

# NC-0 Cruising the North Channel

From Drummond Island, Michigan (NC-1)  
To Baie Fine, Ontario (NC-83)...

*100 nautical miles*

## North Channel quick reference...

Type of report	overview of area
US Charts	NOS <a href="#">14860</a> , <a href="#">14880</a> , <a href="#">14881</a> , <a href="#">14882</a>
Cdn Charts	2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2250, 2251, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2268, 2286, 2299
US Customs	Drummond Island
Cdn Customs	1-888-CAN-PASS
Telephone area code	705, 906
GLCC Port Captains	yes



Left: the beautiful Bay of the Benjamins. Jo Schneider photo. Right: a snug and scenic anchorage. Ron Dwelle photo. Click the pics for enlarged views...

It's impossible to say what makes an ideal cruise through the best cruising waters in the world. There are many different kinds of cruisers, with different boats, different amounts of time available, different interests, different requirements.

This report makes recommendations for the following cruisers:

- Families with children
- Social cruisers — who move as a group of boats or want to be in locations with many other boats
- Activity-Oriented Cruisers — who want to hike, kayak, dinghy, and do things off the boat
- Marina Oriented — who want to be at a dock if possible and dine out often

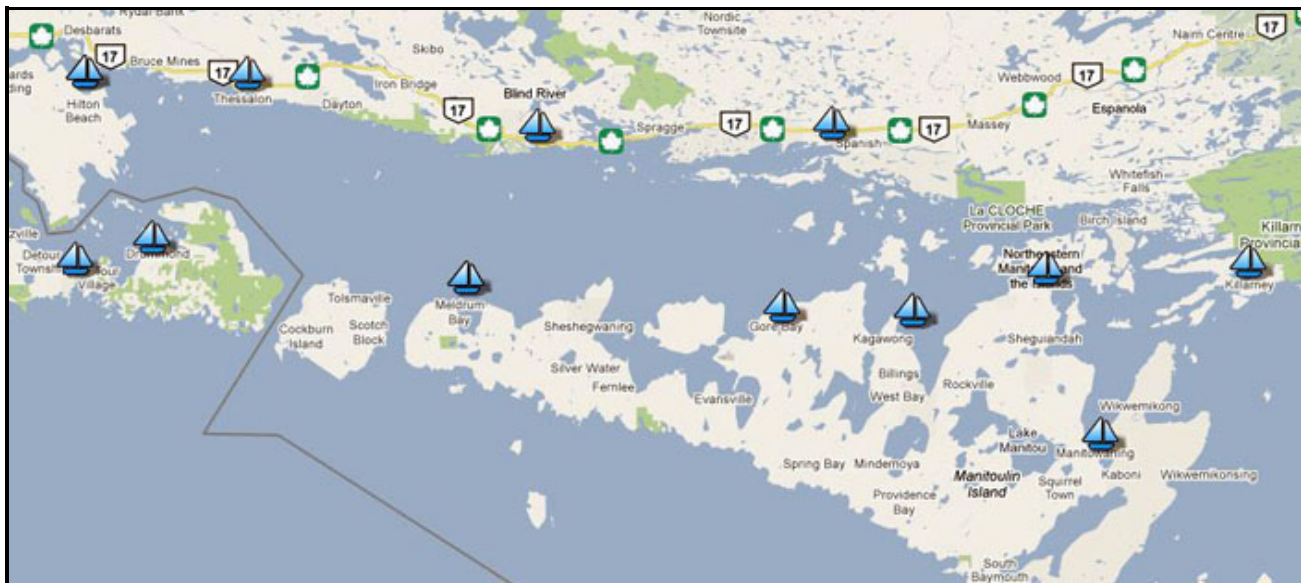
## Ports

Every boat will need services at some time. It may be just water and a pump-out. Most will also need fuel, laundry, food, and beverages. Many also like services such as restaurants, hair care, and other supplies and services such as a marine store, hardware, drugstore, banks, a book store, and internet access.

The following is the list of North-Channel ports—from best to worst—in providing these services.

Remember: there are no large cities in the North Channel, but all the small towns are experienced and generally do an excellent job for cruisers. Taken into account in the list below is the distance from the major services to the marinas. For the ports at the bottom of the list, some services are not available. Click on the port's name to go to the detailed harbor report.

1. [Little Current \(NC-17\)](#)
2. [Gore Bay \(NC-14\)](#)
3. [Thessalon \(NC-63\)](#)
4. [Blind River \(NC-59\)](#)
5. [Spanish \(NC-40\)](#)
6. [Manitowaning \(NC-78\)](#)
7. [Killarney \(GB-52\)](#)
8. [Detour \(H-83\)](#)
9. [Meldrum Bay \(NC-10\)](#)
10. [Hilton Beach \(NC-75\)](#)
11. [Kagawong \(NC-15\)](#)



Above: map of major service ports...

## Major places to visit

The following are spots that everyone should visit on a North-Channel cruise. You do not need to spend the night at anchor, since they are often quite crowded in season and seem to attract boaters who may not be well-skilled at anchoring. However, a night at each of these will provide all the basic beauties of a North Channel cruise.

- [Bay of the Benjamins, \(NC-23\)](#)
- [Covered Portage, \(GB-53\)](#)
- [Long Point Cove \(NC-53\)](#)
- [Bay Finn, \(NC-83\)](#)

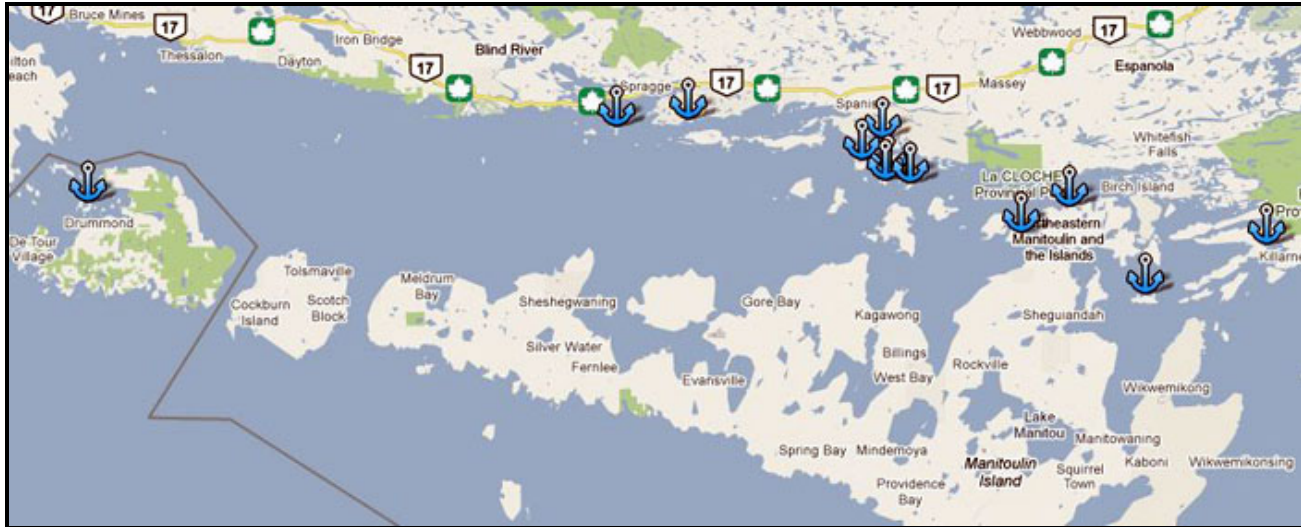
As you meet experienced cruisers, you will hear of other "must see" anchorages—it's sometimes said that 25 of the top 10 anchorages in the world are in the North Channel.

## Social Harbors

There are over 100 useful anchorages in the North Channel. The "social harbors" are larger anchorages that attract many cruisers. You can meet lots of people here, usually without undue

crowding. The listing is from west to east:

- [Harbor Island, \(NC-2\)](#)
- [Turnbull Harbor, \(NC-55\)](#)
- [Beardrop Harbour, \(NC-51\)](#)
- [West Hotham, \(NC-34.1\)](#)
- [Eagle Island, \(NC-25\)](#)
- [Bay of the Benjamins, \(NC-23\)](#)
- [South Benjamin, \(NC -25\)](#)
- [Croker Island, \(NC-22.5\)](#)
- [Sturgeon Cove, \(NC-28.5\)](#)
- [Rous Islands, \(NC-19.5\)](#)
- [Browning Cove of Heywood Island, \(NC -77\)](#)
- [Covered Portage Cove, \(GB-53\)](#)



Map of the "social" harbors...

## Activity-Oriented Cruisers

Go to these places for dinghy exploring, kayaking, hiking, and exploring. Bird-watching, flora and fauna viewing are always part of these places.

- [Turnbull Harbor, \(NC-55\)](#)—kayaking and dinghy exploring
- [Long Point Cove, \(NC-53\)](#)—kayaking/ dinghy and climbing the rocks
- [Beardrop Harbor, \(NC-51\)](#)—kayaking/dinghy and exploring
- Marianne Cove in [Bay Finn, \(NC-83\)](#)—hiking
- [North Channel, McGregor Bay, \(NC-87\)](#)—kayaking/dinghy and exploring
- [East-West Channel, \(NC-89\)](#)—kayaking/dinghy and exploring
- [The Pool in Bay Finn, \(NC-83\)](#)—hiking

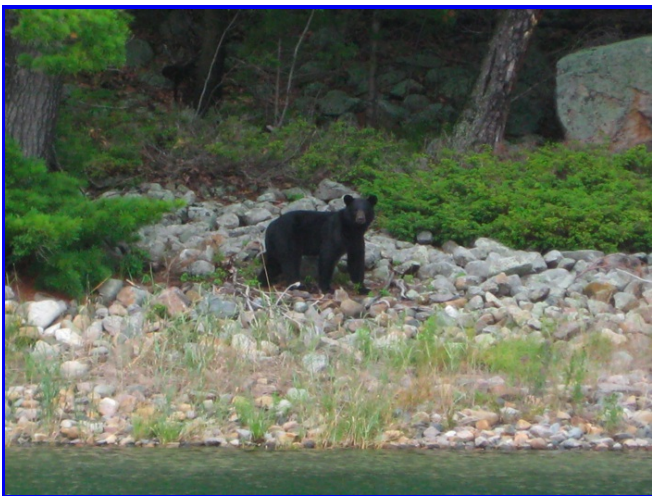
## Family Cruising Spots

Try these spots for children-friendly places, with swimming or a less-crowded environment. Beaches with warm water are scarce in the North Channel but here are a couple of places to try.

- [Louisa Island, \(NC-30.5\)](#). Great beach.
- [Thomas and Birthday Islands, \(NC-42\)](#). Excellent rock climbing, and small can't-get-lost islands.
- [Turnbull Harbour, \(NC-55\)](#). Good beach in the northwest corner of the north anchorage.



Left: shore-side hiking is great in the [South Benjamin anchorage \(NC-24\)](#). Right: sunset in [McGregor Bay \(NC-84\)](#). Ron Dwelle photos. Click on the pics for enlarged views...



Wildlife abounds in the North Channel. Photos of brown bear (left) and bald eagle (right) by Jo Schneider. Click on the pics for expanded views...

## Great Places to Eat

- [Killarney, \(GB-52\)](#)—Herbert's at the "Bus." Fish & chips served in a box.
- [Killarney, \(GB-52\)](#)—[Killarney Mountain Lodge](#)
- [Little Current, \(NC-17\)](#)—[The Anchor Inn](#) and Old English Pantry
- [Blind River \(NC-59\)](#)—[The Eldo Inn](#)
- [Gore Bay, \(NC-14\)](#). A suggested side trip to two different restaurants: [Garden's Gate](#); in Tehkummah and the School House in Providence Bay. Garden's Gate has great food and an unusual selection of micro brews in a garden setting. The School House (in an old school house) has traditional food, rich and cooked to perfection. Both require a driver service as they are approximately 30 minutes away by car. Bill's Driver Service provides a very interesting cruise to dinner. Bill's services can be arranged through the Gore Bay harbor master.
- [Meldrum Bay, \(NC-10\)](#)—the [Meldrum Inn](#). Outstanding smoked trout appetizer & white fish dinner.
- [Thessalon, \(NC-63\)](#)—Tina's on Main



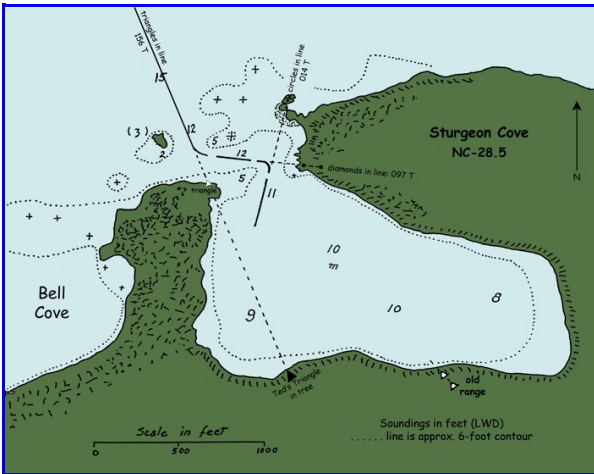
Left: photo by Jim Wooll. Right: the Meldrum Inn, a gem of an eatery in a tiny village. Donna Fink photo. Click on the images for enlarged views...

## Navigation

Canadian charts are now generally good, though you will almost always want the GLCC harbor reports to supplement them. With GPS, open water navigation is no problem, but among the islands you will almost always be in close quarters. Frequently, depths vary greatly, with 1-foot-deep rocks right next to 30-foot depths. Canadian aids to navigation are usually smaller and harder to spot than US sailors are used to, and many harbors have no aids whatsoever. So careful piloting is required, always with one eye on the GPS, another on the depthsounder, and another watching the landmarks near and far. Few cruisers will travel at night.

## Anchoring

Almost all the anchorages in the North Channel have good mud or sand bottoms to hold your hook, but there are also some gravel and rocky spots, and weeds can be a problem. As always, make sure you have a good set, and watch your swinging room. The standard courtesy of keeping clear of a boat already anchored should be religiously observed.



Left: many anchorages require GLCC harbor reports for safe entry—here [Sturgeon Cove \(NC-28.5\)](#). Right: very shallow water and very deep water are often right next to each other. Jo Schneider photo. Click on the images for enlarged views...

## Great Fishing

Fishing is a major activity in the North Channel. Almost every place offers possibilities. Small-mouth bass are caught most everywhere. Walleye (known in Canada as "pickerel") are a specialty

of the river outlets, particularly the [Spanish](#) and [Serpent Rivers](#), and the [Bay of Islands](#). Perch have been on the decline but can be occasionally caught in significant size and numbers. As is always the case, fishing was usually better yesterday...



**The government dock at Little Current, the hub of the North Channel. David Allen photo...**

## **Another View**

A 50-year-old report on an "ideal cruise"—written by the dean of North Channel cruising, the late Howard Blossom—is also available. [Click here..](#)

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