



Isle Royale Info – Trip Packages

Rock Harbor Loop



Total Miles	39.1
Difficulty Clockwise	5.955
Difficulty Counter-Clockwise	5.814

[Based on "medium" and "long" sample itineraries]

The Rock Harbor loop is a good section of trails to do in 5-7 days and covers the entire eastern end of the island and the entire "Rock Harbor Trail". It is a good first trip to the island if coming over from Michigan or, via the float plane. It is relatively easy and the trail is very easy to follow.

This loop features a wilderness lake along the north shore of Lake Superior, a beautiful inland lake with good fishing, a "picture postcard" campground on a bay on Lake Superior, a large campground with a rich history on Lake Superior and another on the lake with a view of the outer islands. It includes a hike along the eastern side of the famous "Greenstone Ridge Trail".

This description and itinerary starts from Rock Harbor taking the Isle Royale Queen from Copper Harbor, Michigan or the Ranger from Houghton, Michigan to there. It is also possible to book the floatplane from Houghton to land in Rock Harbor. It is also possible to take the boats from Grand Portage, Minnesota to Windigo then, take the Voyageur from Windigo to Rock Harbor to begin the trip. To get back, you would take the Voyageur from Rock Harbor to Windigo to catch your return boat. However, this adds days and cost to the overall trip.

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Sample Itineraries

Medium

Days	Nights	Avg. Miles/Day
6	5	6.52

Day One:

Ferry from Copper (leave 8:00 Eastern) to Rock Harbor (arrive 11:15 Eastern) or...

Ferry from Houghton (leave 9:00 Eastern) to Rock Harbor (arrive 2:00 Eastern)

Rock Harbor to Lane Cove Campground – 6.9 miles

Day Two:

Lane Cove Campground to Daisy Farm Campground – 7.2 miles

Day Three:

Daisy Farm Campground to Chickenbone West Campground – 7.9 miles

Day Four:

Chickenbone West Campground to Moskey Basin Campground – 5.9 miles**

Day Five:

Moskey Basin Campground to Three Mile Campground – 8.3 miles

Moskey Basin Campground to Rock Harbor Campground – 11.2 miles

Day Six:

Three Mile Campground to Rock Harbor – 2.9 miles

Ferry from Rock Harbor (leave 2:45 Eastern) to Copper Harbor (arrive 6:00 Eastern)

Ferry from Rock Harbor (leave 9:00 Eastern) to Houghton (arrive 2:00 Eastern)

- *Italics indicate Houghton (Ranger) option due to the boat leaving early in the morning. Another option would be to follow the Copper Harbor itinerary and spend an extra night in Rock Harbor and get the boat the following morning.*

*** If going back on the Ranger, this could be changed to go to Daisy Farm Campground to cut the next day's miles down.*

Long

Days	Nights	Avg. Miles/Day
7	6	5.59

Day One:

Ferry from Copper (leave 8:00 Eastern) to Rock Harbor (arrive 11:15 Eastern) or...

Ferry from Houghton (leave 9:00 Eastern) to Rock Harbor (arrive 2:00 Eastern)

Rock Harbor to Lane Cove Campground – 6.9 miles

Day Two:

Lane Cove Campground to Daisy Farm Campground – 7.2 miles

Day Three:

Daisy Farm Campground to Chickenbone West Campground – 7.9 miles*

Day Four:

Day hike to McCargoe Cove (2.7 miles) – 0 miles

Day Five:

Chickenbone West Campground to Moskey Basin Campground – 5.9 miles**

Day Six:

Moskey Basin Campground to Three Mile Campground – 8.3 miles

Moskey Basin Campground to Rock Harbor Campground – 11.2 miles

Day Seven:

Three Mile Campground to Rock Harbor – 2.9 miles

Ferry from Rock Harbor (leave 2:45 Eastern) to Copper Harbor (arrive 6:00 Eastern)

Ferry from Rock Harbor (leave 9:00 Eastern) to Houghton (arrive 2:00 Eastern)

- *Italics indicate Houghton (Ranger) option due to the boat leaving early in the morning. Another option would be to follow the Copper Harbor itinerary and spend an extra night in Rock Harbor and get the boat the following morning.*

*** If going back on the Ranger, this could be changed to go to Daisy Farm Campground to cut the next day's miles down.*

** This could be change to McCargoe Cove Campground via the Chickenbone East Trail.*

Short

Days	Nights	Avg. Miles/Day
5	4	7.34

Day One:

Ferry from Copper (leave 8:00 Eastern) to Rock Harbor (arrive 11:15 Eastern) or...

Ferry from Houghton (leave 9:00 Eastern) to Rock Harbor (arrive 2:00 Eastern)

Rock Harbor to Lane Cove Campground – 6.9 miles

Day Two:

Lane Cove Campground to Chickenbone West Campground – 13.0 miles

Day Three:

Chickenbone West Campground to Daisy Farm Campground (via Moskey Basin) – 9.4 miles

Day Four:

Daisy Farm Campground to Rock Harbor Campground – 7.4 miles**

Day Five:

Ferry from Rock Harbor (leave 2:45 Eastern) to Copper Harbor (arrive 6:00 Eastern)

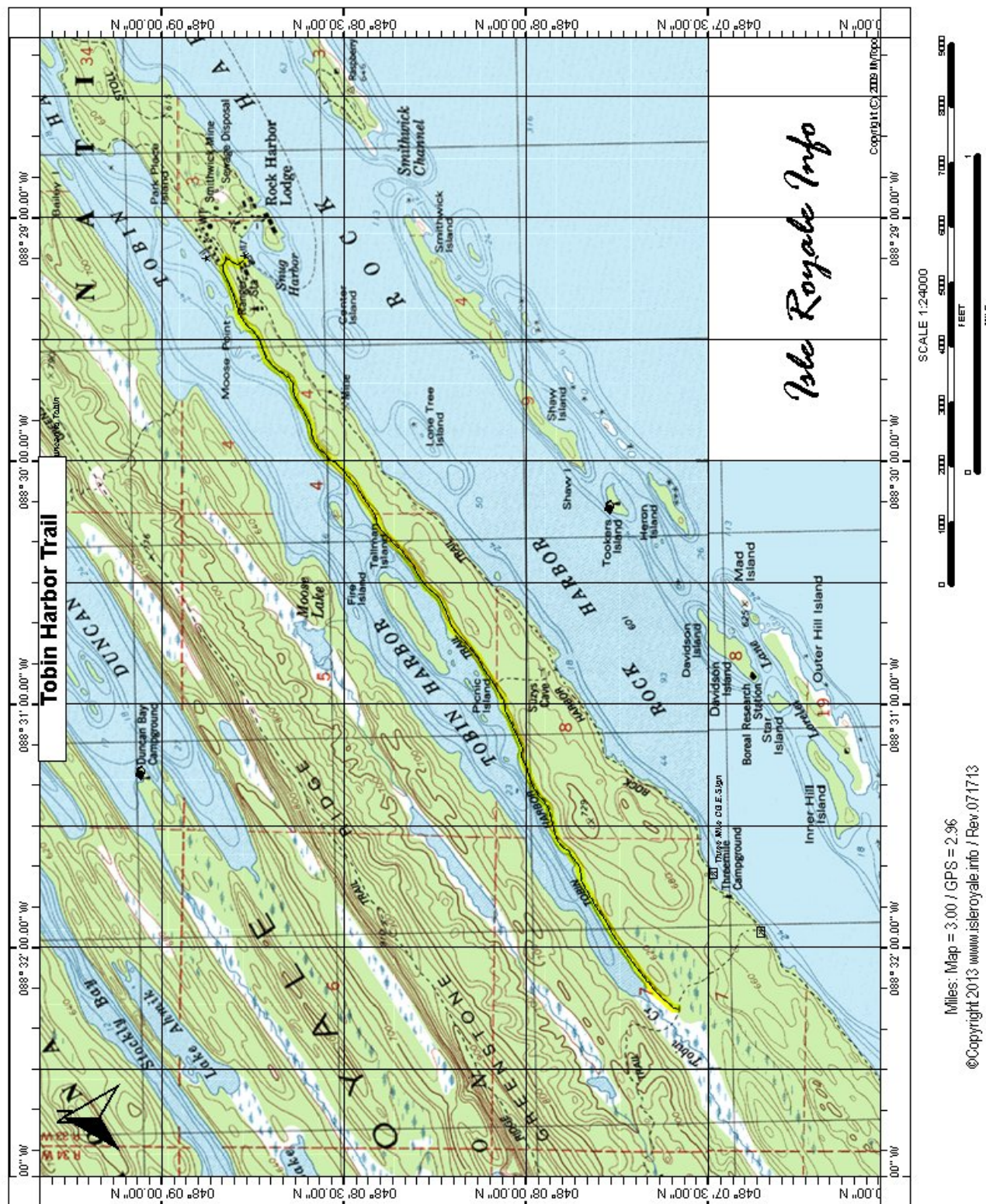
Ferry from Rock Harbor (leave 9:00 Eastern) to Houghton (arrive 2:00 Eastern)

- *Italics indicate Houghton (Ranger) option.*

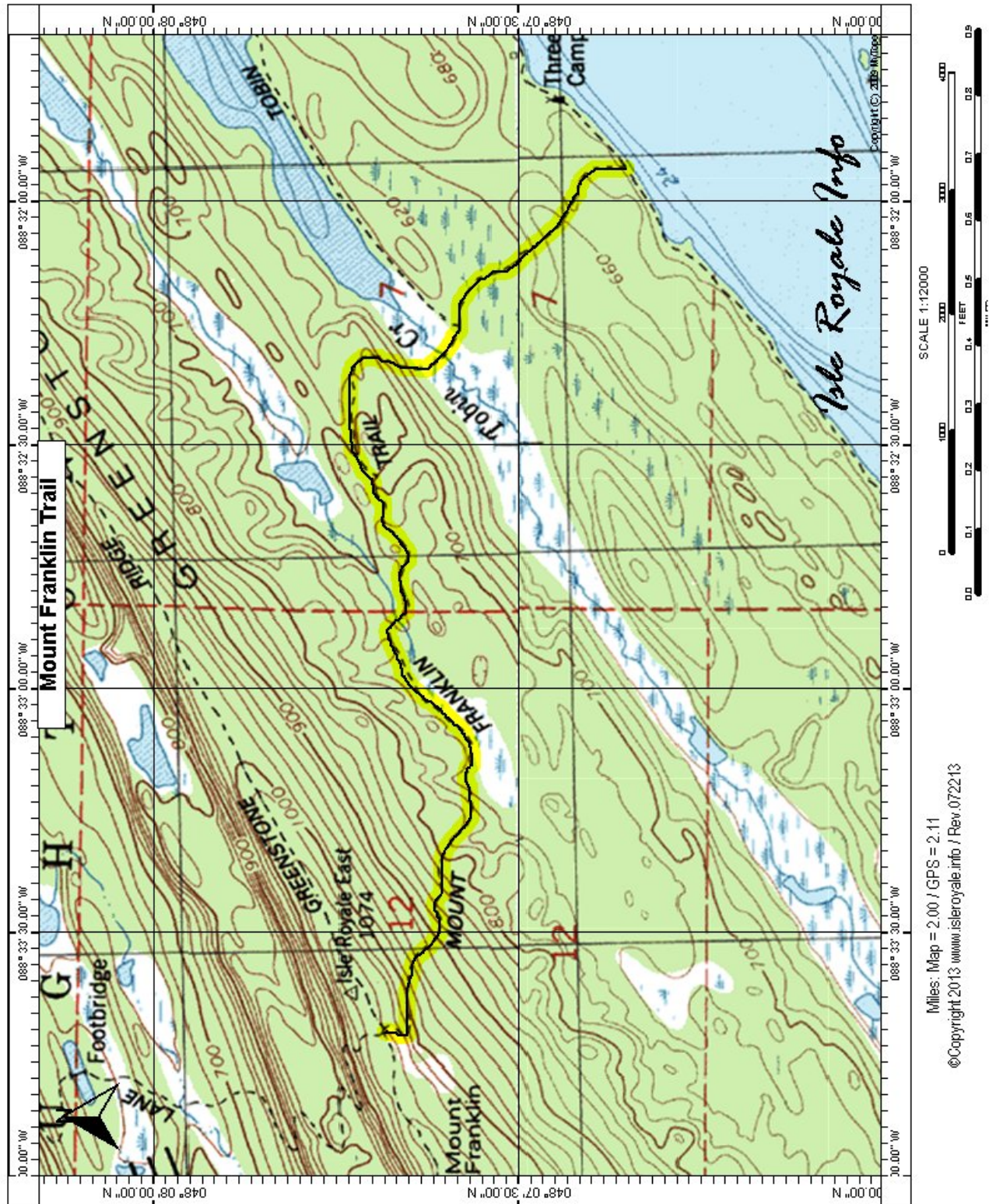
*** If going back on the Queen (Copper Harbor), this could be changed to go to Three Mile Campground and walk in to Rock Harbor in the morning.*

Trip Maps

Tobin Harbor Trail



Mount Franklin Trail



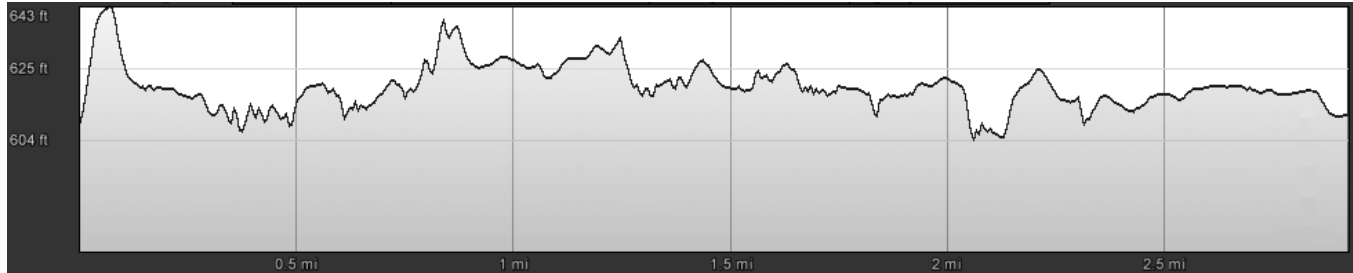
Route Descriptions

Note: The detail maps are captured from maps at 1:24000 scale and reduced to 60%.

Tobin Harbor Trail

East to West

Rating		Miles		Max Elev.	Min Elev.	Gain	Loss	Elev. Diff.	% Max Grade	% Avg. Grade
Direction	Reverse	Map	GPS							
4.25	4.25	3	2.96	643'	604'	247'	-245'	2'	16.4/-16.0	2.6/-2.5

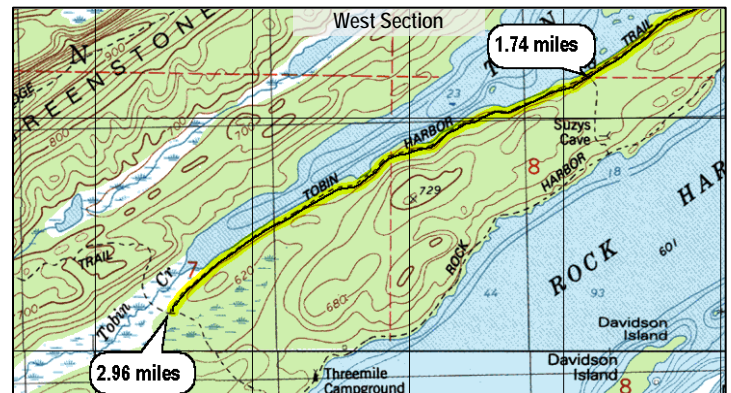


Overview: This trail starts at Rock Harbor and ends at Mount Franklin Trail, where Tobin Creek drains into the harbor. It is a scenic walk, with gentle up and downs its entire length. The harbor is in view most of the time, and features a lot of little islands and the opposite shore. This is an easier alternative to walking the Rock Harbor Trail to Three Mile Campground, as it is easier and not an "ankle-twister".

Key Points:

- 0.00 - Rock Harbor Ranger Station
- 1.74 - Suzy's Cave trail
- 1.40 – West end of Tallman Island
- 2.96 - Mount Franklin trail junction

Details: The trail starts in Rock Harbor, at the visitor center and store, and follows asphalt up 15' towards the efficiency cabins and seaplane dock, reaching a fork with a sign pointing east for the cabins, and west for the dock, and the trail at 0.03 miles. Turning left, the trail leaves the asphalt and turns to gravel until it passes the floatplane dock at 0.1 miles, where it becomes a regular trail and dips down a little and follows the shore until it starts a slight uphill until 0.16 miles, the trail descends 30', and then cuts inland, at 0.19 miles. It stays away from the harbor until cutting towards it and climbing 20' at 0.28 miles, and arriving next to the harbor at 0.34 miles. It then climbs up slightly and away from the harbor until 0.43 miles, where it follows a lovely forest trail until descending 25' towards the shore at 0.65 miles, and begins to be rocky until 0.68 miles, when it climbs 40' and goes away from the harbor until 0.75 miles, when it heads back to the harbor with a 20' steep descent until 0.74 miles, where it comes back to a rocky trail along the harbor at 0.8 miles. It then begins an ascent of 60' until 0.84 miles, while going away from the harbor and levels off at 0.98 miles, before going down 30' back towards the harbor at 1.10 miles, where the trail becomes very rocky with



Looking west from trail to Suzy's Cave.



West end of trail just before Franklin Trail.



The trail then heads inland to a short section of boards and follows forest, until coming to a board bridge and big rock, with a tree growing out of it at 1.37 miles. This is followed by some large rock outcroppings with big rocks until 1.42 miles, when it goes back into the woods with roots until coming out at the shore again at 1.49 miles. It stays along the shore with rock, until coming to the post marking **Suzy's Cave** at 1.54 miles. The cave is just north of the trail.

After leaving, it enters a short wood and rock section, until coming to a major rock climb, with a post marking where the trail goes up a large rock. These are steep climbs until 1.64 miles, when it settles down a bit before going into some woods at 1.7 miles, where it enters a hard section of slippery rocks lasting until 1.77 miles, when it changes to woods with minor roots. This continues until 1.86 miles, when it makes a short climb up rock, then down, only to climb a large outcropping at 1.91 miles. This is the largest of the climbs, but it continues a series of tough rock climbs, one after another, until 2.06 miles. From there, it descends into woods at 2.08 miles, only to climb a short rock surface, and then descend into a balsam forest of dirt at 2.18 miles. The worst of the trail is over at this point. The trail stays in forest, with a dirt trail, with minor roots, until reaching a wooded area at 2.3 miles, and the east Three Mile Campground sign at 2.39 miles. The center campground sign is at 2.50 miles.

Campground Descriptions

(In Alphabetical order)

Chickenbone East Campground

Shelters	Tent	Group	Fires	Tables	TP	Gen	Dock	Wild	Elev.
0	3	1	N	N	N	N	N	7	794'

The Campground is 0.09 miles north from the Greenstone Ridge Trail and is a very easy walk. The trail leaves the post and crosses some boards, then climbs a steep 3-4 step ridge, and seems to come to the campground out of nowhere. The first time I came to the campground in 1999, I wrote "This is the only campground I have stayed in on the island that I did not think was beautiful. It lies on a hill above the lake, in an open area, with small scrub forest and a few trees. There are no real vistas to be seen, except, maybe in the spring, you can see the lake". There still aren't vistas and the water is still a long way away, but the campground has grown up and the sites have become somewhat private. I sort of like it now. It doesn't have a view of the lake, except in the spring.

The water source (lake) is 0.25 miles, down a hill that descends 135' over the distance, which, can be very slippery in the rain. This campground is a good alternative to Chickenbone West during the busy season, or if you just want to avoid people. For good Moose viewing, walk down the trail towards the lake, and follow the lake for a bit, until the trail opens up near some wetlands at the far, east end of the lake.

The Tent Sites are located on the west side of the trail and are all quite open to the sun, and thus, the elements, but they are also spaced out enough to offer a lot of privacy.

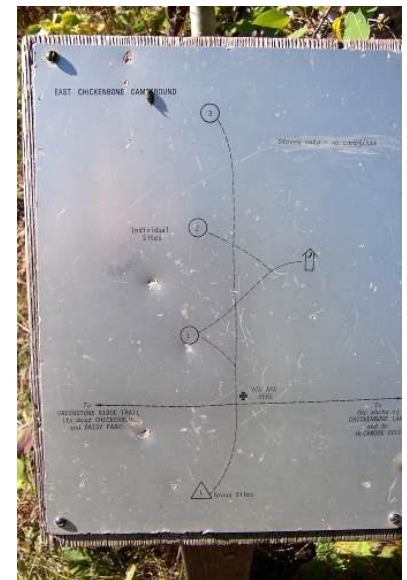
Tent #1 Okay, semi-private, 3 tent pads. It is private from the other campsites, but not from the trail. You are visible to everyone coming down the trail. It has good seating, last time there, in 2011. Someone had made a fire that left a scar on some rocks and the ground sometime before 2010 and in 2011 it was still there, but dissipating.

Tent #2 is o.k., semi-private, 2-3 tent pads.

Tent #3 is located 485' back from the main trail. Okay, more private, 2-3 tent pads. This site is very private, but a long way from the outhouse.

The Group Site is located 263' from the trail on the east side. It is a bit more protected from the elements than the tent sites. It has good seating, is very roomy, private and has 4 maybe 5 good tent sites. It has a better view than the individual sites, but does not get full sun.

Site Ratings: Individual= #3, 2, 1 / Overall= Tent #3 (or 2 if bathroom is a priority)



Tent site #1 in fall, 2005.



Chickenbone West Campground

Shelters	Tent	Group	Fires	Tables	TP	Gen	Dock	Wild	Elev.
0	6	3	N	N	N	N	N	6	670'

The Campground is 0.11 miles north of the Greenstone Ridge Trail, and 2.5 miles, from McCargoe Cove Campground, along the Indian Portage Trail. It is very nicely located right on the lake, with excellent views. It is also a good area for moose watching. This campground can get a lot of people in the busy season, and seems to be on a lot of itineraries for big groups (i.e. boy scouts, kid camps, etc.). From the north to south campground sign, it is 0.18 miles from end to end.

The Tent Sites are all nice at this campground, and it is hard to rate one over another. I'd pick a site here based on the sites taken already and the weather. **Tent #1** has a good sitting area with 3 good tent pads, possibly 4. It sits right on the lake.

Tent #2: has a good sitting area with 2 good tent pads, possibly 3. It is across the trail from the lake

Tent #3: has very nice sitting and 2 good tent pads, possibly 3. It has a nice view of the lake.

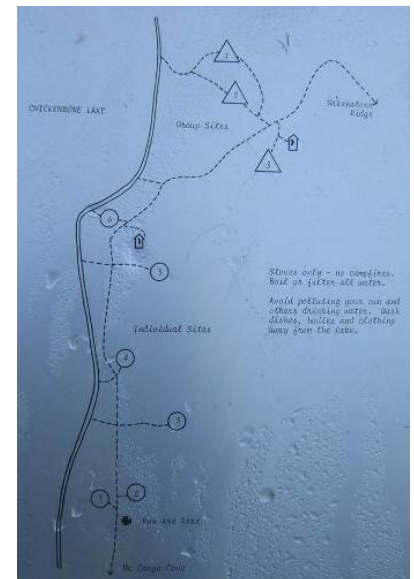
Tent #4: has a good sitting area with 3 tent pads, possibly 4. It has a good view of the lake.

Tent #5: has a nice sitting area with 2 good tent pads, possibly 3. It sits across the trail from the lake.

Tent #6: has lots of sitting with 3 good tent pads, possibly 4. It is in a big open area by the lake.

The Group Sites are not very good here. They sit up on a hill, away from the lake, about 400' with barely a view of the lake. I would not want to stay in any of these. They do, however, have a lot of room for tents and are perfect for the big groups that come through here.

Site Ratings: Individual= #6, 1, 3, 2, 4, 5 / Group= None / Overall= #6 or #1



Chickenbone Lake from site #6

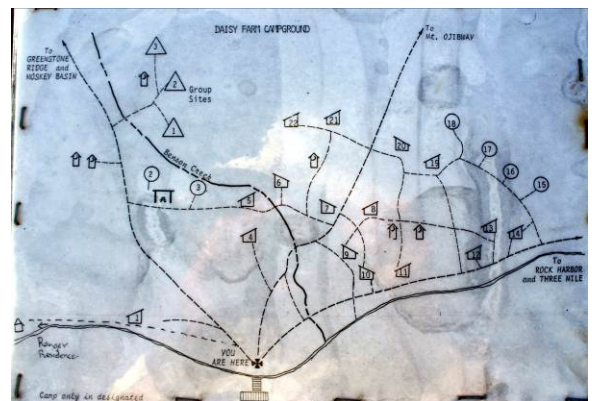


Daisy Farm Campground

Shelters	Tent	Group	Fires	Tables	TP	Gen	Dock	Wild	Elev.
16	6	3	N	Y	Y	N	9'	3	603'

The Campground is located along the shore of Rock Harbor, across from the Edison Fishery. This is one huge campground. For as big as it is, there really aren't any bad sites, except the tents sites. I have always tried to avoid it due to its size. However, the first time I did stay there, on September 29, 2001, there wasn't anyone else in the entire place! The second time I stayed there, in May, 2002, it was empty again for two nights! It is a very nice campground, with a nice view of Rock Harbor and the Edison Fishery.

The campground is very pretty, with an open meadow in the center area, with well-worn trails running throughout. Benson Creek runs through the campground, and there are four bridges crossing over it in the campground proper. The campground is a hub of activity during the day, due to its location with boats coming in and out, and people coming in or passing through. There are quite a few man made things you will see around the campground area. More details on these are listed under "Added Attractions" below. There is a ranger station down a short trail, just west of the campground. This campground also has a relatively large pavilion, which is very nice when it is raining. During the summer, Candy Peterson



Pavilion



Points of Interest

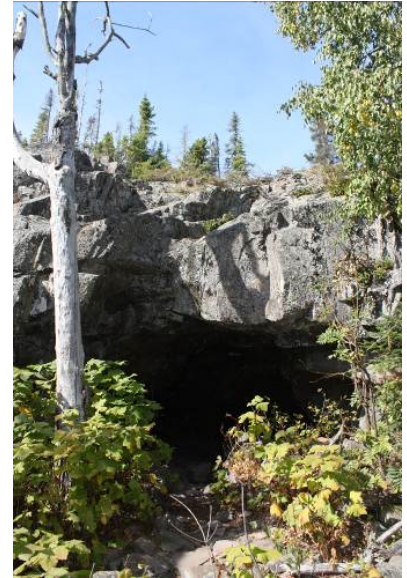
Suzy's Cave

This is a wave carved arch from a time when Lake Superior was at a higher level (Lake Nipissing). It is located between the Rock Harbor Trail and the Tobin Harbor Trail.

From the Rock Harbor Trail, it is located 251' north, above the post marking it. The post is 1.54 miles west from the sign at Rock Harbor Campground west sign and 0.87 miles east of the east sign marking the beginning of Three Mile Campground. It is 0.15 miles south of the post marking it on the Tobin Harbor Trail.

From the Rock Harbor Trail, You follow a well-worn path up rocks to the cave rising 28' from the post. Going into the large cave opening facing the harbor, you can walk right inside very easily. You can see light on the other side, through a small opening that can be squeezed through. Walking around the other side of this opening, you will see the trail that leads to the Tobin Harbor Trail. There is a very nice view of the harbor from the cave site.

History: *Suzy Tooker, of Tookers Island, would often canoe across Rock Harbor to play in the cave. Once she was caught in a rainstorm and took refuge here. [Source: "Place Names of Isle Royale"]*



Mount Franklin

Located 0.3 miles (Map) / 0.22 miles west from the Greenstone Ridge Trail and the Mount Franklin Trail intersection, and 2.8 miles (Map) east of the Mount Ojibway Trail, it is 1080' high and offers an excellent view of the North side of the island and Canada. It is basically a couple of huge rocks that sit on a cliff. There wasn't a sign or anything, but you knew when you were there. When I was there in the fall of 2008, there was a sign there with the elevation on it.

There are huge rocks forming a ledge overlooking the entire northeast end of the island. Plan on spending/losing some time here, it is well worth it. It's a great place to drop the pack and bask in the beauty. It can be windy, but if you just get off the rock and down some, there is protection. I have spent a couple of nights near here in a backcountry camp, and the view can be spectacular at night.

It was supposedly named after Benjamin Franklin after he drew the boundary between the United States and Canada and included Isle Royale in the US territory. Not sure where I read or heard this. [Fall, 1999 / Fall, 2001 / Fall, 2011]

View from Mount Franklin, September 2007.



Mount Ojibway and Tower

Located along the Greenstone Ridge Trail at the junction of the Mount Ojibway Trail, it measures 1136' above sea level. There is a 41' tower there that was built in 1964. It is possible to walk up the steps until coming to a locked gate. From here it offers a 360-degree view of the surrounding area. The tower is no longer used except for storing a radio repeater and research and monitoring projects. There is what I believe to be a weather station located due NNE about 30 yards from the tower.

Mount Ojibway Tower. Fall, 2011



Contacts

Isle Royale National Park

The headquarters for the park in Houghton, Michigan.

Phone: 906-482-0984 / Fax: 906-482-873 / Emergency: 800-727-5847

Website: www.nps.gov/isro / Email: isro_parkinfo@nps.gov

800 E. Lakeshore Drive, Houghton, MI., 49931-1869

Isle Royale Queen IV

Boat from Copper Harbor, Michigan to Rock Harbor on Isle Royale.

Phone: 906-289-4437 / Fax: 906-289-4952

Website: <http://www.isleroyale.com> / Email: captaink@pasty.net

The Isle Royale Line Inc., P.O. Box 24, Copper Harbor, MI., 49918

Ranger III

Boat from Houghton / Hancock, Michigan to Rock Harbor on Isle Royale.

Phone: 906-482-0984 / Fax: 906-482-8753

Website: www.nps.gov/isro/planyourvisit/fares-and-reservations.htm

Email: isro_ranger3reserve@nps.gov

On-line Reservations: www.pasty.com/~isro/nps3.php

Isle Royale National Park, 800 East Lakeshore Drive, Houghton, MI., 49931-1869

Royale Air Service

Seaplane service from Houghton to Windigo or Rock Harbor.

Phone: 877-FLY- ISLE (359-4753) or 218-721-0405 / Fax: 218-721-0409

Website: www.royaleairservice.com / Email: RoyaleAirService@aol.com

Royale Air Service Inc., P.O. Box 15184, Duluth, MN 55815

Sandy

Boat operated by the Rock Harbor Lodge as a water taxi, between Rock Harbor and Malone Bay, on the south shore, and Rock Harbor and McCargoe Cove on the north shore.

Phone: 906-337-4993 (May-September), 866-644-2003 (October-April)

Website: www.isleroyaleresort.com / Email: isleroyaleresort@starband.net

Summer: P.O. Box 605, Houghton, MI., 49931-0605

Winter: P.O. Box 27, Mammoth Cave, KY., 42259-0027

Voyager II and Sea Hunter III

Boat from Grand Portage, Minnesota to Isle Royale.

Phone: 218-475-0024 (May thru Oct) / 651-653-5872 (Oct thru Apr)

Website: www.isleroyaleboats.com / Email: mailto:reservations@isleroyaleboats.com

(Formerly: www.grand-isle-royale.com)

Grand Portage-Isle Royale Transportation, P.O. Box 10529, White Bear Lake, MN 55110