

## Launch Ramps in the San Francisco Bay Area

There are lots of launch ramps in the Bay Area and the areas just beyond, each with pros and cons. If you're bringing your trailerable multihull to the Bay Area, here are the available launch ramps that are closest to the Central Bay. This article only covers launch ramps into the bay, the sea, or rivers or estuaries that are connected to the bay. No lakes are covered in the below.



### **Grand Street Launching Facility in Alameda**

Photo credit: Truls Myklebust

Address: 2094 Grand Street, Alameda, CA 94501

Coordinates: 37.778451N, 122.251367W

Launch fee: FREE

The Grand Street launch ramp is a good spot on the Oakland Estuary, directly across from Coast Guard Island, with two available launch ramps and a single dock finger in the middle. This launch ramp is free (i.e. launching and parking are both free). However, parking is very limited in the parking lot by the launch ramp, and cars without trailers often park in the designated trailer parking, taking up those valuable parking spots, and there is no apparent parking enforcement. There is parking along Grand Street, and on busy days, there are trailers parked quite a long way down Grand Street. In the wintertime, or on weekdays, it's usually fine to use this launch ramp, but on summertime weekends, you either have to get there very early (pre-dawn), or try the afternoon after some of the boats have returned. There is a public restroom right by the launch ramp, but it is usually filthy and foul-smelling.



## Encinal Launch Ramp in Alameda

Photo credit: Truls Myklebust

Address: 190 Central Avenue, Alameda, CA 94501

Coordinates: 37.769252N, 122.290744W

Launch fee: FREE

The Encinal Launch Ramp is on the west side of Alameda, just north of Ballena Bay Yacht Club. The Alameda Community Sailing Center is located here, and there is a beach that is suitable for launching small craft. The launch ramp is free (i.e. launching and parking are both free). There is parking available onsite. However, the water by the launch ramp is very shallow, and there is only a fairly short dock finger at the launch ramp. This is a good launching facility for small vessels like kayaks and dinghies, and perhaps for a Weta trimaran, but it's not a good place for larger trailerable multihulls. Also note that while the launch ramp has good protection in the prevailing westerly winds during the summer, the launch ramp is exposed in southerly winds that can occur during winter storms.



## Emeryville Marina Sport Fishing Docks in Emeryville

Photo credit: Truls Myklebust

Address: Powell Street, Emeryville, CA 94608

Coordinates: 37.838457N, 122.313028W

This is a small launch ramp tucked inside Emeryville Marina, which has direct access to the Central Bay. There is only a short dock finger here, and the entry to the launch ramp has to be made at a sharp angle to avoid large commercial vessels that are docked nearby. In addition, parking is very limited, and cars without trailers often park in the few designed trailer parking spots. This launch ramp is only practical for small craft like kayaks and small dinghies.



## Berkeley Marina Boat Launch Ramps in Berkeley

Photo credit: Truls Myklebust

Address: 1-1/2 Spinnaker Way, Berkeley, CA 94710

Coordinates: 37.868135N, 122.317529W

Launch / Parking Fees: \$16.00 per day up to 7 days

This is a very popular launch ramp among powerboaters. The launch ramp itself has good capacity. There are three dock fingers, and four boats can be launching or retrieving at the same time. However, parking is woefully inadequate, and always fills up on weekends. In addition, there are large trees with overhanging branches on approach to the launch ramp, and because of the limited parking, a few jerks almost always park their truck and trailer outside the designated parking spots, thus forcing you to take a wide turn around them and drive close to the trees to get to the launch ramp, and you won't be able to pass by with the mast up. This is a launch ramp that's in a great location with direct access to the Central Bay. It looks good from Google Maps, and it works well for powerboats. You may have luck here on a weekday. However, for sailboats, this launch ramp is not recommended on weekends.



Photo credit: Truls Myklebust



## **Marina Bay Yacht Harbor in Richmond (aka Richmond Launch Ramp 13-103)**

Photo credit: Truls Myklebust

Address: 1340 Marina Way South, Richmond, CA 94804

Coordinates: 37.913911N, 122.354019W

Launch / Parking Fees: \$12.00 for 24 hours / \$24.00 for 48 hours

This is an excellent launching facility, with a wide launch ramp and two good and long dock fingers, long enough to accommodate three boats at a time. The launch ramp is wide enough to accommodate four boats launching or retrieving at once side-by-side, although most boats launch along the dock fingers on either side. There is usually enough parking here on all but the very busiest days (big holidays in the summer and first days of various fishing seasons). For any races in the Central Bay, this is probably the best publicly accessible launch ramp that you can reliably use on weekends. The launch ramp is inside a breakwater, and is behind Brooks Island, so the water is well protected. However, beware that the approach to the launch ramp is generally downwind, and it can be windy here, particularly in the afternoons during the summer. You need good reverse on your motor to back out from the launch ramp, and to stop at the launch ramp if returning on a windy afternoon! There is a public restroom right by the launch ramp, and there is also a good washdown station for the boat (two lanes) near the exit from the parking lot.

One more note: When departing from this launch ramp, make sure to follow the channel markers along the Craneway Pavilion and along the Point Potrero Reach. There is good depth only in channels that have been dredged. If you go outside the marked channels, you may find yourself in <2ft depth!



## Clipper Yacht Harbor in Sausalito

Photo credit: Truls Myklebust

Address: 310 Harbor Drive, Sausalito, CA 94965

Coordinates: 37.868627N, 122.497147W

This is a first-class full-service marina and launch facility, but the launch ramp is only open to tenants, and is no longer open to the public (you need marina keys to unlock the launch ramps). Clipper Yacht Harbor offers a limited number of dry storage spots for mast-up storage, and a number of trimarans in the local multihull fleet use Clipper Yacht Harbor. There are two launch ramps, and a single central dock finger – long enough for two boats on each side, and because the ramps are not open to the public, the ramps are hardly ever busy. Sausalito has easy access to the Central Bay. This is the closest launch ramp for races that start in Tiburon or on the San Francisco cityfront. The water in Sausalito is very well protected, and the approach to the launch ramp is mostly into the wind, with the wind providing an ideal slight push onto the dock. There's a fuel dock right by the launch ramp, with a pump-out station. There are good bathrooms and showers in the parking lot. There is a washdown station, and there are power outlets available by the dry storage parking spots.

Note that at high tide, the launch ramp is a bit shallow, and an extended tongue on the trailer may be recommended. Also, the second launch ramp has an awkwardly angled approach, and works best for smaller powerboats. Also note that the fuel dock gets busy at times (you sometimes see several boats waiting for their turn at the fuel dock, and they may misunderstand your approach to the launch ramp as an attempt to cut in line to the fuel dock ☺).



## Oyster Point Marina in South San Francisco

Photo credit: Truls Myklebust

Address: Marina Blvd, South San Francisco, CA 94080

Coordinates: 37.662930N, 122.374783W

Launch Ramp Fee: \$12.00

Oyster Point Marina has a launch ramp with two lanes and a central dock finger. The dock finger is a bit short, and can really only accommodate a single boat launching or retrieving on each side. Parking is usually not a problem here. However, it can get very windy here in the summertime, and the approach to the launch ramp is side to the wind, slightly downwind, and can be really tricky when it's windy. Also note that it's important to stick within the dredged channel on your way out of and back into the marina, as the water outside the channel is shallow.

## Coyote Point Recreation Area in San Mateo

Address: 1900 Coyote Point Drive, San Mateo, CA 94401

Coordinates: 37.590886N, 122.317995W

Launch fee: \$6.00 to launch, plus \$6.00 entry fee per vehicle into Coyote Point Recreation Area

Coyote Point Recreation Area has three launch ramps with two long dock fingers inside Coyote Point Marina, under the flight approach path to SFO airport. There is limited parking for trailers in the parking lot. Note that when leaving the marina, you need to stick within a dredged channel heading northwest along the breakwater. On either side of that channel, the water is very shallow (<2ft).



## Port of Redwood City Launch Ramp in Redwood City

Photo credit: Truls Myklebust

Address: 601 Chesapeake Drive, Redwood City, CA 94063

Coordinates: 37.502715N, 122.214443W

Launch Fee: \$5.00

This launch ramp has dock fingers on each side of a launch ramp wide enough for two boats to launch or retrieve at the same time, and the dock fingers are long enough to accommodate two boats. Redwood City has its appeal – it's warmer than in the Central Bay, and there's sailing available right in the channel in Redwood City, but it's a long way upwind to get to sailing areas in the Central Bay. There is plenty of parking in the parking lot, and there's mast-up dry storage available right next to the parking lot.

Note that in the prevailing winds during the summer, the approach to the launch ramp can be tricky. There is limited room between the launch ramp and the docks at Sequoia Yacht Club. The approach to the launch ramp is downwind, turning to side wind. The better approach would be from downwind, but there is very limited room to turn a boat below the launch ramp. If there is traffic at the launch ramp when you return, you may have to wait for a sufficiently clear window to approach the docks.



**Alviso Marina Launch Ramp in Alviso**

Photo credit: Truls Myklebust

Address: 1195 Hope Street, Alviso, CA 95002

Coordinates: 37.429319N, 121.981893W

This not-well-known launch ramp is on Alviso Slough in Alviso. There are two lanes, each with a sturdy dock finger. There is a limited amount of parking on-site, but the launch ramp doesn't see much use, so even the limited parking that's there is often available. Launching is free. Alviso Slough is a narrow channel that empties out into Coyote Creek and then into the bay. And the southern end of the bay is very shallow (<2ft), so it's a long way from Alviso to get out of the slough, and then upwind in the bay past the Dumbarton Bridge before you get to a channel that's wide enough to do any real sailing. This launch ramp is not recommended for sailboats, and not for multihulls in particular, due to its location and the narrowness of the channel (and the narrowness of the lanes at the launch ramp). Best for small fishing boats. The Port of Redwood City Launch Ramp is a much better choice in the South Bay.

## Launch Ramps on the Coast



**Pillar Point Launch Ramp in Half Moon Bay**

Photo credit: Truls Myklebust

Address: Pillar Point Harbor Blvd, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019

Coordinates: 37.501851N, 122.477553W

Launch fee: \$15.00

This is an excellent launch facility that provides six lanes and four dock fingers, with access into Pillar Point Harbor in Half Moon Bay. There is plenty of parking available on-site. Note that for trimarans, at full unfolded beam, there isn't quite enough width between the dock fingers to accommodate another boat alongside you (see above picture), so it's best to approach the launch ramp with at least one ama folded. Pillar Point Harbor is very well protected by Pillar Point itself, plus a breakwater that provides protection from the south. Pillar Point Harbor is the end point for the one-way Half Moon Bay races (OYRA and SSS each have one each year), making it possible to stage a trailer and haul the boat out at the end of the race (a good option if there is heavy wind from the NW). The Half Moon Bay Yacht Club is also located in Pillar Point Harbor, and there is plenty of anchorage space inside the harbor. Directly outside Pillar Point Harbor is the world-famous Mavericks surf break. The waves get truly monstrous here in the wintertime. The Half Moon Bay races guide you around the Colorado Reef Buoy and then the G1 and G3 approach buoys, and it's very important to not cut inside these buoys. Also note that there's a Southeast Reef that also sees breakers a little bit further south, so pay attention to the chart and go on the correct sides of the various buoys.



## Santa Cruz Harbor in Santa Cruz

Photo credit: Truls Myklebust

Address: 135 5<sup>th</sup> Ave, Santa Cruz, CA 95032

Coordinates: 36.963928N, 122.001567W

Launch fee: \$17.00 for motorized trailer boats, or \$13.00 for non-motorized, non-trailer vessels

This launch ramp is in the Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor, right next to the Crow's Nest Restaurant. There are five lanes, but only two dock fingers, one on each side of the launch ramp. One of these dock fingers is long enough to accommodate three or four boats. Beware that although the harbor is nicely protected, there can be surge from swell at the launch ramp, so pay special attention while launching or retrieving. Parking is quite limited at the launch ramp. There is overflow parking, and if you arrive in the morning on a weekend, you're going to have to park in the overflow parking. However, most of the launch traffic is fishing boats, and there is often room in the parking lot in the early afternoon after these boats haul out again. Note that the trailer parking spots are often coned off, and the harbormaster's office does that regularly to try to prevent cars without trailers from parking in the trailer parking spots. Remove the cones, park your truck and trailer there, and just let the harbormaster know that you did that. The parking lot is a bit tight, and you need to be a bit quick with raising your mast, since boats may come by while you're raising your mast.

The Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor is picturesque, provides access to Monterey Bay, to the famous Wednesday night races in Santa Cruz, and provides nice and leisurely sailing along the shoreline between Santa Cruz and Capitola. Beware that in the summertime, there is often a reversion layer near shore. The winds may be in the mid-20s from the NW a little bit offshore, but near shore, the winds may be very light, and may even blow from the SE. Be prepared that the winds may change and strengthen quickly as you head offshore. Also beware that in wintertime, there can be significant surf near the breakwater at the entrance to the harbor, so appropriate care must be taken when leaving or entering the harbor, and the harbor entrance is sometimes closed completely during periods of high surf. Also note that the harbor entrance sometimes silts up completely during the winter, and is then closed until the entrance channel can be dredged.



Photo credit: Truls Myklebust

## Moss Landing North Harbor Boat Launch Ramp in Moss Landing

Address: 2486 CA-1, Moss Landing, CA 95039

Coordinates: 36.811476N, 121.787096W

Launch fee: \$17.00

This launch ramp is right off the side of Highway 1 in Moss Landing, just north of the bridge crossing over Elkhorn Slough. The main launch ramp features four lanes and three dock fingers. There is a second launch ramp just north of the main one, but the second launch ramp only has a short single dock finger and is best for smaller vessels (e.g. kayaks). There's lots of trailer parking on-site. Moss Landing provides direct access out to Monterey Bay. Note that the water is very shallow just outside of the marked dredged channel, so you need to pay close attention to the channel markers.



## Breakwater Cove Launch Ramp in Monterey

Photo credit: Truls Myklebust

Address: Cannery Row, Monterey, CA 93940

Coordinates: 36.609069N, 121.893416W

Launch fee: Launching is free, but a double pull-through parking spot is \$24.00 per day

The launch ramp in Monterey is inside the breakwater for Breakwater Cove Marina. The launch ramp has two lanes with a dock finger on either side, but is wide enough that it could accommodate a third car in the middle in a pinch, as you can see in the photo. There is limited trailer parking available on-site. This launch ramp makes it possible to haul out the boat at the end of Spinnaker Cup and trailer the boat back upwind to the Bay Area.



## Fisherman's Wharf Launch Ramp in Monterey

Photo credit: Truls Myklebust

Address: Cannery Row, Monterey, CA 93940

Coordinates: 36.602230N, 121.890798W

Launch fee: Launching is free, parking is \$2.00/hour, \$15 daily max, double space \$4/hour

This launch ramp is inside the marina next to the Municipal Wharf in Monterey. The launch ramp has two lanes with central dock finger. However, the lanes are too narrow for multihulls (unless amas are folded), the approach angle to the ramp is awkward, and the path through the marina to the ramp snakes around and includes some narrow passage points, so this launch ramp is not ideal for multihulls. There is limited trailer parking available on-site, but note that cars with people heading to the wharf end up parking in many of the double trailer parking spots, reducing the number of double trailer spots available.

## **Miller Boat Launch at Nick's Cove in Tomales Bay**

Address: 23240 CA-1, Marshall, CA 94940

Coordinates: 38.199559N, 122.921989W

Launch fee: Launching is free, but parking is \$5.00 per day

This launch ramp provides direct access to Tomales Bay, without having to cross the bar at the entrance to the bay (which is shallow and has breakers with any significant ocean swell). The launch ramp has two lanes separated by a sturdy dock finger in the middle. There is trailer parking onsite. However, watch for overhanging trees, which could interfere with raising your mast.

The launch ramp is located across from Hog Island and White Gulch Cove on Tomales Point. Beware that the water in Tomales Bay is very shallow in all areas except for the main channel. The water outside the Miller Boat Launch isn't more than 4-7 feet deep, and there are lots of areas in Tomales Bay that are only 1-2 feet deep, so plan your route carefully and keep a close eye on your depth meter.

## **Westside Regional Park in Bodega Bay**

Address: 2400 Westshore Road, Bodega Bay, CA 94923

Coordinates: 38.323010N, 123.054604W

Launch fee: \$4.00 for trailered boats, plus \$7.00 for day-use parking

The launch ramp at Westside Regional Park is inside Bodega Harbor in Bodega Bay. The launch ramp provides three lanes and two dock fingers. There is lots of trailer parking in the parking lot. Bodega Harbor is very well protected, and provides safe access out to Bodega Bay itself, the area around Bodega Head, and out into the Pacific.

Note that Bodega Harbor is badly silted almost everywhere except for the marked channel. The area outside the launch ramp between the launch ramp and the main channel is also fairly shallow, but is passable for a sailboat. However, you should take care to not venture north or south until you get to the main channel.

It is also possible to sail from Bodega Bay to Tomales Bay, but beware that this involves a shallow bar crossing into Tomales Bay, with only 8-ft depth at the deepest crossing, and only 4-ft depth across the shallow part of the bar. This crossing should only be attempted at high tide and with minimal ocean swell, and you must be careful to cross only at the deepest areas close to Tomales Point (but not too close, as there are rocks close to shore). If there is any significant ocean swell, there will be breakers all the way across the bar into Tomales Bay.

# Launch Ramps in the North Bay and Sacramento Delta

## **Vallejo Launch Ramp in Vallejo**

Address: 139 Curtola Parkway, Vallejo, CA 94590

Coordinates: 38.095802N, 122.258275W

Launch fee: FREE

This launch ramp on the Mare Island Strait features two launch ramps with dock fingers, with lots of parking available. The launch ramps are behind a breakwater that protects the area from the currents that the Mare Island Strait are renowned for. This is not too far away from Vallejo Yacht Club, which is the destination for both the Great Vallejo Race and the SSS Vallejo I-II races. Mare Island Strait empties into Carquinez Strait and San Pablo Bay. Beware of ferry traffic, as there is a ferry terminal near the launch ramp.



## **W 9th St. Boat Launch & Pier in Benicia**

Photo credit: Thom Davis

Address: End of West 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Benicia, CA 94510

Coordinates: 38.057636N, 122.174766W

This launch ramp provides two lanes with dock fingers on each side of the launch ramp, with access directly into Carquinez Strait. There is a large and roomy parking lot on-site (see picture to right). The launch itself is not well protected, and fish lines are an obstacle when returning from a sail. It can be shallow at low tide, but it's a mud bottom if you hit.



Photo credit: Thom Davis



### **Benicia Marina Launch Ramp**

Photo credit: Thom Davis

Address: To the right at the end of East 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Benicia, CA 94510

Coordinates: 38.044780N, 122.153866W

Launch fee: \$5

This small launch ramp is well protected inside Benicia Marina and provides a single lane, with access out into Carquinez Strait, and is often used after the end of Jazz Cup. Note that it's a fairly narrow channel through the marina to the ramp, and the approach is downwind in the prevailing westerly winds. There's only a small number of parking spots for your truck and trailer. Parking is free, but on fishing tournament weekends it is unlikely that you will find a spot in the parking lot.



Photo credit: Thom Davis

### **Martinez Marina / Almar Marina in Martinez**

Address: 7 North Court Street, Martinez, CA 94553

Coordinates: 38.026339N, 122.137594W

This launch ramp provides four lanes with two central dock fingers, with access directly into the Suisun Point Channel, just west of the Benicia Bridge. There is a large parking lot on-site with designated trailer parking spots.

## **Pittsburg Public Boat Ramp in Pittsburg**

Address: Cutter Avenue, Pittsburg, CA 94565

Coordinates: 38.038116N, 122.884303W

Launch fee: FREE

This launch ramp provides three lanes with two dock fingers, with access into New York Slough in Pittsburg (San Joaquin River). There is designated trailer parking onsite.

## **Antioch City Marina Boat Ramp in Antioch**

Address: End of L Street, Antioch, CA 94509

Coordinates: 38.018903N, 122.817413W

Launch fee: \$5.00, valid for 24 hours (you may purchase up to 3 permits for 72 hours per visit)

This launch ramp provides four lanes with three dock fingers, with access into the San Joaquin River in Antioch, west of the Antioch Bridge. There is lots of designated trailer parking onsite.

## **Sherman Island Boat Launch on Sherman Island**

Address: 4800w Sherman Island Road, Rio Vista, CA 94571

Coordinates: 38.055906N, 121.785645W

Park & launch fee: \$10.00 for vehicle + trailer (or \$5.00 + \$3.00 for small watercraft launch)

This small launch facility provides two lanes, but only one short dock finger, at the western tip of Sherman Island, with access into the Sacramento River. There is a parking lot with designed trailer parking available on-site.

## **Brannan Island State Recreation Area on Brannan Island, near Rio Vista**

Address: 17645 CA-160, Rio Vista, CA 94571

Coordinates: 38.115114N, 121.688328W

Launch fee: \$5.00 per day, plus \$8.00 per day for parking

This high capacity launch facility provides twelve lanes and six dock fingers, along with lots of on-site trailer parking. The launch ramp provides access into Threemile Slough, with access to either the San Joaquin River or the Sacramento River (through the Threemile Slough Lift Bridge).

## **Russo's Marina, on Bethel Island**

Address: 3995 Willow Road, Bethel Island, CA 94511

Coordinates: 38.034174N, 121.621651W

This marina has a two-lane boat ramp with a dock finger on either side, and a limited amount of on-site trailer parking. The launch ramp provides access to Piper Slough and Franks Tract in the Delta, with access from there to the San Joaquin River through False River, Fisherman's Cut or Old River.

## **Buckley Cove Boat Launch in Stockton**

Address: 4911 Buckley Cove Way, Stockton, CA 95219

Coordinates: 37.976994N, 121.375459W

Launch fee: Vehicle with trailer \$15.00 Fri-Sun / \$13.00 Mon-Thu. In addition, there is an overnight fee of \$8.00 Fri-Sun, or \$7.00 Mon-Thu.

This high capacity launch facility provides eight lanes and four dock fingers, along with lots of on-site trailer parking. This launch facility is right across the street from the Stockton Sailing Club, and is used by many of the boats that participate in the annual Delta Ditch Run race, allowing boats to trailer back after a 70NM downwind race by spinnaker. Note that there is a hoist at the Stockton Sailing Club as well, so you can choose between hoisting the boat out there or hauling it out at Buckley Cove. Access from either is onto a long and fairly straight section of the San Joaquin River near Stockton.