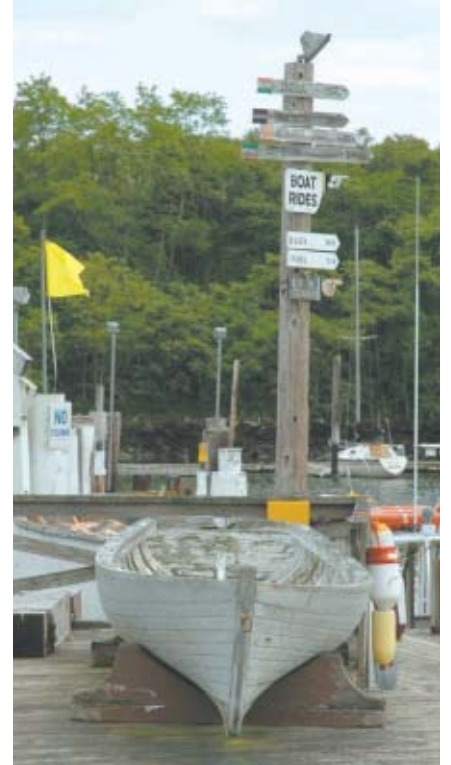


Black Rock Harbor

BRIDGEPORT
CONNECTICUT



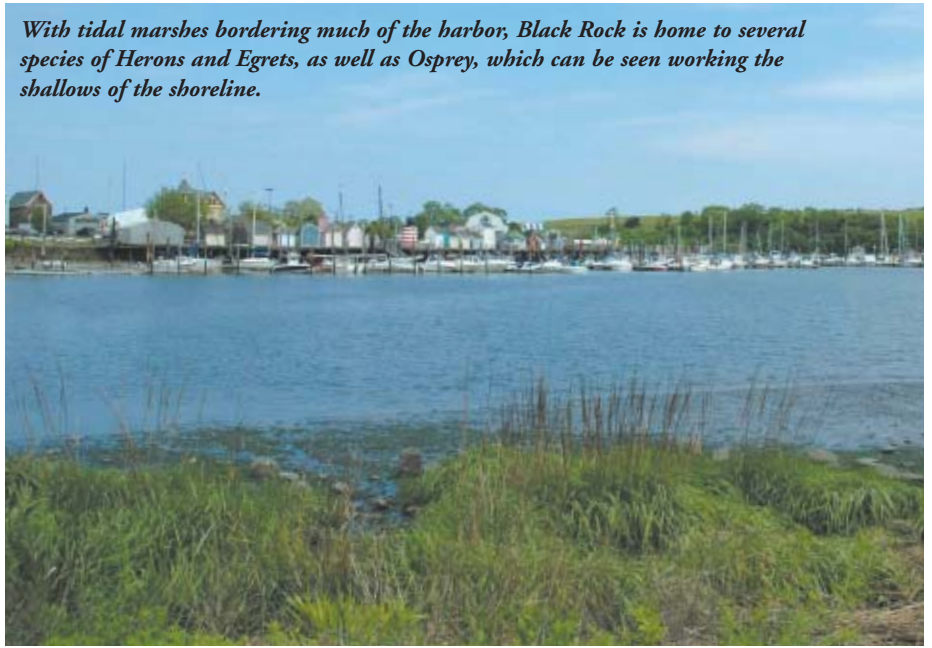
41° 14.3' N
73° 22.3' W



Morgan Kaolian aeropix.net

A charming and friendly little harbor, Black Rock is often visited by day-trippers from Port Jefferson and Northport, New York or surrounding Connecticut-side harbors. Certainly the harbor's main attraction is Captain's Cove Seaport, but there is much to discover here, so why not spend a whole weekend? Black Rock is part of Bridgeport, but residents – though they are proud of their city, like to think of Black Rock as its own, special place – and it is. There is nothing big-city about Black Rock and if you run into any one of its residents, you will be made to feel as comfortable as an old friend.

With tidal marshes bordering much of the harbor, Black Rock is home to several species of Herons and Egrets, as well as Osprey, which can be seen working the shallows of the shoreline.



The entrance to Black Rock Harbor is wide, and presents no particular navigational challenge, but be aware that there are several (mostly charted) rocks located about a mile outside the harbor that have caused untold numbers of skippers grief over the years. The western approach to the harbor is marked by Penfield Lighthouse, which lies about a mile offshore from Fairfield. Penfield Reef runs out to the lighthouse, but the rocks are not arranged in a straight line - they curve eastward like a giant fishhook.

Another rockpile to the east of Penfield Lighthouse, known as “the Little Cows” is marked by a daybeacon. Also, a flashing green buoy (“LC”) designates this hazard. Stay eastward when making your approach from the west, and DO NOT attempt a shortcut across Penfield Reef at any time! The rocks are barely submerged at high tide - a fact that numerous careless skippers learn the hard way every year.

On approach, Black Rock Harbor is as picturesque as any. With a glance toward the west, you'll enjoy scenic views of Jennings and Penfield beaches, as well as the private sandy ‘front yard’ of Fairfield. As you pan northward, you will see the small entrance to South Benson Marina and Ash Creek. This channel is the divider between Fairfield and Bridgeport. South Benson Marina is Fairfield’s municipal marina and Ash Creek is one of Bridgeport’s most picturesque tidal estuaries. The borough of Black Rock is a peninsula that is surrounded on its western side by Ash Creek, its southern tip by Saint Mary’s by the Sea Park and the harbor

on the east.

Once inside the harbor, you will first encounter the very quaint historic Fayerweather Light, situated on the right-hand side of the channel (see p. 23) and immediately on the left is the Black Rock Yacht Club, established in 1926. A private yacht club, Black Rock is open to transient guests and has reciprocal relationships with many Long Island Sound yacht clubs. For guest mooring reservations, call 203-335-0587, email shorecaptain@blackrockyc.com or hail the club dock on VHF channel 14. During the summer months, the club’s launch runs from 0800 to 2300.

There is a restaurant, bar, pool and tennis courts on the grounds, and from here, the seawall walkway that runs along St. Mary’s is a wonderful way to stretch your legs. You’ll often see a fisherman struggling to land a bluefish or bass. You will definitely see plenty of Black Rockers walking their dogs, rollerblading or enjoying one of the many park benches that line the walkway. Architectural enthusiasts can spend an entire day wandering the streets of Black Rock, gazing at the lovely homes and mansions, some of which started life as summer cottages of the George Hotel or seasonal residences. In fact, many of the streets bear the names of Black Rock’s historical figures (see p. 23).

As you progress down the well-

marked channel, which is lined on both sides by moored boats from the various yacht clubs in the harbor, you will pass a small opening where Middle Wharf is located. Immediately next door is the S.S. Norden Swedish Singing Society, known simply as the Norden Club, which claims to have the finest billiards room in the harbor. Follow the channel further and on your left you will come upon Port 5. Port 5 is a Naval Veterans Club. Though it has a small dock, the members are always willing to raft up and sign a guest in for a friendly chat and a beer (or two).

Separated from Port 5 by a public access boat ramp, Fayerweather Yacht Club sits alongside Port 5 and is the first place in the harbor that offers gas (no diesel) and overnight dockside tie-up. Also a private club, Fayerweather boasts a 245-foot dock with 120V /30A power and fresh water, and welcomes transients, honoring a reciprocal arrangement with many other yacht clubs. Guest dockage rates are \$2.00 per foot for the main dock and \$1.00 per foot at the transient dock, located across the channel. A pumpout station (\$5.00 for guests) ice and an outdoor shower are available. Fayerweather’s dock shack and launch monitor VHF channel 14, and launch service is available from 0800 to 2200 during the summer. The club’s phone number is 203-576-6796.

Progressing down the channel, your eyes will immediately shift to the large hangar-like main building of Captain's Cove Seaport, but don't miss Fayerweather Boat Yard to the left, nestled deep inside the shallow (0 feet at low tide) alcove of Burr Creek. Fayerweather Boat Yard, located at 135 Bywater Lane, has a Travelift and a small ship's store. Their phone number is 203-334-4403.

As you arrive at Captain's Cove, you will see several docks with slips off your port side. On your starboard side is the transient dock (identified by a large and armless pirate). Just across the slipway from the transient dock is the fuel dock, then more private slips. The Cove is a full service marina with slip space for 350 boats. Visit the Main Office to arrange your overnight stay. Showers and laundry are located in the rear of the Pilot House building; while gasoline, diesel fuel, engine oil and ice are available through the dock master in the commercial dock area. The seaport office is open seven days a week and services are provided year round. The seaport office number is 203-335-1433 and they monitor VHF channel 18. There is a pumpout boat that operates out of the Cove that monitors channel 9 or 16, or call for assistance at (203) 384-9777.

'The Cove' has much to keep parents, kids and even grandparents busy and happy for a whole weekend. The 400 seat restaurant is open from May to September, 11am to 5 pm and serves just about anything you desire, from steaks to hot dogs, salads and lots of seafood. Call their take out number (203-368-




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A portion of Black Rock from above: Counter-clockwise from the bottom is Fayerweather Towers, Port 5, Fayerweather Yacht Club, Fayerweather Boat Yard and Ellsworth Field.






3710) and your order will be ready when you arrive. Upstairs from the restaurant is one of the more distinctive looking bars on the Sound, and possibly anywhere; the tugboat bar is literally a tugboat. Also decorating the large room is a scale model of the *RMS Titanic*. At 40 feet long, it is quite an impressive sight. There is also a large model of a Sikorsky VS44A "Excalibur" flying boat (Connecticut aviation pioneer Igor Sikorsky, invent-

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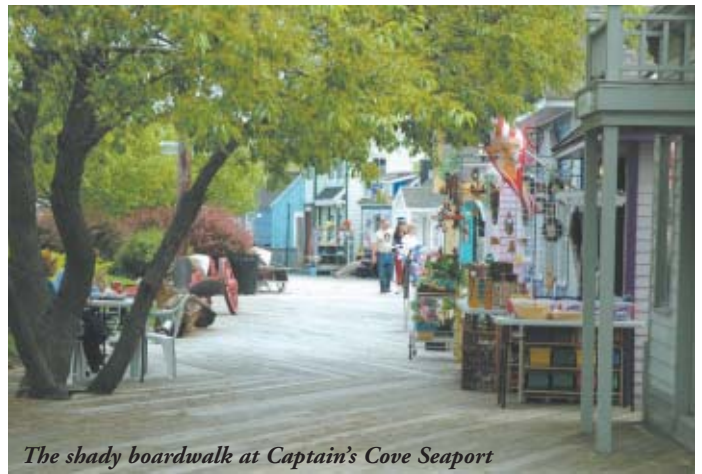
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ed the helicopter), large screen TVs and a huge open deck overlooking the harbor. There's live music in the bar on most nights, and also a popular "Bands on the Boardwalk" on Sunday afternoons.

One of the first things that will catch your eye as you approach the Cove is the long string of mini-houses that make up the Boardwalk Shoppes. These tiny buildings house jewelry and gift shops, ice cream shops, a sailing school and lot of other great attractions to see as you stroll along the deck. The last building along the boardwalk is a miniature airplane hangar containing a half scale model of the Whitehead #21 Aircraft, the original of which was designed, built and flown by Bridgeport inventor Gustav Whitehead from various locations in the area, including the spot where Captain's Cove now sits.

Some historians continue to dispute the fact that Whitehead actually had a 1 / 2 mile powered flight 28 months before the Wright brothers. Though there were several eyewitnesses to a series of flights - including a seven-mile loop over the Sound - Whitehead took no photographs, while the Wright brothers carefully documented their achievements.

The Dundon House, a Queen Anne Victorian home built by Richard Dundon, owner of a coal yard on Burr Creek, has been relocated to its present location at Captain's Cove, across the parking lot from the boardwalk. The extensively renovated house contains an exhibit on the maritime history of the area. On view are photos, models and artifacts relating to Black Rock Harbor and the oyster



The shady boardwalk at Captain's Cove Seaport

industry in Connecticut. The Dundon House is open from April through September. Call the Seaport Office at 203-335-1433 for more details.

Sailaway Sailing School, located on the Cove's boardwalk, offers a variety of programs, taught by qualified instructors, for all ages and levels of experience. They also have courses just for women, and a kid's summer sailing camp. Courses include a three-hour "Intro to Sailing," a nine-hour, three-session "Small Boat Sailing," taught in JY 15s, and a twelve-hour, four-session "Basic Keelboat Sailing." Hourly, half-and full day sailboat rentals are available (course graduates get a discount!). Sailaway also offers Sunset Cruises. Call 203-209-3407 or email sailaway@snet.net for more information.

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The Cove is also home to the Boat Shop, which is a full-service marine facility with certified diesel mechanics. Two travelifts are available and can handle just about any size vessel. Next door to the Boat Shop is Roxburgh Marine, a first-class fiberglass and paint repair shop. On the educational side, the Cove property is also home to the Bridgeport Regional Vocational Aquaculture School, which was opened in 1993. The Aquaculture School provides hands-on education in subjects ranging from marine biology to boatbuilding, and has just launched an environmental science program. The *Catherine Moore*, the school's research vessel, is berthed in the marina and can be seen taking samples in and around the harbor. Also situated in the commercial dock area are the *Chief*, which provides several daily tours of the harbor with a historical narrative and the *Middlebank*, a party fishing boat. Check captainscoveseaport.com for more information.

If you can keep yourself from stopping at the Cove, you will progress down the harbor to Cedar Marina. This is a small yard, with private slips, electricity and water, with a full-time mechanic and a 15 ton travelift. Cedar Marina accepts boats up to 70 feet. There are a few transient slips here and the Cove is within walking distance.

Still further along the left side of the channel is Bluefish Cove Marina. This too is a small marina with private slips. Though it is located in a largely industrial area, Bluefish Cove Marina boasts brand new docks and finger piers and has electricity and water available.

As you venture away from the harbor, you can stroll the streets of Black Rock's peninsula, or work your way toward Fairfield Avenue. Along the mile-long stretch of "the Ave." you will find a number of great places to check out, though the Ave. is best known for its restaurant and bar scene. (See sidebar) ♦

Gobble, gobble, Hey!

BEWARE OF LOW FLYING TURKEYS

Black Rock is home to a growing number of wild turkeys, and the large birds have actually become a minor navigational hazard. The turkeys spend their days on the wooded land adjacent to Seaside Park, and in the evening many of them fly across the channel by Fayerweather Yacht Club to roost in the trees next to Fayerweather Boatyard. Two years ago, the crew of a boat heading out for the Fayerweather YC/Black Rock YC Wednesday night races was startled when an unwary gobbler ran "afowl" of the mast. Boat and crew were unharmed, although the turkey was a casualty - rumor has it the bird was dressed and cooked in FYC's kitchen!