

Introduction

Contacts

Ramsey and Laxey Harbour Keeper VHF 12 tel no 01624 812245

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Manx Sailing & Cruising Club tel no 01624 813494

Both Laxey and Ramsey harbours dry at Low Water and are only suitable for yachts that can take the ground; Laxey in particular is small and really only viable for small cruisers. Both harbours lay out a couple of visitors' buoys during the sailing season but in both cases these are a fair way (over half a mile) from the harbour mouth so you would need an outboard for your tender. Both harbours are difficult to enter in Easterly conditions and, obviously, their visitors' moorings should not be considered in these conditions either.

Laxey harbour was originally built to service the mines inland (with the famous wheel) but nowadays is only used by small local boats and some inshore fishing boats. The small inner harbour is usually full of these local boats but you can generally find an alongside, drying berth at the South Pier. The entrance faces South and has small light towers on the end of each pier (banded green and red appropriately); inside the entrance, on the north side there is a training wall down the side of the channel marked by green unlit perches (see photograph gallery). The main attraction here is the large water wheel but to be honest if your reason for coming here is to visit this famous relic of the nineteenth century you should be warned that it is a long way inland and you'd probably be better off going to Douglas and taking the scenic electric railway trip from there! The area around the harbour is mainly residential though you'll be relieved to hear that there is a pub! Laxey does have a small sailing club and, when it is open, welcomes visitors.

On the other hand Ramsey harbour is a popular port for the yachting fraternity and is home to a fishing fleet also running commercial operations from its East Quay. You should contact the Harbour Keeper for berthing instructions; if he doesn't reply on VHF 16/12, address your call to Douglas who will alert him. Obviously it would be more convenient for every one if you give him a ring during office hours and warn him that you are coming.

Ramsey harbour is entered between two long piers, again marked by light towers. The channel bears round to the left and there is a lit dolphin in the middle of the harbour which marks a shoal extending out from the north side of the harbour; this mark should be left to starboard. There is a swing bridge over the harbour beyond which is a shallow inner harbour suitable only for small boats and unlikely to be of any use to the visiting boat. One day there may be a marina in this bit of the harbour but as yet nothing has been done and it is suspected that the whole idea has been shelved. Outside the harbour area there is a long pier on stilts jutting out into the sea half a mile to the South of the harbour entrance which was built in 1886 to accept steamers at low water and continued to serve that purpose up until 1970. It was one of many examples of its kind around UK and had kiosks and a railway but after the fall off of the steamer trade it, like many of the others, fell into disuse and now is the centre of a focus group who want to restore it to its former glory. For the moment though, it remains derelict and landing at it is prohibited as it is too dangerous. The Ramsey visitors' buoys can be found close NW of its end but you should land your tender at the steps inside the harbour entrance on the South Pier, not at the old pier. There is much to enjoy about Ramsey, it has its share of seaside attractions but not to the same extent as Douglas which has attracted most of the funding for recent improvements. Local residents look with envy at the new marina at Peel which some of you may remember as little more than a walled tidal ditch and then compare it with their own harbour. Of course, there are those of us who prefer tidal harbours to marinas and, if you are one of those who do, then this is the place for you, but spare a thought for the residents who see all the jobs and trade migrating to Douglas while their shops get boarded up.

There is an IOM harbour information website which lists all the IOM harbours and a whole raft of downloadable docs (most of which do not apply to cruising skippers) at:-

[Isle of Man Government - Harbours Information](#)

[Isle of Man Government - Ramsey](#)

Approach

The tidal streams close in around the IOM do not follow those depicted in the UKHO tidal Atlas; there are often counter currents. For close-in information you can access the IOM's own tidal streams info at [tidal_streams.pdf \(gov.im\)](#)
[tidal_streams_2.pdf \(gov.im\)](#)

We suggest that if you are spending any time in the Irish sea with regular visits to the IOM you visit those two internet pages, print and add them to your Pilot Book.

Approach to either harbour from the South holds no dangers

.....and as long as you are within a couple of hours of High Water they may be entered safely but be aware that once you are in you will have to be able to take the ground wherever you clew up. Laxey is tucked in the north corner of Laxey bay and may be a little difficult to pick out but if you head north from Clay Head you'll trip over it eventually.

Ramsey from the North is a different kettle of fish. The currents around the Point of Ayre have, over the millennia formed a series banks stretching out to the East which should be avoided, especially in heavy weather when the seas break over them. There is also a problem in that chart depths on the West coast to the SW of the Point of Ayre are based on Victorian lead line surveys and are no longer accurate, there being reports of depths as much as 2 meters less than that expected. In suitable conditions the best bet is to come in North of the Strunakill Bank then tight to the Point of Ayre and slip inside the Whitestone Bank; alternatively, if coming up from Peel stand off Rue Point (SW of Ayre) and then shape a course to pass between the Strunakill Bank and the Point. If you decide to go outside the Whitestone Bank to the East of the Point of Ayre you are committing yourself to an unnecessarily long passage around the Bahama Bank.

The tidal streams around Point Ayre are quite fierce, reaching 3.5kts at Springs. East going starts at Dover +0600 and the West going at Dover -0015.

Ramsey will be obvious from miles away as it has tall white buildings to both the north and South of the harbour entrance. It must be emphasized that in any strong easterly winds you should not attempt to enter either harbour.

Berthing

In Laxey you have the choice of a visitors' buoy

..... a mile SW of the harbour in Garwick Bay or mooring next to one of the ladders on the South Pier if you can take the ground. The holding is good on sand just to the SW of the harbour entrance and anchoring there has to be a favoured option in light or off shore winds.

At Ramsey you will probably be directed to an alongside berth on the quay below the swing bridge. The East Quay is reserved for commercial traffic. If you can take the ground you could anchor on the bank north of the dolphin but that is uncomfortable if a swell sets in from the east. If the outer harbour is busy (as it well may be) you may be directed through the swing bridge to the inner harbour to dry out alongside the West Quay. As has been said there are a couple of visitors buoys just to the North of the end of the Queens Pier in the summer.

Facilities

At Laxey there is fresh water from a tap on the quay, limited provisions close to the harbour and showers in the sailing club when it is open. We understand that the HM of Ramsey can provide a code for visitors to access the club if it is closed.

[Manx Sailing and Cruising Club](#)

Ramsey is better provided for; there's water and shore power on the quays, showers and toilets in the yacht club (the HM has the access code in the Harbour Office). Diesel and petrol can be obtained in cans and there are plenty of shops for provisions. There is also a small boat yard with a slip if you need repairs.

What To Do

There is little at Laxey apart from a pub, a seaside cafe; and an Italian restaurant. Ramsey is a lot better having some busy, if narrow, shopping streets, plenty of pubs and eateries. It has to be said that Ramsey today is not what it used to be although "Nightlife" the only night club in the North of the Island has recently reopened in Market Place. Ramsey is also the terminus of the Manx Electric Railway giving access to the rest of island including of course Snaefell if you change at Laxey. Bus & train time tables <https://www.gov.im/categories/travel-traffic-and-motoring/bus-and-rail>

History