



PORTS OF CALL

PORT TOWNSEND

◆ By Norris Comer ◆

Port Townsend, known in the days of yore as the “City of Dreams” when it was believed the town would grow into the largest port on the West Coast, has in many ways lived up to the name in a more organic-artisan, authentically salty, wood-planks-n’-brickwork kind of way. It is hard as a boater or lover of the sea not to be uplifted when the opportunity arises to visit, for the soul of the town is a rare, dare we say bespoke, mix of things we love. Victorian houses and historic buildings house hyper-local establishments and restaurants, such as the iconic and independently owned Rose Theatre that originally opened in 1907 as a vaudeville house. Central to the brick-red beating heart of Port Townsend is all things marine, and the place is a magnet for some of the best nautical craftspeople in the world.

There, we said it, the world. There probably isn’t a town of this size anywhere else where you can build a Nor’easter Dory (with Chesapeake Light Craft), attend professional seamanship classes (with the U.S. Maritime Academy), build a Rowcruiser (with Northwest Maritime Center [NWMC]), enroll the kids in water-themed youth programs (NWMC, again), and build a wooden kayak (with Pygmy Boats) all within walking distance from each other in the middle of town. It’s the kind of place where the entire community takes to the streets to celebrate with live music and a craft beer in hand, such as during the iconic Wooden Boat Festival (which just enjoyed its 40th iteration).

For the incoming mariner, Port Townsend is obstacle-free. The town sits on the west side of Admiralty Inlet and one can gaze at Whidbey Island’s bluffs to the east from downtown. Boats often utilize the services of a marina, such as the large, modern, and centrally located Port Townsend Boat Haven Marina, vs. anchoring off the hook, which is perfectly legal with public, dinghy-friendly beaches. The southerlies can really howl, the tides are strong, and there is reportedly poor grounding on the south side of town. If approaching from the north, you’ll be fresh from the straits of Juan de Fuca (“I-wanna-puke-a”) and will pass the Point Wilson Lighthouse on your starboard before reaching downtown proper. Mind the tides and winds as always or risk a frustrating beat in foul conditions near shipping traffic. We live in a beautiful, but often unforgiving, place.

1. Northwest Maritime Center

How could a boater in good conscious avoid the bright yellow Northwest Maritime Center? The NWMC not only offers a staggering array of maritime classes from their headquarters, but they also are the masterminds behind the legendary Port Townsend Wooden Boat Festival and the harrowing sensation RZAK Race to Alaska. Events range from Navigator Brunches to Wooden Boat Wednesdays. Regattas, charters, and just about everything you can imagine are spearheaded by NWMC, which is part people’s yacht club, college, and church of Neptune. The NWMC is certainly a cultural fixture, home of the “cool kids” of the PNW boating scene.

The best way to keep up with these folks is to check out their website to see what’s on the calendar, nwmaritime.org. The big yellow “campus” is on 431 Water Street. The Current Wooden Boat Chandlery store hours are 1000 hours to 1700 hours, seven days a week.



2. Point Hudson

Not only is Point Hudson a navigational landmark and right next to the Point Hudson Marina and RV Park, but there are a few things worth investigating for the curious. A cluster of eateries housed in old wood buildings include the Pacific Northwest-inspired Chinese restaurant Shanghai Chinese, the Hudson Point Café, and Doc’s Marina Grill in Port Townsend and should have something for every palette. What’s more, Washington Fish and Wildlife maintains a small but visit-worthy space that often shows short educational films, features touch tanks, and has great information on the local fisheries. Want the latest news on the shellfish harvesting grounds? Look no further. To cap it all off, the east view at the end of Hudson Point is a scenic gander.

3. Water Street

Ah, Water Street. This northeast-southwest running street is the historic waterfront’s spine that connects the Hudson Point Marina to the Ferry Terminal. It may be 2016, but musicians belting sea shanties and living off the dollars in their guitar cases are still common sights. Brickwork and historic buildings lull a person into a feeling of true peace. Boutiques and ice cream are the norm around Water Street, and charming green spaces with jungle gyms for the little ones and benches for grandma and grandpa speckle the route. If you find yourself in Port Townsend, we reckon you’ll be on or near Water Street quite often during your visit. Without Water, the town would surely be a shadow of itself.



4. The Old Guard

Fort Worden State Park is Port Townsend community’s green roaming space, the great lawn as it were. Situated on the northeast corner of town, the historic gathering space is a virtual menagerie of all things Port Townsend. Winding roads and paths take visitors past the Port Townsend Marine Science Center, a good stop for the marine science lovers among us. The wonderfully preserved military buildings have been mostly co-opted by artists these days, among them the Madrona MindBody Institute that teaches yoga and soul motion dance. The old batteries like Battery Ash and Battery Kinzie keep a weathered, guarded eye to the sea and are fun to explore. The Point Wilson Lighthouse and Puget Sound Coast Artillery Museum are a few of the historic attractions in the park. There’s a lot going on here, check out the website at fortworden.org.

5. Celebrate!

Port Townsend is a lively place. Where else hosts the Wooden Boat Festival, a Military Vehicle Show, the Jefferson County Farm Tour, an annual film festival, the Kinetic Sculpture Festival, and more? There really is no way to anticipate the next Port Townsend event other than to keep a pulse on the community and get over there when something strikes your interest. The website enjoypt.com, the official tourism site for Port Townsend, is a great resource.



6. Uptown



If you don’t mind navigating the uphill stairs that connect Taylor Street to Jefferson Street, the stroll to Uptown is a Port Townsend must. One passes the historic Fire Bell Tower, and what must surely be the best view of town and Admiralty Inlet, while en route to the off-the-beaten-path business district. Churches built in the old style, like St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, bring an inviting austerity to the neighborhood’s scenery. The cluster of businesses on Lawrence Street includes Petals Flower Shop and the Uptown Theatre. Restaurants like Sweet Laurette Café & Bistro and Lanza’s Ristorante, as well as the Uptown Pub, give the visitor some flavor to savor as they soak in the quieter scene. Give it a visit if you have time, Uptown is certainly worth it.

7. Pub Crawl

Port Townsend is as Pacific Northwest as it gets, and having a craft beer scene is par the course. If a good Port Townsend brew is what you seek, Port Townsend Brewing Co. [330 10th St.] and Propolis Brewing [2457 Jefferson St.] are within walking distance from each other near the Port Townsend Boat Haven Marina. How’s that for convenient? Sirens [823 Water St.] is a bit further off and isn’t a brewery, but it is a popular sailor bar by the water.



Anchorage and Marinas

There aren’t a ton of mooring options in Port Townsend, but there should be a spot for you somewhere. The go-to fuel dock is at The Fish’n Hole at the Boat Haven Marina and has ethanol-free unleaded gas and regular diesel. One can moor off the hook, but be wary of rough conditions and poor grounding.

Port of Port Townsend: Boat Haven

48°6.389’N, 122°46.257’W

Moorage: 375 slips ranging from 25-50 feet with maximum of 100 feet capacity. Check in at the moorage office when you arrive for slip assignment, the office is in the white building at the head of the ramp. Transient moorage is available on a first come, first serve basis.

Comms: Boat Haven monitors VHF Channel 66A.

Customs: A Customs Office for those coming in from Canada, or across the Pacific, is located here.

Office hours are seven days a week, 0800 hours to 1630 hours. 360-385-2355 or 800-228-2803.

2601 Washington Street
Port Townsend, WA 98368

Port of Port Townsend: Point Hudson Marina and RV Park

48° 6.96’N, 122° 44.88’W

Moorage: 32 slips with 800 feet of linear dock space. Slip sizes range from 32 to 70 feet.

Comms: Point Hudson monitors VHF Channel 9.

Office hours are seven days a week, 0800 hours to 1630 hours. 360-385-2828.

103 Hudson Street
Port Townsend, WA 98368

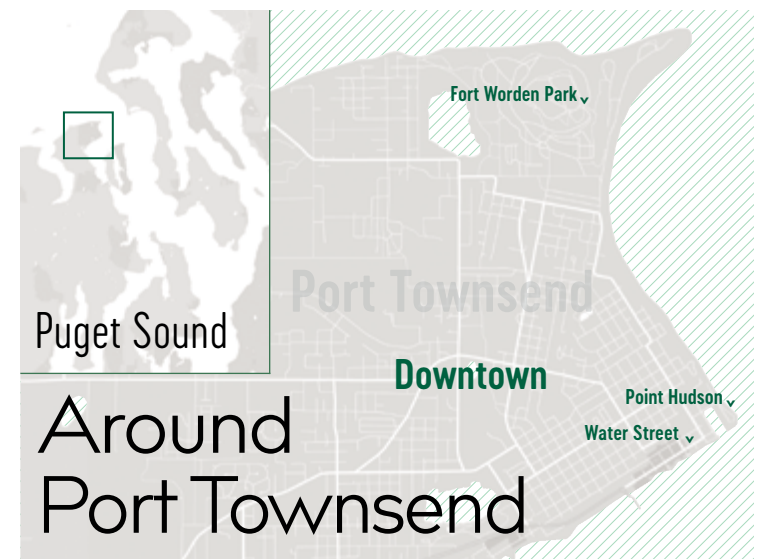


Support local and regional programs for children and young adults through the charitable donation of your boat.

The Pacific Marine Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization funding regional programs such as Northwest Youth Services, Sea Scouts, Boys & Girls Clubs, and local public school education foundations. A substantial tax savings and the possibility of a partial cash sale makes a charitable donation a very attractive alternative for any owner who is considering selling their well-found power or sailing yacht.



(206) 225-3360
www.pacificmarine.org



Gastronomy

You’d be hard pressed to eat poorly in Port Townsend, and a good eatery is almost always a literal stone’s throw away. You like pizza? Hillbottom Pie [215 Tyler St.] and Water Pizza [951 Water St.] are for you. Craving food from the Far East? Everyone seems to love Khu Larb Thai [225 Adams St.] and Hanazono Asian Noodle [225 Taylor St.]. The American diner scene is well represented with places like Dogs-a-Foot [630 1/2 Water St.] or Nifty Fifty’s [817 Water St.]. The Silverwater Café’s Mediterranean and Asian influenced food is always popular, so get a reservation [237 Taylor St.].

There are also a whopping three different weekly farmer’s markets in Port Townsend, all winners:

- Saturday, Tyler St., Uptown Port Townsend, 0900 hours to 1400 hours, April 2 to December 17.

- Sunday, Chimacum Corner Farmstand, 1000 hours to 1400 hours, June 5 to October 30.

- Wednesday, Polk St., Uptown Port Townsend, 1400 hours to 1800 hours, June 15 to September 14.

We huffed it up the stairs to Uptown for a meal at Lanza’s Ristorante [1020 Lawrence Street], and we encourage everyone to do the same. The Spaghetti Putanesca [\$16.50] and Tortellini Carl Vella [\$18.50] were simply out of this world, especially when paired with a bottle of Oregon Pinot Noir. The classy, modest space was intimate without being claustrophobic, and there was even a live piano player. If you’ve got a heart, you’ll leave a few bucks in his tip jar. If you’re taking a first date here, you’re already learned far beyond the need for advice.



BIG WIND DAYS

beget better dreams ...

Scatchet Head, Round the County,
Columbia Gorge, wherever ...



“Bring it on, Mom Nature!!!”

Jan’s Marine Photography
www.janpix.smugmug.com