

Topo Maps 31 C/I & 31 B/5
Navigation Chart 1437
Waterproof Chart #78
Reference Map ⑤



Gordon Island looks much different than many of the others because of the thin sandstone layer that underlies it.



ROUTE

Navy Islands



The Navy Islands are a nearshore island cluster that features quiet bays, innumerable islets and a maze of tiny, back channels seemingly designed for paddlers. Mulcaster Island lies in the midst of this island group, offering quiet campsites, deep water swimming and interesting forest trails. It is a favourite destination for paddlers exploring this route.

DEPARTURE POINT

The Ivy Lea Campground offers excellent mainland camping and is an ideal launch site that positions paddlers on the protected waters of legendary Smuggler's Cove. Park information is available at www.stlawrenceparks.com/ivylea.htm For shorter day-trips, the Parks of the St. Lawrence, way-side park at Halstead's Bay is also a good access point, although the launching is off a rock beach. Those embarking on extended trips in this region should consider secure departure points offered by the many inns and marinas in the Ivy Lea Village vicinity that maintain boat launches and offer overnight parking facilities.

Paddlers already on the water can easily access the Navy Islands from the westerly Admiralty Islands route (#4), or easterly Raft Narrows route (#6).

TRIP LENGTH

A full-day of paddling is easily filled here, and nearby camping and accommodations allow paddlers to use this area as a base for adventures further astream.

DISTANCES

Departing from Halstead's Bay Park, paddlers travelling downriver will arrive at Mulcaster Island after a sheltered 3 km trip, while those heading southwest to Gordon Island should expect a more exposed 5 km paddle.

Two kilometers separate Ivy Lea Park and Ivy Lea Village. From the village to Mulcaster Island is a 4 km paddle.

FRONTENAC AXIS

The Ivy Lea area, the centre of the Frontenac Axis, is the perfect place to ponder the area's mysterious geological history. Here the channels are narrow and the river is dominated by large islands that nearly connect the northern and southern shores.

The natural landscape of Southern Ontario has been altered and fragmented since European settlement to meet our economic and social development needs. Due to the rugged character of the Frontenac Axis, the Thousand Islands region was not altered as significantly. It remains a semi-wild area with much of its ecosystem structure and function intact.

The Thousand Islands provides landscape-level connectivity allowing the movement of wildlife such as lynx, wolf and bear, between the wild areas of the Algonquin Highlands and Adirondack Mountains.



POINTS OF INTEREST

Gordon Island

Gordon Island lies just 1 km offshore of Sturdivant's Point, downriver from Gray's Beach, and 1.5 km north of Sugar Island. The thin sandstone layer that underlies Gordon Island makes this place an anomaly in the Thousand Islands. Extensive sandstone bluffs can be viewed along the island's southern and western shores. The island can quickly be distinguished from the water, for it lacks any substantial relief. The tree tops are a uniform height because the granite ridges and cliffs, characteristic of neighbouring islands, are absent. The hardwood forest community on the island hosts a rich diversity of flora, including a colorful wildflower bloom each spring.

The archaeological evidence found on Gordon Island suggest that humans began to use this spot 9000 years ago; just after the last ice age. A complex of ancient campsites, the most important archaeological find ever made in the Thousand Islands, indicates that the island may have been a seasonal stopover used by aboriginal people following game, a site close to rich fishing grounds, or a gathering place for trade.



Parks Canada maintains 5 campsites on the island. These are best accessed by the docks at the northwestern corner or southern face. A spectacular sunset view awaits campers who choose the quiet site atop the bluff at the island's western tip.

Mulcaster Island

Mulcaster is a hidden gem within St. Lawrence Islands National Park. Its secluded campsites, winding trail, and deep water swimming make it a favourite destination for a picnic or setting up a base camp for further paddling. The trail network is a showcase for the remarkable forest diversity the island boasts. The trail climbs gently atop the southwest granite face, among pitch pine, red cedar and juniper,

winds across the central ridges of the island through towering hardwoods, past cool wetlands and hemlock gullies and around the sheltered bays on the eastern end of the island. Three campsites are located a few strides from a granite cobble beach on the south shore of the island.



Raptors

Keep an eye open overhead for raptors of all sorts. Osprey are particularly vocal as they circle above the river, spying for a fishy meal. Keep watch for others too. Northern goshawk, Cooper's and red-shouldered hawks, and even bald eagles have been reported in the vicinity.

Stave Island

Stave Island is a large, forested island that is fringed with marshes. Its considerable size, diverse habitats and abundant wildlife combine to make it a valuable ecological treasure. The Nature Conservancy of Canada, a national, non-government, heritage organization, was instrumental in protecting it. Stave Island marks the southwestern end of the Navy Islands, as paddlers approach the Lake Fleet Islands.

Landon Bay Cliffs

Landon Bay leads off the St. Lawrence, under the highway bridge. Great granite and gneiss cliffs surround paddlers as they follow the cut deeper into the rocky uplands that split, beneath Fitzsimmons Mountain, to form this sheltered bay. The nearby wetlands are recognized as provincially significant, and provide spawning areas for muskie and pike. The upland areas surrounding the bay contain the rare Hudson's Bay currant and winged sumac.

Daytrippers frequently use Landon Bay to test the waters, and practice technique before heading out on the Navy route. Parking alongside the bike path on the north side of the Thousand Islands Parkway is available, but vehicles should not be left here when on extended trips.

EXTENSION

The natural extension of a tour in the Navy Islands is the Lake Fleet route (#4) that extends southwestward to spectacular Camelot and Endymion Islands. Downstream, the Raft Narrows route (#6) leads to the heart of the Thousand Islands, and to beautiful Rockport, while the mysterious Lost Channel disappears into Lake of the Isles.

HAZARDS

Channel Crossings

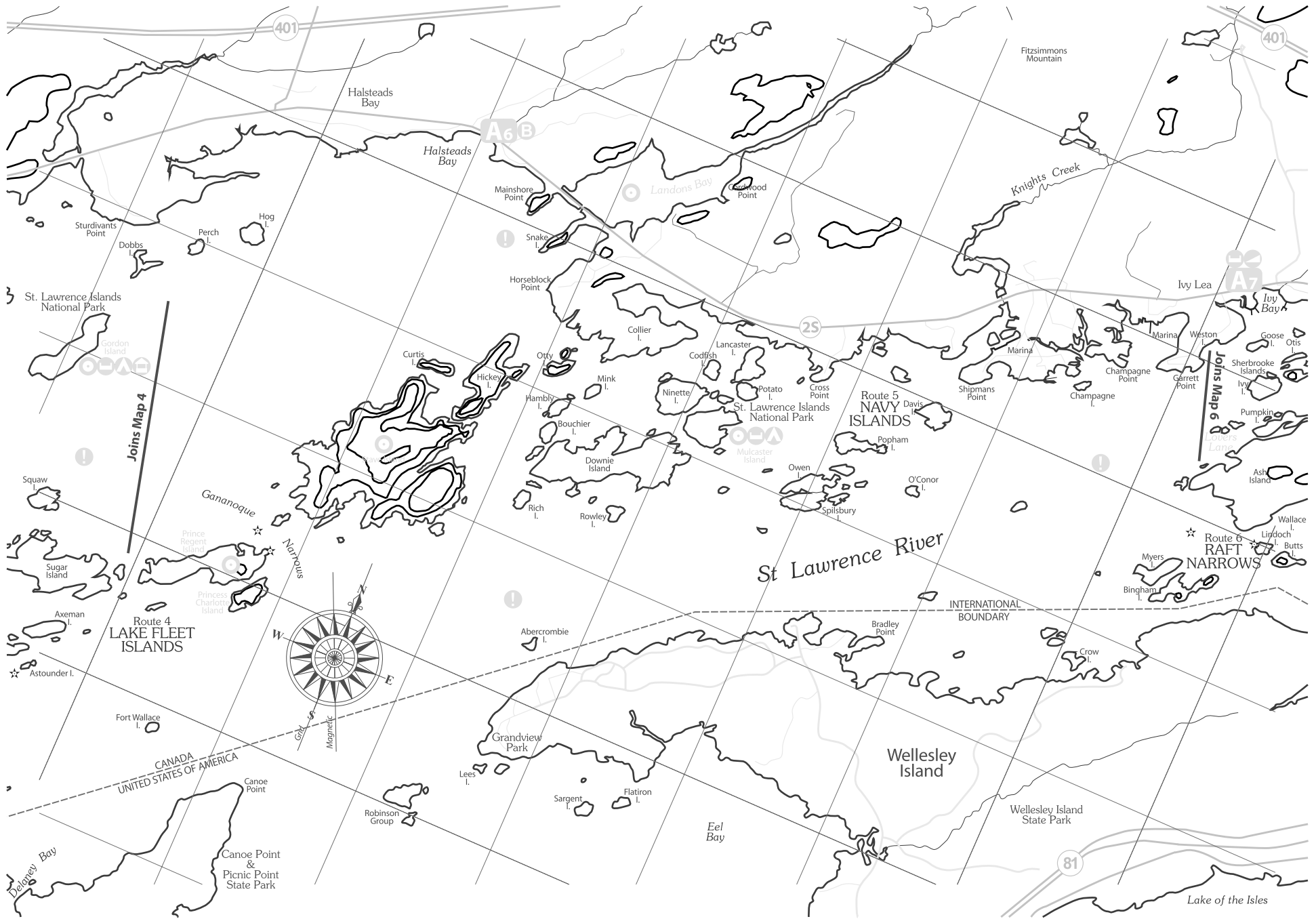
The recreational boating channel bisects this route in many places. Be aware of other watercraft and exercise caution in channel crossings. The Gananoque Narrows between Stave and Prince Regent Islands is particularly busy, however the channel is a speed zone (15 km/h) for power boats, and visibility is good in both directions

Open Waters

Paddlers heading out from Halstead's Bay may encounter large waves that build across the exposed stretch of water offshore. Also be prepared for an open water crossing to Gordon Island. Use a steady bracing stroke and stay close to paddling companions.



Carrying nautical charts or topographic maps and consulting them regularly, will help to get you to your destination safely.



**Route 5:
NAVY ISLANDS**

MAP 5

**Route 6:
RAFT NARROWS**