

# NC-0 Cruising the North Channel

07/16/2022 Joann Mead

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	ROAM app, <a href="#">CPB Information</a>
Canadian Customs	ArriveCan, <a href="#">CBSA Information</a>

GLCC Port Captains yes

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



**1) The beautiful Bay of the Benjamins. Jo Schneider photo. 2) A snug and scenic anchorage. Ron Dwelle photo.**

## Ports

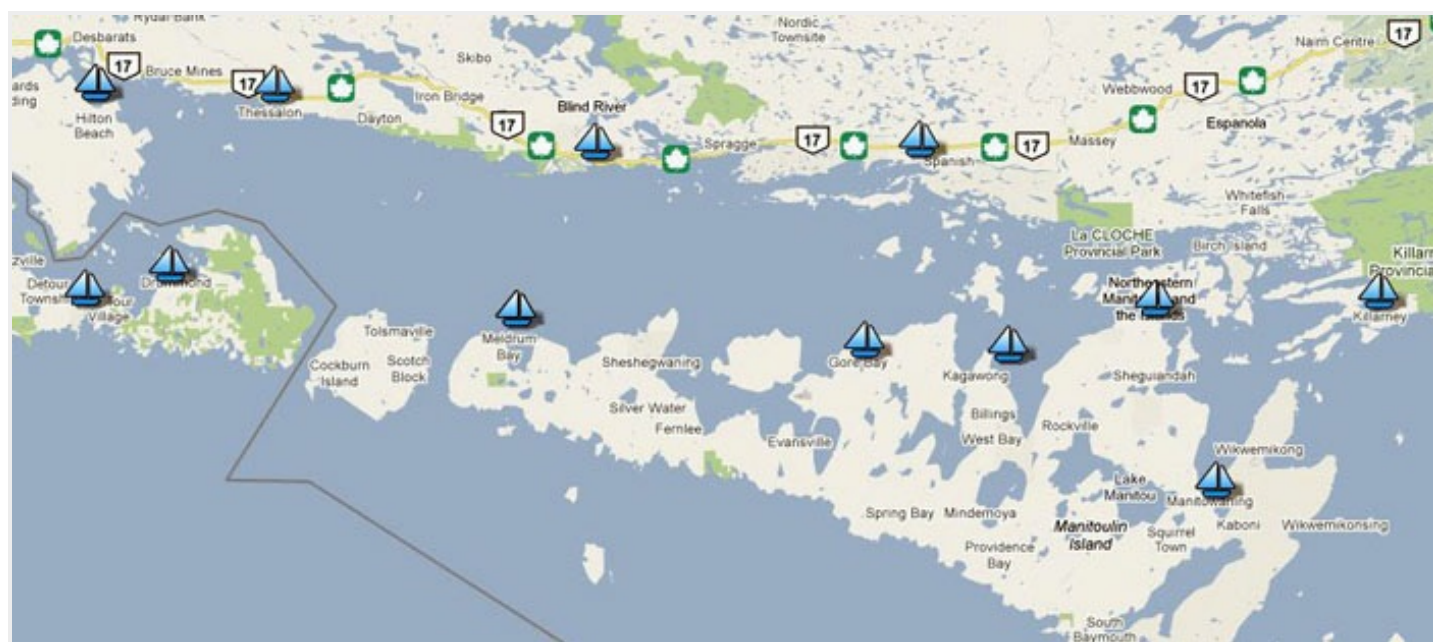
Every boat will need services at some time. It may be just water and a pump-out. Most will also need fuel, laundry, food, and beverages. Many also like services such as restaurants, hair care, and other supplies and services such as a marine store, hardware, drugstore, banks, a book store, and

internet access.

The following is the list of North Channel ports 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.

- [Little Current \(NC-17\)](#)
- [Gore Bay \(NC-14\)](#)
- [Thessalon \(NC-63\)](#)
- [Blind River \(NC-59\)](#)
- [Spanish \(NC-40\)](#)
- [Manitowaning \(NC-78\)](#)
- [Killarney \(GB-52\)](#)
- [Detour \(H-83\)](#)
- [Meldrum Bay \(NC-10\)](#)
- [Hilton Beach \(NC-75\)](#)
- [Kagawong \(NC-15\)](#)



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 \(NC-53\)](#)
- [Baie Fine \(NC-83\)](#)

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.



## Map of Social Anchorages

## 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 Harbour \(NC-55\)](#)
- [Beardrop Harbour \(NC-51\)](#)
- [West Hotham \(NC-34.1\)](#)
- [Eagle Island \(NC-25\)](#)
- [Bay of the Benjamins \(NC-23\)](#)
- [South Benjamin \(NC-24\)](#)
- [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 \(GB-53\)](#)

## 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 Harbour \(NC-55\)](#)—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 \(NC-83.2\)](#) in [Baie Fine \(NC-83\)](#)—hiking
- [North Channel, McGregor Bay \(NC-87\)](#)—kayaking/dinghy and exploring
- [East-West Channel \(NC-89\)](#)—kayaking/dinghy and exploring
- [The Pool in Baie Fine \(NC-83\)](#)—hiking

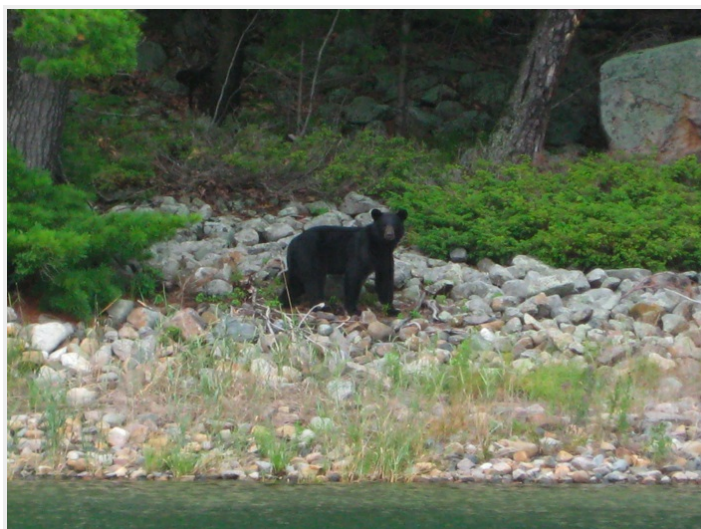
## Family Cruising Spots

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 northeast corner of the north anchorage.



1) Shore-side hiking is great in the [South Benjamin anchorage \(NC-24\)](#). 2) Sunset in [McGregor Bay \(NC-84\)](#). Ron Dwelle photos.



1) Photo of black bear and 2) Bald eagle. Wildlife abounds in the North Channel. Photos by Jo Schneider.

## Navigation

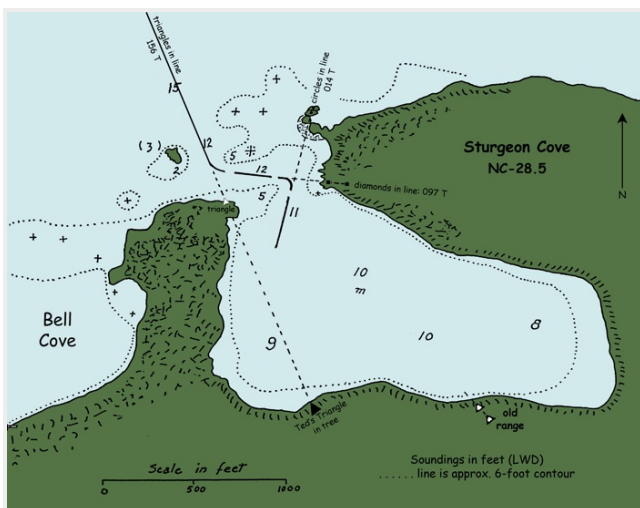
Canadian charts are generally good, though you will almost always want the GLCC harbor reports to supplement them. With GPS, open water navigation is no problem, but among the islands you will almost always be in close quarters. Frequently, depths vary greatly, with 1-foot-deep rocks right next to 30-foot depths. Canadian aids to navigation are usually smaller and harder to spot than U.S. 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 depth sounder, and another watching the landmarks near and far. Few cruisers will travel at night.



**1) Aerial photo of island anchorage in the Whalesback Channel. Photo by Jim Wooll. 2) The Meldrum Inn, a gem of an eatery in a tiny village. Donna Fink photo.**

## 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. Weeds can be a problem in some bays, as can submerged trees (deadheads). 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.



**1) Many anchorages require GLCC harbor reports for safe entry—here [Sturgeon Cove \(NC-28.5\)](#). 2) Very shallow water and very deep water are often right next to each other. Jo Schneider photo.**

## Social hour at anchor

Cocktail hour is a great time to meet and get to know other cruisers in your anchorage. There are some informal rules. Take the dinghy out and visit other boats before cocktail hour. When you find someone with common interests invite them over or you may be invited aboard. Agree to a time.

It is expected that everybody will provide their own first drink and bring along some hors d'oeuvres to share. If you are having a good time; the host boat may offer a second drink. This is more likely if you are drinking something simple like beer or wine. Most of these last about 90 minutes with the sure signal to leave that you need to use the head. Do not expect to use the head if you are a guest. If there is a large group of like minded boaters in an anchorage a shore party may be arranged at some local rock outcropping.

## Walking

Getting off the boat and strapping the legs always feels good. You can walk from any marina but

here are some special places that you may easily miss.

- [Milford Haven \(NC-6\)](#) Take the dinghy up the creek to the launch ramp and walk the lightly traveled roads.
- [Tolsmaville \(NC-9\)](#) Walk to the old school house or any of these really lightly used roads.
- [Meldrum Bay \(NC-10\)](#) Walk north along the shore or walk around the south side of the bay to the small marina.
- [Gore Bay \(NC-14\)](#) Walk north to the light house which is a small museum. Walk south around the bottom of the bay and up the hill for a grand view of the marina and town.
- [Barren Island area \(NC-31\)](#) Dinghy to Fort La Cloche which is a close kids camp. Cross the stream and follow the train along the east bank to LaCloche Lake
- [Baie Fine \(NC-83\)](#) Hiking form the pool or from Marianne Cove.
- [Usual Reason Cove \(NC-88 \)](#) Hike to the top of the ridge for great views of Baie Fine
- [Shoal Blight \(NC-92\)](#) Ashore you will find a large open field with low grass.

## Great Fishing

Fishing is a major activity in the North Channel. Almost every place offers possibilities. Small-mouth bass are caught nearly 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 occasionally be caught in significant sizes 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.](#)

*Report by Jim Wooll, Ron Dwelle, Ted Youngs, Mark O'Mara, Neal Owen, Mark Gagyi, Tom Wiese, and Lou Bruska*

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