

SECTION ELEVEN: Boats and Planes

© Copyright 2001-2013 Mike Tremblay / Last Updated: 2/9/2013

Transportation reservations are highly recommended, if not essential, especially during the busiest times of the year. You might try and call at the last minute, but to plan a trip like this, you should plan well in advance and buy your tickets, or at least call to make sure there are spaces left. I personally, would not go without reservations.

Note: Pets and wheeled devices (except wheelchairs) are not allowed on the island. No alcohol consumption is allowed on the ferries. Stove fuel in approved containers can be carried on the ferries, but not on the seaplane. Stove fuel should be accessible, as some boats require storage in a separate compartment on the ship. Fishing poles should be put in protective cases to avoid breakage.

When on the boat, packs are stored separately and you will not have access to them during the trip. Make sure you have anything you need, on your person, beforehand. I usually make sure I have a warm coat and a windbreaker and/or raincoat so I can go on deck. If you are prone to seasickness, make sure you stay towards the back of the boat and/or take necessary medication before. I have also seen people wear earplugs and chew gum to prevent seasickness.

There are times when the boats cannot go or are delayed due to weather. In general, boats do come unless the weather is very bad, but they may leave and/or arrive earlier or later to avoid bad conditions. If the weather is bad, it is a good idea to check at the dock to see if there are changes in the schedule. For additional information, see "***When the Boat Does Not Come***".

Float Plane

The plane operates from the Houghton County Airport from mid-May through mid-September. It can hold up to 4 people and baggage is limited to 50 pounds per person. The plane cannot carry stove fuel.

Seaplane service was started again after not being available 2002-2003 through Royale Air Service. Royale Air flies between Houghton County Airport and the Park. The Cessna 205 amphibious aircraft, capable of carrying four passengers in addition to the pilot, will fly on-call up to six days a week and seven days a week during peak season, weather permitting.

The trip typically takes less than 60 minutes and can land at either Windigo or Rock Harbor. Either trip is treated the same for cost and a round trip can be from either place. Inter-island is between the two.

Park User Fees: The user fees for the park are paid when you make reservations.

Costs: (as of 2012) \$199 one way, \$299 round trip and \$100 inter-island.

Parking: (as of 2012) \$4 a day collected when you come back.

Schedule: (as of 2012)

It generally operates from mid-May to mid-September with flights available 7 days a week during the peak season of mid-July to August.

Years I have taken: 1996 (old service, one way).

Contact Information:

Reservations: (toll-free) 877-359-4753 or 218-721-0409

Email: info@royaleairservice.com

Web: www.royaleairservice.com

Private Aircraft

There are no landing strips on the island. The only way to land is with a seaplane. There is an airport in Grand Marais and Duluth, Minnesota and one in Thunder Bay, Ontario. You can fly into one of those airports and get transportation to Grand Portage, Minnesota. I do not know of any way to fly to the island except for Royale Air Service via the ***Float Plane***.

Isle Royale Queen

The vessel operating out of Copper Harbor is run by the Isle Royale Line and has been running a ferry to the island, for over 75 years. The current boat operating out of Copper Harbor is the Isle Royale Queen IV. She is a 100-foot aluminum boat, with a triple diesel engine, that can carry 100 passengers, but limits its capacity to 80. There is an enclosed, heated cabin with chairs and tables, and decks are available for walking outside. The trip aboard the "Queen" to and from Isle Royale is approximately 55 miles each way and takes approximately 3 hours and 15 minutes each way. They rarely delay a trip due to weather, but will change leaving and arrival times to deal with bad weather and all trips are subject to safe sailing conditions. For example, in 2010, she did not go twice the entire year. Once was in the summer and once at the end of September. On the trip, she passes through a major shipping lane and she will often cross paths with a freighter. There is coffee, tea and hot chocolate available for \$1.25 per cup and \$1 for refills (as of fall, 2010) and various snacks available. During the peak season, I believe they sell additional items.

At the dock, they have a nice store that sells various Isle Royale souvenirs. They do not sell equipment though.

If you are bringing a canoe or kayak, you must have advance reservations and need to be at the dock by 7:15 a.m. for loading.



Park User Fees: User fees for the park are collected on the boat by cash or check only.

Costs: (as of 2013)

2013 Isle Royale Queen IV Rates (one way)		
Off-Peak	Peak	
\$60.00	\$65.00	Adults 12 and over
\$30.00	\$32.50	Children 11 and under
\$25.00	\$25.00	Canoes and Kayaks
\$40.00	\$40.00	Double-Kayaks
\$5.00	\$5.00	Motors under 5 hp
\$15.00	\$15.00	Motors over 5 hp
Note: Peak Season is 7/15 to 8/15		
Last Edited: 2/6/2013		

Individual reservations require 72-hour notice for a refund. Group reservations of 10 or more require 2-week notice for a refund. There is a 15% cancellation charge for all reservations.

Note: They offer special discounts for same day trips.

Parking: (as of 2013)

There is parking available near their dock, for a fee, which is charged when you purchase your tickets. Cars and trucks are \$5 per day with a maximum of \$20. RV's over 24' long are \$10 per night with a maximum of \$40 (advanced notice on RV's required). Cars with trailers are \$7 per night with a maximum of \$28.

Schedule: (as of 2013)

2013 Isle Royale Queen IV Route Schedule & Times (All times are Eastern)					
Route	Dates				
	5/13 - 6/7	6/10 - 6/29	7/1 - 7/30	7/31 - 9/1	9/2 - 9/30
Copper Harbor (8am depart) to Rock Harbor (11:15am arrive)	Mo., Fr.	Mo., Tu., Th., Fr., Sa.	Mo., Tu., Th., Fr., Sa.,	Every Day	Mo., Fr.
Rock Harbor (2:45pm depart) to Copper Harbor (6pm arrive)					

©2013 Mike Tremblay / www.isleroyale.info / Last Updated: 2/6/2013

(Note: She is sailing an extra day on Wednesday, June 5th)

Years I have taken: 1999, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010

Contact Information:

Phone: 906-289-4437

Web: www.isleroyale.com**Travel Times and Miles**

These times and miles are based on published times of the ferry service or Greenstone newspaper and my actual travel times and/or GPS miles.

Copper Harbor to Rock HarborMiles: Statute= 56 miles / 57.8 miles (GPS: Fall, 2010)Travel Time: 3:15 (Ferry Service) / 3:10 slightly rough first half (Fall, 2005)

Back of the Isle Royale Queen IV taken in 2007.

**Ranger**

This boat is owned and operated by the National Park Service, their current boat, is the Ranger III. She is a 165' long, 34' wide, weighs 648 tons and carries 128-passengers. It is the largest piece of moving equipment owned by the National Park Service. It runs from Houghton to Rock Harbor. It is a 6-hour trip, one way. This is the largest ferry operating to Isle Royale. The ship offers interpretive and educational programs, a luncheon grill, three staterooms, four comfortable lounges, two decks and indoor/outdoor seating for passenger comfort. She is large enough to carry boats up to 20'. There are other packages and pricing available. See their site for details and current rates.

Ranger III going down Rock Harbor. Taken from Caribou Island in 2007.

**Park User Fees:**

Park user fees are collected on the boat. Park entry orientation is also done on the boat.

Costs:

2013 Ranger III Rates (one way)		
Off-Peak	Peak	
\$50.00	\$60.00	Adults 12 and over
\$20.00		Children 7 to 11
Free		Children 6 and under
\$85.00		Boat less than 18'
\$137.50		Boat 18' to 20'
\$20.00		Canoes/Kayaks (hand-loaded)
\$50.00		Canoes/Kayaks over 20' or 90 lbs.
\$15.00		Outboard Motor
\$50.00		100 lbs. gear per passenger
\$9 per 100 lbs.		Additional freight over 100 lbs.
\$50.00		Adult Group Rate (7 or more)
Note: Peak Season is 7/10 to 8/25		
Last Edited: 2/7/2013		

They also offer discounted packages if you are staying at Rock Harbor Lodge. Contact the lodge for information and reservations at: 866-644-2003.

Parking: (as of 2013)

Free parking in secure fenced-in lots is available at the dock, in the park headquarters, in Houghton. If the main lot is full, there is overflow parking an easy walk up the hill that is also free.

Schedule:

2013 Ranger III Route Schedule & Times (All times are Eastern)	
Route	Dates
Houghton (9am depart) to Rock Harbor (2pm arrive)	Tu., Fr.
Rock Harbor (9am depart) to Houghton (2pm arrive)	We., Sa.
©2013 Mike Tremblay / www.isleroyale.info / Last Updated: 2/7/2013	

Note: In 2013 the Ranger III will run a limited extended schedule (as they did this in 2011 and 2012). There are 6 seats available for passengers to Mott Island/Three Mile Campground on September 17th & 24th and October 1st and 6 seats returning from Mott

Island/Three Mile Campground on September 19th & 26th and October 3rd. There is also 6 seats available traveling from Windigo to Houghton on October 8th. To make reservations for these limited seats, call 906-482-0984.

Years I have taken: 1996 (One way only)

Contact Information:

Phone: 906-482-0984

Email: ISRO_Ranger3Reserv@nps.gov

Web: www.nps.gov/isro

[Online Reservation Request Form](#)

[Online Instructions for making a reservation and payment by Email, Fax or Mail](#)

Sandy

The M.V. Sandy is operated by the Rock Harbor Lodge, as a water taxi between Rock Harbor and points between up to Malone Bay, on the South shore and Rock Harbor, and points between up to McCargoe Cove, on the North shore. It can carry up to 6 passengers with backpacks or up to 4 passengers with 2 canoes. It also does various planned sightseeing cruises to areas such as, McCargoe Cove, Hidden Lake, Passage Island and various other places in the area.

Costs: (as of 2012 rates were not changed as of this date)

M.V. Sandy Water Taxi Rates						
Place	Miles	1or 2 people	3 people	4 people	5 people	6 people
Caribou Island	5	\$62	\$66	\$70	\$74	\$78
Tookers Island	2	\$62	\$66	\$70	\$74	\$78
Three Mile Dock	3	\$62	\$66	\$70	\$74	\$78
Mott Island	4	\$62	\$66	\$70	\$74	\$78
Hidden Lake Dock	4	\$62	\$66	\$70	\$74	\$78
Rock Harbor Lighthouse	6	\$123	\$129	\$135	\$141	\$147
Daisy Farm Dock	6	\$123	\$129	\$135	\$141	\$147
Duncan Narrows	8	\$123	\$129	\$135	\$141	\$147
Passage Island	9	\$123	\$129	\$135	\$141	\$147
Moskey Basin	9	\$173	\$181	\$189	\$197	\$205
Chippewa Harbor	12	\$181	\$189	\$197	\$205	\$213
Belle Isle Dock	13	\$181	\$189	\$197	\$205	\$213
Birch Island	19	\$241	\$251	\$261	\$270	\$280
McCargoe Cove	21	\$337	\$349	\$361	\$373	\$385
Malone Bay	22	\$300	\$312	\$324	\$336	\$348
Last Updated: 2/8/2013						

Schedule: (as of 2012)

She was operating from 5/25 thru 9/7.

Years I have taken: never

Contact Information: