

FROM THE BRIDGE | WATERSIDE BRIEFING

Drop the Hook. Take the Day.

*A boater's guide to anchoring, mooring, swimming and lingering
across western Long Island Sound*

BRIDGEPORT + PORT JEFFERSON → THROGS NECK

Prepared by Monty's Ark Adventures

A planning companion—not a substitute for current charts, Notices to Mariners, tide data or local harbormaster direction.

The bridge view

The short version. Western Long Island Sound rewards boaters who choose the stop to match the day. For a swim-first raft-up, favor the islands and sand-rimmed coves. For a quiet float, favor protected water with room outside channels and mooring fields. For an overnight, prioritize holding, swing room and wind protection.

If the day calls for...	Lead choice	Good alternate	Why
A real swim-and-float day	Sheffield Island Harbor	Great Captain / Captain Harbor	Protected feel, island scenery, room to settle in
The classic weekend raft-up	The Sand Hole, Lloyd Neck	Cockenoe Harbor	Sociable, sandy, swim-focused—arrive early
Maximum shelter	Oyster Bay / West Harbor	Lloyd Harbor	Multiple wind options and useful room to settle
A sandy pocket	Port Jefferson / Pirate's Cove	Sand City / Eatons Neck	Beachy setting without making a shoreside stop
A western rendezvous	Captain Harbor	Sands Point / outer Manhasset	Convenient for crews approaching from the west

How to read this briefing

Anchor day: A place where swinging at anchor is a normal part of the experience. Confirm the charted bottom, prohibited areas and room to swing before committing.

Mooring day: A harbor where a guest mooring is the easier, more predictable way to secure the boat for swimming and relaxing aboard. Availability and use rules change—call ahead.

Swim character: “Good” means appealing in settled summer conditions, not guaranteed water quality or a lifeguarded area. Never swim in a marked channel, fairway or ferry route.

Grill plan: This guide means grilling aboard only, using a properly mounted marine-rated appliance under the skipper's control.

The 11-stop working list

1. Sheffield Island Harbor

NORWALK, CT • ANCHOR DAY — TOP PICK

Why go: The sheltered water north of Sheffield Island is the Connecticut-side classic: island backdrop, lighthouse atmosphere and a recognized short-term/overnight transient anchoring area. Settle in for swimming, floats, paddleboards, sun and lunch aboard.

Watch: Rocky and shoal-studded Norwalk Islands demand current charts and disciplined piloting. Do not treat nearby land as part of the outing.

2. Cockenoe Harbor / Norwalk Islands

WESTPORT–NORWALK, CT • ANCHOR DAY

Why go: A relaxed small-boat setting for swimming, paddling and a floating lunch in settled weather. It feels more open and exploratory than a conventional harbor.

Watch: NOAA notes Sheffield is generally preferred. The approach is intricate; exposure and wakes can build, and oyster stakes or broken stakes may be present.

3. Ziegler's Cove

DARIEN, CT • ANCHOR OR AUTHORIZED DAY MOORING — TOP PICK

Why go: A deep, notably protected cove just east of Stamford and a long-standing local favorite for swimming, raft-ups, floating and lunch aboard. Its granite shoreline and enclosed feel make the boat itself the destination.

Watch: The approach and cove are slow-no-wake. Day-mooring ownership and permitted use must be respected; anchor only where lawful and clear of the channel, moorings and oyster activity. All surrounding shoreline is off-limits, including Great Island docks and beaches.

4. Captain Harbor / Great Captain Island

GREENWICH, CT • ANCHOR OR AUTHORIZED MOORING — TOP PICK

Why go: One of the Sound's prettiest western places to stop the boat. The appeal here is the protected island setting: swim from the boat, float, sun and let the skyline recede.

Watch: Town moorings are assigned, demand is high, and regulated boat-landing and swim zones must be kept clear. This guide does not contemplate going ashore.

5. Port Jefferson Harbor / Pirate's Cove side

BROOKHAVEN, NY • ANCHOR DAY

Why go: The sand-rimmed eastern side of the harbor is the leisure play: a scenic backdrop for swimming, floating and lunch aboard without turning the day into a village visit.

Watch: The main harbor carries ferry and commercial traffic. Remain completely outside the channel, confirm local anchoring restrictions, and expect shoaling and weekend crowds.

6. Sand City / Eatons Neck basin

HUNTINGTON–NORTHPORT, NY • ANCHOR DAY

Why go: A broad, beachy Northport Bay option for swimming and sunning aboard, with more breathing room than the Sand Hole when conditions cooperate.

Watch: Wind direction matters, and the basin/approach includes shoals and busy recreational traffic. Choose the exact position from the current chart and observed conditions.

7. The Sand Hole, Lloyd Neck

HUNTINGTON, NY • ANCHOR DAY — ICONIC

Why go: The famous raft-up pocket: sandy, social and purpose-built in spirit for swimming, floating and an onboard barbecue. Arrive early, set carefully and expect company on hot weekends.

Watch: Tight quarters, shoaling, wakes and anchor overlap are the story. There are no facilities. This is a no-discharge area; carry everything aboard and carry everything out.

8. Lloyd Harbor

HUNTINGTON, NY • ANCHOR DAY

Why go: A quieter protected alternative when the objective is simply to secure the boat, swim, read, grill aboard and stay through the afternoon.

Watch: Private shoreline, moorings, local restrictions and shallow margins limit where you can settle. Keep the entire experience waterborne.

9. Cold Spring Harbor

HUNTINGTON–OYSTER BAY, NY • ANCHOR DAY

Why go: Long, scenic and well sheltered, with room to find a calmer patch for a slow afternoon aboard when the Sound itself is lively.

Watch: Depth and swing room change toward the head; avoid mooring fields and shellfish activity. Be conservative about swimming after rain.

10. Oyster Bay / West Harbor

OYSTER BAY, NY • ANCHOR OR AUTHORIZED MOORING — TOP PICK

Why go: The most versatile all-weather choice in the set: broad protected water, multiple wind options and a natural rhythm for swimming, paddling, sun and an onboard meal.

Watch: Extensive moorings and shellfish activity constrain free anchoring. Use a permitted/guest mooring where appropriate and check water-quality advisories after rain.

11. Sands Point / outer Manhasset Bay

NORTH HEMPSTEAD, NY • ANCHOR DAY — WESTERN OPTION

Why go: A convenient last swim-and-float option before the Throgs Neck end of the route, best in settled weather with the boat positioned outside traffic and mooring concentrations.

Watch: Exposure, wakes and dense harbor traffic can make it less restful than the eastern picks. Avoid channels, cable areas and the inner mooring field.

Three ready-made day plans

The island picnic / Sheffield Island Harbor

Anchor north of the island in the designated transient area, swim from the vessel when traffic is settled, then break out lunch, floats and paddleboards.

Bridge note: *Best in settled conditions with an early start; make the route through the Norwalk Islands part of the navigation plan, not an improvisation.*

The classic raft-up / The Sand Hole

Set the first anchor independently, confirm it is holding, then rig fenders and lines for the raft. Keep a sober operator aboard and leave a clear escape plan for wind or crowd changes.

Bridge note: *Bring everything—there are no facilities. Expect a social scene and little privacy on prime weekends.*

The quiet float / Oyster Bay / West Harbor

Choose the protected side for the day's wind, secure the boat outside traffic and shellfish activity, then make the boat the destination: swim, read, paddle and grill aboard.

Bridge note: *Ideal when mixed-age crews want room, shelter and a lower-key alternative to the Sand Hole.*

Bridge checklist: before anyone goes over the side

- **Weather:** Read the NWS marine zone forecast for Long Island Sound west of New Haven/Port Jefferson; look beyond wave height to thunderstorms, fog, wind shifts and timing.
- **Tide and current:** Use current tide/current predictions and the latest chart. Western Sound tidal range and narrow harbor entrances can change depth, set and swim conditions quickly.
- **Anchor set:** Confirm bottom and depth through the full tide cycle; allow scope and swing room; take bearings or use an anchor alarm; re-check after raft-up loads change.
- **Swim control:** Engine off, keys controlled, propeller stopped, swim ladder deployed, visible float or flag as locally required, and one responsible adult maintaining a lookout.
- **Traffic separation:** No swimming in channels, marina fairways, ferry lanes, near launch ramps or where tenders are moving. Recover swimmers before repositioning the vessel.
- **Water quality:** Check municipal/county beach advisories, particularly after heavy rain. A nearby public beach closure is a strong reason to postpone casual swimming.
- **Grill and fuel:** Use only a properly mounted marine grill; keep flame away from fuel vapors, canvas and swimmers; never refuel while the grill is hot; extinguish before getting underway.
- **Head and trash:** All Long Island Sound waters in this briefing are no-discharge waters. Secure the marine sanitation device as required, use pumpouts, and bring every scrap home.

- **Stay waterborne:** A beach visible from the anchorage may be municipal, private, protected habitat or permit-only. This itinerary assumes no beach landing and no shoreside use.

A note on seasonal reality

This briefing intentionally avoids publishing “guaranteed” depths, coordinates, fees or guest-mooring promises. Those are the details most likely to change with dredging, storm damage, local rules and the operating season. Before departure, pair this guide with the latest NOAA chart/ENC, U.S. Coast Pilot, Local Notice to Mariners, NWS forecast, tide/current predictions and a direct call to the relevant harbor master or managing agency.

Planning sources

NOAA U.S. Coast Pilot 2, Chapter 9 — Western Long Island Sound — [open source](#). Primary navigation context for anchorages, channels, hazards and harbor descriptions.

NOAA Coast Pilot portal — [open source](#). Current editions and weekly updates.

National Weather Service — New York marine zones — [open source](#). Forecasts for Long Island Sound marine zones.

EPA — Vessel sewage no-discharge zones — [open source](#). Authoritative NDZ definitions and state listings.

Connecticut DEEP — Connecticut Boater’s Guide — [open source](#). State boating rules, facilities and safety guidance.

Connecticut DEEP — Coastal Access Guide — [open source](#). Public coastal access, swimming and launch information.

Norwalk Harbor Management Plan — [open source](#). Transient anchoring area north of Sheffield Island and local management context.

Darien Code, Chapter 78 — Waterways — [open source](#). Ziegler’s Cove boundaries, slow-no-wake rule and mooring governance.

Darien — Great Island Early Access Rules — [open source](#). Confirms no water access, beaching or swimming from the Great Island property.

Greenwich — Great Captain Island — [open source](#). Municipal island status and operating context.

Greenwich — Beach Swimming Status — [open source](#). Current status and rain-related swimming guidance.

Town of Oyster Bay — Boat Moorings — [open source](#). Mooring administration and contact information.

Town of Oyster Bay — Pumpout Stations — [open source](#). Seasonal pumpout boat and fixed-facility details.

Nassau County — Swimming Pools & Bathing Beaches — [open source](#). Beach monitoring and closure/advisory information.

NYS DEC — Suffolk County Boat Launch Sites — [open source](#). Official launch and facility directory for the north shore.

FROM THE BRIDGE • MONTY’S ARK ADVENTURES