

Visiting Murray Harbour by Boat

Extract from “Cruising Guide to the Saint Lawrence”, Editor Jim Evans, Puffin Press

Murray Harbour

46° 02.1N, 62° 27.1W

Canadian Chart 4420

Jim Evans 2016



The photo above shows Murray Harbour from the north. Beach Point is in the far distance, with Nova Scotia faintly visible beyond. Cahoon's Wharf is in the foreground - it's possible to get in here with care - Clow's Wharf and the Murray Islands beyond. Sandspits out on the islands often have seals on them – worth a dinghy trip on a fine day. Machon's Point and Murray Harbour village are out of sight to the right, as is Murray River (around the point in the middle right).

Directions



CAUTION The entrance to Murray Harbour is good by local standards but should definitely be avoided in a strong easterly gale, particularly on the ebb, as the seas break right to the bottom on the bar. It is safe in all other conditions.

The entrance changes somewhat each year. You should have no trouble carrying at least seven feet at lowest tide to the entrance. There is a conspicuous range which works well until one gets close to the entrance; however, the best course in 2016 was to take a straight line from the red-and-white fairway buoy towards the front range. Watch for first the FIG buoy (the shallowest part of the bar is close to this) and then the red as you approach the entrance - favour the red, then look for the red lighted buoy NM8 just inside the entrance. A shoal makes out eastward from Beach Point (Oldstore Point) eastward (the edge of this shoal is very abrupt and it dries at low tide). A small green buoy was added to the south side of the channel close to the entrance in 2008. Favour the north side in the entrance. When the sun is out and the water clear the shoals are obvious, but may be harder to see after a storm. Currents run strongly here – up to 4 knots – and mixing of the water layers sometimes gives false sonar readings (with consequent imminent heart failure) just inside, but there is in fact at least 20 feet. It's not as difficult as it sounds – I routinely sail in and out.

Anchorage and Berths

There is a lovely quiet anchorage in by Gordon's Island (46° 01.323N, 62° 29.786W), perfectly sheltered from northerly winds and fairly well sheltered from the rest by the shallow banks to the

south. This was an anchorage in the days of working sail when the schooners sailed from this area to Cape Breton and Newfoundland with Island produce. The island used to have several homes and a canning factory, but all the islands are now owned by the Nature Conservancy.



Gordon's Island anchorage and channel, Beach Point Harbour

The channel is easy to see in sunshine or at low tide after rounding Sable Point, but even when the banks are well covered it is easily found by taking it slowly and using the depth sounder. Once the channel has been located follow in to the middle of the island where anchorage may be found for several vessels in about 16 - 17 feet. Although there is a channel westward shown on the chart it is hard to find and has shoaled. The current here is strong at spring tides and in windy conditions boats lie to the current rather than the wind, making for uncomfortable anchoring. In light conditions it's delightful.

Many of the other potential anchorages have been taken over by mussel farms.

It appears on the chart that there might be a potential anchorage at Cody Point, Murray Harbour North, but the old piers are ruinous and completely shoaled in.

Beach Point

46° 01N, 62° 29.2w

Canadian Chart 4420
Jim Evans 2008

Remarks

The locals call Beach Point “the Cape” or “the Bull Pen”. It’s a busy place in lobster season, but they probably won’t throw you out, although they may prefer you went elsewhere. Out of season it’s well-sheltered, with easy access through a short, well-buoyed channel, but the fish plant operates most of the year so there’s constant truck traffic. There’s power and possibly water available; you may be able to get lobster and ice from the plant. It’s a mile or so to a nice beach at Beach Point (much quicker by dinghy, but watch the current in the entrance).

Machon’s Point Wharf

46° 00.8N, 62° 30.8W
Canadian Chart 4420
Jim Evans 2014

Directions

Buoyage and ranges into Murray Harbour have been changed. The Machon Point range has been discontinued. The channel buoyage has been improved, however, and is quite

straightforward to the green buoy turnoff onto the village range; look for a red with a black/red/black to the east of it across from the green buoy, which indicates the turn up to the village.



As soon as the range into Murray Harbour village from NM15 lines up (have binoculars ready, it’s hard to see the range in daylight, particularly in the afternoon although it’s easy to see after dark – the range is just to the left of the church spire) turn hard to port onto the range around the green buoy. There are shoals close on either hand at this point and the current can be strong on the beam for the first hundred yards or so. The channel into the village is staked but the stakes are in the shallows - the range accurately shows the deepest water right through the narrows just past Machon’s Point wharf. There is at least ten feet all the way in - but the channel is narrow. Take care turning into Machon’s Point Wharf: there are shoals on both sides and it isn’t very deep in the middle! The wharf itself is usually busy, but you can anchor in the bay.

Remarks

Machon’s Point Wharf is best avoided in lobster season and in herring season - it’s very noisy and crowded with much coming and going. The rest of the year the only reason to go here rather than Murray Harbour a short distance away is that there is a fishermen’s co-op chandlery (they have good things like boat nails, stainless nuts and bolts, epoxy, antifouling, foul weather gear,

paint, rope and fishing tackle) in the shack above the wharf (nearest the road by the parked boats on the left in the photo above). Ask and you can probably get fresh lobster and mussels here.

Murray Harbour Village

46° 00.3N, 62° 31.3W

Canadian Chart 4420

Jim Evans 2014, Michael Moore 2014



Directions

Simply follow the range and staked channel on past Machon's Point Wharf - it is quite deep and wide once past the narrows and the stakes are probably reliable past this point. Watch for the last port-hand stake before the harbour: don't cut the corner.

As you come in look for "Nellie Lamb" on her mooring in front of the yellow bungalow inshore from the last red stake before the harbour (that's her picking up the mooring above). If she's not there feel free to use the mooring - it's a big truck engine with 1" ground chain and ½" riser - but be aware there's barely four and a half feet at low water springs. The mud's so soft you may not notice if you go aground. If she is there come ashore and say hi!

Anchorage and Berths

As well as the public docks on both sides of the river (power available if you have a long extension and can find the outlets) Murray Harbour boasts Jamie Richards' "Bowdridge Landing" marina: (902) 962 2427. The marina is in the small indentation in the south river bank at the top of the photo above - the floating docks are not shown in the photo - and there was a lot of dredging done in 2009. Murray Harbour offers the best shelter south of Montague - Hurricane Juan hardly disturbed boats in here while it wreaked havoc in Charlottetown.

Michael Moore 2014 noted: Jamie remains totally friendly and helpful. The dredged marina basin is filling in. We draw 6'6" and 4 days after springs dried out by about a foot on the outer side of the southernmost dock, but the next night were able to stay afloat by wedging our

inflatable between the boat and the dock, pushing the keel 5 feet further into the stream and gaining 2 feet of depth under the keel, the river bank dropping off towards the middle of the river. The marina has Wi-Fi.

Facilities

The marina has a shower and toilet, and power and water on the docks. Jamie will go out of his way to help with anything you need. The nearest fuel is in Murray River. Butler's General Store in the village (just up the hill from the marina) is now a liquor store as well as a grocery and hardware store, making this a convenient spot to provision. Otis Butler does his own butchering, so the meat is good. There is a post office (up the hill at the top of the photo) and two good restaurants: Harbourview - their chowder is recommended, across the bridge, and #5 Café, offering more upscale grub in a lovingly restored church next to the General Store. The service station across the road from the docks no longer has fuel: nearest fuel is in Murray River.

A machine shop (East Coast Engine and Machine), situated just west of the village, is equipped to do major engine rebuild and installation work. They provide a manufacturer's authorized sales, warranty parts and service centre for: Deutz*, Lister Petter, Daewoo/Doosan, Iveco, Yanmar* , Hatz*, Ford power products*, Kohler diesel*, Robin, Subaru*, Mann filters* , Lofa control panels, and Farymann*. (*Exclusive to PEI)

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Most other things can be organised if you ask around.

Often there is a ceilidh at the Community Centre on Friday nights. The library at the Community Centre has high-speed Internet access.