Could you live on a remote island?

Level 2 • Upper intermediate

1 Warmer
a. Write ten words to describe a small remote island and things you would expect to find there.
b. Compare your words. Then, scan the article to see how many of your words fit with the type of remote islands described there.

2 Find the information
Find the following information in the article.
1. the name of two islands off the coast of Wales
2. the name of an island off the coast of Scotland
3. the name of an island off the coast of England
4. a word that describes people who love islands
5. the names of four kinds of seabirds
6. the collective noun for a group of birds

3 Key words
Match the key words with the definitions. Then, find them in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>warden</th>
<th>appeal</th>
<th>self-sufficient</th>
<th>tyranny</th>
<th>isolated</th>
<th>acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. units for measuring the surface area of land; each unit is equal to 4,047 square metres</td>
<td>(para 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. someone whose job is to be responsible for a particular place and who checks that rules are obeyed</td>
<td>(para 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. the power that something has to control people’s lives and the way that they behave</td>
<td>(para 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. a long way from other places and often difficult to get to</td>
<td>(para 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. a quality that something has that makes people like it or want it</td>
<td>(para 6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. able to do everything that you need to by yourself, without help from other people</td>
<td>(para 6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>tour reps</th>
<th>appreciate</th>
<th>soothing</th>
<th>degrading</th>
<th>day trippers</th>
<th>cosy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. warm and comfortable and making you feel relaxed</td>
<td>(para 6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. making you feel calmer and more relaxed</td>
<td>(para 7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. people who make a journey for pleasure in which they go to a place and come back on the same day</td>
<td>(para 9)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. people whose job it is to look after people when they are on holiday</td>
<td>(para 11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Something that is causes you to have less respect for a particular situation.</td>
<td>(para 17)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. be grateful for something and recognize that it has good qualities</td>
<td>(para 18)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Could you live on a remote island?

Level 2 • Upper intermediate

**Extreme conditions, loud birds and fresh food by boat – could you live on a remote island?**
Patrick Barkham
20 April, 2019

1. After supper, while Eddie Stubbings was washing up, huge flocks of puffins would come flying past his kitchen window. Later, when the sun had finally set, the Skomer night filled with the strange cry of 350,000 pairs of manx shearwaters, which fly across the small island.

2. “Living on the island was absolutely amazing,” says Stubbings, 40. With his partner, Bee Bueche, 41, he has completed six years working on Skomer, 720 acres of seabird-populated rocks off the coast of Wales.

3. Whenever there is a job advertisement for warden of a small island, hundreds of islophiles apply. Most of them are hoping to escape the tyranny of modern life. It wasn’t always this way: in the past, many of the 6,200 small islands that make up the British archipelago were like prisons. Their isolated residents eventually chose to live on the mainland, which offered more comfort, companionship and opportunities.

4. Now people want more contact with nature, and there is a new use for small islands – as sanctuaries for rare seabirds. And so wildlife wardens are living on these formerly “empty” islands.

5. Stubbings and Bueche left Skomer at the end of 2018, and they are now working on Islay, off the coast of Scotland.

6. The appeal of a small island, Bueche says, is not just being closer to nature – it is being self-sufficient. “Everything that breaks you have to fix yourself,” she says. “It’s challenging and exciting – you have to look after yourself, use your brain and imagination. Even not being cosy is great – you wake up and feel the cold and chop wood and put the woodburner on. It makes me feel really alive.”

7. Like most people overseeing the wildlife of small islands, Stubbings and Bueche love birds. Skomer was “absolutely incredible” for them. Stubbings says: thousands of guillemots, razorbills, puffins and, most of all, the noisy, nocturnal shearwaters. Many people find it difficult to sleep in this noise; Stubbings and Bueche found it soothing.

8. Many people who apply for jobs on Skomer want to be alone, Stubbings says. “You have to tell them that’s really not what you’re going to find. There’s a lot of hustle and bustle”, he says. “You never get five minutes to yourself. People come and knock on your door asking questions at 8pm, 9pm, 10pm.”

9. Their working day as Skomer wardens began with a phone call to the boatman to see if the weather will allow boats to run. Skomer receives 250 day trippers during the main bird-breeding months of May and June and can take 16 overnight guests. As well as birds and seals to count, there are beds to make, staff and volunteers to organize and visitors, such as international ecologists, to support. “People probably want to hear we’re wild and remote and cut off from the world,” Stubbings says. “The truth is, these days, you’re not. Everyone has got the internet and mobile phones in their pockets, and there are plenty of people on the island.”

10. Stubbings and Bueche’s neighbours on nearby Skokholm, Richard Brown, 38, and Giselle Eagle, 34, have a slightly quieter life: they only have 90,000 pairs of manx shearwaters to monitor and only two boats a week, bringing 20 paying guests to the island.

11. Brown and Eagle live in a lighthouse, surrounded by puffins. “We’re a bit like tour reps,” Brown says. “When people first think about living on an island, they think of an isolated way of life. But I imagine we meet more people during the year than most people on the mainland.”

12. They receive a fresh-food delivery by boat once a month. “There’s no reason not to eat well on an island. We have a lot of root vegetables,” Brown says. “We’ve got loads of tinned and dried food if our delivery doesn’t happen,” Eagle laughs.

13. It sounds simple, but Brown says it is much more luxurious than when he began. “When I moved to the island, we still had gas lights and no hot water unless you boiled it. These days, we’ve got solar power and solar hot water and a 4G signal.”

14. Dean Woodfin Jones is the warden of Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel, off the coast of England. “Everything we do is dictated by the weather – Mother Nature is truly in charge here,” he says.

15. Lundy, 1,100-acres of rock, has 29 residents who are employed to protect the island. As Stubbings says, “If you can’t cope with being part of a
Could you live on a remote island?

Level 2 • Upper intermediate

small-island community, you’re going to explode because you’re on a small island with a small group of people.”

Small talk is very important on small islands, Woodfin Jones explains. “We’re quite social and like having a drink in the sunshine or going snorkelling together. There are always little arguments between people, but they work themselves out most of the time.”

The role of small islands as sanctuaries for endangered wildlife seems completely positive, but not everyone agrees. Tourism, one islander said, was degrading. “If you don’t have development, what have you got – a museum?”

“Life on a small island is not for everyone,” Bueche says. “If you wanted a family, it would be difficult, but we decided this life is for us, and we’re not going to have a family.” She finds she appreciates the comforts of the mainland more now. “A hot shower! Central heating! A comfy bed! If you want a cucumber, you can go to the shop and get it. When you live on the mainland, you don’t get any joy from buying a cucumber. After being on an island, you start to really value these things again.”

Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the information in the article? Correct any that are false.

1. People on Skomer are cut off from the world.
2. Skomer receives 250 day trippers every day during the summer holidays.
3. A wildlife warden often has to look after people as well.
4. Small talk is not important for wardens of a remote island.
5. Stubbings and Beuche are currently wardens on the island of Skomer.
6. Everyone believes that turning remote islands into wildlife sanctuaries is a good idea.
7. Many of the 6,200 islands around Britain used to be like prisons.
8. More and more people want to leave the mainland and go to live on islands to escape modern life.
9. Most people who work on a remote island are lonely as they only meet other people when boats arrive once a month.
10. Life on the remote island of Skokholm has become more comfortable over the past few years.

An expression

1. Find and underline the expression hustle and bustle in the article.
2. Choose the correct meaning.
   a. a lot of loud arguments
   b. a lot of noisy activity
   c. a lot of difficult work tasks
3. Share your answers to these questions.
   • Is there a lot of hustle and bustle in your workplace?
   • In general, do you enjoy the hustle and bustle of everyday life, or do you try to get away from it?
Could you live on a remote island?

Level 2 • Upper intermediate

6 Discussion
- How far is it to the sea from where you are now?
- What is the nearest island or group of islands?
- Does anyone live there?
- What kind of wildlife lives there?
- How easy or difficult is it to get there?
- Is it a place that day trippers or tourists visit? Why? Why not?
- Have you ever been to a small remote island?
  o If so, describe your experience.
  o If not, is there a small island that you would like to visit?
- Bee Bueche mentions some things that she now really appreciates when she is on the mainland (para 18). What things do you think you would miss if you lived on a remote island?

7 Group task
Work in small groups to complete the following task.
- Brainstorm things you would like to include on your packing list for a year on a remote island.
- Divide these into essential items and luxuries.
  o Do not include food or small items that you might be able to order every now and again (such as shampoo and candles) as these will all, if the weather is good, arrive by boat every month.
- Make a list of ten to 20 items that you all agree on and that would fit on a small boat.
- Compare your lists with other students and say why you would want to take each of the items on your list.

8 Webquest
Research one of the islands or seabirds mentioned in the article, and make a presentation to the class.
Could you live on a remote island?

**Level 2 • Upper intermediate**

**KEY**

**2 Find the information**

1. Skomer; Skokholm
2. Islay
3. Lundy
4. islophiles
5. guillemots, razorbills, puffins, shearwaters
6. flock

**3 Key words**

1. acres
2. warden
3. tyranny
4. isolated
5. appeal
6. self-sufficient
7. cosy
8. soothing
9. day trippers
10. tour reps
11. degrading
12. appreciate

**4 Comprehension check**

1. F – They are not cut off from the world as they have the internet and mobile phones.
2. F – Skomer receives 250 day trippers every day during the main bird-breeding months of May and June.
3. T
4. F – It is important as you need to be able to get on with other residents as well as all the visitors.
5. F – They spent six years there but now live on Islay in Scotland.
6. F – One islander says that it is degrading and makes the islands nothing more than museums.
7. T
8. T
9. F – There are also other people who live on the islands such as volunteers and staff, as well as day trippers and other visitors, such as ecologists.
10. T

**5 An expression**

2. b