



SESSIONS AND SAIL 2019 - VOYAGE NOTES

ORKNEY

The Trip



Join us aboard the Lady of Avenel for **Sessions and Sail 2019 - Orkney**.

This two-masted, Brigantine-rigged tall ship will be your home for the week as we step aboard in the old Viking city of Kirkwall and sail through the islands of Orkney. The ship will be your base for a voyage of exploration and music with sessions, workshops, sailing and more.

Walk to the site of the original St Magnus Cathedral on Egilsay, visit the charming village of Pierowall on Westray, watch seals on the rocks at Stronsay.

You will learn tunes from the rich Orkney tradition under the guidance of some of Orkney's best musicians in the bright saloon aboard Lady of Avenel; later, we will walk ashore to the local pub or village hall 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.

Back in Kirkwall on the last night of the trip, we will host a grand concert and dance, open to the wider public – if you wish, you may choose to demonstrate some of the music you have learned this week and take the stage to join the performance.

Later, as the floor is cleared and one of Orkney's best ceilidh bands strikes up, you can dance the night away.

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



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Kirkwall



Home to one of the UK's most spectacular cathedrals, St Magnus, Kirkwall was the seat of the Viking earls of Orkney and Shetland (and at times, Sutherland) throughout the days of the Orkneyinga Saga.

Today it is a small but bustling harbour town of 6,000 and the capital of Orkney.

Egilsay



The site of the martyrdom of St Magnus, in 1117, his original cathedral still stands here, a short walk from the small harbour. Further south, the RSPB reserve of Onziebust boasts skylarks, lapwings, redshanks and the rare corncrake.



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Rousay



The distinctive, double-hilled island of Rousay is home to a community of 205, and boasts over 160 archaeological sites.

Westray



The Northern isle of Westray has a thriving community of 600; the village of Pierowall is built around the harbour. Westray has an RSPB reserve at Noup Head, the impressive Noltland Castle, built by Mary Queen of Scots' sherrif Gilbert Balfour in the 16th century, and a host of craft shops, pubs and cafes.

Stronsay



Stronsay is a flat, fertile island with a rocky shore much frequented by seals. The island has a strong musical tradition and is home to the Silver Darlings music group.

Shapinsay



Just a short hop from Kirkwall, Shapinsay is an agricultural island with a population of around 300. The Scots Baronial Balfour Castle dominates the skyline.



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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

You meet the 'Lady of Avenel' alongside the pier in Kirkwall harbour, where Barry and the crew will welcome you aboard; you are given a tour of the ship and a briefing from the Captain.

We leave the harbour and sail out to Rousay Sound, anchoring there in time to enjoy a drink before dinner. 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

After breakfast, we have the opportunity to walk ashore on Egilsay. Viewing the original St Magnus Cathedral, hearing the spring birds at the Onziebust RSPB reserve, you will surely agree that Orkney is at its very best in May.

Back aboard the ship, we pick up our first Orcadian tutor who, after lunch, hosts our first tuition session. Whether fiddler, guitarist or piper, beginner or expert, you will find new inspiration in Orkney music and will learn new tunes or techniques.

We then move the ship closer to the Rousay pier where we go ashore and join local musicians for a session at the Taversoe Inn.

Day 3

We sail on in the morning, to the isle of Westray. Taking up to 4 hours to cover the 18 miles to Pierowall, we will cross fingers for a fair wind to allow us to set as many of the Lady of Avenel's 11 sails as possible. You will be encouraged to join in, guided by the professional crew, although this is voluntary and some may prefer to sit back and watch the action!

Tying up in the harbour at Pierowall, we will have lunch and the opportunity to stretch legs with a walk ashore; then, our second tutor will join us and will lead a workshop session in the Lady's saloon.

In the evening, the community will welcome us to the cosy Pierowall Hotel where we will play tunes and enjoy the island hospitality.



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Day 4

A 20 mile sail takes us round the north of Eday, through the narrow Eday Sound, and into the sheltered harbour at Whitehall, on Stronsay. There we will recap and work through some of the tunes and techniques we have been taught over the past three days, under Barry's guidance.

There will be time to walk ashore and explore the shore and village before dinner; later, the Stronsay Hotel will be ready for our visit and some more tunes.

Day 5

In the morning we sail on, and 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 on the Stronsay shore or play over some tunes as we cruise along.

Arriving at Shapinsay, we will be joined by our third local tutor of the trip, who will give us further tuition and another unique take on Orkney's music.

Ashore we can enjoy an evening with the residents of Shapinsay.

Day 6

A walk and an explore ashore, then we sail from Shapinsay back towards Kirkwall for the final night party.

There will be opportunity to work through any tunes or pieces you may be considering to perform at the concert, and guidance from Barry where needed.

The public ashore and the venue in Kirkwall are ready for the Sessions and Sail ceilidh; after an earlier dinner we join them there. The format is a traditional concert followed by a dance; the concert will feature items from the participants of the voyage, with potential visits from some of our tutors from the week.

The decks are then cleared and we can all have a good time dancing Eva 3-steps, Strip the Willows (Orkney style) and waltzes, to the music of a traditional Orkney dance band.

Day 7

The morning will give us a breakfast together, and possibly one last tune before we pack up our bags, say our goodbyes and leave the Lady of Avenel at the Kirkwall Pier.



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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

Kirkwall can be reached by aeroplane, with flights from Aberdeen, Inverness, Glasgow, Edinburgh or Shetland – see www.loganair.co.uk

Northlink Ferries have sailings up to three times a day from Scrabster to Stromness, evening sailings four times a week from Aberdeen to Kirkwall, and evening sailings three times a week from Lerwick. See www.northlinkferries.com

Pentland Ferries have sailings three times a day from Gill's Bay to St Margaret's Hope, see www.pentlandferries.co.uk

Bus travel within Orkney, and from the airport and ferry terminals is frequent; timetables are available at <http://www.orkney.gov.uk/service-directory/b/bus-timetables.htm>

We recommend confirming flights or 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

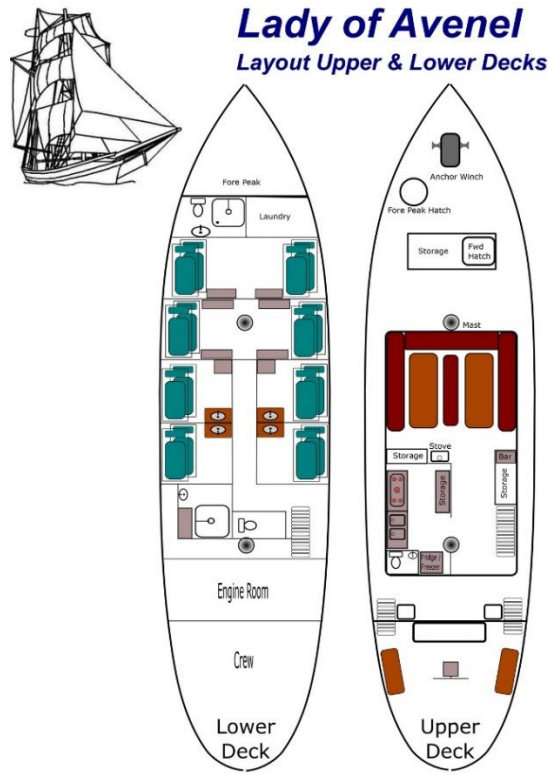


A double cabin aboard Lady of Avenel.



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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 are the brainchild of 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.

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.

