

Welcome Anchorages

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Not yet updated for 2025, but even so it is a useful resource for those from the USA and maybe Ireland too?. You will find these free magazines at Marinas.

Local Information

With grateful thanks to RHYC Commodore Martin Clark for putting this together

First , crews may not be aware that if boats are landing in Southern Ireland from the west they will find that the currency is Euros, Northern Ireland and Scotland is pounds. However most places have card readers (applies to the Western Isles as well)

Oban

Medical

All facilities are available here in Oban, there is a hospital, medical centre, emergency dental care is also available. There are numerous pharmacies: Boots on the seafront is probably the nearest and most comprehensively stocked.

There is a small hospital/medical centre on Mull (Tobermory) also pharmacies.

There is a hospital and medical centre(s) on Skye (but some distance from Loch Harport).

There is a small hospital/medical centre on Barra (it has a helipad for emergency transfers to the mainland) also pharmacy.

Location for provisions and Liquor:

There are several including Tesco, Aldi, Lidl even Marks and Spencer's. In the UK we buy everything in supermarkets. There are specialist liquor stores but unless you are really after something obscure it will be cheaper at supermarkets. Lidl and Aldi are cheaper than Tesco (usually) but Tesco have a better range. Tesco, Aldi and Lidl are all on the Lochavullin estate which is a 10 minute walk from the North Pier/Transit marina. NB you can't buy liquor before 10 am in Scotland (for some unfathomable reason)

Kerrera Marina

As Kerrera is an island, the marina runs a ferry to the mainland (I think hourly) so crews can provision. This needs to be booked. Alternatively boats can go to the Transit Marina which is attached to the north pier however berths can't be booked, so it's first come etc and there is a 3 night limit.

Martin would STRONGLY suggest crews buy as much as possible in Oban as there will be nowhere near the choice/availability in Tobermory or Castlebay and there is only a very small shop at Loch Harport

Restaurants

Kerrera: The Waypoint and plenty in Oban

Oban: EE Usk (North pier) actually two restaurants, The Piazza for light bites and EE Usk full blown restaurant, European cuisine. Cuan Mor, (seafront) European cuisine full range good value and choice. The Waterfront Fish House, (behind the ferry terminal) Fish. Porcini at No.17, (along the promenade just past the big Catholic Cathedral) pricy but good, Italian Cuisine. Kaina Italian Kitchen (near Tesco). Taj Mahal (George Street) Indian. China Restaurant (Stafford Street). Bar Rio, (part of the Columba Hotel on the north pier), burgers chicken fries etc. George street fish restaurant (George Street), traditional British chippy but can sit in (and the best chippy in Oban IMHO).

Not an exhaustive list there are also other snack bars etc. If anyone wants something in particular either try google or direct them to me at the opening gathering.

We've been to all apart from China Restaurant.

Most have websites with menus.

Churches

There are two Sundays on the cruise, the first at Oban where there are several flavours of Christian worship: St Columba's Catholic Cathedral, Church of Scotland, The Baptist Church, Oban free Church, Scottish Episcopal Church.

(However if we are going to cruise in company to Tobermory on Sunday I should point out that we will have to leave before 11 to take the tide.)

The second Sunday is in Vatersay and in general Barra/ Vatersay is Catholic. The closest church is Our Lady Star of the Sea in Castlebay. There is a Church of Scotland further round the west side of the island and I'm sure if someone really wanted to go we could arrange transport.

No Hindu Temples or Mosques listed for any of the locations we will visit.

Tobermory

Provisioning

There are quite a few small shops and a medium sized Co-operative supermarket.

Nowhere near the choice in Oban but sufficient for topping up.

Restaurants

Bear in mind Tobermory is one street (more or less). Therefore I've listed the restaurants in order of distance from the marina (roughly). If I've commented we've been recently-ish.

Macgochan's right by the marina (good food). The Tobermory Hotel Restaurant, (nice but more expensive). MacDonald Arms, (new last year trying hard very good service and food). The Galleon Bistro European. Spice of Mull Indian. Crystal Palace Chinese Restaurant. The Western Isles Hotel, up the hill overlooking the bay, We've not been recently but reports from last year OK. Then there's the Mishnish. The most famous pub in Tobermory. Mandatory to visit (just to say you've been!!) they have a spin off restaurant called the Mishdish, (good last time we went). Cafe Fish on the pier.

I would think you will have to book for all apart from the Indian, Chinese, Macgochans and possibly Mishdish.

Also several cafes for light bites, lunches etc.

Castlebay

Provisioning:

Co-Operative supermarket close to the marina

Restaurants:

Castlebay Hotel, (good food medium price). Kisimul Cafe, Indian (good food medium price). Cafes and takeaways near Co-op also Buth Bharraigh (walk around bay towards ferry terminal. You will need to book for both these restaurants. NB it's also a bus ride from Vatersay and you would need to check when the last bus is.

Repair and Haul out facilities

Kerrera 50t travel hoist and access to engineers both on site and specialist peripatetic.

Dunstaffnage same but also has an excellent chandlery but a bus ride from Oban.

Tobermory has a chandlery but it majors in clothing. No significant marine repair facilities.

Castlebay: My contact has said that if anyone is in trouble at Vatersay she will try to organise someone local to assist.

Fuel

Kerrera

Dunstaffnage

Tobermory

Salen quay (Loch Sunart)

Castlebay from a local garage in containers (not ideal but possible)

Boats coming from the south would be advised to refuel at Ardfern marina or Craobh marina if they need a lot, as it's usually cheaper.

As a general point I would strongly recommend that if possible boats ensure they have sufficient fuel to get from Tobermory to Loch Harport-Vatersay-Tobermory based on motoring the whole way!

I will get an up-to-date list of fuel prices per station for the event as I have no idea at this time how both domestic and world events will have affected this by July.

NB UK craft sailing in home waters have to buy fuel at 60/40 tax rate. This is the assumption that 60% of the fuel is used for propulsion and therefore taxed whilst 40% is used for heating and power generation and untaxed. I'm not sure if US boats might get away with all fuel free of tax. I've tried to check but it isn't clear.

Water availability

Kerrera (though if there has been a dry spell they sometimes struggle keeping pace with a lot of boats as they are not on mains water and they ask that Skippers don't wash their boats in the marina).

Tobermory

Castlebay

Again I would recommend that boats leave Tobermory full as it could be a bun fight if lots of boats need to visit Castlebay for water.

Pump outs

Tobermory

Ice

Re Ice I think some supermarkets sell ice blocks but it's not something we look for. I'll have to come back to you on that.

Navigation

Nothing special to report; yes we do have fish farms but they are charted.

The only tidal issue on the route would be the Sound of Mull however for the passage to Tobermory it is neaps and although I'd still choose to go with the stream, it won't be that strong.

Navionics charting for the area is available for about GBP40 for iPad/Tablets this gives active tidal information as well.

Weather information

Coastguard, channels 62, 63, 64, 10 every three hours from 07:30 BST. Announced on Ch16 before forecast begins.

Other means: We use XC weather app (by location) or Pocket Grib files app for general weather charts both still free to download to Tablets and iPads I think.

Off path cruising

Given the outward route distance and timescale we are just looking at cruising between Tobermory/Loch Drumbuie and Loch Harport. I think the OCC are going to plan our return route

Depending on wind conditions there are a few places to visit mainly the small Isles (Muck, Eigg, Rum and Canna) though Loch Scavaig (Skye) would be possible in Calm conditions.

I would suggest that skippers take careful notes from the CCC pilot when exploring, if they have it, or better yet download Antares Charts as they give detailed chartlets for 500+ anchorages and are more accurate than mainstream chartplotter software. (GBP20 for tablets/iPads available on line)

More information in Bulletin #3

Tide tables

These are available on line generally or at any chandlery for about GBP2 and organisers will take this into consideration with events planned.

Courtesy Flag

The correct courtesy flag for all UK waters is the red ensign which should be flown between the Republic of Ireland waters (where it is the Irish Tricolour) and the top end of the North Channel. However in Scottish waters the Saltire is perfectly acceptable (and I would say preferable on this cruise!!)

Things to do

Re young children not sure, however there may be an opportunity to dinghy sail with Oban sailing Club depending on insurance etc. Likewise Tobermory and Castlebay clubs but you'd have to enquire specifically. There are things to do on Barra/Vatersay eg walking and cycling and I will get hold of some A3 information sheets from Sarah when we go out in May to add to the goody bags.

Holding Tanks

Notwithstanding my specific comments in the meeting concerning At Loch Harport and Vatersay holding tanks SHOULD be used. Otherwise there aren't any restrictions on discharges of all types of waste overboard (yet) however in marinas it is not done to discharge solid waste where shoreside toilets are available.

Trash

There are general waste and often recycling bins at all marinas.

Clothing

Ha! The temperature can vary between 10-25 Celsius (45 - 80F) in summer, it can also be wet so apart from oilskins bring layers!

But most importantly bring some midge repellent cream (available widely in Scotland the best one we find is "Smidge the Midge") seriously they are awful and if you "get midged" it is no joke!

Emergencies

Don't know if you have this so I'll outline it.

UK and Irish coastguard have similar procedures and use the RNLI as a rescue service. This rescue service is a charity and is free to all users.

In the event of a serious problem use international Pan Pan or Mayday procedures.

However if you have a non-serious concern it's OK to call the coastguard on ch 16 and use the phrase "ROUTINE TRAFFIC". They will suggest you go to Channel 67 (usually) and stand by.

All these guys are very helpful and would rather know if you have a problem which could develop.

Once on 67 (or whatever they decide) You can then describe your problem(s) and ask for advice. They may suggest you head for a destination where specific help is available or they may task a lifeboat to assist or escort you if they deem it appropriate.

In the western Isles the coastguard station is Stornoway but approaching through the Irish Sea the stations are Milford Haven, (South Irish Sea) Holyhead, (central area and Isle of Man) then Belfast until you reach the sound of Jura. (You would need to google the Southern and Western Irish stations).

So it's channel 16 "Stornoway (or whichever is closest) coastguard (x3) this is yacht xxx (x3) Routine traffic"