



# Canso Islands

**Length:** 10 km, return

**Time:** full day

**Type:** tidal, saltwater, ocean

**Facilities:** none

**Closest Amenities:** town of Canso

**Rating:** intermediate



**Access Information:** From the village of Guysborough, follow Route 16 into the town of Canso. Continue down Main Street, turn right onto Union Street, and continue to an intersection. Turning left toward the water, you will see the boat launch beside a large government wharf.

**Special Features:** The several islands off the coast of Canso have, for generations, played an important role in the settlement and operation of this small town. In recent years these islands are being recognized for their historical significance on a larger national and international scale. As early as the 1500's Basque and French fishermen were exploiting the rich offshore banks, while using the rocky shores of these islands for drying their catch. Generations prior to this, Mi'kmaq used this area for their own subsistence practices.

**Description:** Leaving the boat launch site, and paddling past the government wharf on your left, you will see Durell Island, which is connected to the mainland via a small causeway. Directly ahead of you is Hart Island, which is home to a marine aid station. Paddling between, to the left of Hart Island and to the right of Durell, head out into the open Atlantic Ocean. As you navigate, seek greater security by keeping your boat close to the islands. You will notice clear sandy bottom and catch glimpses of scattered sand dollars, and tufts of seaweed along the way. Rounding Hart Island and passing over Long Point Ledges, another large island known as Piscatiqui comes into view. Here you will find a peaceful cove with a sandy beach that is the perfect place to have a rest or explore the barren granite shoreline. To the left of Piscatiqui Island is Hog Island. A wide channel between the two will lead you into George's Harbour. In this rugged and secluded area, you may notice pairs of shiny black eyes peering above the surface, as pods of friendly and curious seals may playfully accompany you on your journey. Among the many small islands to be explored are, Walsh, Barry's Rock, Pigeon, Big Gooseberry, Little Gooseberry and The Goose. Beyond these smaller islands are a larger grouping called the Derabies, which are also excellent for exploration. Paddling back toward the entrance to George's Harbour, you will find on your left, the opening to a long, serene corridor through smooth walls of granite. This quiet passage spills into the cove behind Grassy Island National Historic Site. From here, make your way back across the open water to the town of Canso.