



Mackinac Horsemen's Association

Bringing Your Horse to Mackinac Island

Bringing your horse to Mackinac Island is a wonderful experience and these recommendations are provided to help you best prepare for your trip. If you are a new visitor to the Island, we strongly suggest you first visit the Island without your horse. This will allow you to understand the Island's unique set of horsey challenges (bikes, carriages, crowds, noise). If you have decided you want to come, here are some things to consider and arrangements you'll need to make before you load your horse in your trailer. The months of June, September or October provide the best options for stall availability for your horse and room availability for you. During the mid-summer months, the Mackinac Community Equestrian Center is busy with our summer 4-H and lesson programs and may not be able to accommodate short-term boarding. Other questions are welcome.

Transportation to the Island

Arrangements must be made in advance with the ferry line to transport your horse from the mainland to the Island. You will have to set your dates to and from the Island with them. It is recommended that you schedule your crossing before noon to avoid crowds and have time to settle in on the Island. Please call the Ferry Companies directly at the numbers provided below for more detailed information.

Your boat or barge will leave the mainland from St. Ignace, Michigan. From the Lower Peninsula you will have to cross the Mackinac Bridge. There is a mandatory MDA inspection station on the right after the tollbooths. A current Coggins will be needed for in-state travel and both a Coggins and health certificate will be required for out of state travelers.

1. Ferry – StarLine Ferry offers freight boat and passenger boat options. Charters are also available. Park your vehicle and trailer in the area specified by the ferry company (be aware there may be parking fees). Unload your horse from your trailer and load your horse onto the lower deck of a passenger freight boat via a ramp. Your horse must stand tied quietly for the trip to the Island. The decks are steel with slip proof paint, but steel shod horses may have slipping issues. You will unload your horse on the Island up the ramp and unto the dock; from there you are in the heart of downtown and must lead your horse safely out of the downtown area before mounting.
2. Barge - Drive your truck and trailer (with horses loaded) onto a freight barge offered by Arnold Freight Service or Shepler Freight Service. Your horses will stay in your trailer for the trip to the Island. When the barge is docked on the Island your trailer is positioned to unload your horses directly onto the dock. Your vehicle and trailer will need to be taken back to the mainland by you, ferry company personnel or a fellow traveler and parked for the duration of your stay (again, there may be parking fees).

For either option, a well-traveled, well-behaved horse is essential to everyone's safety, especially once on the docks and in the busy downtown areas of the Island, which is unfamiliar to most horses.

Stabling your horse on the Island

Limited stall space is available on a first-come first-served basis at the Mackinac Community Equestrian Center. Make reservations for your rooms, horse stall(s) and the horse ferry well in advance. If you have the good fortune of reserving your stall(s), please take your horse(s) directly to MCEC and get settled in before venturing out to explore the Island.

Should you have a long haul and require overnight boarding Hiawatha Hawk Ranch in Mackinaw City, MI accepts overnight horse boarders as does Gaylord Equestrian Center in Gaylord, MI (based on availability).

Please call them directly for reservations:

Hiawatha Hawk - Angie Ostman: 231-420-4544

Hiawatha Hawk - Joe Ostman: 231-445-2495

Gaylord Equestrian Center: Liz Koscielniak – 989-858-1882

IMPORTANT – Please take note before boarding your horse with us that there are no facilities on the Island to care for serious equine medical emergencies. We have a capable veterinarian on call, but treatment is limited. There is no equine surgery facility within 200+ miles of the Island and once your horse is on the Island, getting off the Island any time quickly or after hours is very difficult. If your horse is insured be sure you are fully aware of the requirements for any claims and how you will be able to fulfill those requirements while stabled on the Island.

Rules of the Road on the Island

- Commercial horse-drawn vehicles are “rulers of the road.” Please use great caution in the vicinity of these carriages and give them a wide berth. Do not canter up behind them, do not pass without warning the driver, and approach them as you would if driving a car. You do not want to cause a runaway.
- Saddle horses for hire should also be given wide berth, as they can be aggressive towards strange horses and their riders usually have little control over their horse in this situation.
- Bicycles and recumbent bikes can spook horses unfamiliar with them, so please be aware of the traffic around you and take precautions to assure everyone’s safety.
- The downtown area is very congested during the day in the summer and must be avoided. Avoiding the high traffic area allows you to fully enjoy the beauty and serenity of the trails.
- Think safety, safety, and safety. Be aware of your horse’s reactions to situations, keep your eyes open to potential hazards, and be cautious.
- You will have to consider how to transport your luggage, extra tack, etc. from the dock to the hotel and/or the stable upon arrival and departure while you handle your horse. It is recommended that you hire a dray (through Mackinac Island Service Company) or dock porter to carry your bikes, gear and luggage. Dock porters work directly for the hotels, so check with your hotel as to whether this service is offered. It is often helpful to have one person dedicated to take care of these things for your party.
- We do not have feed stores or tack stores on the Island. You must bring what you need and make do with that.
- Our main roads are paved and our trails tend to be somewhat rocky, so shoes or boots are almost always necessary. We have farriers here on the Island, but scheduling a shoeing depends on their work schedule and should not be expected.

Staying at the Mackinac Community Equestrian Center

- Our Boarding charge is \$50 per night per horse. Attached are the barn rules for your information. Your cooperation is appreciated.
- Helmets are required for all riders less than 18 years of age and strongly suggested for every rider.
- A 50% deposit will assure your reservation and stalls are limited. If your visit has to be canceled we will refund your deposit up to one week before your visit. Please send your deposit to:

Mackinac Horsemen's Association
P.O. Box 462
Mackinac Island, MI 49757

- We supply grass hay, bedding and stall cleaning once a day. We have a low starch general feed available, provided upon request for a nominal fee. Supplements or other special requirements are the owner's responsibility.
- Please bring any extra items you might need while you are here such as fly spray, bute, banamine, or other items of specialized care.
- We do not accept stallions for boarding.
- Please bring cash or a check to pay the balance of your board and your receipt from the Arnold Ferry should you use the walk-on boat option for you and your horse.
- Vaccines should be up to date and proof of a negative Coggins is required. (Out of State travelers should also have a health certificate.)

Phone Numbers

- Mackinac Community Equestrian Center: 906-847-8034
- Arnold Ferry – Freight: 906-643-8288
- StarLine Ferry: 906-643-7635
- Shepler's Ferry - Freight: 906-430-0974
- Mackinac Island Taxi: 906-847-3323
- Mackinac Service Company: 906-847-3713
- Mackinac Island Taxi: 906-847-3323