

A gurl's guide to island hopping

John Arthur Harwood Crouch gets you to the islands and back in one piece

for those 'mos not blessed with cottages in Muskoka or other similarly fabulous addresses, the best bet for escaping the hustle and bustle (not to mention the pollution, garbage and mayor) of our fair city are the Toronto Islands. Guys already familiar with the hot bodies of Hanlan's or the kitsch of Centreville can skim this story. However, if your reaction was "Islands, what islands?!" then please, take the time to read this easy-to-follow guide on getting to your new favourite summer escape.

The most foolproof way to get to the islands — whether it's the largely residential Ward's Island to the east, the family-centric Centre Island in the middle, or the heavenly homosexual Hanlan's to the west — is to take a 15-minute ferry ride from the Toronto Ferry Docks, located at 9 Queen's Quay W (between Yonge and Bay). For \$7 (or less, if you buy in bulk) you get a return ticket to any of the islands' three docks; all the ferries leave at 15-minute intervals. Good news for those who get stuck on island time: if you miss the ferry, the islands are entirely linked, and you can get from Ward's all the way to Hanlan's in less than 15 minutes by bike so you can catch another one. (A bike is really the best way to get around this land mass.)

If you do take the ferry, plan ahead. The lineups on nice days (especially weekends)

can be brutal, and most of the ticket booths are cash only. Go early or late and stay as long as you can (the final ferry leaves at 11:45pm) to miss the worst of the crowds. To avoid that pesky line at all times, buy 10 tickets in advance for \$63. Then you can walk past the hordes, throw in a ticket and sail away!

Basic info and schedules: toronto.ca/parks/island/ferry-schedule.htm

Deals and island details: torontoislands.org

Fairies can avoid ferries completely by spending a few more dollars, gathering some friends and opting for a water taxi. The cost is \$10 per person (minimum \$30 charge per boat) for a one-way trip over, and it's an open secret that once you're on the island, you can catch a ferry back to the mainland free of charge (there's no turnstile and no one checks for tickets). Taxis can be found along

Grindr and Squirt aren't the only handy apps you'll want on your phone during an island voyage.

The ferry app will ensure you never miss the boat: torontoislandferryfinder.com

Queen's Quay just west of the ferry docks; we recommend calling ahead to ensure your floating carriage awaits. The best thing about these boats? They operate on your schedule and might be a good bet for visiting and impatient out-of-towners who want the Toronto experience without the delays. (It should be noted that taking a water taxi means missing out on the prime man-watching available in the ferry lines.) Most taxis are cash only.

fivestarwatertaxi.com
torontowatertaxi.weebly.com

Feeling sporty and adventurous? Several places, including Mountain Equipment Co-op on King St or the Harbourfront Canoe & Kayak Centre on Queen's Quay, allow you to become the captain of your own tiny yacht (hat not included) for an hourly or daily rental fee. You'll have to find parking for your vessel once you get across and you'll probably get soaked, but think how butch you'll look paddling up to Hanlan's in your AussieBums.

mec.ca
paddletoronto.com

The next time you find yourself bemoaning life in the city or yearning for real estate in cottage country, remember that all you really need is to pack snacks, drinks and sunscreen and make your way to Toronto's very own tropical loveland.

John Arthur Harwood Crouch is captain of his own tiny yacht.

