



Thousand Island Trippers and the Trailer photo by Ralph Heimlich

Thousand Islands: The Trailer

By Ralph Heimlich

August in the Chesapeake Bay region is hot, hazy and humid, so members of the Chesapeake Paddlers Association often seek a cooler venue for paddling. This August, thirteen of us escaped the dog days in the cool climes of Canada and upstate New York, paddling the Thousand Islands region of the St. Lawrence River. The trip was organized by Ed Hershon and Tom Heneghan, who began planning early in the Spring. This report covers our four camping venues and our use of a trailer to cut gas costs. For the full trip report, click [here](#).

DRIVING TOGETHER: In the face of rising gas prices, we wanted to consolidate transportation so we rented a large van and borrowed a kayak trailer hauled by Jim Allen's pickup truck. We put 10 boats on the trailer, carefully padded with foam, 2 on racks on Jim's truck, and our 13th member, Frank Day, took his own boat separately as he met us up

in Canada. The kayaks rode the trailer very well, with no loosening and no damage. Ed and Tom did wrap their boats, the lowest on the trailer, in commercial plastic wrap to shield them from road tar and gravel, but with the right trailer design, that may not be needed. Using the pickup allowed us to load all the gear in one truck (other than personal items taken in the van), but because Jim doesn't have a cap, we had to make sure most everything was in dry bags or packed so as not to be hurt by rain. A cap would have obviated the need for this, and all gear rode below the truck sides, so a cap would have worked. Here's a brief rundown of the cost savings from driving as a group:

We borrowed the trailer from a church camp that had benefitted from CPA help in the past, so there was not cost for that. Savings from group travel were 2/3 compared with everyone driving their own car and half of the cost if 12 of us carpooled in two's. Savings per trip member equal \$364 compared with going alone and \$118 each compared with carpooling by two's. Of course, we had to put up with each other in pretty close proximity for all those miles, and the van wasn't as comfortable as our own cars, but we didn't have to drive, either!

FOUR CAMPS: We stayed at four different camps over the week, a situation we recognized as less than ideal, necessitated by being late with our reservations (camping fills up quickly when Summer is only 2 months long!). Each camp had pros and cons.

Method	Van	Pickup	Group Total	12 Cars	6 Cars
Miles driven	962	962	1,924	11,544	5,772
MPG	19	20		24	24
Gas cost/mile	\$0.21	\$0.20		\$0.16	\$0.16
Wear and tear	\$0	\$293	\$293	\$3,954	\$1,977
Tolls	\$6.50	\$10	\$16.50	\$78	\$39
Rental	\$833				
Total Cost	\$1,041	\$496	\$1,537	\$5,908	\$2,954

Notes: 481 miles x 2 x number of vehicles. Assumes \$3.80 per gallon. Wear and tear is IRS mileage allowance of \$0.505 minus the gas cost. Tolls were \$3.25 each way for 2 axles and \$5 for 3 axles.

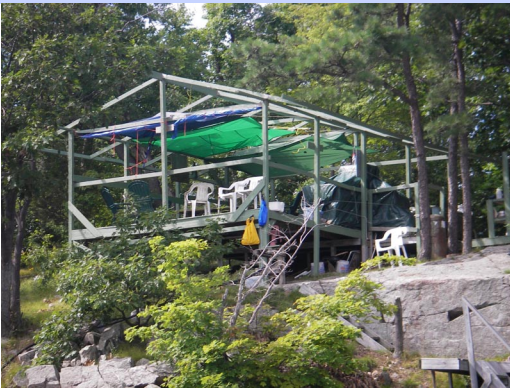


Misty Isles Resort photo by Ralph Heimlich

Misty Isles Resort (<http://www.mistyisles.ca/accomodations.html>)—We needed somewhere to land after driving all day and to stage our paddle for the next day. Misty Isles, a private camp just east of Gananoque, Ontario, is really tuned into kayakers (as you can tell by their sign!) They have cabins and campsites with picnic tables and fire pits and have nice bath houses and a launching beach. We were only there overnight (on a Saturday) so we didn't get their best sites, but we talked to other paddlers (from the States, mostly) who based their whole trip there. Sites are \$30 per night (2-4 people, \$5 per head for up to 2 more).

Sugar Island (<http://www.sugar.islandertalk.com/>)—Sugar Island is a 47 acre Island privately owned by the American Canoe Association. It is available to all members for year round use. The island is rustic, with no modern amenities. Staying on the island is a throwback to more primitive camping experiences on an island gem that is pristine and pure. The night skies glow with stars because light pollution is minimal. The air is clean. The water is clear and surprisingly warm in August. Our camp on Rochester Bay (the south side of the island) consisted of woody tent sites, some lumber platforms we used for a kitchen, dining area and social club, a

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Our Social Club on Sugar Island photo by Ralph Heimlich

Thousand Islands (Continued from page 6)

few primitive outhouses, and spectacular views of Axman, Astounder, Psyche, Bloodletter and many other islands stretching away to the U.S. side at Grindstone Island. Life on Sugar Island is very comfortable for being primitive. We had a hand-pump pulling water directly out of the river (which we filtered using Tom's Katahdin gravity filter), picnic tables on a wood platform shaded by numerous tarps we had brought, and a utilitarian "kitchen" where we set up the stoves and pots and pans. We swam in the Bay and had warm sun showers set up on another platform.

There was even a swanky composting toilet over near the HQ. We were not the only ones on Sugar Island, and shared the muddy paths with an energetic young family and several other groups of paddlers. Sugar is one of a group of islands known as the Lake Fleet Islands, and we could easily paddle to the Admiralty Islands, Navy Islands, and down into the American Narrows from there, so it could be the base for an entire week. Sugar Island costs \$7 per night for ACA members, and \$15 for nonmembers (so join!). You can rent platforms and cabins there, as well.



Swim time in Rochester Bay, Sugar Island photo by Bela Mariassy

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CPA HQ at Keewaydin State Park photo by Bela Mariassy

Keewaydin State Park (<http://nysparks.state.ny.us/parks/info.asp?parkID=146>)—

This park was right on the river and had a marina with a boat ramp. We had three campsites next to each other and used the two end sites for our tents and made the middle site our common area with three picnic tables, CPA banner and tarps. It is a typical state park, with lots of RVs and family tent camps, overcrowded bath houses, and people driving around on the roads at all hours. It was conveniently located to explore the American Narrows, Millionaire's Row, Boldt Castle and Alexandria Bay (where Todd became the whipping boy for a Pirate Queen—you have to go to the full trip report for that one!). We had some difficulties with park police and trailer parking that left a bad taste in our mouths, but you could base out of Keewaydin if you are addicted to more comfort camping than fits in your hatches. There is also Grass Point State Park (<http://nysparks.state.ny.us/parks/info.asp?parkID=123>) west of Clayton, that seemed newer and a little less congested. Friday morning, we had to break camp, pack the truck and van, load the boats and launch for our last leg out to Mary Island State Park because at the time we made reservations, there were no sites in Keewaydin for us on Friday night.

Mary Island State Park (<http://nysparks.state.ny.us/parks/info.asp?parkID=150>)—One of several island parks in the NY State system, Mary is a little gem. Just 12 acres, it has a dozen campsites in heavy woods that are barely visible from one another, but have wonderful water views. Potable water and flush toilets (but no showers) make up its amenities. We had three sites and quickly set up camp, just before an afternoon thunderstorm blew in. Mary is at the eastern end of Wellesley Island, within spitting distance (literally) of the Canadian Border. From here you can explore west along the Canadian Middle Channel under the International Bridge and down the Rift to Lake of the Isles, or east to Grenadier Island. If you are comfortable with kayak camping, this is another island that you could base from for a full week and not get bored.



Mary Island Camp photo by Brian Blankinship

No matter where you stay in the Thousand Islands, you'll find the clear water, delightfully cool summer weather, and interesting natural and built shoreline a fascinating place to paddle.

Full trip report and links to photos at <http://www.cpakayaker.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=3373>

A proposal to acquire access to a trailer for the club may be made over the winter, so more paddlers will have the ability to organize group trips with shared travel.