

Introduction

Contacts

Marine Operations Centre VHF 12 tel no 01624 686628

Inner Harbour Office tel no 01624 687543

Douglas Bay Yacht Club tel no 01624 673965

Douglas Harbour is situated at the South end of sweeping Douglas Bay. Douglas itself is the capital of the Isle of Man and has been a very popular holiday resort since Victorian times. Approaching from the sea you could be coming into Weymouth, Bridlington or any of a number of similar Victorian seaside towns; broad sandy beach backed by a wide promenade and behind that tall nineteenth century houses which have been converted into apartments, hotels, B&Bs and interspersed with amusement arcades and souvenir shops; it's all here, risqué postcards, Isle of Man rock, T-shirts and fish and chips!! (For amusements and diversions see our section on Entertainment below)

As well as being a holiday resort, by reason of its independent status, the Isle of Man is well known as a tax haven for the well heeled, has a very busy financial district in the middle of the town and the island is "home" to quite a few well known people. On top of this, situated in the middle of the Irish Sea with sea connections to England, Ireland and Scotland the island has an amazing mix of dialects during the summer as young men & women from all these areas flock here for work; you'll be amazed at the number of Irish accents you come across.

When you visit here you have definitely left "England" and only fifty years ago if you misbehaved on a run ashore you could expect to be sentenced to a birching (the last birching was carried out in 1975). You will also be aware of the TT races, held on closed roads at the end of May and early June. The course follows the A1 Peel Road out to the A3 which it follows all the way round to Ramsey; it then returns to Douglas via the A18 and A2. These roads are closed for most of the time so travel in those areas is much restricted although you can still get to Ramsey via Laxey on the A2. The south of the island is undisturbed by the races themselves but basically the whole island is taken over by the circus and spectators involved in this world famous event, accommodation is full, campsites are full, pubs and restaurants are full and so will be the marinas and harbours. Unless you are following the races it would not be a good time to come here for a quiet cruise.

The harbour itself is the main entry port to the Isle of Man and is the terminus for HS ferries, slower freight vessels and car/lorry transporters and you in your 28 foot pride and joy will have to dodge through the lot to get to your mooring. The harbour consists of an outer basin protected by Battery Pier; the ferries dock between Victoria Pier and King Edward VIII Pier and yachts proceed between King Edward VIII pier and Fort Anne Jetty through a drying basin, over a flap gate into the yacht basin.

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 - Douglas](#)

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.

What ever direction you are coming from it is imperative that you contact Marine Operations Centre on Channel 12;

They will be able to advise you of any, large fast traffic. It might also be an idea to contact the Inner Harbour Office before departing for here to see what sort of room is available in the Inner Harbour. They don't take reservations but at least you'd know if there was no chance at all!!

When positioning for the approach give the end of Battery Pier a wide berth and make your final run in to the Initial Fix from the NE to avoid any possible overfalls off the end of that pier. If making your approach at night note that the lead in lights (to the right of the Lifeboat house) are Blue. It won't have passed your notice that there is a large lump of rock topped by a tower just NW of the harbour entrance; at HW you need to give that tower at least a cable and a half offing to avoid the rubbish around it. If you've studied your history you will know that the tower was built not to warn of the rock but as a refuge for distressed mariners who could not make it back into harbour; you can actually land here in a dinghy at LW if you want to explore it.

As you approach the harbour entrance you should take notice of the International Port Signals at the end of Victoria Pier which we have reproduced in the picture gallery. (If you have an old copy of the Imray Pilot for these waters the subsidiary lights mentioned in that publication no longer exist)

You can only get right in to the pontoons in the inner harbour two hours either side of HW, outside these times and during the summer months only, there is a temporary berth available on a pontoon alongside berth 14 (see chartlet)

The restrictions on the timing for getting into this harbour can make life awkward. If HW and rush hour coincide much of the time available for access will be taken up by vehicular traffic on the bridge; you may well find yourself swanning about in the outer harbour waiting for the evening tide.

Flap-gate schedule can be found in the downloadable links on this web page

<https://www.gov.im/categories/travel-traffic-and-motoring/harbours/douglas/>

Once you have negotiated the harbour entrance, continue on course for the lead in marks/lights until the channel between the King Edward VIII pier and Fort Anne Jetty opens up and make for that. Note that the lights on the end of these piers are two verticals and that there is another set of vertical reds at the inner end of Fort Anne Jetty. Then it's just a case of motoring up to the lifting bridge/flapgate keeping well to starboard especially if near the time limits for this approach. The inner harbour office listens on Channel 12 so should be aware of your approach and will advise you of the next opening time (roughly every half hour unless you happen to arrive at rush hour)

Berthing

The main berths are in the inner harbour but,

..... as has been mentioned, there are berths available on the pontoon by no 14 berth on the Battery Pier. A NE wind sets up an uncomfortable swell inside the harbour so this pontoon is not a good place in those conditions.

Within the inner harbour there are pontoon berths or alongside berths against the wall.

You can anchor out in the bay but that's more for very large boats with mile of cable and a mechanical winch! If you anchor in close you'll be liable to get caught up in the surf at some stage of the tide.

In 2022 if you tie up for the night in the outer harbour in a 10m boat you will be charged £16.68, against the wall in the inner harbour it's £25.00 and for a pontoon it's £34.32 (that does entitle you to free shore power)

Facilities

Water and power (payment card) is supplied on the pontoons in the inner harbour, but just water on the outer harbour pontoon. There's a shower and toilet block next to the Inner Harbour Office at the west end of the Tongue where you'll also find the Douglas Bay Yacht Club. The Yacht Club is RYA affiliated and also houses showers, toilets and a two bars. Their web site has links to all the services available on the Island including chandlers, sailmakers, electrical and electronic engineers, mechanical engineers and boatyards; they also do food on race days and Sundays.

<http://www.douglasbayyachtclub.com/>

We have been advised that the chandler, Manx Marine, has ceased operations which has made the obtaining of fuel cards difficult. These cards are still available at Peel from the Manx Fish Producers but, until they sort something else out you will have to rely on voluntary help to obtain red diesel or treck across to Peel. (Thank you our member **Jaypea** below)

What To Do

You are spoiled for choice here and we will not attempt to list all the watering holes and eateries; just explore and enjoy.

For entertainment they have three theatres and two cinema, eight night clubs. On a Saturday night the area close to the marina and the South end of the promenade is the focal point for the younger generation; for family meals/entertainment you'd best try the Gaiety Theatre, Villa Marina or Summerland Concert venue further along the promenade.

For days out there is the Electric Railway to the Laxey Wheel, the Steam railway to Peel and if you walk to the far end of the prom you can always hop on a horse drawn tram to rest tired feet on the way back.

Bus & train time tables <https://www.gov.im/categories/travel-traffic-and-motoring/bus-and-rail>

Ideas <http://www.isleofman.com/>

History