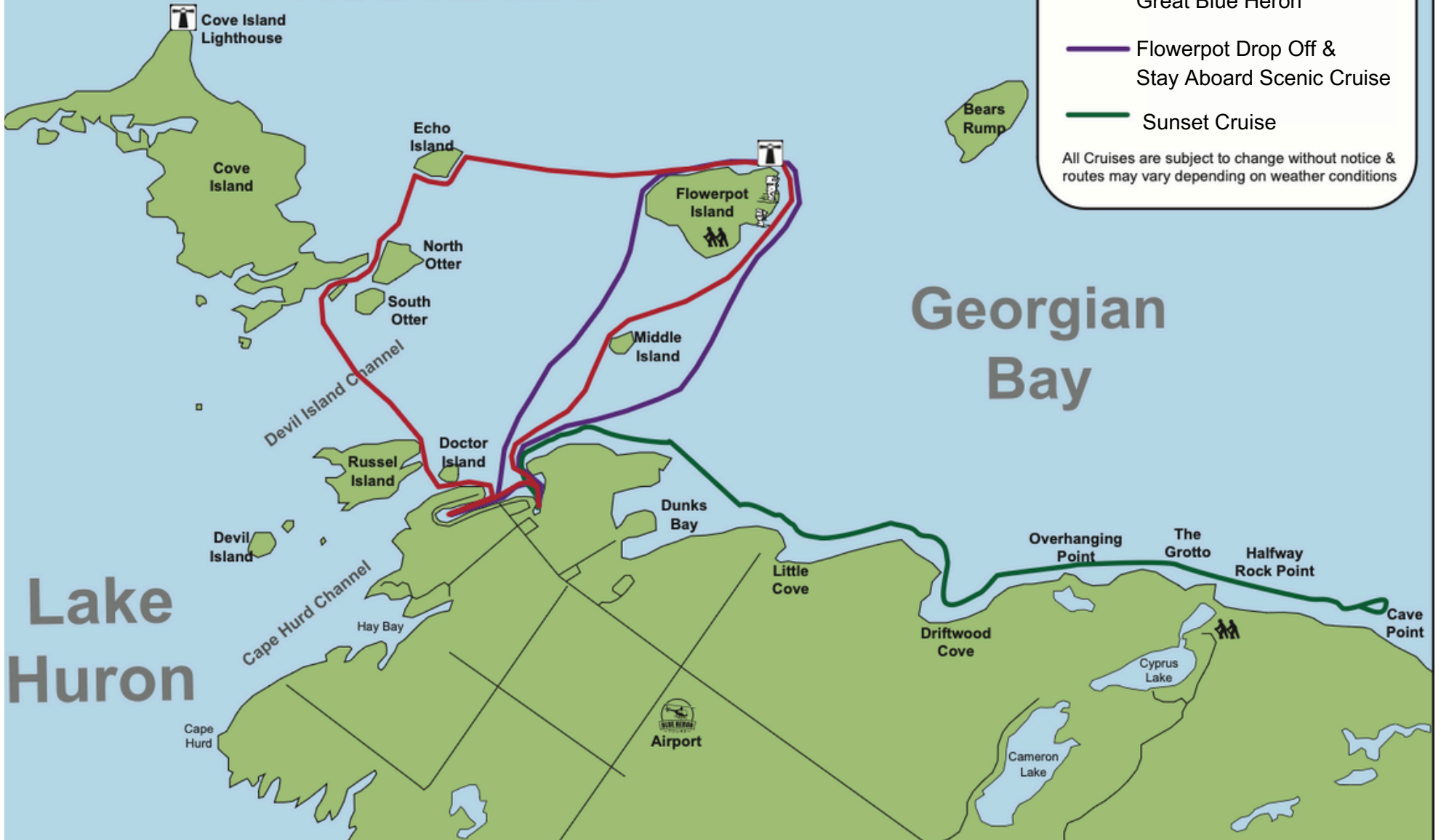




BLUE HERON CRUISES

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ROUTE MAP





Stop and visit the historic **Lighthouse Keeper's dwelling** on Flowerpot Island. This two-story, original house was built in 1900. The site is operated and maintained by welcoming volunteers.

Big Tub Lighthouse

This timber-frame lighthouse marks the entrance to one of Tobermory's two natural harbours. Prior to its construction in 1885, Tobermory's first settler James Earl, hung a lantern atop a pole to guide schooners into the harbour. Today, it is a popular spot to swim, picnic and scuba dive.

The Sweepstakes

A typical two masted, centre-board schooner, The Sweepstakes ran aground in the fall of 1885 near Cove Island Lighthouse. Thankfully all of the crew were rescued by the Cove Island lightkeeper. The following spring she was towed to her present location where most of her rigging, equipment, and cargo of coal were salvaged before she sank. Her hull is nearly intact and a section of railing and the windlass, used for hauling the anchors, can be seen at the bow. She is 36.3 metres long and was built in Burlington, Ontario in 1867.

The City of Grand Rapids

This 37.3 metre steamship was a cargo and passenger vessel calling into many ports on Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. Built in Grand Haven, Michigan in 1879, she caught fire in Little Tub Harbour in 1907. To prevent the fire from spreading, she was towed out of the harbour and released. The burning hull drifted into Big Tub Harbour, burnt to the waterline and sank. While only a section of the hull remains intact, the steam engine and fire box are visible.

Cove Island Lighthouse

Seen in the distance, this grand Imperial Tower was built in 1858 and is one of 6 similar lights on the Canadian shores of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. The 26 metre tower, built of limestone blocks quarried from the Bruce Peninsula, has walls 1.5 metres thick. The station was the last manned lighthouse on Georgian Bay and was automated in 1991.

Plants & Animals

The forest cover is a mixture of cedar, spruce, white pine, birch, tamarack, balsam, mountain ash and trembling aspen. Some of the cedars clinging to the cliffs are among the oldest living trees in the world, at over 1500 years of age. However, most of the islands and all the mainland had been extensively timbered by the early 1900s. Virtually all the tree growth is second or third stand. These islands are famous for rare orchids including spotted coral root, rams head, calypso, lady slipper and rattlesnake plantain. Smaller animals including red squirrels, snowshoe hares, otter, beaver and raccoons inhabit most of the islands. Cove Island, the largest in the Fathom Five National Marine Park, has more diverse wildlife including deer, fox, coyote and black bears. The venomous Massasauga rattlesnake is found only on Cove Island and the mainland.

Flowerpot Island has a large population of harmless garter snakes and some watersnakes. Birdlife includes ring-billed and herring gulls, common and caspian terns, double-crested cormorants, red-breasted and common mergansers, loons, turkey vultures, bald eagles, osprey, great black-backed gulls, and our inspirational namesake, the Great Blue Heron.



Automated in the 1960s, the **Big Tub Lighthouse** today is maintained by dedicated community volunteers. This charming site, accessible by road, is popular with swimmers, divers & picnickers.



Look carefully and you may spot a majestic **Bald Eagle** from the boat as we approach the Lightstation at Flowerpot Island.



You will see two 19th century shipwrecks in Big Tub Harbour including the well-preserved schooner, **The Sweepstakes** (pictured here) and the remains of the steamship, **City of Grand Rapids**.



The golden-orange **lichen** growing on the limestone boulders all along the Georgian Bay shoreline is an algae fungus symbiosis.



The Bruce Peninsula is home to an abundance of diverse and unique ecosystems. The population of **ancient cedars** (pictured here) is one of the most significant features of landscape.

Flowerpot Island

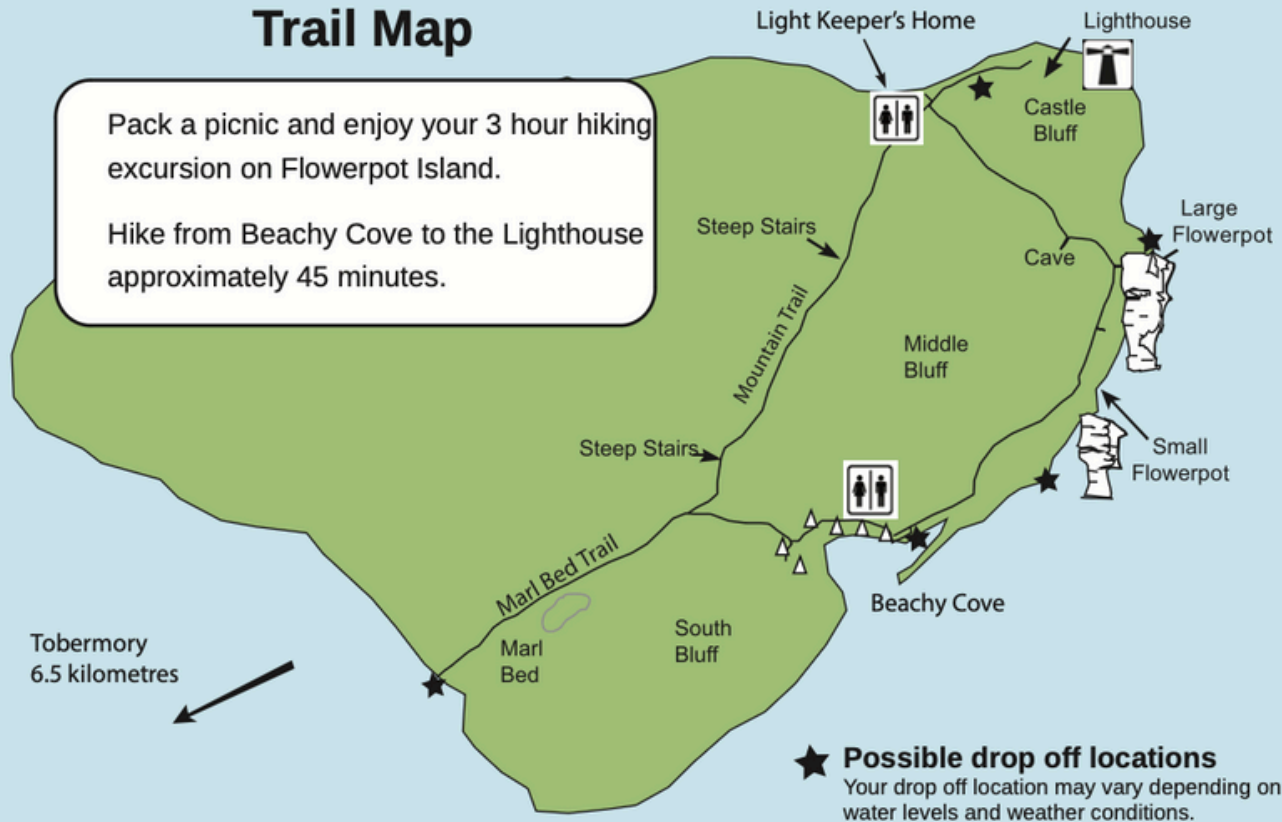
Named for the two rare rock formations on its eastern shore, Flowerpot Island has been part of the Canadian National Park system since 1929. From the dock at Beachy Cove it is a 15 minute hike to the flowerpots. The trail then leads to a large cave and the lightstation before looping back through the interior. A short side trail at the lightstation extends to a panoramic viewing platform at Castle Bluff. Much of the 200 hectare island is undeveloped. The minor 'repairs' at the base of the two flowerpots were undertaken several generations ago. Today ParksCanada has a non-intervention philosophy and some day these amazing natural structures will fall victim to the relentless action of ice, waves, wind and gravity. The limestone rock known as dolostone was formed when coral reefs built up under a shallow tropical sea some 425 million years ago. During the last 25 million years the area has been reshaped and scoured by ice age glaciers - up to 1 kilometre thick - that have advanced and retreated several times.



FLOWERPOT ISLAND Trail Map

Pack a picnic and enjoy your 3 hour hiking excursion on Flowerpot Island.

Hike from Beachy Cove to the Lighthouse approximately 45 minutes.



Please help protect this delicate ecosystem.
Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints.