



**QHM PORTSMOUTH**

# **A SMALL CRAFT GUIDE TO PORTSMOUTH HARBOUR & ITS APPROACHES**

## **Approaching Portsmouth Harbour**

**When Approaching from the West.** Boats entering Portsmouth should approach the harbour through the Swashway. The Swashway (also used by ferries and commercial vessels) runs 049°T on the right hand edge of the prominent block of flats in transit with the War Memorial.

**Approaching from the East.** If approaching from Langstone/Chichester, **BEWARE OF THE SUBMARINE BARRIER WHICH RUNS DUE SOUTH FROM SOUTHSEA SEA FRONT TO HORSE SAND FORT AND IS A HAZARD TO ALL CRAFT.** There are two passages through the barrier - the inner passage approximately 200 metres off the beach (marked by red and green piles) and the outer passage approximately 0.8 nautical miles off the beach (marked by a quick flashing red dolphin and a green pile).

**Portsmouth Harbour Entrance.** Vessels under 20 metres in length entering or leaving Portsmouth should use the Small Boat Channel. This 50 metre wide channel runs between 4 Bar Buoy and Ballast Pile. Tides in the harbour entrance can run up to 5 knots from HW-1 to HW+3. There may be standing waves at the entrance and conditions can become confused, particularly during southerly winds which can eddy around Fort Blockhouse and frequently turn through 180°.

**Portsmouth Harbour.** Once through the entrance the harbour opens out and vessels may safely proceed under sail keeping to the west, avoiding the main hazards in the east including the Isle of Wight ferry berths, Naval Base and the continental Ferry Port. The Gosport ferry crosses the harbour at frequent intervals just north of the Ballast Pile. If underway at night beware of several unlit mooring buoys and numerous pleasure craft moorings on the west side of the channel just north of Burrow Island. The harbour north of Burrow Island broadens considerably but most of this area is mud which dries at low water. This area is bounded by two channels, Fareham Lake to the NW leading to Fareham, and Portchester Lake to the NE leading to Port Solent.

**Further details can be found on Admiralty Charts 2631 and 2625.**

# Portsmouth Harbour Entrance - Approach Channel, Small Boat Channel, Swashway and Inner Swashway

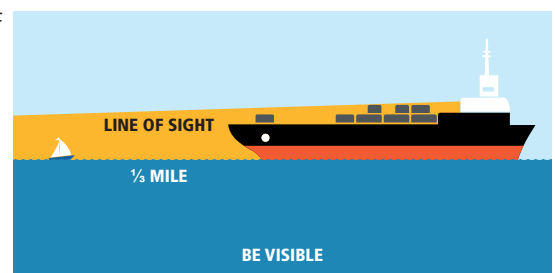
- Mariners are advised that the Queen's Harbour Master has made the following General Direction under the Dockyard Port of Portsmouth Order 2005; that the Portsmouth Harbour entrance and main approach channel is considered a narrow channel in accordance with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS) and as such, all mariners are reminded that in accordance with Rule 9(b) "a vessel of less than 20 metres in length or a sailing vessel shall not impede the passage of a vessel that can safely navigate only within a narrow channel or fairway".
- A Small Boat Channel for vessels less than 20m in length including Personal Watercraft (PWC) has been created on the western side of the harbour entrance. The 50 m wide Channel is shown on Admiralty charts. Its northern and southern extremities are at Ballast Pile and No 4 Bar Buoy.
  - All vessels under 20m must enter and leave the harbour through the Small Boat Channel
  - Use engine if fitted
  - Avoid overtaking
  - Keep out of main channel
  - Do not loiter
  - Leave Ballast Pile and 4 Bar Buoy to port inbound and outbound.
  - BC Outer Beacon shall be left to port when using the Inner Swashway, inbound and outbound.
  - Call QHM on VHF Channel 11 to cross north of Ballast pile to Town Camber/Gunwharf Quays or vice versa.
- Remember the 10 knot speed limit and to create minimum wash

## Extract from Queen's Harbour Master Portsmouth DIRECTION NO 2/17

Full details: <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/qhm/portsmouth/local-notices/general-directions/2017/1702-portsmouth-harbour-entrance>

## Key Safety Points

- **Avoid sailing in the main navigational channels,** especially in poor visibility so you don't impede the passage of large ships.
- **DO NOT underestimate the speed of ships.** Large container ships may transit the Solent at 18 knots and above.
- **VHF is a key control and safety measure in the Solent.** Across the broader eastern Solent, VTS Southampton use CH12 to control traffic. When approaching Portsmouth and certainly north of a line between Outer Spit Buoy (OSB) and Gilkicker Point listen to Channel 11 for QHM.
- **Be visible.** From the bridge of an aircraft carrier or large tanker, the captain or pilot will lose sight of you ahead when you close within approximately a third of a mile, although YOU can see the ship at all times. At night make sure your navigation lights can be seen.
- **Be alert.** Look around, especially astern. Keep a good all round watch and check behind sails. Even on a clear night you will have difficulty seeing a big ship approach
- **Within half a mile of the shore and inside the Harbour, the speed limit is 10 knots** through the water but create minimum wash at all times.



# NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION

**MAINTAIN LISTENING WATCH  
VHF CHANNEL 11 QHM  
INSIDE HARBOUR**

PORTSMOUTH  
INTERNATIONAL PORT

**10kts  
NO WASH**

## SMALL BOAT CHANNEL RULES

- Use engine if fitted
- Leave Ballast Pile and 4 Bar Buoy to port inbound & outbound
- Pass others on your port side
- Avoid overtaking
- Keep out of main channel
- Do not loiter
- Watch your speed and wash

CALL QHM  
CHANNEL 11  
TO CROSS



BALLAST



BC OUTER



4 BAR

**INNER SWASHWAY:  
NOT A RECOGNISED ROUTE**

**OUTER SWASHWAY**

**SMALL BOAT CHANNEL**

**MAIN CHANNEL**



0 200  
Approximate Scale (m)

