



SESSIONS & SAIL 2020 – Caledonian Canal

VOYAGE NOTES

The Trip



Join us aboard the Lady of Avenel for **Sessions and Sail 2020 – Caledonian Canal**

This two-masted, Brigantine-rigged tall ship will be your home for 5 days as we step aboard in Oban and sail through the heart of the Scottish Highlands to Inverness. The ship will be your base for a voyage of exploration and music with sessions, workshops and more.

See the famous ‘Neptune’s Staircase’ while admiring lofty Ben Nevis; follow this ship route through the heart of the highlands Enjoy the tranquillity and remoteness of the canal and a pace of life that harks back to a less frantic time.

You will learn tunes from the rich local tradition under the guidance of top Scottish musicians in the bright saloon aboard Lady of Avenel; we will walk ashore to a local pubs or village halls to play sessions with local musicians and meet the communities.

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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Destinations.

Oban



(Photo: Barry Nisbet)

The gateway to the isles, the bustling town of Oban is where you will join the Lady of Avenel; the scenery, islands and sea passages that surround it will capture your imagination from day one.



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Corpach



(Photo: Corpach Sea Lock by Ian Rainey CC BY-SA 2.0)

At the head of Loch Linnhe, with Fort William and the imposing form of Ben Nevis just across the water, Corpach is where we enter the Caledonian Canal. The eight locks of Neptune's Staircase raise us the 20 metres vertically before the canal brings us to Loch Lochy.



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Fort Augustus



(Photograph: puffin11uk CCO 1.0)

Halfway along the canal, between Loch Oich and Loch Ness, we have Fort Augustus, a small but bustling town with several good session pubs. Tour boats, yachts and fishing boats assemble here to pass the Fort Augustus locks.



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Loch Ness



(Photograph: 'Loch Ness' Dave Stokes CC BY 2.0)

Loch Ness could potentially provide one of two opportunities to set some sails on this voyage. Given the geography of the Great Glen, the wind will generally be either right astern or right on the nose. If it's the former, we will set some square sails; if the latter, we will need to use Lady of Avenel's engine to make headway up the loch.



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Inverness



(Photograph: 'Inverness' jeremySO CC BY 2.0)

The capital of the Highlands, Inverness is our destination at the North Sea end of the canal. A busy town of 50,000, Inverness boasts several famous session pubs.



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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 pier in Oban, where the crew welcome you aboard; you are given a tour of the ship and a briefing from the Captain.

We leave the harbour and sail past Lismore and the Appin narrows (Note, we have spied sea eagles on the islands here in the past so keep your eyes peeled!). We will set some sails on this passage if conditions allow.

Our route takes us up Loch Linnhe, through the Corran Narrows, and towards Corpach, where we tie the ship up in time for dinner, awaiting the start of our canal passage tomorrow morning.

After dinner is cleared away, the group gathers in the Lady of Avenel's upper saloon and gets to know each other over a few tunes.

Day 2

Liaising with the canal staff, we let go our lines and proceed into the first lock. It will be all hands on deck as we work the mooring lines and manoeuvre Lady of Avenel into each lock, making fast fore and aft and tending lines as the ship rises before letting go and motoring into the next lock.

By afternoon we should be clear and able to steam out into the canal, where 7 miles and more locks at Banavie and Gairlochy take us to Loch Long, perhaps with some tunes on deck as we navigate the canal.

We stop for the night at the head of Loch Lochy and enjoy a well-earned dinner and, after a stroll ashore, some tunes aboard the Lady.



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Day 3

We pass through Loch Oich, the Caledonian Canal's highest and most remote stretch, before a three-mile stretch of canal takes us to Fort Augustus. We tie up here and are joined by one of our professional tutors. After lunch we clear away the saloon for a tuition session, learning tunes from the Scottish tradition. This session may have to be coordinated around our passing down the locks at Fort Augustus – on the canal, all plans are dictated by the lock timings!

In the evening, we go ashore to play tunes and enjoy a few refreshments in one of Fort Augusta's popular pubs.

Day 4

Emerging into Loch Ness in the morning, if we're lucky and there is a fair breeze we may set squares and sail the 18 miles up the loch, keeping an eye out between tunes for a sighting of the monster or, more plausibly, the views of the mountains and Urquhart Castle that line the banks of the loch.

We'll have a chance to play through our new tunes once more, and plan what we may try at the session in Inverness tonight. You may like to have a shot at steering the ship, look out for wildlife in the loch, the sky or on the shore, or play over some tunes as we sail

Once we clear the loch, five miles of canal take us down to Inverness where we tie up and get ready for a night out in the city! It's a short taxi ride to the centre of town where bars such as MacGregors, Hootananny and more are well used to hosting sessions; having called ahead, we'll be hoping for a warm welcome and a few tunes here.

Day 5

This morning, after a breakfast together, and possibly a farewell tune or two, it's time say our goodbyes, pack up and leave the Lady of Avenel.



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

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

Getting there

Oban is connected by the bus daily from Inverness and Glasgow – see Citylink for more information <http://www.citylink.co.uk>;

There are trains to Oban from Glasgow www.thetrainline.com/www.scotrail.co.uk

If you choose to drive, we can advise on parking in the area – please email.

Inverness is well connected by bus, rail and has an airport with connections to many British cities.

We recommend confirming travel arrangements as early as possible to avoid price rises and availability problems.



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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

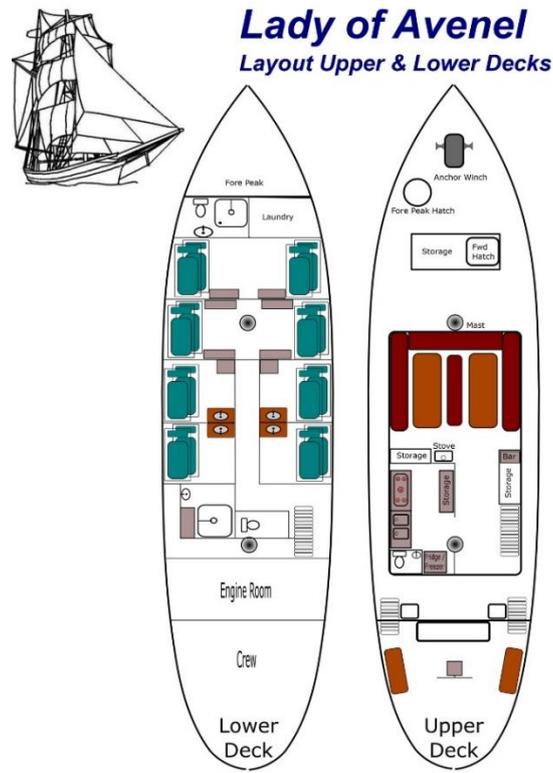


A double cabin aboard Lady of Avenel.



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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.

