

Publishers' Diary: Cruise to Flowerpot Island

Photos by Mike Davis Written by Gloria Hildebrandt

A hot sunny day would be a heavenly time to take the Fathom Five Tour to Flowerpot Island off Tobermory. Even on the chilly, windy day in early October that Mike and I went last year on the boat called The Great Blue Heron, the views were beautiful. Snuggled in a cosy, soft blanket conveniently available on the top deck, I enjoyed the sights in the open air. Here are some highlights from that tour.

Cruising to Flowerpot Island is “armchair” travelling at its best. Gorgeous scenery slides slowly by as the boat leaves Little Tub Harbour in Tobermory, turns into Big Tub Harbour, passing impressive cottages, and moves out of harbour for the other islands off Tobermory at the northern tip of the Bruce

▲ Flowerpot Island, famous for its sea stack, or rock pillars visible above left, is part of Fathom Five National Marine Park, and is 6 ½ km northeast of Tobermory. The Niagara Escarpment makes a dramatic appearance on this east side of the island.

◀ The Great Blue Heron, a glass-bottomed boat owned by Blue Heron Cruises in Tobermory, comes into Tobermory's Little Tub Harbour to pick up passengers.

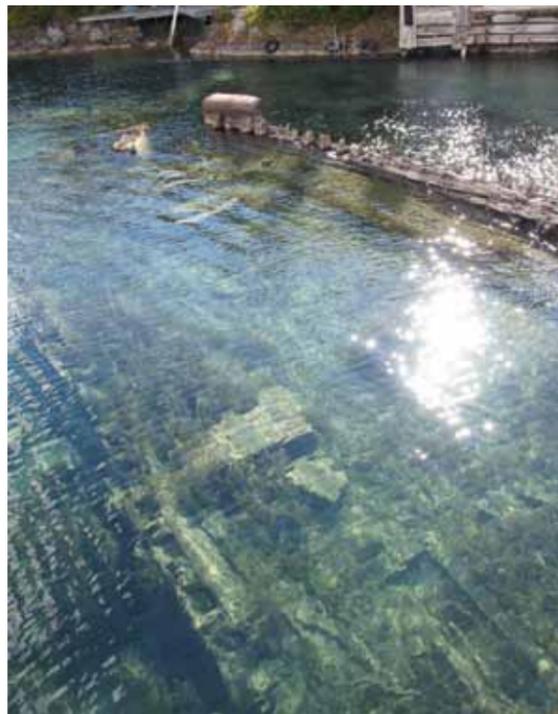




▲ Passing Lightkeepers Home on Flowerpot Island. Left, Flowerpot Lightstation is on the northeastern point of the island.

◀ Big Tub Lighthouse, on the mainland entrance to Big Tub Harbour in Tobermory, dates back to 1885. Note the person studying the light from the top balcony, while in the water, scuba divers explore 15-metre underwater cliffs. The Tobermory area is famous for fascinating dive sites from 20 to 230 feet deep.

From the boat, two shipwrecks at the end of Big Tub Harbour are clearly visible in the crystal waters. The City of Grand Rapids, seen here, was a passenger steamer that caught fire in Little Tub Harbour and ended up sinking here. ▶



▲ Built in 1879, the City of Grand Rapids caught fire in 1907, was towed out to Georgian Bay where wind pushed her into Little Tub Harbour. Looking like skeletal remains of a huge animal in this low water, ribs of her frame and part of the boiler are visible.

Peninsula, including Russel Island, Cove Island, South Otter and North Otter Islands, to circumnavigate Flowerpot Island, which are all lands and waters protected by Fathom Five National Marine Park.

Shipwrecks

The waters off the Bruce Peninsula contain many shipwrecks suitable for snorkelling or scuba diving. Tours to Flowerpot Island include a visit to two wrecks in Big Tub Harbour. In the middle of the harbour lies the Sweepstakes. Built in Burlington in 1867, the two-masted schooner was wrecked in 1885 at Cove Island,

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▲ The Fathom Five Tour passes beautiful scenery on the way to Flowerpot Island. Wildlife and rare plants including ancient Eastern White Cedars abound on these protected islands. Here, the erosive nature of water can be seen in the caves that have formed on the shore of North Otter Island.

Flowerpots in the making? A rock formation on Flowerpot Island that shows vertical cracks and signs of erosion, that may eventually break down and leave more sea stacks. ►

At 39 feet high, this is the larger of two sea stacks, or natural rock piles, that make Flowerpot Island famous. ▼



where the lightkeeper managed to rescue all of the crew. She was towed here to be salvaged and sank afterward. The second wreck is the passenger steamer City of Grand Rapids, built in 1879 and destroyed by fire in 1907.

Wind, Water, Waves

This is how sea stacks or flowerpots can form. The waves of the Great Lakes constantly batter the rocky shores. The weaker rock such as limestone erodes away and caves can start to form. When water opens the

cave all the way through, an arch can be left. Rain and meltwater seep into deep vertical cracks, widening them. Waves keep wearing away the sides of the arch until the top of the arch collapses, leaving harder rock formations standing as sea stacks. These are called flowerpots because of their shape. **NEV**

*Cruises to Flowerpot Island:
Blue Heron Cruises
blueheronco.com or 519.596.2999*