

Put-in-Bay, OH

A delightful island escape on Lake Erie.

With a quirky name like Put-in-Bay, boaters have come to expect something special from this tiny island, and Put-in-Bay does not disappoint. Only 2 by 4 miles, Put-in-Bay is located on South Bass Island, the crown jewel of the Lake Erie islands. In the late 18th century, schooners sailing on Lake Erie would “put in” their boats to the bay to wait out a storm. Many unfamiliar sailors would slang it up as “puddin’ bay.” Today, Put-in-Bay has evolved into a popular resort destination with parks, caves, wineries, restaurants, tons of festivals and some of the best walleye and perch fishing in the U.S.

To get there, visitors can push off from the Catawba mainland and sail the Miller Ferry with bikes, passengers and cars to Put-in-Bay — all in less than 20 minutes. Ferries run every half-hour in the summer and less frequently though November. Jet Express offers late night weekend service from Put-in-Bay to Port Clinton, Sandusky and Kelleys Island.

“Put-in-Bay is extremely boater friendly,” says Peter Huston, island ambassador for Put-in-Bay. “We have great facilities, both public and private. Showers, restrooms and easy-to-access transportation — including bikes, golf carts and cabs — are all nearby the downtown docks. The downtown area is an easy walk from the docks and is where many of our great restaurants, shops and parks are located. B&B’s, hotels and cottage rentals are near the harbor so you can extend your stay. Put-in-Bay loves to host maritime events and boating get-togethers; if your club or group would like to schedule a rendezvous, we’ll be happy to help.”

Historically, Put-in-Bay served as the base of operations for Commodore Oliver Perry in the War of 1812 against the British. From this victory, the famous U.S. Navy battle cry emerged: “We have met the enemy and they are ours.” Today, the 352-foot Perry’s Victory and International Peace Memorial proudly stands as the nation’s third tallest monument, commemorating the naval battle, as well as peace with Britain and Canada that has lasted more than 150 years. Take the \$5 elevator ride to the top of the memorial for exquisite views of Lake Erie; don’t forget to watch the brief, informative video about the war.

Up and down

Explore the island by walking, biking or driving around in a golf cart. Learn about the island’s historical past on the narrated Put-in-Bay Tour Train. Enjoy stops at the Perry’s Cave Family Fun Center, the Heineman Winery and Perry’s Memorial.

Watch butterflies take flight at the Butterfly Museum by Perry’s Cave; this unique habitat showcases three different environments. After the museum, head down below to Perry’s Cave, an Ohio National Landmark, and feel the



cool 50-degree air while exploring the cave’s nooks and crannies. The Crystal Cave, which holds the world’s largest recorded geode, is located beneath Heineman Winery. A cave journey is included with the winery tour.

Head to South Bass Island State Park for exquisite views of Lake Erie and climb to the top of the South Bass Island Lighthouse, which is now on the National Register of Historic Places.

For maritime needs, check out the Put-in-Bay Watercraft Rentals for jet-skis, wave runners and kayaks. Put-in-Bay Surf Shop, Sunstopper’s and Wharfside offer fishing equipment, coolers, marine and boat parts, life jackets, sunglasses and more. Stop at Adventure Bay Amusement Park, Fort Amaze’n and War of 18 Holes putt-putt course to create lasting memories.

Dee-licious dines

“Old Forge Café and Creperie is one of our most popular island restaurants,” says Huston. Located in a historic building, they serve up sweet and savory crepes and have a secluded garden bar.

Huston also recommends Goat Soup and Whiskey Tavern, a local favorite in the old Coopers Winery Building. “The best indoor place on the water is The Boardwalk with fresh seafood

and fantastic views, also ideal for groups,” Huston says. “The Frosty Bar is a sailor hangout for frosty mugs of beer and pizza.”

Daily docking

The Put-in-Bay Village Marina (A and C docks), the DeRivera Park (B dock), Put-in-Bay Township Port Authority (moorings) and Oak Point State Park are public transient marinas that can accommodate almost any size boat for daily or overnight dockages.

“All [marinas] provide access to water, electricity, wireless high speed internet and the village’s large bathhouse,” says Scott Sneller, head dockmaster for the Village of Put-in-Bay (responsible for the Put-in-Bay Village Marina and DeRivera Park). “We can be reached on channels 68 and 69, but reservations are not accepted.”

The private marinas Boardwalk Dock, Park Place Marina and Miller Marina do accept reservations if space is available.

Celebrate with the islanders

Put-in-Bay offers a summer full of fun, with festivals galore. “Every June, Pyrate Fest invades the downtown harbor with a parade, kids costume contest, cardboard boat race, learning the art of skullduggery and foam sword fights,” Huston says.

The Put-in-Bay sky is lit up with fireworks for the Fourth of July, accompanied by music in the downtown harbor. The best viewing locations are along the downtown waterfront and at Perry’s Victory and International Peace Memorial grounds.

Visitors will think that the holidays came early during the Christmas in July event (July 22-24), when the stores are decorated for Christmas and Santa Claus marches the town in a traditional holiday parade.

On August 9, the Bartender Olympics features zany theatrics, a keg roll and a best drink pour competition.

The All Sport FUNDamentals Put-in-Bay Charity 5k/10k and Kids FUN Run on August 14 is an annual charity run that winds through beautiful shoreline cliffs.

In September, the Annual Labor Day Bash (September 3-5) caps off the summer with the last celebration of the season. Later in the month, New Year’s at the BAY! (September 16-17) rings in the New Year a little early with casino-style gaming downtown.

October 8-9 marks the Island Oktoberfest, featuring great beer, live entertainment, Wiener Schnitzel sauerbraten and other German delicacies.

“No matter when you come, we’ll help you ‘find your island,’” Huston says. ★



Main: Aerial view of Put-in-Bay and Perry’s Monument. Top left: Put-in-Bay offers plenty of dockage for boaters. Top right: Climb to the top of the South Bass Island Lighthouse. Bottom: Participants dress up for the Pyrate Fest.