

Milford Haven/Gwynns Island Trail

14.1 to 20.5 miles



This trail extends from the Gwynns Island Bridge (upper left of the chart) to Haven Beach (lower right of the chart). Milford Haven, the body of water separating Gwynns Island from the mainland, is an area of open water about three miles long. It is about half a mile wide up to Cockrell Point and then opens up to about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile beyond Cockrell Point as you go east towards the Chesapeake Bay. There are numerous creeks off the Haven that can be explored as side trips. Milford Haven is open to the Bay in the southeast. Wave action can be substantial in windy conditions, especially as you get closer to the Bay. The trip from the Gwynns Island bridge via the northern shore of Milford Haven to Whites Creek Landing is about 5 miles. The trip along the southeastern shore of the Haven is slightly shorter, about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles. If you take the channel below Rigby Island traveling between Whites Creek and the Haven Beach, it is another roughly 1.5 miles.

Keep in mind as you paddle into Milford Haven that the main channel runs from the bridge down the middle of the Haven with one branch going into Stutts Creek and the main channel going out into the Chesapeake Bay at Hole in the Wall. If you travel along either shoreline, you will have a more peaceful trip and will avoid crossing into the paths of speeding boats and their wave action.

Milford Haven's Southern Entrance

An interesting way to exit or enter Milford Haven near its southernmost extremity, and

one that is especially suitable for small, hand-powered craft such as canoes and kayaks, is to take the narrow channel, or cut, just below Rigby Island. Rigby Island is the last remnant of a series of barrier islands that once extended for ten miles to the south. There are numerous sandbars at its southern tip, and a small channel that leads into the Chesapeake Bay. The channel seems always to be there, but large storms can move it around. It separates Rigby Island from the spit of land that forms Haven Beach, Mathews County's Public Beach. The channel is narrow and at maximum tidal flow (which occurs at the time approximately halfway between the times of high and low tides), the current pours through it making your exit virtually impossible if you are bucking the flow. In that case, your boat can easily be portaged over the sand spit on either side - a matter of a few feet. In fact, this is a good place to beach your boat and walk the sand beaches.

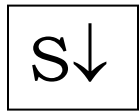
It is important that you read the Guide sections "Notes of Caution" and "Using the Guide" before using this trail guide.



CRUISING NORTH TO SOUTH

Northeast Shore of Milford Haven (Gwynns Island Shore)

Section 1: Gwynns Island Bridge to Cockrell Point - 2.2 to 2.7 miles

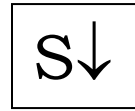


This section, the closest to the bridge, is one of the busiest areas of Milford Haven as many boats pass through the narrows (the area near the bridge). Tidal currents can be strong in this area. Here you will see the Narrows Marina, the Islander Motel, the Coast Guard Station, a large boatel, the Seabreeze Restaurant, and quite a few homes, buildings, docks and piers. As you head east following the Gwynns Island shoreline, you will pass the white buildings of Callis Wharf (a former steamboat landing, ferry landing and dock for floating theaters), now a waterman's wharf where boats come to unload their catches of crabs and fish. Next are the waterfront condominiums, and the wharf at Island Seafood, where local fishermen bring in fresh seafood. You soon come to Edwards Creek, quiet and picturesque, about a half mile long. Continuing along the shore for almost a half mile to the east, you will pass "Gwynnville," the historic home site of the Gwynn family. Just after that is Cockrell Point.

Launching points:

#6 - Milford Haven Landing.

Section 2: Cockrell Point to Sandy Point - 1.9 to 2.5 miles

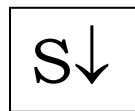


Just beyond Cockrell Point, is Barn Creek, about a half mile long, worth exploring for its typical island homes and boats. It has two branches. The right (south) branch is the longest. Once past Barn Creek, the watery landscape begins to change. There are now fewer homes and more low marshlands. Sand beaches and tiny islands appear off in the distance. More wildlife can now be seen, especially as you approach the outer reaches of Gwynns Island and Sandy Point. Here you may see cormorants, eagles, terns, herons and other birds depending on the season. Roughly halfway between Cockrell and Sandy Points is Hills Creek. At the time of writing, there is a cut through to the Bay in its upper portion (not shown on the chart) that provides a handy shortcut to and from the campground.

Launching points:

#6 - Milford Haven Landing.

Section 3: Sandy Point to Whites Creek - 2.6 miles



Sandy Point is the name of the beautiful narrow beach at the southernmost tip of Gwynns Island where boaters often stop to fish or swim. The open water between this section of Gwynns Island and Rigby Island is known as the Hole in the Wall. It became a channel after the disastrous 1933 hurricane. Now on summer weekends, numerous motor boats and some smaller sailing vessels pass through this marked channel coming to and from the Bay. It is about three quarters of a mile across to the nearest land (Point Breeze, Lilleys Neck, or the tiny islands off

Rigby Island). Care should be taken to watch for speeding powerboats going through the channel, and also watch for the waves they generate. On a calm day experienced paddlers can cross to Rigby Island and Whites Creek. You will enter quieter and more protected waters as you head towards Rigby Island and into Whites Creek.

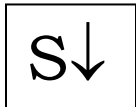
Launching Points:

#7 - Whites Creek Landing.

Southwest (Mainland) Shore of Milford Haven

There are several large creeks along the mainland shore of Milford Haven, and you can choose to follow that shore instead of the Gwynns Island shore. In fact, a trip following one shore with a return trip along the other makes for a nice round trip cruise.

Section 4: Gwynns Island Bridge to Point Breeze - 2.7 to 3.7 miles



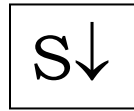
This section, the closest to the bridge, is one of the busiest areas of Milford Haven as many

boats pass through the narrows (the area near the bridge). The first creek on the right (southwest) as you paddle east from the bridge is Lanes Creek, about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile long, suitable for a side exploration. Along the long shoreline of Crab Neck, you will see woods, beaches, and some cottages, but most of this shore is uninhabited. Point Breeze is located at the southeast tip of Crab Neck. It is about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile west of Sandy Point. As you round it, you enter the mouth of Stutts Creek - Billups Creek.

Launching points:

#6 - Milford Haven Landing.

Section 5: Stutts and Billups Creeks - 3.4 to 5.8 miles



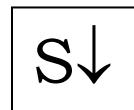
The Stutts Creek - Billups Creek mouth is about half a mile wide at the opening. This is another area of considerable boat traffic in summer. It is best to avoid the channel. Once inside the creek, the first half-mile remains wide. Billups Creek opens to the south. At Fanneys Point, to the west, Stutts Creek narrows to about a quarter of a mile. Initially there is not much to see here because of the low shoreline but once into the narrower part, the land rises a bit, and there are numerous older homes along the shoreline. Here, you enter the part of the creek known for its quieter, gentle charm. There are many coves and small creeks that are sheltered from the winds of the open waters.

Launching points:

#6 - Milford Haven Landing.

#7 - Whites Creek Landing.

Section 6: Stokes Creek and Lilleys Neck - 2.1 to 3.1 miles



Lilleys Neck is the large peninsula between Stokes Creek and Stutts Creek - Billups Creek. It is mostly marshland with a few houses. The south shore of the creek is deeper. It is an area of considerable marshland and few homes, and is an ideal bird sanctuary.

After this section, you can either proceed up Whites Creek to the landing, or exit below Rigby Island.

Launching points:

#7 - Whites Creek Landing.

Section 7: Whites Creek to Haven Beach via Rigby Island Channel - 1.3 to 1.9 miles

Leave Whites Creek through the Rigby Island channel, taking care to allow for the tidal flow. After passing through the channel to the Bay and cruising in a southerly direction, you will see open sand beaches extending along the shore for miles. Wind and wave action can be substantial once you are out in the open Bay waters. The access road (Rt. 643) to Haven Beach is about ¾ mile south of the cut.

Launching points:

- #7 - Whites Creek Landing (protected).
- #8 - Haven Beach (open Bay).



CRUISING SOUTH TO NORTH

Section 7: Haven Beach to Whites Creek via Rigby Island Channel - 1.3 to 1.9 miles



The access road (Rt. 643) to Haven Beach is about ¾ mile south of the Rigby Island

channel. After leaving Haven Beach, paddle north along the shore. Take care since wind and wave action can be substantial on the open Bay waters. Leave the open Bay and enter Whites Creek through the Rigby Island channel, taking care to allow for the tidal flow as explained in the introductory paragraphs of this trail. After passing through the channel, Whites Creek is more protected.

Launching points:

- #7 - Whites Creek Landing (protected).
- #8 - Haven Beach (open Bay).

Southwest (Mainland) Shore of Milford Haven

There are several large creeks along the mainland shore of Milford Haven, and you can choose to follow that shore instead of the Gwynns Island shore. In fact, a trip following one shore with a return trip along the other makes for a nice round trip cruise.

Section 6: Lilleys Neck and Stokes Creek - 2.1 to 3.1 miles



Lilleys Neck is the large peninsula between Stokes Creek and Stutts Creek - Billups

Creek. It is an area of considerable marshland and few homes, and is an ideal bird sanctuary. The south shore of Stokes creek is deeper. As you round its northern tip, you are in the Stutts Creek entrance and off the mouth of Billups Creek, which extends to the south.

Launching points:

- #7 - Whites Creek Landing.

Section 5: Stutts and Billups Creeks - 3.4 to 5.8 miles



The Stutts Creek - Billups Creek mouth is about half a mile wide at the opening. This is another

area of considerable boat traffic in summer. It is best to avoid the channel. Once inside the actual creek, the first half-mile remains wide. Billups Creek opens to the south. At Fanneys Point, to the west, Stutts Creek narrows to about a quarter of a mile. Initially there is not much to see here because of the low shoreline but once into the narrower part, the land rises a bit, and there are numerous older homes along the shoreline. Here, you

enter the part of the creek known for its quieter, gentle charm. There are many coves and small creeks that are sheltered from the winds of the open waters.

Launching points:

- #6 - Milford Haven Landing.
- #7 - Whites Creek Landing.

Section 4: Point Breeze to Gwynns Island Bridge - 2.7 to 3.7 miles

As you leave the mouth of Stutts Creek, you round Point Breeze and begin to head northwest along Crab Neck. Point Breeze is located at the southeast tip of Crab Neck. It is about three-quarters of a mile west of Sandy Point. Along the long shoreline of Crab Neck, you will see woods, beaches, and some cottages, but most of this shore is uninhabited. The last creek on the left (southwest) as you paddle northwest along Crab Neck is Lanes Creek, about three quarters of a mile long and suitable for a side exploration. Past Lanes Creek is the Gwynns Island bridge, one of the busiest areas of Milford Haven as many boats pass through the narrows (the area near the bridge).

Launching points:

- #6 - Milford Haven Landing.

**Northeast Shore of Milford Haven
(Gwynns Island Shore)**

Section 3: Whites Creek to Sandy Point - 2.6 miles



This section starts in the quiet, more protected waters of Whites Creek. As you paddle toward the north, Rigby Island is the low sand island to your right (east). Sandy Point is the

name of the beautiful narrow beach at the southernmost tip of Gwynns Island where boaters often stop to fish or swim. The open water between this section of Gwynns Island and Rigby Island is known as the Hole in the Wall. It became a channel after the disastrous 1933 hurricane. Now on summer weekends, numerous motor boats and some smaller sailing vessels pass through this marked channel coming to and from the Bay. It is about three quarters of a mile across to the nearest land (Point Breeze, Lilleys Neck, or the tiny islands off Rigby Island). Care should be taken to watch for speeding powerboats going through the channel, and also watch for the waves they generate. On a calm day experienced paddlers can cross to Sandy Point.

Launching Points:

- #7 - Whites Creek Landing.

Section 2: Sandy Point to Cockrell Point - 1.9 to 2.5 miles



Much bird life can be seen near the outer reaches of Gwynns Island and Sandy Point. Here you may see cormorants, eagles, terns, herons and other birds depending on the season. There are low marshlands and relatively few homes. Roughly halfway between Cockrell and Sandy Points is Hills Creek. At the time of writing, there is a cut through to the Bay in its upper portion not shown on the chart that provides a handy shortcut to and from the campground. Just before Cockrell Point, is Barn Creek, about a half mile long, worth exploring for its typical island homes and boats. It has two branches. The right (east) branch is the longest. Once past Barn Creek, the watery landscape begins to change. There are more homes and buildings.

Launching points:

#6 - Milford Haven Landing.

Section 1: Cockrell Point to Gwynns Island Bridge - 2.2 to 2.7 miles



Continuing along the shore, just after Cockrell Point you will pass "Gwynnville," the historic home site of the Gwynn family. You soon come to Edwards Creek, quiet and picturesque, about a half mile long. Next is the wharf at Island Seafood where local fishermen bring in fresh seafood. As you head west following the Gwynns Island shoreline, you will pass waterfront condominiums and the white buildings of Callis Wharf (a former steamboat landing, ferry landing and dock for floating theaters), now a waterman's wharf where boats come to unload their catches of crabs and fish. Here you will see quite a few homes, buildings, docks and piers, the Seabreeze Restaurant (to your right [west]), a large boatel (on you left [south]) and the Coast Guard Station. After passing under the bridge, the Narrows Marina and then the Islander Motel will be on your right (east). The area closest to the bridge is one of the busiest areas of Milford Haven as many boats pass through the narrows (the area near the bridge). Tidal currents can be strong here.

Launching points:

#6 - Milford Haven Landing.

Tidbits

- River (whitewater) kayaks are built to turn quickly and easily, and they tend to do so even when you don't want them to. They are not as suitable for cruising as touring and sea kayaks.
- Canoes can hold more gear than kayaks, but are difficult – sometimes impossible- to paddle in wind and waves.