

3 Days *in Tobermory*

A plan for 3 days or more at the top of the Bruce Peninsula: 3 fixed points, 2 bookings and a lot of deliberate gaps. The gaps are the part people describe to us afterwards.



BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

2 bookings and 1 grocery run

Almost every disappointing trip up here comes from one of these 2 not being done. Everything else on the peninsula can be improvised.

- 1 **Reserve Grotto parking** the day your dates are firm. From May 1 to October 31 you cannot park at Cyprus Lake without a reservation. Slots run about 4 hours per vehicle, you check in early in your window or the reservation is forfeited, and there are no changes, only cancel and rebook. Summer weekends sell out early. Book through the Parks Canada reservation system: parks.canada.ca/reservations-parking-bruce. [Our Grotto parking guide](#) covers what to do when your date is gone.
- 2 **Book the Flowerpot Island boat** if the island is on the list. [Blue Heron Cruises](#) and [Bruce Anchor Cruises](#) both run from Little Tub Harbour and both cross the Big Tub shipwrecks on the way out. Book the **drop-off tour**, not the stay-aboard cruise, which never lands. Landing carries a small Parks Canada fee, so check what is included. [Our island guide](#) covers which sailing and how the day runs.
- 3 **Do the big grocery shop on the drive up**, in your city or Wiarton. Selection thins out fast past Wiarton.

PLAN AROUND THE BOAT SEASON

Day 3 needs a boat in the water and so does the ferry watching on day 1. Flowerpot sailings run through the warm months and thin out as the season closes, and the Chi-Cheemaun runs May 1 to October 18 in 2026. When she stops for the winter a great deal of Tobermory stops with her: a short list of restaurants stays open and most of the shops close.

Outside that window, swap day 3 for Little Cove, Halfway Log Dump or a Bruce Trail day hike, and [the Grotto needs no reservation from November](#), which is the quietest it ever gets. [Our winter guide](#) has what stays open and who to phone first.

1 DAY ONE

Get up here early and spend it in the village

LEAVE EARLY

Check-in almost everywhere up here is 4 p.m., so the hours before it are yours whether you plan them or not. Do the grocery shop on the way, drive through to Tobermory and start the holiday in the village instead of waiting in a driveway for a lockbox code.

AFTERNOON

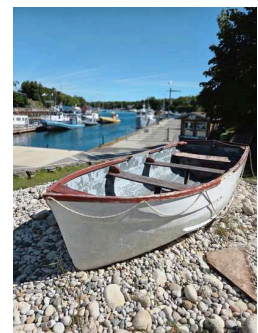
Walk [Little Tub Harbour](#), the shops and the sweet shop, and let everyone stretch out after the drive. Then drive 5 minutes round to [Big Tub Lighthouse](#), an 1885 wooden tower 2 minutes from the car. The 2 schooners in the harbour lie at the far end off private shoreline, so they are for the boat crossing rather than this walk.

THE FERRY

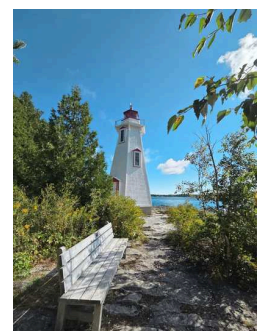
The Chi-Cheemaun works in and out of Little Tub through the season and she is a great deal bigger than the harbour looks able to hold. Watching her turn and back into the berth is 20 minutes of free entertainment, and her crossing times are at ontarioferries.com.

DINNER

Eat in the village while you are already there. Almost nothing takes reservations in summer, so go early or plan on a wait. [Our where to eat guide](#) covers who is open and when. Then check in on the way back, open every blind and argue pleasantly about who gets which room.



Little Tub Harbour.



Big Tub Lighthouse, 1885.

2 DAY TWO

The Grotto, then whatever the group has left

MORNING

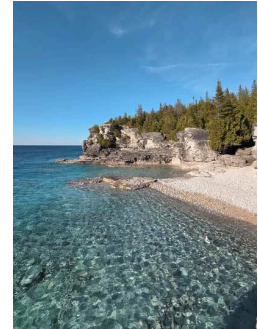
And it has to be morning. Take the earliest slot you managed to book, arrive early in the window and walk the Georgian Bay Trail out to Indian Head Cove and the Grotto, about 3 km or roughly 45 minutes each way from the Cyprus Lake lot. Cool air, flat water and a cove that has not filled up yet. Swim if you are brave. Georgian Bay does not warm up so much as relent. Leave yourself the walk back inside your parking window, because that is the mistake people make at the end of a good morning.

AFTERNOON

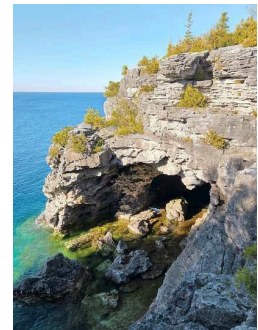
A real choice, because a Grotto morning takes more out of a group than anyone expects. **If everyone still has energy:** [Singing Sands](#), 15 minutes away, facing west over ankle-deep water that runs warm all summer. Check the wind first, because a west wind turns the flats into surf. **If they do not:** go back, [get the fire going early](#) and cook outside. Both are correct answers, and the second one is chosen more often than people admit when they are planning from home.

DO NOT ADD THE ISLAND TODAY

People stack the Flowerpot boat onto a Grotto morning and it does not fit. A parking slot runs about 4 hours, the walk alone is 90 minutes return, and the sailings that leave you enough time on the island are the later ones. These are the 2 biggest days on the peninsula and each one earns its own.



Indian Head Cove, on the walk out.



The Grotto, cave mouth at water level.

3 DAY THREE

Flowerpot Island, and give it the whole day

MORNING

The boats leave Little Tub Harbour and cross the [Big Tub shipwrecks](#) on the way out, so the crossing is part of the day rather than transport to it. Choose a later return sailing than feels necessary. Nobody comes back saying they had too long on the island.

ON THE ISLAND

The loop trail runs about 3 km past the flowerpot sea stacks, the cave and the 1897 lightstation, over rock and boardwalk that wants proper shoes. Carry your water and your lunch in with you.

EVENING

A slow dinner wherever you are staying. After a full day on a boat and a trail, this is the night to cook while the sun goes down over Lake Huron.



The stacks, 20 minutes from the island dock.

THE LAST MORNING

And the drive home

EARLY

If the water is flat this is the [paddle morning](#). It is usually flattest in the first hour of the day, before the wind comes up mid-morning. Coffee first, paddle second, or the other way around.

10 A.M.

Check-out at most rentals up here. Pack the night before if you want the last morning on the water.

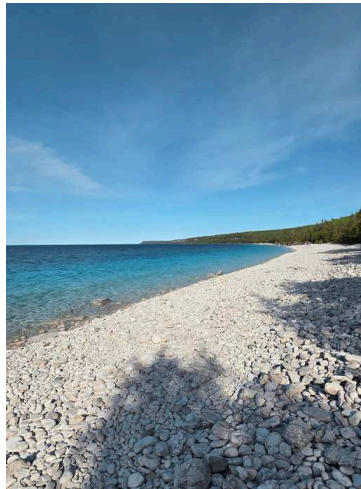
SOUTHBOUND

Lion's Head, if you have the legs for it: 30 minutes south, and the walk out to the lookout over the harbour and the white cliffs is the postcard. It works just as well on the way up as on the way home, so take it on whichever day the group is feeling energetic.

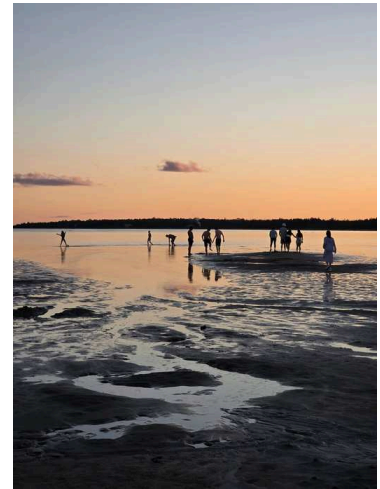
IF YOU HAVE LONGER



Little Cove, the cobble shore.



Halfway Log Dump, the long cobble beach.



Singing Sands, warm and ankle deep.

4+ days instead of 3: [Little Cove](#) for the fossil shore, [Halfway Log Dump](#) for a very long white cobble beach with far fewer people, or a [Bruce Trail day hike](#). Check the parking rules for each before you drive out, because they are not the same as the Grotto's.

With small children: Singing Sands twice and treat the Grotto as optional. Warm shallow water beats dramatic cold water at that age, and the boat to Flowerpot is half the fun of Flowerpot.

A rainy day: the peninsula does mist beautifully and the Grotto in fog is close to empty. Otherwise the St. Edmunds Township Museum and the brewery.

A day with no walking in it: a walk-on round trip on the [Chi-Cheemaun](#), which is the cheapest 3 and a half hours on Georgian Bay you can buy.

September instead of July: this exact plan with warmer water, thinner crowds and easier parking. It is what we would book.

November to April: a completely different trip and an equally good one. No Grotto reservation, no boats, no queue.

Nothing in this plan is more than half an hour away, which is the real argument for staying up here rather than day-tripping in. The 3 days work because the driving does not eat them. One last thing, and it is the only line in here about where you sleep rather than where you go: [whichever place you book](#), check which way the main room faces, because cooking and eating in front of the water is a different evening from doing it with your back to a wall.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Written by the hosts at Casolena, a cottage midway up the peninsula on the Lake Huron shore. The web version of this plan lives at casolena.ca/tobermory-itinerary, with the rest of the local guides at casolena.ca/area-guide. The words and photographs are our own.