

Cruising Notes: Thousand Islands - Kingston Ont

Alex Bay

1. Marinas – Favorite spot is [Keewaydin State Park](#) –

- a. Keewaydin has a decent but not huge marina (fees around \$1.50 / ft?) which is located right off the main shipping channel providing interesting sights of large commercial freighters
- b. Restrooms have been upgraded since we were there last
- c. Park has a large swimming pool which is welcome on some of those hot days
- d. Convenient to both downtown Alex Bay, local tourist spots and Clayton NY
- e. Only downside is the marina is not convenient walking distance to stores

2. Alex Bay – town & area attractions

- a. Private dockage at several hotels in A Bay – rates generally high but convenient to downtown & hotels if others stay there
- b. Town docks available for transient docking at both E & W sides of town & both convenient walk to downtown – shops, restaurants, etc – no grocery in town
- c. [Boldt Castle](#) across from town – accessible by boat (tours or private) w/ generous docking available. Castle is an interesting tour and the additional boathouse tour is worthwhile. The castle was never completed / occupied but the Seaway Authority has taken it over and is furnishing it w/ period décor.
- d. [Singer Castle](#) – further east – on Dark Island – further east near Cedar is & Chippewa Bay – again generous dockage available. Best bet is to call ahead and find out when the commercial tours arrive – if you avoid those times there are a lot fewer visitors and you have a much better experience. This castle was occupied by the Pres?/CEO? of Singer Sewing machine fortune and is actually a working B&B
- e. Mary Is State Park – we have stayed overnight at docks on this Is – decent location close to A Bay if you want to get away – shallow going in to docks – check charts & current water level vs chart datum – frequently more water than shown on the charts except in very dry yrs

3. Clayton – town & area attractions

- a. [Antique Boat Museum](#) is the best attraction here and definitely worth at least a half day visit. Not sure if docking is available at the museum – might be worth a call ahead to inquire. The museum does run boat rides in some of their “antique” boats – I haven’t done these but friends have and spoke highly of them.
- b. There are town docks available – again no firsthand experience as we were staying at one of the private marinas & walked to the museum when we visited.
- c. [Canoe Point State Park](#) – another nice stop with decent dockage for larger boats – we had 3 – 30’ – 36’ boats on the docks and they were secure – also ability to

walk ashore on the island nice – a small swimming beach close to docks Fairly busy location during the day but it quiets down at dusk

4. Alex Bay to Kingston

- a. Our favorite route is a little longer but much more scenic – Head East & North around Wellsley is to Rockport Ont and find your way along the north shore under the North span of the TI bridge. There are some nice narrow but deep channels between the islands N of Wellsley
- b. There is a marked channel from the NW corner of Wellsley Is to Gananoque Ont – follow the channel as this area is shallow & rocky.
- c. From Gan we prefer the N channel that starts just W of Gan – more protected if there is any wind and more picturesque than the main channels to Kingston – check charts ahead of time as there are a lot of markers in the area - of the start of the N Channel - and can be confusing if you haven't looked it over ahead of time
- d. There are lots of Ontario Provincial Park Islands w/ docks / anchorages in the area – if interested get a guide/ pamphlet for the Parks – most are first-come self-service – pay. These are very popular and fill up early in the day.
- e. Gananoque has a town marina that is nice – also a customs check-in location (see Kingston for customs reqm'ts)

5. Kingston

- a. The place to stay is [Confederation Basin](#) – across from the fort & near the lift bridge that is the start of the Rideau System (sufficient clearance for most boaters under the fixed portion of the bridge – only exception is fairly high flybridges / high water yrs). Kingston is a great town w/ most everything you want w/in working distance of CB – we always try to spend a night or two here on our way across Lk Ontario
- b. Confederation Basin – Transient dockage for around 200 boats – (\$approx \$2/ft?) – call on Ch 68 (when inside the breakwater) & very efficient dock hands will direct and assist you in. This can be a real on-the-water boat show with a real variety of types & sizes generally in the marina
CB is very convenient to downtown – nice park ashore – some days concerts in the park – extensive rest rooms & showers, restaurants, & shops close by w/ grocery & wine/liquor store a short walk. No Pump out or fuel at CB but both available (& launch ramps) at several marinas just inside the lift bridge.
- c. If you are only checking in w/ customs and starting up the Rideau there are day docks inside the breakwater to the left of the large hotel – overnight transient docks are to the right of the hotel
- d. CB is a customs check in location – phone w/ 800# to call located on shore at the end of the floating docks.
- e. Canadian Customs Check-In (arriving by boat)

- i. Passports are now req'd for visits to Canada
- ii. Capt should take info & call in w/ balance of crew / guests remaining aboard until cleared.
- iii. Can customs will issue a check in # - record this and post it aboard on the windshield or side window
- iv. Generally a verbal check-in is all that is required – they will want passport #'s & personal info for all aboard – have birthdates, citizenships, addresses, etc for everyone.
- v. They will ask how much beer, liquor, cigarettes you are bringing in
In general 1 case of beer or 1 ltr of liquor per adult person – beer & liquor are expensive in CA – wine is fairly reasonable there. If friends are coming over by car they can purchase duty free near the border check-in at 1,000 Is Bridge.
- vi. Of our 10 – 12 crossings I think we have been boarded & checked once – the agents seemed to be more interested in drugs & guns – both serious NO-NO's in CA. We have frequently taken more than allowed but are sure it is well hidden or disguised... most boats have some pretty obscure location to stash things?!? However...I'll deny that if anyone quotes me!!

f. General Comments

- i. Generally you will not find the free walls & town docks like you experience on the NY Canal system – both the lock fees and dockage are higher on the St Lawrence & Rideau system – but the Rideau is one of our favorite cruising destinations... and worth it. Some years the US – CA exchange rate is in our favor and helps other yrs not so much
Gas is definitely higher in CA – be sure to fill up in NY before you cross.
- ii. Docking – while plentiful in the area are almost always fee based with fees varying widely – probably the best rates are NY State Parks and the higher ones Confederation Basin in CA.
- iii. You can stay at all / any of the Rideau locks but again there is a fee – not real high and there is an adder for power where available – see the Rideau cruising notes for the better locks to stay at.
- iv. Town docks – e.g. Westport also charge but they are not too high – don't recall rates from the last trip?
- v. Quebec Summer Holiday – Note: Quebec has a traditional 2 week summer holiday which is a very busy period on the St Lawrence, 1,000 Is & Rideau – I think this is usually the end of July but you can confirm online – marinas, anchorages & the Rideau are fairly busy during this period – we try to avoid it by going early July if / where possible.