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VIA EMAIL

**Saoirse Rally
Ireland – Madeira 1923 – 2023
Celebrating Conor O'Brien's Circumnavigation**

Dear Commodore,

Next year will mark the centenary of the commencement of Conor O'Brien's remarkable two-year circumnavigation south of each of the great capes, the first by an amateur yachtsman. The voyage was conducted under the Royal Cruising Club burgee (ICC was founded in 1929) and the ensign of the newly independent Ireland. He was awarded the RCC Challenge Cup in each of the years 1923, 24 and 25. O'Brien was elected as the first honorary member of the ICC following its foundation in 1929.

To mark the anniversary of this momentous cruise, the Irish Cruising Club is organizing a rally to Madeira next year as the first leg of O'Brien's cruise was from Dun Laoghaire to Madeira. We would be delighted if members of the The Ocean Cruising Club would join us in their yachts. In the appendix to this letter I set out the information that we have issued to our own members. Because of port size limitations in Madeira the number of yachts participating is restricted to approximately 50 and thus we are pleased to offer approximately eight places to OCC members. This number may be capable of increase depending on uptake by our own members and other guest clubs.

If any of your members wish to express interest in joining the event, please ask them to do so by contacting Seamus O'Connor, chairman of the organizing sub-committee at socmarine@gmail.com.

Yours sincerely,

David Beattie
Commodore

Appendix
Irish Cruising Club
Saoirse Rally
Ireland – Madeira 1923 – 2023
Celebrating Conor O'Brien's Circumnavigation

The ICC intends to host a cruise of yachts in the Madeira island group in June/ July 2023 to mark the centenary of the commencement of Conor O'Brien's circumnavigation of the world.

Conor O'Brien's circumnavigation in his yacht *Saoirse*, commenced from Dun Laoghaire (Dublin) on 20th June 1923. The port of Funchal in Madeira was his first port of call, where he arrived on 3rd July, 1923.

Conor O'Brien was the first person to be awarded Honorary Membership of the ICC in recognition of his outstanding achievement. We intend to commemorate the centenary of the first leg of his voyage, while having an enjoyable cruise for members and guests.

Conor O'Brien Commemorative Cruise - Madeira July 2023

The following dates are indicative and may change slightly as planning continues:

On/before 29th June: Yachts assemble in Porto Santo

30th June: Rally events ashore

1st July: Depart for Quinta do Lorde marina in Madeira – crew changes possible, and shore parties can join yachts

- Alternative is to remain in Porto Santo and sail directly to Funchal on 3rd July

3rd July: Depart for Funchal – Sail in company to Funchal

- Special Mooring Facility with Pontoon being arranged to accommodate yachts
- Plan is to be Funchal based for 5 days
- shore events, tours, bodegas, Levada walks, - learn about and sample Madeira wine etc

7th July: Conducted tour and visit to Ilhas Desertas – event to be arranged.

8th July: Cruise ends with final dinner

The focus is primarily centered in Funchal with exploration events ashore. The proposed period is 10 days commencing circa 29th June in Porto Santo and then proceeding onwards to the main island of Madeira, and possibly on to Ilhas Desertas, the nature reserve, before finishing on/about 8th July.

There are three available marinas on the main island; namely Quinta do Lorde in the east, Calheta in the west, and one at Funchal, the capital, about mid-way along the sheltered south coast – as mentioned we are arranging a special mooring facility in the center of Funchal, this should prove to be comfortable and convenient and caters well for crew/family joining in the activities.

The voyage there and back

Madeira is about 1200 nm from Ireland. However, the voyage can very conveniently be made with shorter passages. Examples are:

Ireland – 600 nm → Galicia – 280 nm → Lisbon – 130 nm → Lagos – 500 nm → Porto Santo. Galicia → Porto Santo direct is 700nm.

All these places (except Porto Santo) offer the possibility of crew changes.

A return from Madeira might go: Funchal – 530 nm → The Azores—830 nm → Galicia.

All the potential stop-overs offer great opportunities to explore, rest, revictual and to leave a boat over winter.

Thus, the voyage to and from this cruise can be considered an opportunity to do some blue-water cruising with a lot of interest en route. When we begin to understand how many yachts are participating and get some idea of their preferred routeing, we may be in a position to organise events/support, for instance in Galicia, Lisbon or indeed Lagos.

The event organising committee are working hard to produce an enjoyable and worthwhile cruise. Do join us for all the fun and adventure.

To help us estimate demand for marina berths, we would appreciate expressions of interest asap from members who may be interested in participating.

Please email : Séamus O'Connor at socmarine@gmail.com

- Yacht name and LOA
- Contact person with email address
- Your probable routeing to/from Madeira

A firm commitment is not required at this time. If you have any questions, please contact the chairman of the organising committee (Seamus O'Connor).

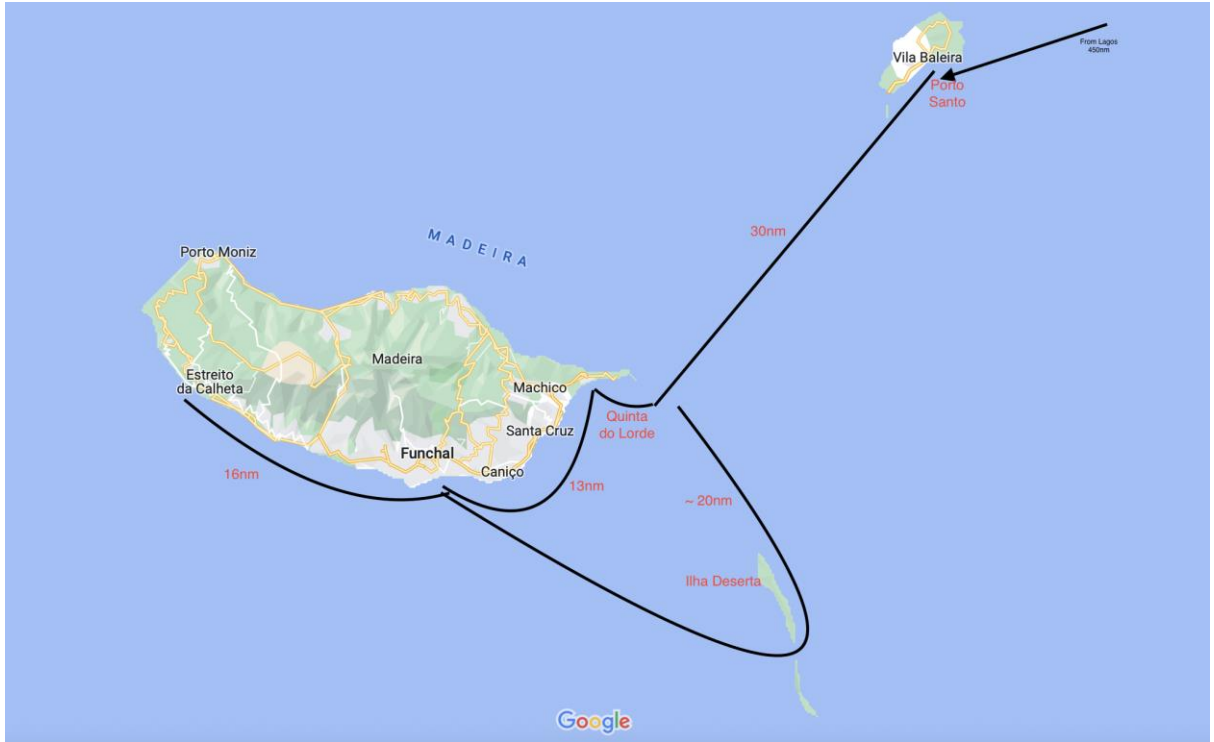
More about Madeira

Madeira represents a significant island in the context of the 'Era of Discovery' for Portugal; Madeira was its first discovery in 1419. Madeira consists of the main island with the capital Funchal, to the NE is the island of Porto Santo. It is a delightful island to visit. To the SE are the Ilhas Desertas, made up of three islands, which are an uninhabited (except for wardens) nature reserve with some anchorages. A permit is required to visit.

Madeira itself is very historic with delightful architecture and interesting Botanic gardens to visit, as well as exploring the bodegas for the famous Madeira wine. There are numerous restaurants. Of special interest to walkers are the stunning *levadas*. These are irrigation channels, all with a narrow footpath beside them, that encircle the south of the island at various levels offering wonderful, if sometime quite vertiginous, easy walks through varied countryside and villages.

Currently there are direct flights twice weekly from Dublin to Funchal. It is also possible to fly to Funchal via Lisbon with either Ryanair or TAP, so crew changes and landside visitors will be easily accommodated.

The RCC Pilotage Foundation "Atlantic Islands" now in its 7TH Ed. (September 2021), provides comprehensive information for visiting the islands. Weatherwise temperatures are mild throughout the year, averaging 24°C in summer while sea temperatures are on average 22°C. North to northeasterlies winds prevail for about 60% of the year but with local variations particularly on the south side of the island.



Some facts about Conor O'Brien and his boat

W M Nixon wrote in *Afloat* magazine:

"Ireland's [Conor O'Brien](#) was the first amateur skipper to circumnavigate the globe by the classic sailing ship route south of the great Capes, running down his easting in the big winds of the Great Southern Ocean which blow unhindered round the globe. But although his 42ft ketch Saoirse – which he'd designed himself – was often described as a "little ship", she was tiny by comparison with the enormous square-riggers which regularly plied this route"

O'Brien designed and commissioned the *Saoirse* for the circumnavigation. It was built in Baltimore in West Cork. He sailed under the burgee of the Royal Cruising Club (it was before the foundation of the ICC) and his ensign was the tri-colour of the Irish Free State and that was a first in every respect!