



## TRIP OVERVIEW

Welcome to the Wild Side! Ireland's Donegal coast is unlike anywhere else on earth, which explains why it was named '**Coolest Place on the Planet**' by National Geographic Traveller in 2017. This liveaboard swimming holiday allows you to explore the natural beauty of Ireland's dramatic Atlantic coastline and discover the untamed landscapes that exist in one of the country's most isolated and beautiful areas.

Throughout the week, you'll have the chance to swim in some of the most inaccessible locations in the British Isles, many of which can only be reached by ship, as we swim and sail our way between the glacial loch of Lough Swilly and the quiet seaside village of Burtonport. You'll also be able to take in the culture of this proudly independent region of The Republic of Ireland.

This trip sees us exploring the length of County Donegal's west coast, swimming alongside impressive coastal cliffs and taking on circumnavigations around charming Irish islands that lie off the mainland. We'll journey along the coast on a more sustainable form of transport, and enjoy freshly cooked meals in our downtime from our own onboard chef. From seeing the might of Ireland's wild Atlantic Way to the chance to try 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.

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## WHO IS THIS TRIP FOR?

This trip is made up largely of crossings and some coastal swims. 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.

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## LOCATION SUMMARIES

### Wild Atlantic Way

The "Wild Atlantic Way" is a route that showcases the sheer magnificence of Ireland's West coast, from stunning headlands and beaches to colorful villages and towns all rich with the history, heritage and tradition of this rugged coastline. Relax in cozy rural pubs, find sanctuary in old monastic sites, learn the histories and tales of ancient castles as you swim and sail your way along this enthralling coastline.

### Lough Swilly

Located at the start and end of our trip, Lough Swilly is one of only three glacial lochs in the whole of Ireland and is a wildlife haven. Dolphins and porpoises feature below the water and a large range of migratory birds fill the skies above.



## Fanad Head and Arranmore Island

This is a dramatically exposed headland on the stunning Fanad Peninsula. Razor sharp rocks, broken up by idyllic beaches, typify the coastline. This is a popular spot for grey seals bobbing about in the water. Arranmore Island is a spectacularly beautiful island off the west coast, featuring wild and rugged landscapes with incredible cliff views, dramatic sea caves and golden sandy beaches.

## TRIP SCHEDULE

<b>Start Point</b>	<a href="#">The Guildhall</a> , Derry, Londonderry, BT48 6DQ
<b>Start Time</b>	18:30 Day 1
<b>Finish Point</b>	<a href="#">The Guildhall</a> , Derry, Londonderry, BT48 6DQ
<b>Finish Time</b>	12:00 Day 7

## Daily Itineraries

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

After meeting your SwimTrek transfer and fellow guests at The Guildhall in Derry, Londonderry at 18:30, we have a 30-minute drive to Lough Swilly where our ship and accommodation for the week, the 'Lady of Avenel', is moored. After a tour of this classic rigger, we then hold a full trip briefing followed by an acclimatisation swim in Lough Swilly. Following our swim, we have our welcome dinner and chat further about the plan for the week ahead.

### Day 2

This is the first of our full Donegal swimming days and it's an incredible start to the week. In the morning, the Lady of Avenel sails north and we stop on Lough Swilly's western flank at Gortlosk. From here, we carry out a shallow coastal swim along to Drumnacraig beach, which features stunning white sand.

Following lunch on board our ship, we travel to Fanad Head Peninsula and carry out a swim between the two beaches that sit either side of the exposed lighthouse of the same name. From here, there is nothing to see but the vast Atlantic Ocean and the surrounding coastline is formed of steep jagged rocks that tower above the ocean floor. Due to Fanad Head's exposed position, you should expect some swell as we swim this stretch.

In the late afternoon, we cruise by ship around to Sheephaven Bay, which is home to one of Ireland's most vibrant herring fishing fleets. There is an opportunity to go ashore and stretch our legs as well as visit the Singing Pub, which looks more like a traditional Irish cottage than a pub.



### **Day 3**

We start the day by approaching Horn Head at the entrance to Sheephaven Bay. The 180-metre high cliffs are some of the tallest in Ireland and make the swimming here all the more spectacular. We carry out a stunning coastal swim underneath these cliffs where there are still remnants of Neolithic stone circles and tombs which dot the landscape.

Once everyone is back on board, we travel across to Tory Island, which lies eight miles off the Irish mainland. The island is steeped in history, mythology and folklore and has a unique rugged quality to it. We head to East Town and the isthmus that separates Noughermore from the rest of the island. We circumnavigate the peninsula, which features swim throughs, sea stacks and sheer cliffs. It's certainly a unique place and one that makes for an unforgettable experience. If conditions allow, we will moor near the island and enjoy what East Town has to offer in the evening.

### **Day 4**

This morning features our first long sail as we travel from Tory Island to Owey Island and the surrounding islets. During the voyage you will have an opportunity to help sail the square rigger. On route we will see Bloody Foreland and the islands of Inishsirrerr, Inishmeane and Gola. It's a dramatic scene as the wild Atlantic roars along this coastline.

In the afternoon, we carry out our first crossing of the week as we swim first around Owey Island and then hop to Cruit Island. It's possible to see the seabed most of the way across. Once we reach Cruit, we have a chance to walk around the island and explore. The ship will moor up in this archipelago of islands and we'll spend the night here.

### **Day 5**

We are now over half way on our journey along the Donegal coast. Depending on conditions, we will try to stop off at the Crohy Head Sea Arch, a natural arch inside Knockfolá Bay. From here, we head southwest along some impressive Donegal coastline. Conditions will dictate which swims we take on. For example, we may choose to head to the abandoned village of Port Pier, which is believed to be the first maritime community in the county. From here, we can either swim around Toralayden Island or carry along the coast to the Sturall Headland which is widely regarded as one of the most outstanding sea cliff features in the whole of Ireland. With either option, the swims will be exhilarating and something you're unlikely to have ever done before.

If the weather allows, we will tuck ourselves away in Ardara Bay to spend the night, where there are some stunning walks to be enjoyed.



## Day 6

We are up early as we hold our first swim in Ardara Bay. We swim around a part of the Cotten Headland which has many nooks and crannies to explore. Once back on board, we head north to Aranmore Island for one of the true highlights of the trip, as we visit sea caves and sea stacks. The underwater topography is also something to marvel at, as well as the resident grey seal population.

In the late afternoon, we travel past Goat, Edernish and Inishcoo Islands before arriving into Burtonport Bay where we will spend our last evening. It's a great opportunity to reflect on the trip and the swims that we have taken.

## Day 7

We start the morning with a pre-breakfast swim in the bay before our final group breakfast. For those making their way from Burtonport back to Derry, your transfer will meet you as you disembark and take you back on the two-hour journey to The Guildhall where your trip will come to an end.

## 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"/>	Woolly 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.

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
Gortloak - Drumnacraig (Lough Swilly)	2½km	Fanad Head Peninsula	2km
Horn Head (Sheephaven Bay)	2km	Noughermore Peninsula	2km
Owey Island - Cruit Island	1½km	Crohy Head Sea Arch	1km
Port Pier - Sturall Headland	3km	Cloughcor (Arranmore Coastal)	2½km
Cloughcor (West Coast)	2km		

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 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.

## Temperatures

MONTH	WATER TEMPERATURE*	AIR TEMPERATURE*
July	13 - 16°C / 55 - 61°F	15 - 17°C / 59 - 63°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 support 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 Derry, Londonderry at the start of your trip is to fly into either Northern Ireland (Belfast International or Belfast City Airport) or The Republic of Ireland (Dublin International Airport) and then catch a train or bus to Derry. There are also limited flights into City of Derry airport.

There are good train and bus links from both Belfast and Dublin to Derry. For further information about these services, please visit [visitderry.com](http://visitderry.com).

Once you arrive in Derry, you will need to catch a taxi to our meeting point at The Guildhall (BT48 6DQ), which is located in the heart of the city. From here, your SwimTrek guides will accompany you on your journey to The Lady of Avenel.

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 and public transport options for this trip:

**Flights:** [www.skyscanner.net](http://www.skyscanner.net)

**Trains and Buses:** [www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.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.

### Travelling via Derry

To search for available flights into City of Derry Airport, please visit [www.skyscanner.net](http://www.skyscanner.net).

There is a taxi rank located immediately in front of the airport terminal with taxis available for private hire. There are also a number of buses which run from the airport to the city centre. For timetables and further information, please visit: [www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk)

### Travelling via Belfast

To search for available flights into Belfast International Airport or Belfast City Airport, please visit [www.skyscanner.net](http://www.skyscanner.net).

There are regular direct bus services from both Belfast airports to Derry. For timetables, tickets and further information, please visit: [www.airporter.co.uk](http://www.airporter.co.uk)

Translink also operates a train service from Belfast Central Station to the centre of Derry. For timetables, tickets and further information, please visit: [www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk)



## **Travelling via Dublin**

To search for available flights into Dublin Airport, please visit [www.skyscanner.net](http://www.skyscanner.net).

There are train and bus services to Derry via Belfast, however, journey times are considerably longer than flying directly into Belfast. For timetables, tickets and further information, please visit: [www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk)

## **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 supplements 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 currency along the Donegal Atlantic Way is Euros (€). In Derry, where you will start and end your trip, the currency is British pound (£).



## **Passports and Visas**

The start and finish point for this trip is in Derry, which is part of the United Kingdom, however, the trip itself takes place in the Republic of Ireland. Non-residents of both the U.K. and Ireland require a full passport to enter the country, which should be valid for six months beyond the expected length of stay. Citizens of all EU member states, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are given 'leave to enter' the U.K. and do not need to apply for a visa for either the U.K. or Ireland. 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 and Ireland, including all recommended and required vaccinations, please visit [www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries](http://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**

For a useful source of information on the different electrical outlets, electrical plugs, and electric sockets, please visit [www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plug-voltage-by-country/](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plug-voltage-by-country/).