

Finding the entrance to Wyndham Harbour

Wyndham Harbour is a new, all weather safe harbour on the north western shore of Port Phillip. It is protected by a fully enclosing and overlapping breakwater. This feature makes Wyndham Harbour such a great place to visit or to moor your boat on a long term basis but it can also cause some difficulties when determining the exact location of the entrance the first few times you visit the harbour. Even some locals have said that with the afternoon sun behind the marina it can be difficult to get your bearings. There is also a video on the “SailEscapade538” video channel.

General points to note-

- As with most things, if you know what you're doing its fairly straight forward, if you don't, then check your insurance.
- Judging distances at night is particularly difficult. The lights used on aids to navigation have a wide variety of brightness which makes it even harder to judge their distance.
- If in doubt, slow down, turn around or back up.
- And to state the obvious - at 5kts you will have time to read these instructions, at 15kts



Illustration 2: Central spine carpark showing the streetlights, amenities and apartment buildings.

you won't.



Illustration 1: Chart of Wyndham Harbour

Here are some tips for the first timers and old salts alike.

Daytime entry

There is, of course, a detailed chart of the harbour (Illustration 1). However this doesn't show a number of the useful landmarks which can be used to find our way home.

The most useful of these is the central spine area (Illustration 2) including the carpark which has a very prominent row of double overhead street lights right down the middle and a conspicuous orange/brown coloured amenities building in the middle. In daylight it can still be hard to pick out the features until you get a bit closer, the four storey apartment buildings in the background can provide a further useful aid. The spine starts between the two buildings. If we stay well out to sea until we are looking directly down the central spine and its row of light poles we can turn toward the shore keeping the spine and its light poles in line. As we approach the spine the harbour entrance will become apparent on our port (left) bow. Once you can clearly see a gap in the break water (Illustration 3&5) you can alter course to port and make your entrance.



*Illustration 3: Even with the last of the setting sun behind the breakwater the entrance gap will be quite plain to see once you have approached using the central spine light poles as a guide. Note the position of the **port** and **starboard** entrance marks which will become important for night entry.*



Illustration 4: Daylight aerial shot of the harbour showing clearly the entrance between the overlapping breakwaters as well as the port and Starboard lateral marks.

If we look at a larger area we can see how this fits together in Illustration 4&5.

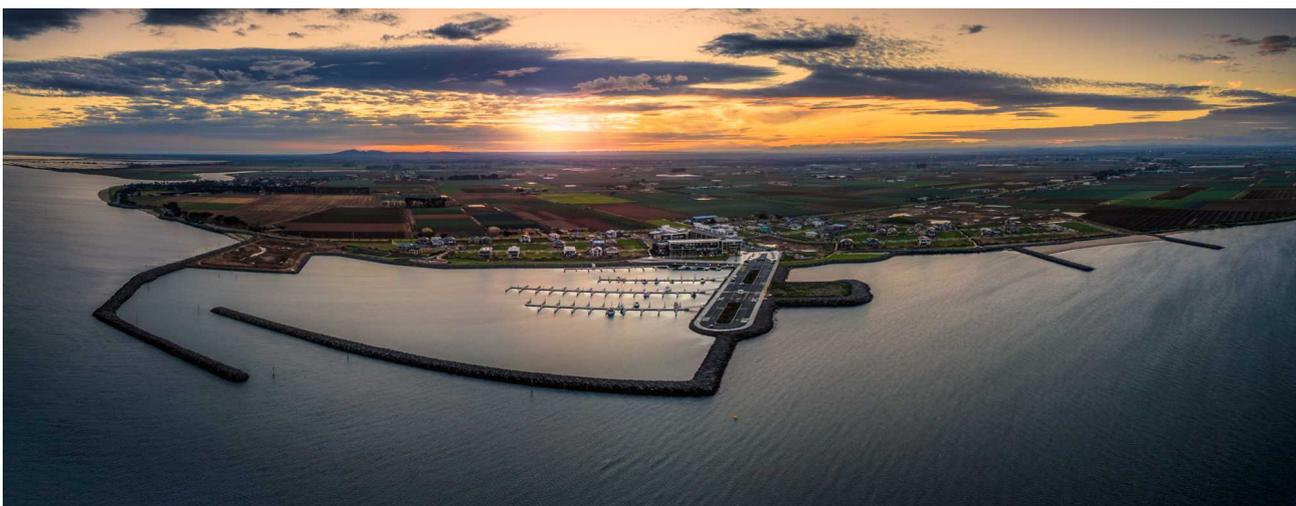


Illustration 5: Wyndham Harbour from the air showing the central spine car park almost in line and the entrance opening to the left or port side.

Entering at night.

At night of course the whole picture changes. The one good thing about entering at night is that the central spine carpark lights will be ablaze and stand out quite clearly. As for a daytime entry, remain well out to sea (depth 5m if you have a depth sounder) until the blazing row of double street lights on the central spine are in line. Then approach keeping the street lights in line. Off your port bow you will now see the flashing lights of the entrance marks. Port marks are red and flash together (synchronised) every 4 seconds, starboard marks are green and the right (eastern) most mark (#1) will be flashing continuously with the other two (#3 & #5) flashing every four seconds and synchronised with the port marks. The lights should appear roughly as per the following diagram as you begin to head toward the central spine.



As you get closer they will change their orientation. Number 4 and number 6 will cross each other and number 2 will come into line with number 5.



This is the time to turn towards the entrance and keep number 2 just offset to the left of number 5 as shown. Pass through the entrance keeping the red ones on your port side and the green ones on your starboard side. Once you pass the last green flashing light (#5) turn 135 degrees to starboard and take a few seconds to identify the marina arms which are lit.

One further note - There is also a high intensity directional light mounted on the breakwater wall. This light is a multicolour, very high intensity but very narrow beam (only a few degrees per colour) which is green, white or red depending on which part of the beam you are in eg.

If you are approaching from the north east then this light will become VERY noticeable, very suddenly. It is faintly visible over a much wider angle but it will be as bright as a car headlight on high beam when you are in the directional beam and will disappear as quickly if you cross the beam. This light can be used to find the entrance by heading directly into the beam and then adjusting course slightly according to whether the light turns red or green. As above, once entrance lights 2 and 5 are in line then head into the entrance with the red lights on your port side and the green ones on starboard.



The above description is provided by Robert Bradley. Robert is the chief instructor at Sail Escapade's Wyndham Harbour sailing school. Please provide any feedback directly to Robert@sailescapede.com.au. Sail Escapade provides a range of on water and shorebased training for all levels from first time "Try Sailing" through to Yachtmaster, advanced yacht handling and offshore ocean racing. For more information call Robert on 0418 574360.