



## TRIP OVERVIEW

Join us on an unforgettable swimming expedition where we'll traverse the 10 islands that make up the southern section of the Scottish Outer Hebrides. From South Uist in the north to Berneray in the south, we swim amongst some of Britain's most spectacular landscapes, all whilst living on board the beautiful Lady of Avenel, a 102-foot Brigantine square rigged ship.

Over the course of the trip, you will discover an abundance of beautiful lochs, long sandy beaches and scenic landscapes whilst enjoying your time out of the water on the Lady of Avenel ship, complete with your very own on board chef. You can expect to see a huge range of wildlife, both in and out of the water, making this trip a nature lover's dream.

This trip will see you exploring some of the wildest parts of Scotland on a sustainable form of transport, with the option to learn some new skills and get involved with the crewing of the ship. A perfect opportunity to enjoy a unique activity holiday with some pretty impressive bragging rights, 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. Due to the nature of this trip, there is a minimum swimming speed of 25 min/km (40 min/mile). 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

### Outer Hebrides

Also known as the Western Isles and Na h-Eileanan an Iar in Gaelic, the Outer Hebrides are a 130-mile-long string of islands lying off Scotland's northwest coast. There are 119 islands in total, of which the main inhabited islands are Lewis and Harris, North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist and Barra.

### South Uist

South Uist is a landscape of fresh and salt water lochs, bordered on its western side by miles of sandy beaches and cultivated crofts. The island is known for its birdlife, including Arctic terns, gannets, corn buntings and Manx shearwaters.

### Barra

Barra is the most southerly of the inhabited islands in the Outer Hebrides. Long famed for its beautiful beaches and moors, Barra is a special place to visit, especially if you arrive by plane, as flights landing on the beach at Cockle Strand in between tides.



## Mingulay

Towards the southern tip of the Outer Hebrides sits the Isle of Mingulay, abandoned by its last inhabitants 100 years ago. There are the remains of an Iron Age fort, an old school house and a chapel house. Mingulay is also known for its important seabird populations, including puffins, black-legged kittiwakes, and razorbills, which nest in the sea-cliffs and are amongst the highest in the British Isles.

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## TRIP SCHEDULE

<b>Start Point</b>	Castlebay Pier, Isle of Barra
<b>Start Time</b>	19:00 on Day 1
<b>Finish Point</b>	Castlebay Pier, Isle of Barra
<b>Finish Time</b>	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. After a tour of this classic rigger, we then hold a full trip briefing followed by a unique acclimatisation swim as we swim around Kisimul Castle which sits in Castlebay. Following our swim, we depart from Castlebay and head north arriving at South Uist. On arrival, we hold a welcome dinner and chat further about the plan for the week ahead.

### Day 2

In the morning we begin our first swim of the trip by crossing from South Uist to Eriskay, which furnished the storyline for one of Scotland's most famous tales; Whiskey Galore. The swim is an ideal introduction as the crossing is short and the location is protected. We then take time to have lunch and relax on board the ship.

In the afternoon, we undertake a more ambitious crossing of the Sound of Barra as we use the islands of Gighay and Hellisay as stepping stones towards Barra and our finish point of the Aird Mhor Barra Ferry Terminal. The swim between Eriskay and Gighay is stunning with the hues of the water changing underneath and around you as you swim. If time permits, there is a wonderful naturally-formed canal that separates Gighay and Hellisay that we can swim through.



### Day 3

After a hearty breakfast, the first swim of the day is from Hellisay to the Aird Mhor Ferry Terminal on Barra, passing a number of low lying islands on the way. During this swim, it may be possible to see aircrafts landing on Barra's Traigh Mhor beach.

In the afternoon we carry out an idyllic coastal swim from Earsairidh Lagoon to Brevig Bay on Barra's east coast. Underwater kelp forests are present below us as we swim. At the end of the day, we sail round to Castlebay, Barra's main ferry port and our stop for the night, where there is a chance to head ashore if you wish.

### Day 4

The Lady of Avenel journeys round to Vatersay where we disembark and walk to South Beach which sits opposite Sandray Island. This is a relatively short swim and a good start to our southern swim's section of the itinerary.

After lunch on board the Lady of Avenel, there is time to go and explore the island. Sandray is home to a number of ground nesting birds due to the absence of any predators here. In the afternoon, we begin one of our more open sea crossings with our swim from Sandray to Pabbay, one of the most exposed swims we will undertake. We finish near Pabbay Beach; one of the most visually stunning in the British Isles.

### Day 5

In the morning, we cross to Mingulay, which is an undoubted highlight of the trip. There are numerous coves, tunnels and sea cliffs to explore and the sandy beach and the ruins of the old settlement are only a short walk away.

In the afternoon, we have the opportunity for a final swim between Mingulay and Barra Head, also known as Berneray, the southernmost island of the Outer Hebrides. The swim itself is a relatively short hop and marks the end of our incredible journey.

### Day 6

Due to the nature of where we are and the unpredictability of the conditions, this day is left open to fit in any swims missed or delays experienced due to poor conditions earlier on in the week. Should we experience no delays, then rest assured we will come up with some interesting and adventurous coastal swims to bring to an end a most extraordinary trip.

### Day 7

We start the morning with a pre-breakfast swim, where we will have the opportunity to explore the southern coastline of Barra. Following this, we have our final group breakfast on board the Lady of Avenel before saying our goodbyes.



## 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
South Uist - Eriskay	1km	Eriskay - Gighay	2½km
Gighay/Hellisay Canal	1½km	Hellisay - Barra	2½km
Barra Lagoon Coastal	2km	Vatersay - Sandray	1km
Sandray - Pabbay	3½km	Pabbay - Mingulay	2½km
Mingulay - Barra Head	1km		

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.

WALK	DISTANCE	WALK	DISTANCE
Across Barra	3½km	Across Vatersay	2km
Mingulay	2km		

## Temperatures

MONTH	WATER TEMPERATURE*	AIR TEMPERATURE*
July	12 - 14°C / 54 - 57°F	12 - 15°C / 54 - 59°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.

As the Outer Hebrides are some of the most exposed islands in Europe the weather will play a key factor in all our swims and crossings. There is an additional spare day scheduled into the trip to give us a better opportunity to complete the scheduled swims.

## Group Size and Boat Support

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 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](http://www.skyscanner.net) / [www.loganair.co.uk](http://www.loganair.co.uk)

**Trains:** [www.thetrainline.com](http://www.thetrainline.com) / [www.scotrail.co.uk](http://www.scotrail.co.uk)

**Ferries:** [www.calmac.co.uk](http://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](http://www.skyscanner.net) and [www.loganair.co.uk](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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/](http://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](http://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 Outer 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 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. 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](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**

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 [www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plug-voltage-by-country/](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plug-voltage-by-country/).