Getting to Isle Royale From Copper Harbor, MI

The Donald Kilpela family owns and operates the Isle Royale Queen IV, sailing to Isle Royale National Park from Copper Harbor, Michigan. Isle Royale is a large island national park in Lake Superior, the largest fresh water sea in the world. The island is about 55 miles northwest of Copper Harbor, MI, which stands at the tip of the Keweenaw Peninsula.

Isle Royale is Michigan’s only national park, one of very few island national parks in the U.S. It is mostly a spectacular northwoods wilderness with not a single road. But it does have one developed area, Rock Harbor, to which the Kilpelas’ ferry service out of Copper Harbor sails nearly every day in summer and two days a week in May and September.
Rock Harbor: The Main Entrance to Isle Royale

Although the ferry trip on the *Isle Royale Queen IV* is a long one, some 55 miles from Copper Harbor, that's the shortest distance for any transportation service from Michigan. The *Queen IV* makes the daily crossing in just over 3 hours, the shortest crossing time to the one developed area of the island, the Rock Harbor Entrance, of any ferry service from either Michigan or Minnesota.

At Rock Harbor there's a small community. The Rock Harbor Lodge offers cabins and motel-style rooms. The Lodge, owned by Forever Resorts, operates a superb dining room and the Greenstone Grill, both of which are open to all island visitors. The Lodge also operates the Rock Harbor Marina, the Rock Harbor General Store, and other amenities.

The Rock Harbor Entrance is the location of the Rock Harbor Visitors Center, operated by the U.S. National Park Service. The Center offers visitors can lots of information on making their Isle Royale visit memorable.

In addition, at the southwest entrance to the park, which is called Windigo (40 miles away from Rock Harbor), there is a small Visitors Center, boating facilities, and a snack bar.
What Is There to Do on Isle Royale?

Isle Royale offers superb wilderness hiking and backpacking (of moderate difficulty), wonderful lakeside and ridge-top views, lots of wonderful wilderness campgrounds, fine canoeing and kayaking, superb fishing, endless photographic opportunities, and more.

Oh... and don’t forget the moose. The island is famous for them. They live in delicate biological balance with the equally famous Isle Royale wolves.

Isle Royale is huge. It’s 45 miles long and about 10 miles wide, the second largest island in the Great Lakes. Isle Royale looks a lot like northern Michigan, but it’s a wilderness and hence much more rugged and pristine. This makes it one of the most unusual places in North America, a spectacular Great Lakes wilderness very close to America’s heartland. It is one of the largest wilderness parks east of the Mississippi River.

Besides the small developed area at Rock Harbor, the island is wilderness. It has 165 miles of wilderness trails leading to more than 30 wilderness campgrounds, some large and easily accessible, most small and remote.

Visit the web sites of the National Park Service, the Isle Royale Queen IV (www.isleroyale.com) the Rock Harbor Lodge, and the web site and blogs of Captain Ben Kilpela for lots more information on visiting the island.
Ways to experience Isle Royale

Stay at the Rock Harbor Lodge

There are lots of activities for a stay at the Lodge: day-hiking, fishing, sight-seeing, boat tours, canoe or kayak rentals, and more. The Lodge offers excellent meals and rooms in various room-packages – or you can prepare your own meals in one of the Lodge's Housekeeping Cottages. With its superb setting on the shores of Rock and Tobin Harbors, the Rock Harbor Lodge can serve as your wilderness base camp with all the comforts of home.

Wilderness Hike and Backpack

Isle Royale's trails follow the Lake Superior shore and crisscross the vast, forested interior, pass lakes and streams of all sizes, and traverse the high ridges of the island. There are dozens of possible hiking and backpacking itineraries for you to follow. Jim Dufresne's book on the island *Isle Royale Foot Trails and Water Routes* is the bible of island hiking. Captain Ben Kilpela also sells informative pamphlets on loop trails on the northeast half of the island and on island activities for Lodge guests. These are available through the office of the *Isle Royale Queen IV*. 
Canoe and Kayak

Isle Royale has become renowned across the world for its superb sea kayaking and canoeing. There are many harbors and coves off Lake Superior and about two dozen inland lakes that have great fishing and superb views. Isle Royale has set up several portage systems for paddlers to get deep into the interior of the national park. If you love to paddle, Isle Royale is a must.

Or Visit for the Day

A day-trip is a great way to get a taste of Isle Royale. The *Isle Royale Queen IV* offers fast round-trip service to Rock Harbor almost every day in summer. The crossing takes a little over 3 hours.

You have about 3.5 hours at the island. That’s time for a long hike, a paddle, or some fishing. You can have lunch at the Rock Harbor Lodge. Or you can relax at one of hundreds of isolated and beautiful spots along the trails near the Queen IV dock. Then it’s about 3 hours back to Copper Harbor, where you can have an outstanding meal at one of our village’s fine restaurants and a great night’s stay at one of our comfortable motels.

The *Isle Royale Queen IV* offers many Day-Trip specials throughout the summer.
Rates * Schedule * Information

See our web site, www.isleroyale.com for complete information on our 2011 rates and our 2011 summer schedule and for links to the National Park Service and the Rock Harbor Lodge. You also can write or call for a brochure and a package of information on staying at Isle Royale.

In summer, visit the Queen IV dock in central Copper Harbor or the Copper Harbor Community Center for lots of information.

In winter, give the Queen IV office a call most afternoons or drop us a line on email at isleroyalequeen@gmail.com.

If you plan to stay at the Rock Harbor Lodge, visit www.isleroyaleresort.com, but request from the Queen IV Captain Ben’s “Isle Royale Activities” pamphlet.

You can call us at (906) 289-4437 most afternoons in the winter and spring or write us any time on email.