



Cruising

St. Michaels, Maryland

One of the most popular cruising spots, this historic town reflects life along the Chesapeake Bay.

By Capt. Don Fleming

St. Michaels is known as the town that fooled the British during the War of 1812 because its residents outwitted the British Royal Navy ships bent on bombarding it. The privateering and block-ade-running patriots of St. Michaels hoisted lanterns up to the top of trees and ships' masts, causing the warships' cannons to overshoot the town. Today, St. Michaels is a town of such rich history and natural beauty that it's the center of a tranquil serene song along the Eastern Shore of Chesapeake Bay.



HOW TO GET THERE

St. Michaels is accessible from the north through the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal and from the south between Cape Charles in Maryland and Cape Henry in Virginia. From either direction the simplest course is to enter Eastern Bay by rounding the southern tip of Kent Island, giving a wide southerly berth to Bloody Point Lighthouse and Kent Point buoy G "1". Follow the channel northeast to the R "4" buoy at Tilghman Point and turn south-east to the confluence of the Wye and Miles Rivers between Bennett and Hambleton Points, avoiding the large shoal middle ground which was once an island. The south channel brings you into the Miles with its clearly marked passage into St. Michaels Harbor. As you enter, look for the famous Hooper Strait Lighthouse (left), which is part of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. The area is covered by charts 12263, 12265, 12267, 12268, and 12271.

DOCKING FACILITIES

Both the harbor and the town of St. Michaels are relatively small, so everything is within walking distance. The Maritime Museum sits on a small peninsula that divides the harbor in two. The south basin has the town and the marinas; the north basin is more removed and quiet. On crowded week-ends boats often anchor directly out-side the harbor in the Miles River. An-chorage is free and water taxis (acces-sible on VI-IF channels 68 and 71) and dinghy docks (at the town dock and at the museum) are readily available. For those who prefer docking, there are two marinas and one boat-yard in the harbor:

St. Michaels Harbor Inn and Marina, (800) 995-9001, immediately to port as you enter, has 60 transient slips with full amenities as well as suites and rooms overlooking the harbor.

St. Michaels Town Dock, (800) 678-8980, further in and to port, is only one block from the center of town. It has 40 transient slips with similar amenities and the only fuel dock. IF you stop here, check in with the dock-master, Bert Blades, who boasts he has lowest fuel prices on the bay.

The Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, (410) 745-2916, has overnight docking, but it's restricted to members. You can become a member on the spot, and your new membership will include admission to the museum's many shipbuilding attractions.

The Miles River Yacht Club, (410) 745-9511, is one mile north of St. Michaels Harbor on scenic Long Haul Creek. It offers reciprocating docking privileges and anchorage to members of all recognized yacht clubs.

Because of its charm, St. Michaels is crowded on holidays and weekends, so reservations are a must. Open docking is usually available during the week.



ACCOMMODATIONS

St. Michaels offers accommodations to fit many tastes and budgets.

One of the more elegant is The Inn at Perry Cabin, an authentic English country home built in the early 18th century by a War of 1812 navy purser who named it for his friend, Com-modore Oliver Hazzard Perry. Once an exclusive riding academy, Perry Cabin has been lavishly restored and is now part of Sir Bernard Ashley's group of fine inns. (410) 745-3348.

If you like authentic bed and break-fasts, try the Victoriana Inn. It's a gra-cious home, complete with tranquil gardens that stretch to the water's edge, and was originally built by a retired U.S. Army doctor after the Civil War. (410) 745-3368. For a list of other period restoration B&Bs, call The Town Office, (410) 745-9535.

If you prefer to overlook the harbor and your boat from your own balcony suite, St. Michaels Harbor Inn and Marina is for you. (800) 995-9001.

For the budget-conscious, Best Wes-tern St. Michaels Motor Inn, one mile east of town, offers modern rooms, a pool and complimentary continental breakfast. (410) 745-3333.

WHAT TO DO

Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum: The museum features classic draketail workboats, authentic bay-built tugs, skipjacks, bugeyes, and log canoes, plus a steam engine and steamboat display. Concerts, festivals, and activities await you on the beautifully restored grounds. (410) 745-2916.

Biking and walking tours: Absorb the quiet charm of tree-lined lanes and brick walkways. Explore Muskrat Park, which overlooks the harbor, and St. Mary's Square and Museum, the original village green. Browse the galleries, boutiques, and antique and craft shops along Talbot Street. The Town Dock Marina has bicycles and 15-foot power boat rentals. (410) 745-2400. The Harbor Inn and Marina has pedal boats, canoes, aqua bikes, and bicycles for rent. (410) 745-9001.

Gunkholing: Directly across the Miles River from St. Michaels, Leeds Creek and Hunting Creek offer the quintessential natural surroundings famous on the Eastern Shore. Due to shoaling, be sure to keep a good 100 yards east of marker G "3" when entering Leeds Creek. Also within easy strik-ing distance are scenic Shaw Bay on the Wye River and the towns of Ox-ford and Easton-on-the-Tred Avon.

Fishing: Rockfish (striped bass), bluefish, Spanish mackerel, black drum, and sea trout (weakfish) abound in the area. Licenses are required: \$5 for five days and \$12 for a full season plus a \$2 striped bass per-mit for nonresidents. If you're in the mood for chartering with an expert, call Capt. Chris Spurry, (410) 745-3233, who has the prettiest custom bay-built boat in the harbor. Or check out Buddy Harrison, (410) 886-2121, at nearby Tilghman Island. For local knowledge try Big Al's, whose "market" doubles as the bait-and-tackle shop. (410) 745-3151.



EATERIES

Town Dock Restaurant: A favorite for casual waterfront Eastern Shore seafood with a touch of elegance at a good price. (410) 745-5577.

208 Talbot: Excellent for gourmet cuisine in a casual and relaxed atmosphere. Great Sunday brunch! (410) 745-3838.

The Inn at Perry Cabin: Four-star continental cuisine. (410) 745-2200.

The Crab Claw Restaurant: Informal dining, friendly service, great seafood, and a lively atmosphere overlooking the harbor. Bushels of steamed crabs are served right on top of your paper-covered table. (410) 745-2900.

Carpenter Street Saloon: The spot for "local color." Serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner. (410) 745-5111.

For more information, contact:

St. Michaels Town Office, Dept. PMY, Box 206, St. Michaels, MD 21663. (410) 745-9535.

Talbot County Chamber of Commerce, Dept. PMY, Box 1366, Easton, MD 21601. (410) 822606.

Capt. Don Fleming is a USCG-licensed Master of Oceans with more than 25 years' experience and a professional educator who has trained hundreds of people in basic and advanced boating skills.

For more information or a copy of Navigation Rules, Inter-national-Inland, contact U.S. Department of Transportation, Dept. PMY, United States Coast Guard, 2100 2nd St. S.W., Washington, DC20593-0001 (202) 267-0406.