

CHARTS

Western Lake Erie, Cdn. Hydrographic Chart #2123
Pelee Island and North Shore Lake Erie, Cdn. Hydrographic Chart #2181
Detroit River, NOAA Chart #14848

DRIVING

The main access route is via Highway 401. To get to Leamington, Kingsville, Colchester, and Pelee Island, take the highway west from Toronto. When nearing Chatham, watch for the signs indicating the turnoff for Leamington. Take Country Rd. 77 south to Leamington. Kingsville and Colchester are a short drive to the east along the lakeshore. From there, you can continue right into Amherstburg without returning to the 401.

If you want to go straight into Windsor, stay on the 401, and it will take you to within a few blocks of the Detroit River.

Ferries run from Kingsville and Leamington to West Dock daily (weather permitting). Reservations are required. To book a spot on the 90-minute crossing, go to www.ontarioferries.com or call 1-800-661-2220.

Wreck of the *America*, Pelee Island: 41° 49' 675" N 082° 38' 066" W

Discover Boating Marina Directory:
www.discoverboating.ca/boating/marinas.aspx

Scudder Harbour, Pelee Island's main recreational boating facility:
(519) 724-2377, 41° 48' 49" N 082° 39' 36" W

ErieQuest, SCUBA diving information: www.eriequest.ca

Pelee Island Wines: www.peleeisland.com

Essex County Wineries and Breweries: www.ecwb.ca
(A complete listing of the wineries and craft breweries in the Erie North Shore Wine Region)

Canada Wine Tours: www.canadasouthwinetours.com

Farm Dog Cycles: www.farmdogcycles.com

Walkerville Walking Tour:
www.citywindsor.ca/residents/historyofwindsor/Documents/Walkerville

African Heritage: www.windsor-communities.com/african-sites-churches.php

Buxton National Historic Site: www.buxtonmuseum.com

and the fall. It's also a great place to take the kids for a picnic and day on the beach.

You can also visit the ruins of one of Canada's first wineries. In the 1860s, Canadian farmers saw the infant wine industry springing up on the American islands and decided to get into the game. Capt. D. McCormick and T. Smith bought 25 acres of land and launched Canada's first commercial winery, Vin Villa, in 1868. The ruins of the winery still haunt a leafy glade in the island's center.

Winemaking thrived until Prohibition curtailed the over-the-counter demands for fermented grape juice. The business declined until winemakers at the modern Pelee Island Wines recognized the superb terroir (wine-growing qualities of the soil) and began planting vineyards. Today they have 200 acres under cultivation on the island producing fine wines from European vines.

Pelee is the southernmost inhabited bit of Canadian land. More than half of the fifty American states lie north of the island, but passports and vaccine certificates are mandatory for entry into Canada. Because of its location,

the island is an ecological treasure house featuring thousands of Carolinian plants like the Honey Locust and Sassafras trees. It's also a naturalist paradise with diverse birdlife not found anywhere else in the country and rare reptiles like the Blue Racer snake.

The island's shores have seen their fair share of shipwrecks due to lying astride the main shipping routes. One of the closest and most accessible to explore by snorkeling is the steamer, *SS America*, which ran aground in 1856. The wreck lies off the beach about half a mile southeast of Lighthouse Point. The ship's boiler is just below the surface (less than 18-inches), while the bulk of the wreckage sits in about ten feet of water.

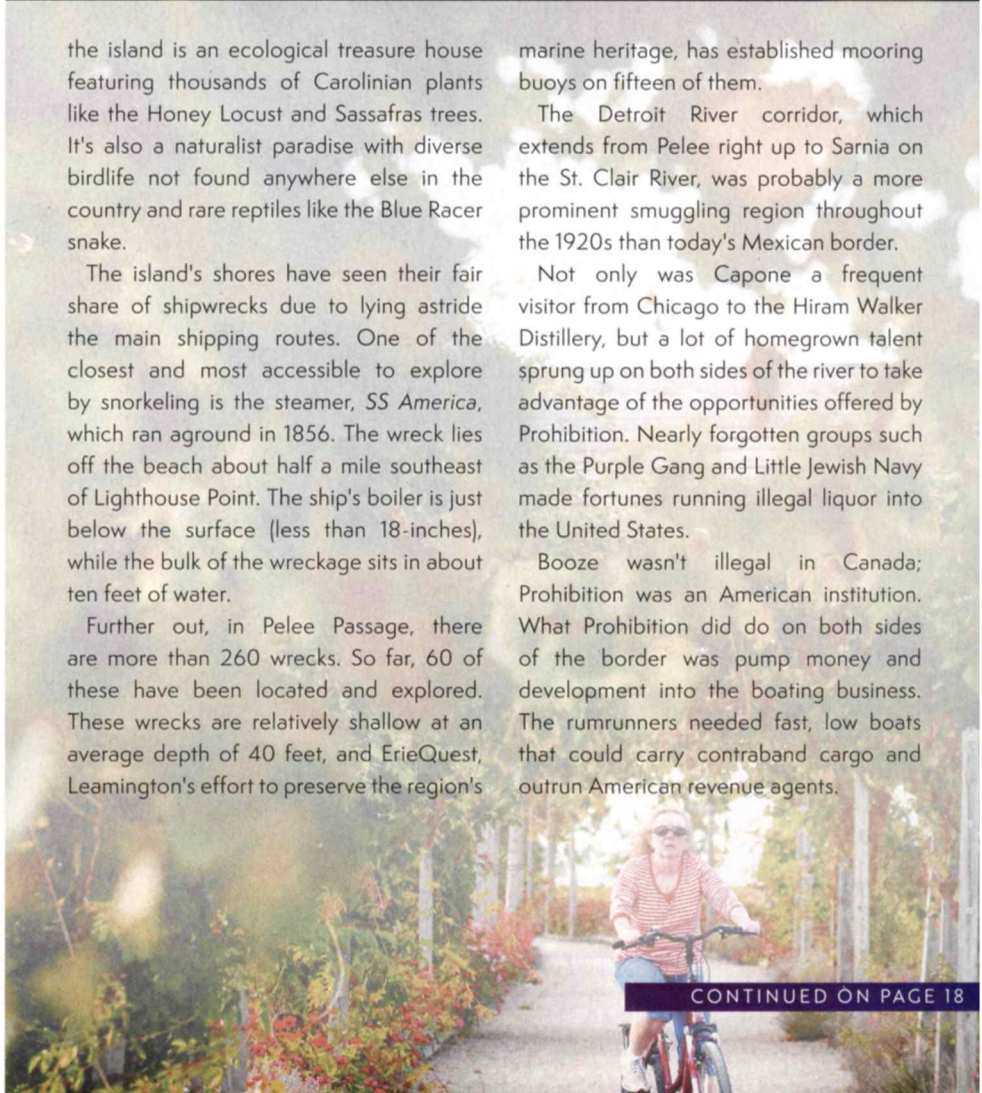
Further out, in Pelee Passage, there are more than 260 wrecks. So far, 60 of these have been located and explored. These wrecks are relatively shallow at an average depth of 40 feet, and ErieQuest, Leamington's effort to preserve the region's

marine heritage, has established mooring buoys on fifteen of them.

The Detroit River corridor, which extends from Pelee right up to Sarnia on the St. Clair River, was probably a more prominent smuggling region throughout the 1920s than today's Mexican border.

Not only was Capone a frequent visitor from Chicago to the Hiram Walker Distillery, but a lot of homegrown talent sprung up on both sides of the river to take advantage of the opportunities offered by Prohibition. Nearly forgotten groups such as the Purple Gang and Little Jewish Navy made fortunes running illegal liquor into the United States.

Booze wasn't illegal in Canada; Prohibition was an American institution. What Prohibition did do on both sides of the border was pump money and development into the boating business. The rumrunners needed fast, low boats that could carry contraband cargo and outrun American revenue agents.



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America was always fascinated with fast boats. Gar Wood developed his incredible racing machines in the Motor City and further up on Lake St. Clair, local boat builders gave liquor outlaws a distinct speed advantage. Names like Hacker-Craft and Chris Craft caught the buying public's imagination, and after World War II, pleasure boat sales skyrocketed into the stratosphere.

Canadian Club Brand Centre (Hiram Walker) tours in Windsor are worth the price of admission. From April through

December, you can visit the tasting rooms to sample the renowned Canadian whisky and learn about the era that made "Scarface" Al Capone and Elliot Ness household names.

The region was also a prominent Underground Railroad gateway into Canada. If you want to understand what the area meant to the fugitive slaves escaping to freedom, rent a car and do a tour of the African-Canadian Heritage Trail to the John Freeman Walls Historic Site, Buxton, and the Sandwich Street First Baptist Church. When the water in the Detroit River is low

enough, the foundations of the Mama Judah Light are still visible. Lake captains involved in the Underground Railroad dropped escaped enslaved people off here (out of musket range) to await pick-up by Canadian conductors who would row out the refugees to safety on the Windsor shore. ⚓

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Destinations

