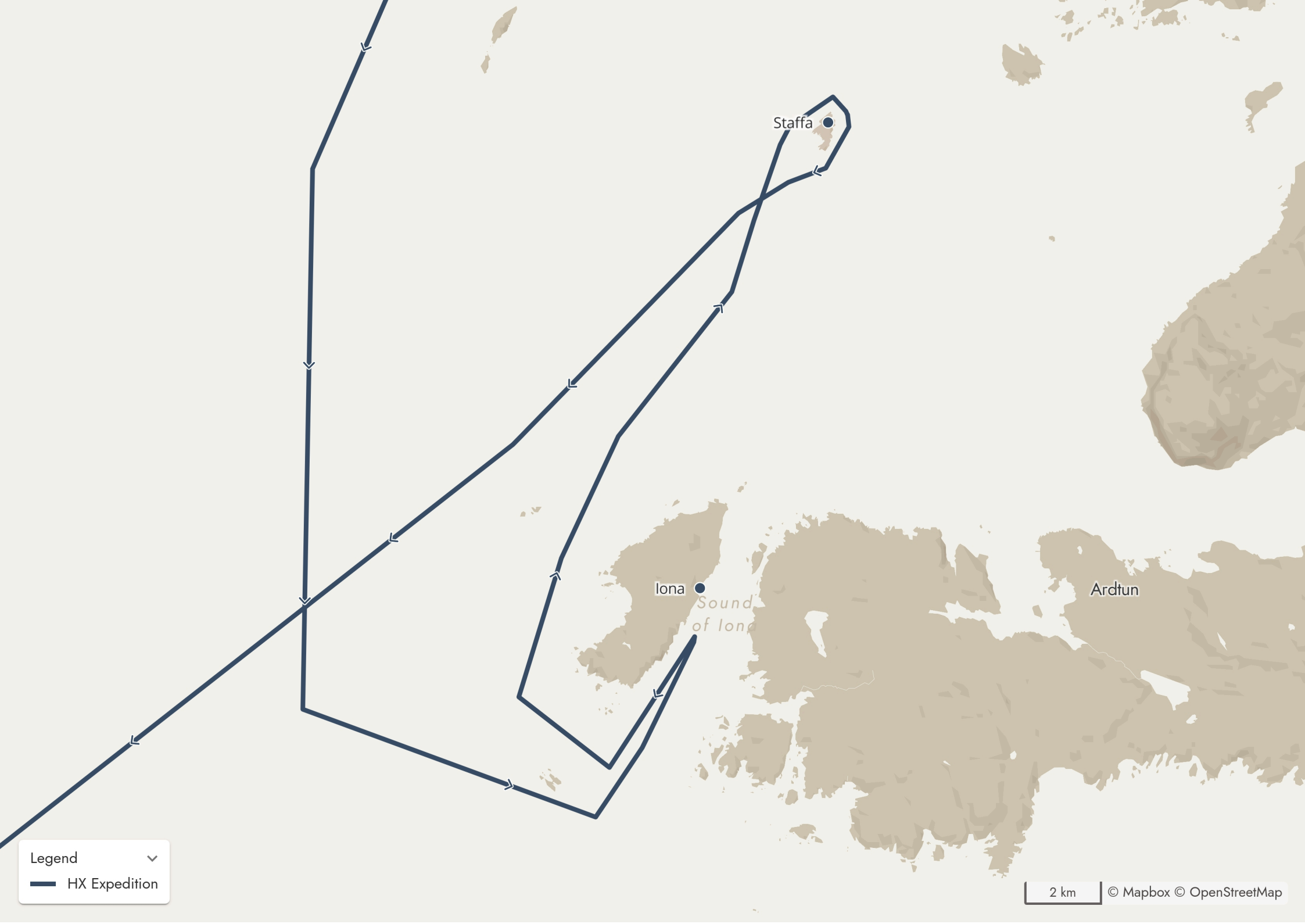
Day 8 - Isle of Eigg (PM)

After a refreshing morning of exploration, we returned to Spitsbergen for lunch as the ship repositioned toward our afternoon destination: the Isle of Eigg.

In the soft afternoon light, we came ashore for a few hours to stretch

our legs and wander through the calm, welcoming landscapes of Eigg. With its laid-back atmosphere, quiet trails, and scenic views, Eigg was the perfect way to round off a day filled with wild landscapes, fresh air, and simple moments of discovery.





Legend

— HX Expedition

Day 9 - Iona

We arrived in the morning to the peaceful shores of Iona, approaching the island by zodiac under calm skies. Landing here felt like stepping into another time.

We spent the morning walking through the island's quiet lanes and historic grounds, with the Iona Abbey standing as a powerful

centrepiece of this sacred place. Along the way, we passed the weathered beauty of MacLean's Cross and soaked in the peaceful atmosphere that seems to linger in every stone and shoreline. It was a slow-paced, reflective morning—one where history and nature blended seamlessly together.

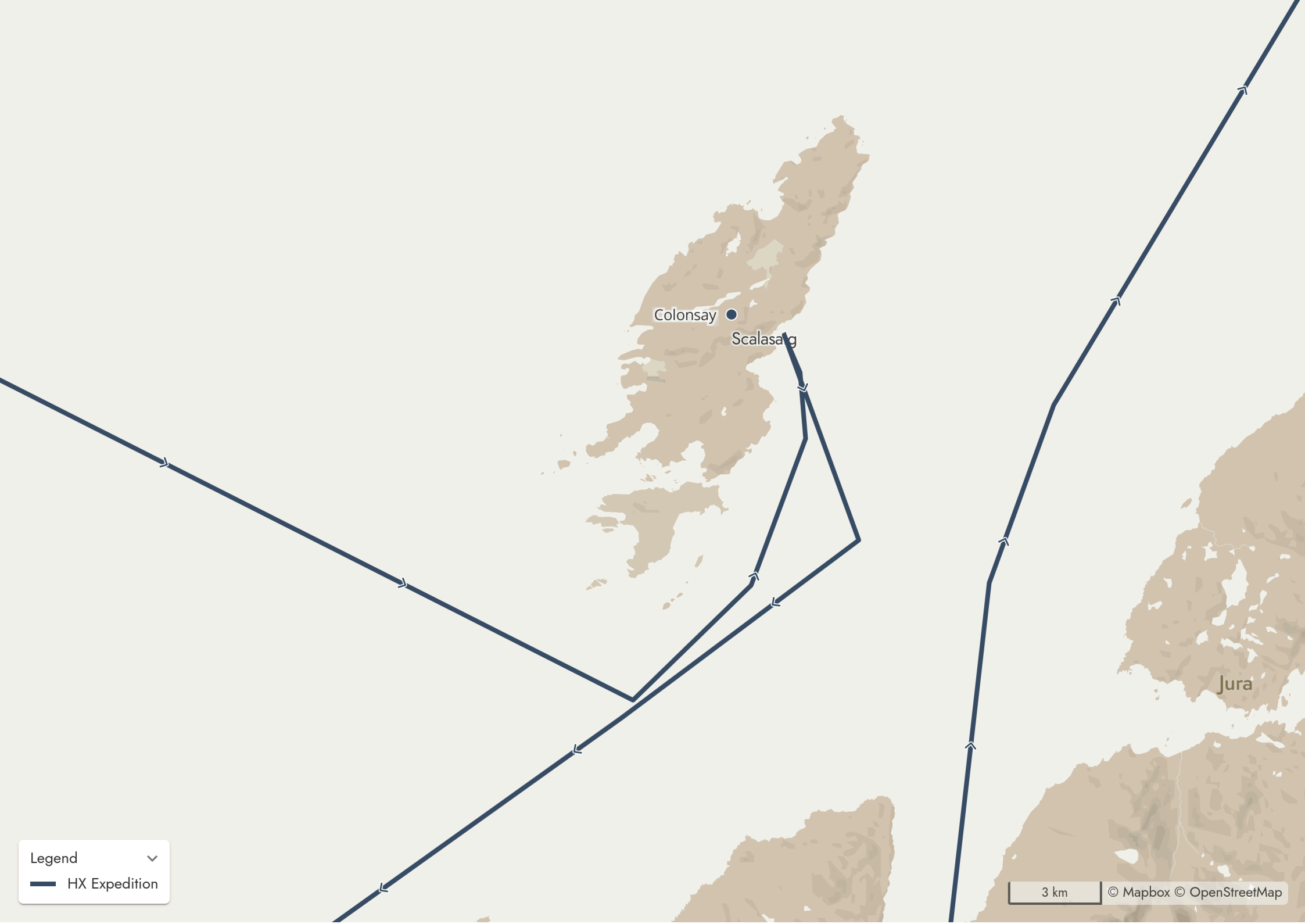


Day 9 - Staffa (PM)

In the afternoon, the adventure continued as we made our way to the tiny island of Staffa. After carefully finding the right spot to anchor, we set out by zodiac to ride the rolling waves—adding a dash of excitement to the outing. The sight of Fingal's Cave, with its dramatic basalt columns and the crashing sea, was every bit as awe-inspiring as it had been for composer Felix Mendelssohn centuries ago.

As if the scenery wasn't enough, the island's famous puffins made their appearance, charming us as they went about their nesting routines among the cliffs. With wild seas, soaring birds, and unforgettable landscapes, the day gave us a taste of both the serenity and the adventure the Hebrides have to offer.





Colonsay

Scalasaig

Jura

Legend



— HX Expedition

3 km

© Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

Day 10 - Colonsay

Our final day of exploration took us to the Isle of Colonsay, a quiet and beautiful corner of the Inner Hebrides. We landed near Scalasaig and set out to enjoy the island's peaceful charm, even as occasional showers reminded us that we were still very much in Scottish springtime.

Many of us wandered through the lovely gardens nearby, where a surprising variety of plants thrive thanks to the island's mild climate.

Others chose a more adventurous path, joining a longer hike across the hills to reach the gardens, rewarded along the way with sweeping views and the rugged beauty that defines these islands.

The rain came and went in true Hebridean fashion, never staying long enough to dampen the spirit of the day. It felt like a fitting goodbye to the British Isles—wild, green, and full of quiet magic.





Day 11 - Disembark in Fairlie

This morning we returned to Fairlie, near Glasgow, where our journey through the British Isles first began. Under soft skies and a gentle breeze, we said goodbye to MS Spitsbergen, our floating home for this unforgettable voyage.

Over the past days, we have walked through ancient villages, explored dramatic coastlines, stood among seabirds and castles, and felt the spirit of islands shaped by wind, waves, and time. From the

peaceful gardens of Gigha to the wild cliffs of St Kilda, every landing offered its own story, each one adding a new chapter to the adventure.

As we disembarked and went our separate ways, we carried with us not just photographs, but memories of the landscapes, the history, the wildlife—and perhaps most importantly, the sense of connection that comes from exploring these remarkable places together.



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