



TRIP OVERVIEW

Take part in a truly breathtaking expedition through some of the most stunning scenery in the British Isles; Scotland's world-renowned Inner Hebrides. Basing ourselves around the Isles of Skye, Rum, Eigg and Muck and staying on board the 102-foot tall ship, the 'Lady of Avenel', this swimming adventure offers a unique opportunity to explore the dramatic landscapes of this picturesque corner of the world.

From craggy mountain tops to spectacular volcanic features, this tour takes some of the most beautiful parts of this collection of islands, including the spectacular Cuillin Hills. Our trip sees us exploring the lochs, sounds, islands, coves and skerries of the Inner Hebrides, while also providing an opportunity to experience an abundance of local wildlife.

This trip allows us to get to know the islands of the Inner Hebrides intimately, swimming in stunning lochs and enjoying wild coastal swims. We'll journey to the islands on a more sustainable form of transport and enjoy freshly cooked meals in our downtime from our own onboard chef. From sunsets on the ships deck to even trying your hand at getting involved with the crewing of the Lady of Avenel, this truly is an epic expedition and an exciting opportunity for adventure swimming and sailing alike.

WHO IS THIS TRIP FOR?

This trip is made up largely of coastal, freshwater loch swimming, along with some crossings, including the crossing from Canna to Rum. Conditions will be challenging, yet extremely rewarding. Swimmers should have a sound understanding and experience of swimming in strong sea conditions and be capable of completing the average daily swim distance of around 4 km (split over a minimum of two swims) prior to the start of the trip. No sailing experience is required, however, the ship's crew are happy for you to assist with on-board duties as much or as little as you like.

LOCATION SUMMARIES

The Isle of Skye

Our swimming and sailing adventure follows Skye's rocky southern shore with diversions to some of the best swimming locations in the Inner Hebrides. Skye is Scotland's second largest island and is a patchwork of jagged edged mountains, towering sea cliffs, abundant wildlife and sparkling lochs.

The Isle of Rum

Owned by Scottish Natural Heritage, Rum is undoubtedly one of Scotland's finest National Nature Reserves. It is of international importance for its flora and fauna and sightings of seals, deer, otters and eagles can be expected. The coastline itself is craggy and is fascinating to swim along.

The Isle of Eigg

The Isle of Eigg is dominated by the 393m peak of An Sgurr, a dramatic pitchstone ridge and the largest of its kind in Europe. It is clearly visible and recognisable from the mainland. The locals pride themselves on being the most eco-friendly places in Britain as the island runs almost entirely on renewable energy.



TRIP SCHEDULE

Start Point	Castlebay Pier, Isle of Barra
Start Time	19:00 on Day 1
Finish Point	Castlebay Pier, Isle of Barra
Finish Time	10:00 on Day 7

Part of the appeal of our Lady of Avenel trips is the unpredictability of the wild areas in which we will swim. The below itinerary is an example of the swims that may take place during the course of your trip, however, actual swim locations and distances can vary according to local weather and sea conditions. Your SwimTrek guides and local boat pilot will determine the most suitable swim locations each day and will let you know swim plans as soon as possible. Sailing a tall ship by its nature brings the excitement of the elements. We sail when the winds are favourable, meaning a degree of flexibility is required as to when we may sail out.

Day 1

To kick off our trip, your guides meet you at the Castlebay Pier and accompany you to our ship and accommodation for the duration of the trip, the Lady of Avenel. We enjoy on board welcome drinks and are given a tour of our classic rigger, followed by a safety briefing and a discussion of the plans for the week. We then embark on a unique acclimatisation swim as we swim around Kisimul Castle which sits in Castlebay. Following our swim, we enjoy a welcome dinner prepared by our very own on-board chef and chat further about the plan for the week ahead. We will then depart from Castlebay and head north towards the Isle of Skye.

Day 2

We'll take in the sights of the Scottish coast this morning as we sail on to Loch Nevis. We swim down the Loch to Kylesknoydart which sits at the narrow strait that divides Nevis in two. Following this, we carry out a short hike across the isthmus separating Nevis and Morar Lochs. The view along the inland Morar Loch is stunning. We then hike back to Loch Nevis and return to the Lady of Avenel for lunch.

After lunch, the ship crosses Loch Hourn and arrives off the southeastern coast of Skye at Ardvasar. For our afternoon swim, we head down the coast towards Aird of Sleat. The coastline is a mix of sandy white beaches and craggy shorelines featuring underwater kelp forest gardens.

Day 3

Today we head up Skye's west coast. Our first stop is at Spar Cave which is an astonishing, cathedral-like structure some 50m long, with a marble-like flowstone staircase and huge columns formed from the centuries of water dripping through the limestone base layers. We'll wait for high tide so we can swim over the staircases. From here, we swim to the Prince Charles's Cave and the island which lies just off it. The swim is dotted with islets, skerries, rocks and beaches.



After lunch, the boat travels onto Loch na Cuilce which is at the gateway to Loch Coruisk, situated in the heart of the Cuillin Hills. The notorious hanging slab “Bad Step” hangs over the sea and offers a spectacular view. The islets in Loch na Cuilce are inhabited by a large population of seals which makes for some great swims here. Following the last swim and time permitting, there may be the opportunity to walk around Loch Coruisk before we spend the night in the bay, where we have spectacular views of the Cuillins.

Day 4

This morning we swim across from Skye to the small Isle of Soay. On arrival, we walk up to the highest point, which offers striking views of the morning and afternoon swims. In the past this island has been well known for its basking shark populations, so there may be opportunities to witness them while we're here.

After a sumptuous lunch on board our square rigger, we raise the sails and make our way to Loch Briddle for a restful afternoon out of the water in preparation for tomorrow's big crossing. The loch is where the world-renowned trials cyclist Danny Mackasill filmed his spectacular film “The Ridge”, which is well worth watching prior to the trip. The sweeping slopes of the surrounding mountains plunge into the Loch offering startling views as we stretch our legs off the ship for the afternoon.

Once back on board, we head across to the Small Isles and our first stop, the Isle of Canna, where we stay offshore for the evening.

Day 5

Our morning swim today takes us on our longest crossing of the trip as we swim from the Isle of Canna to the Isle of Rum. Orval Peak, situated on Rum, guides our way and kelp forests are visible well before we reach the Rum shore. Once we are dry and have had some lunch, we have a chance to walk on Rum and discover some of the world-famous wildlife.

After the exertions of the morning's crossing, there is an opportunity to explore the islands of Rum and Eigg by foot in the afternoon. In the evening, we will aim to moor at Eigg Pier where we will have the opportunity to explore this unique island. Eigg also has its own brewery, so the evening may be spent at the Galmisdale Bay Bar.

Day 6

Today is our last full day of swimming and we aim to swim sections of the of the coastlines of both Eigg and Muck. On Muck, we attempt a circumnavigation of Horse Island which lies off Muck's northern coast. The landscape here is especially stark, while under the water is a collection of kelp forests with the odd inquisitive seal. On Eigg, we have the opportunity to walk to Massacre Cave, the scene of a clan massacre of nearly the entire island's population in the 16th Century.

Sitting on deck for our sail back to Barra is an excellent finale to our tour of the Scottish Inner Hebrides. Barra is where we spend our last evening onboard the Lady of Avenel before our departure tomorrow.



Day 7

Before breakfast, there is an opportunity for a final early morning swim of the week. There is time for packing and farewells before we disembark the Lady and depart.

TRIP INFORMATION

Equipment Checklist

In addition to your daily non-swimming clothes, we also recommend that you bring the following items:

✓	Item	✓	Item
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swimming Costume (x 3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sweater / Fleece / Thick Socks
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wetsuit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wooly Hat and Gloves
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swimming Goggles (x 2)*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thermal Layers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sun Hat and Sunglasses	<input type="checkbox"/>	Long Trousers**
<input type="checkbox"/>	Waterproof Sun Cream	<input type="checkbox"/>	Waterproof Jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	Small Daypack	<input type="checkbox"/>	Walking Shoes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Towel (x 2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Aqua Shoes / Sandals

*Try to bring one clear lens and one tinted lens for different light conditions.

**We also recommend gaiters/rubber bands for protection from ticks when trekking.

There are no safes in the cabins on the Lady of Avenel, so valuables and other belongings are brought on board at your own risk.

Please note that SwimTrek will supply swim hats and provide water and electrolyte drinks in shared water bottles on your safety boat. If you prefer to use your own drink bottle, please feel free to bring one along. If you would like to use a wetsuit, rash vest or fins during your swims, please ensure that you bring these with you.

Important: It can be very cold both during and between swims, so we advise all guests to bring appropriate swimwear and clothing in order to be as comfortable in these conditions. We recommend that all guests bring plenty of layers which can be added and removed as required.

Swimming Distances

SWIM	DISTANCE	SWIM	DISTANCE
Kylesknoydart Swim	1½km	Ardvasar - Aird of Sleat	4km
Spar Cave - Prince Charles's Cave	2½km	Loch na Cuilce Island Hop	2km
Isle of Skye - Isle of Soay	2km	Isle of Canna - Isle of Rum	3½km
Eigg Coastal	2km	Muck - Horse Island	2½km

Please note that these swims are an example of what may take place during the course of your trip and should be used as a guide only. Actual swim locations and distances can vary according to local weather and sea conditions.



Swimming Conditions

Swimming in the sea is a fantastic experience, however you should be aware that certain marine life such as jellyfish may be present during the swims. In all cases we will work on reducing your contact with these creatures, however if you suffer from anaphylaxis, please consult the office prior to booking.

Walking Conditions and Distances

Most walks take place on recognised paths and tracks, however there may be cases where we walk along trails or other unsealed surfaces and care should be taken in these areas. If you do not wish to walk any of the trails, you are welcome to remain on board the ship.

WALK	DISTANCE	WALK	DISTANCE
Loch Nevis - Loch Morar return	3km	Loch Coruisk	5km
Isle of Soay	2km	Rum/Eigg Traverse	5km
Massacre Cave (Eigg)	3km		

Temperatures

MONTH	WATER TEMPERATURE*	AIR TEMPERATURE*
July	12 - 15°C / 54 - 59°F	12 - 16°C / 54 - 61°F

*Please note that these temperatures are indicative and should be used as a guide only.

Weather Caveat

For safety reasons, we rely on decent weather conditions when carrying out our swims. As a consequence, open water swimming holidays require a certain degree of on-trip flexibility which can result in changes to the planned itinerary. These changes often add a touch of uniqueness to your trip and will be communicated to you by your SwimTrek guides as quickly as possible.

Given the location of this trip, the weather will play a key factor in all our swims and crossings. It should be assumed that changes will be made to the planned itinerary based on local conditions.

Group Size

This trip has a maximum group size of 12. The group will be split into two groups, based on speed, with each group being accompanied by their own safety vessel/escort.

Boat support on this trip includes one main ship and two inflatable boats to be piloted by your SwimTrek guides and a local boat pilot. Please note that this boat support is subject to change without notice and cannot be guaranteed.



GETTING THERE

The easiest way to get to Castlebay at the start of your trip is to fly into Glasgow International Airport and then catch a connecting flight directly to Barra Airport. Alternatively, it is also possible to reach Castlebay by train and ferry from many UK destinations.

While we have outlined various travel options below, they are subject to change and should be used as a guide only. We suggest that you use the following websites to search for alternative flights, trains and ferry options for this trip:

Flights: www.skyscanner.net / www.loganair.co.uk

Trains: www.thetrainline.com / www.scotrail.co.uk

Ferries: www.calmac.co.uk

Whichever route you choose to take, we recommend confirming your flights and other travel arrangements as early as possible in order to avoid price rises and availability issues.

Option 1: Flights From Glasgow to Barra

To search for available flights into Glasgow International Airport and then from Glasgow to Barra, please visit www.skyscanner.net and www.loganair.co.uk.

Once you arrive at Barra Airport, we recommend taking a local taxi to Castlebay, which takes approximately 20 minutes and costs £10-£15. When you reach Castlebay, you will be able to see the Lady of Avenel in all her beauty, moored in the bay awaiting your arrival.

Option 2: Trains and Ferries

It is possible to travel to Barra via train and ferry from various UK destinations, however, please be aware that this requires a significantly longer journey than by plane.

Regular train services are available to Glasgow and can be booked via: www.thetrainline.com.

From Glasgow, you will need to catch another train to Oban. This journey takes just over three hours and costs approximately £40 for a return ticket. Information on train fares and timetables can be found at www.scotrail.co.uk.

Once you reach Oban, you can catch a CalMac ferry to Castlebay. This journey takes approximately five hours and costs around £30 for a return ticket. Information on fares and schedules can be found at www.calmac.co.uk/oban-castlebay-barra-ferry-summer-timetable.

Please note that it's also possible to combine your travel plans from Glasgow by purchasing a 'Rail and Sail' ticket. For further information about this option, please visit: www.scotrail.co.uk.

When you reach Castlebay, you will be able to see the Lady of Avenel in all her beauty, moored in the bay awaiting your arrival.



Accommodation Whilst Travelling

You may well require en-route accommodation, either the night before the trip commences or for the night following the trip. If so, you can find a range of quaint and idyllic accommodation options in Oban or Castlebay and the Isle of Barra, to either break up your journey or extend your stay before or after your journey on the Lady of Avenel.

Accommodation in Oban

You can visit www.visitscotland.com/destinations-maps/oban/accommodation/ for a number of B&Bs, guest houses and hotels to choose from in the harbour town of Oban, where the train pulls in from Glasgow.

Accommodation in Castlebay/Isle of Barra

You can visit: www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk for a number of B&Bs, guest houses and hotels to choose from on the Isle of Barra, where the Lady of Avenel departs from.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Accommodation

The Lady of Avenel is a 102-foot Brigantine square rigger ship with 12 guest berths and staff quarters. Originally built in Poland in 1969 as a tug vessel, she was refitted in 1992 and the ship made her film debut in 2016 in 'Alice Through the Looking Glass', the sequel to Tim Burton's 'Alice in Wonderland'.

All cabins on the Lady of Avenel are offered on a twin share basis and include bunk beds. There are six similar guest cabins in total. All guests and crew use shared bathroom facilities with two bathrooms located close to the cabins on the lower deck and a toilet located on the upper deck.

Please note that due to the limited number of cabins on board, there are no single occupancy or non-swimmer places available on this trip.

Luggage

Due to the limited space in the cabins on board the Lady of Avenel, we strongly recommend that guests bring soft, duffle-style luggage and that it is restricted to a maximum size of 40 x 70 x 40cm.

WiFi and Mobile Reception

There is extremely limited wifi and mobile phone reception on board the Lady of Avenel and it is entirely dependent on our exact location and signal strength. To be safe, it should be assumed that you will have no access to 3G, 4G or WiFi for the duration of your trip.

Meals

All meals are included on this trip and are prepared by our very own on board chef. With years of experience working on various vessels, our chef offers a high standard of food which will keep you well fuelled for your swims during the trip.

Extra Expenses

You should bring extra money with you to cover such items as trips to the occasional island pub and shopping on the few islands that have towns. The local currency is British pound (£).



Passports and Visas

The Inner Hebrides is part of the United Kingdom. Non-residents of the U.K. require a full passport to enter the country, which should be valid for six months beyond the expected length of stay. Citizens of all E.U. member states, U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand are given 'leave to enter' the U.K. and do not need to apply for a visa. Please note that visa regulations are subject to change and we advise that you check your own visa requirements prior to travel.

Health Information

For comprehensive health information for people travelling to the UK, including all recommended and required vaccinations, please visit www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries. Please note that this information is subject to change and you should re-check this site regularly prior to your trip.

Travel Plugs & Electricity

The Lady of Avenel features UK-style power points in some cabins and in communal areas.

For a useful source of information on the different electrical outlets, electrical plugs, and electric sockets, please visit worldstandards.eu/.