



SESSIONS AND SAIL 2020 - DONEGAL VOYAGE NOTES

The Trip



Join us aboard the Lady of Avenel for **Sessions and Sail 2020 – Donegal**.

This two-masted, Brigantine-rigged tall ship will be your home for the week as we step aboard in Rathmullan and sail the rugged north-west coast of Donegal. The ship will be your base for a voyage of exploration and music with sessions, workshops, sailing and more.

You will learn tunes from the world-famous tradition under the guidance of our onboard musical guides, and with local guest tutors in the bright saloon aboard Lady of Avenel; often, we head ashore to a pub to meet and play sessions with local musicians.

Throughout the trip we will enjoy locally sourced food, beautifully prepared by our on-board chef.

Some of our likely destinations are outlined overleaf. We look forward to having you join us!



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Who is the trip aimed at?



If you are a keen musician playing at any level - whether beginner, intermediate or expert - with an interest in the traditional and folk music of Scotland, this trip is for you. No sailing experience is necessary, but those keen to participate will be encouraged to join in the sailing of the ship should they wish to, whether steering, helping set and trim the sails, or even climbing the mast for the finest view of all.



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Rathmullan



(Photo: Flight of the Earls, Eskling CC BY-ND 2.0)

On the West shore of Lough Swilly, Rathmullan is a small charming village that was the scene of the 'Flight of the Earls' in 1607, a major turning point in Irish history. This is where you will meet the Lady of Avenel.

Dunfanaghy



(Photograph: Dunfanaghy-Horses in Sheephaven Bay, geograph.org.uk CC BY-SA 2.0)

A small town and former fishing port on the west side of Sheephaven Bay, and near the anchorage and small harbour at Portnablagh, Dunfanaghy is home to a traditional music scene and a regular session at Patsy Dan's Pub.



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Tory Island



(Photograph: Lady of Avenel at Tory Island, Stefan Fritz)

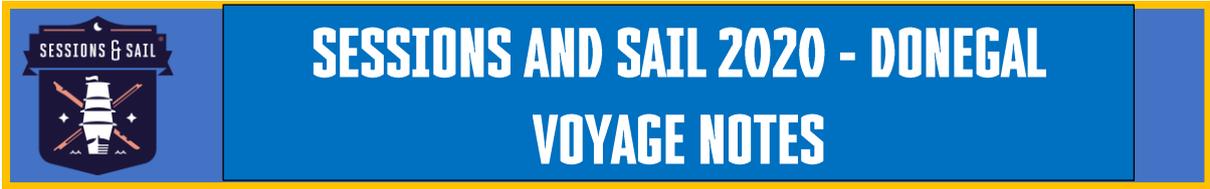
Described by Lady of Avenel owner Stefan Fritz recently as ‘Like the St Kilda of Ireland’, Tory Island is, unlike the Scottish outpost, still inhabited with a population of 144. Getting to this green and rocky gem will be very much dependant on the weather.

Árrain Mhór



(Photograph: Leabgarrow, Arranmore Island – Darren Cullen. CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

A majority Irish-speaking island, Árrain is the largest inhabited island off the coast of Donegal with a population of 460, but rising to well over 1,000 in the summer. Relying on fishing until the 1980s, but now with an economy more dependent on tourism and the Gaeltacht summer schools, we are guaranteed a warm and genuine welcome here!



Likely Itinerary

The following itinerary is a suggestion of how the trip may take form; all destinations are subject to change, are weather dependant and are at the discretion of the Captain.

Day 1

We meet the 'Lady of Avenel' alongside the pontoon berth in Rathmullan, where the crew will welcome you aboard; you are given a tour of the ship and, once everyone is here, a briefing from the Captain.

We leave the harbour and head out the lough; with small farms, tree-lined hills, and historical forts from the Napoleonic and more recent wars, there's plenty to look at. We'll drop an anchor in a sheltered spot in time for the chef to bring out dinner. Over our food and a few drinks we'll get to know each other.

After dinner is cleared away, we gather in the Lady of Avenel's upper saloon and play a few tunes together.

Day 2

After breakfast, we sail on to Sheep Haven Bay.

We drop anchor here and have our first tuition session. Whether fiddler, guitarist or piper, beginner or expert, you will find new inspiration in the music and will learn new tunes or techniques.

In the evening, we head ashore to join a local session at Patsy Dan's pub in Dunfanaghy.



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Day 3

We leave Sheephaven Bay behind, with – weather permitting – Tory Island in our sights. You will be encouraged to join in as we round Horn Head, set sails and manoeuvre the ship guided by the professional crew; this is voluntary, and some may prefer to sit back and watch the action.

We cross the 12 miles of open sea, watching Tory Island grow ahead of us; our skipper manoeuvres the ship into the little harbour here, and we can go ashore and explore, gathering afterwards in one of the cosy pubs for a few tunes and some craic.

Day 4

We sail from Tory Island this morning, heading south towards Àrrain Mhór. On the way we may recap and work through some of the tunes and techniques we have been taught over the past three days.

Arriving off the village of Leabgarrow in the early afternoon, there is time to walk ashore and explore the town before dinner; later, we head to one of the pubs for a sessions with some local musicians.

Day 5

In the morning we sail on; by now, some of the group may be quite adept at joining in the sailing on Lady of Avenel! Others may prefer to have a shot at steering the ship, look out for wildlife in the sea, the sky or on the shore or play over some tunes as we sail through the islands that dot the north-west corner of Ireland.

Arriving at a beautiful, remote anchorage, we may choose to take a wander ashore, play a session aboard the Lady or just enjoy the serenity of our surroundings.



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Day 6

We sail east once more – with the prevailing weather giving us every chance of a fair wind – back towards Lough Swilly. If the weather is fair, we may play some tunes on deck; if the breeze is good we may prefer to get stuck in and help manoeuvre the ship under sail.

Our passage takes us round the corner and into the bay beneath the eyecatching Fanad Head lighthouse; we anchor here and prepare for our last night together. We may hold a concert of our own aboard the Lady; or we may bring our music ashore to one of the remote pubs here. Either way we're sure to make the most of our last night onboard.

Day 7

All that remains is to make the 14 mile passage back up Lough Swilly to Rathmullan. We have a breakfast together en-route and enjoy the scenery before arrival at the pontoon berth where we say our goodbyes.



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Equipment list: (We recommend you bring the following):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Instrument | <input type="checkbox"/> Waterproof jacket and trousers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Warm jumper/fleece | <input type="checkbox"/> Long trousers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boots/waterproof footwear | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunglasses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Towel | <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of identification |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thermal layers | <input type="checkbox"/> RYA logbook if you have one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thick socks | <input type="checkbox"/> A soft bag (no suitcases please!) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient cash to last the week | |

Getting there

Bus

Information on bus travel to Rathmullan is available through <http://locallinkdonegal.ie>

If you plan on coming by bus it will be important to check the timetables nearer the time.

In 2019, travelling by bus from Belfast, a no. 273 took you to Strabane; a no. 32 from Strabane to Letterkenny; and a no. 300 from Letterkenny to Rathmullan, the whole journey taking 4 ½ hours on a Sunday.

Taxi

Taxis are available in Derry and in Letterkenny; a fare from Letterkenny is estimated at 38 euros. If we make contact before the trip it may be possible to share taxis or to coordinate so that fares can be split.

Air

Ryanair fly to **Derry City Airport** from **Edinburgh**; **Loganair** fly there from **Southend Airport**.

Many airlines have routes to and from **Belfast International Airport**.

Sea

Many passenger and car ferry routes can be taken to **Belfast** or to **Larne**, from ports such as Cairnryan, Stranraer, Liverpool and more.



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The ship



Lady of Avenel is a 102 foot Brigantine rigged ship, with 12 guest berths in addition to crew quarters. She was built in Poland in 1969 as a tug, but was converted to a sailing vessel in the Netherlands in 1992. She has been operating out of Maldon, Essex since 2012 and works with a number of different activities, from open water swimming to sea kayaking and paramotor trips.

To learn more about the ship you can visit www.ladyofavenel.com





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Accommodation on board

You will be allocated a berth in one of our six double cabins. For solo travellers, cabins will be allocated on a same-sex basis; if two people travelling together wish to share a cabin, we recommend booking early to ensure availability.

There are two showers and three toilets in the accommodation which are shared.

Meals are prepared in the modern upper deck galley; these are of a high standard and prepared by our own chef. Meals, tea and coffee are included in the price of the trip.



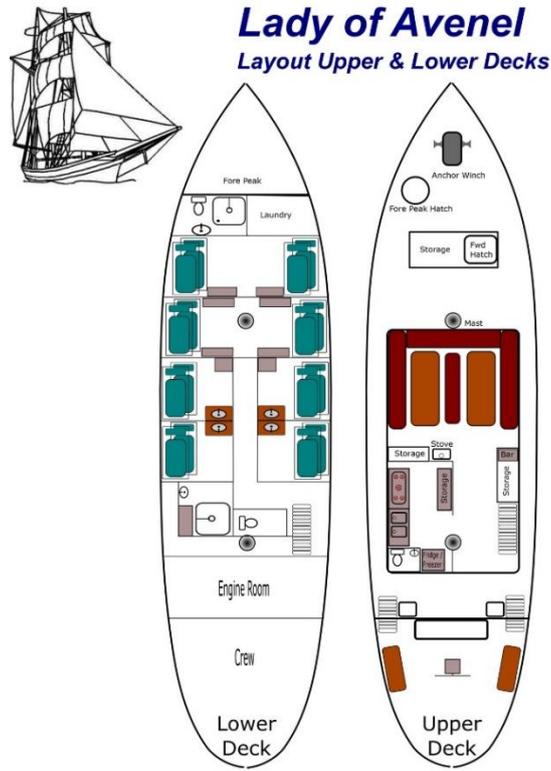
The galley aboard Lady of Avenel



A double cabin aboard Lady of Avenel.



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The upper deck saloon provides an ideal place to socialise and, with the tables cleared away, will be the perfect session space for the evenings we spend aboard. Should the weather be fair enough, we may be able to play sessions on deck.



Drinks (Beer, wine, soft drinks) will be available from the ship's bar; this is run on an honesty system where drinks taken are marked down and the bill settled at the end of the trip.



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Barry Nisbet

The Sessions and Sail voyages were founded by Barry Nisbet, a tall ship sailor and musician from Shetland. Barry has been combining sessions and sailing for years, as captain of a variety of sailing vessels such as Søren Larsen, Pelican of London and Tenacious, and as a well-known fiddle player and songwriter.



(Photograph © Siobhan Diamond 2018)

More information on Barry's music career is available at www.barrynisbet.com



Barry will be on board throughout the Sessions and Sail trips to give guidance on music or sailing to any who need it.



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Other

There may be the times when we visit cafes, bars or attractions ashore. Cash machines may not be available in all the remote places we will be visiting, so it is recommended to bring along enough cash for the week.

If there is any further information you need regarding your trip, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us by email or telephone.

