DOCTOR'S PASS

5.0 nautical miles from Gordon Pass sea buoy, 22.3 miles to Sanibel / Point Ybel, 21.2 miles to Matanzas Pass / Ft. Myers Beach.

Towing Services

There are numerous towing and salvage services available on the southwest coast. Nearly every one will respond to a call for a radio check, and thus you can become aware of them. We have discovered that these folks are generally interested in helping to provide "local knowledge." Since the Coast Guard has removed itself from offering navigational information, the towing services have begun to fill the void, and some contact with them has often made the difference between accident and safety: don't be afraid to ask for help or advice, but remember that the final responsibility remains with the mariner.
Minimum Approach Depth: 5 ft.
Depth In Anchorage: 6-9 ft.

Lat 26°10.7’N / Lon 81°48.6’W
Use Chart 11430 for Navigation

NOTE: the bay names used on NOAA chart 11430 are not consistent with "local usage" as shown here.

Five nautical miles north of the Gordon Pass sea buoy is the Mo(A)"DP" sea buoy for Doctors Pass, a dredged and hardened channel leading east and north into a fine shelter (short stay) anchorage in Moorings Bay. As you turn north at the interior end of the pass, follow the western shore, holding to starboard the string of red marks defining the large shoal visible in the photograph.

The anchorage lies to starboard beyond red 14: a large pool surrounded by private homes. Shelter should be excellent in all winds, with only slight exposure to southerlies.

There is no immediate shore side access here. A short dinghy ride north under the bridge (13' vertical clearance) into Venetian Bay will bring you to a marina catering to gas powered boats with some supplies, three elegant restaurants and several boutiques.

A one mile dinghy trip to the south, beyond the pass and under a bridge (9' vertical clearance) brings you to Hurricane Harbor Bay. Near the southern end of the bay, on the western shore, you will find Gulf Shore Square with a nice restaurant (breakfast and lunch only), and docks.
This should be considered a day anchorage only. Several boats have drifted loose in recent years, endangering the Sanibel causeway and bridges, the island's only connection to the mainland.

The bottom is a thin layer of sand over hard limestone bottom, and there is little protection from east or south winds and none from other quadrants.

A 48-hour limit is enforced, although a permit for longer stays is available at City Hall. Boats should not be left unattended at any time. For longer than a daytime stay, set two anchors in a Bahamian moor with plenty of scope, and keep an anchor watch.

Sanibel wants to be friendly and supportive to visiting yachtsmen: do your part by being responsible boaters.
Minimum Approach Depth: 12 ft.  
Depth In Anchorage: 15-20 ft.

Between flashing red marker 2 and the 98-foot-high Sanibel Island Lighthouse on Point Ybel, you will find an excellent fair weather anchorage.

Approaching marker 2, the anchorage comes abeam to the south. Cruise behind the shelter of Point Ybel, graced with tall Australian pines, and drop the hook within 100 yards of shore.

 Depths run 15 feet or more. Tidal currents are almost always present, and the deep channel and hard scoured sand can make for tenuous holding.

Dinghy access is available on both sides of the causeway where it meets the shore, and about 400 yards east is an inlet to the Sanibel Yacht Club. Pump-out is available there, and a mile or so away is a delicatessen.

Sanibel’s beaches are famous for their large quantity and variety of seashells, which wash up on every tide. Its southernmost beach is a quick hike away.

22.3 Nautical miles from Doctor’s Pass, 3.3 statute miles to Matanzas Pass / Fort Myers Beach, 4.5 statute miles to Punta Rassa.

WHERE THERE’S SCOPE THERE’S HOPE

While we're talking about anchoring difficulties in Sanibel, perhaps we should examine foul weather anchoring and ways to increase your anchor's holding power:

First, scope. Second, more scope! In bad weather, put out 10 times the depth (including the height of your bow to the water).

Third, put down a messenger - anything that will help keep the stock lying flat on the bottom. If you're in surge conditions, put down a heavier messenger or increase the scope. If your boat's a "dancer", swinging back and forth on your anchor, put down a second anchor in a "Bahamian" style. (see page 58)
MATANZAS PASS / FT. MYERS BEACH

Note: photo is at LOW tide!

This anchorage must be approached from the Gulf of Mexico through Matanzas Pass and under a 65 foot fixed bridge. It is not recommended to enter or leave through the twists and shoals of San Carlos Pass to the southwest.

Gulfward of the northwestern tip of Estero Island, at flashing red marker 2, begins the well marked channel leading around the island and east under the high rise bridge to Ft. Myers Beach.

On the other side of the bridge, the channel turns north to skirt shoal water in the middle of the bay (clearly visible at low tide in the photo above.)

The anchorage lies to the south and east of the shoal, between markers 14 and 26. Keep red 14 to port to enter the anchorage directly, along Estero Island, or turn sharp left and follow the marked channel along San Carlos Island to red 24 and 26 to enter the anchorage from the southeast. The unmarked channel along the southern shore of
Minimum Approach Depth: 7 ft.  
Depth in Anchorage: 8-12 ft.  

Lat 26°27.3'N / Lon 81°56.8'W  
Use Chart 11427 for Navigation

21.2 Nautical miles from Doctor's Pass,  
3.3 statute miles from Sanibel-Point Ybel, 6.9 statute miles to Punta Rassa.

The anchorage is heavily used and not recommended for anchoring. Also unmarked is the existing turning basin at the northeast end of the anchorage which completely surrounds red 24 and is equally unsuitable for anchoring.

A strong current that reverses direction with the tide runs through the anchorage, so use a Bahamian moor.

This is a well protected deep anchorage, and all kinds of supplies and facilities are a short dinghy ride away. Several nearby marinas also operate pump-out stations.

NOTE: As this edition went to press, Ft. Myers Beach was in the process of establishing a harbor management plan. Anchoring areas may be marked by special buoys, there may be mooring fields with transient moorings for rent, or both. There may be a harbormaster; try calling "Matanzas Pass Harbormaster" on Channel 16.

See "photomap" on Page 104 for additional information.
PUNTA RASSA

6.9 statute miles from Matanzas Pass / Ft. Myers Beach,
3.8 statute miles to Glover Bight.

GLOVER BIGHT

Off mile 146 on the Okeechobee Waterway: 3.8 statute miles from Punta Rassa, 4.5 statute miles to Bimini Basin.
#1 Punta Rassa
Minimum Approach Depth: 8 ft.
Depth In Anchorage: 6-8 ft.
Lat 26°30.2'N / Lon 82°00.7'W

North of the bascule bridge from Punta Rassa to Sanibel Island and northeast of marker 13 is an anchorage bordering the western reaches of shallow Punta Rassa Cove.

This is a good place to overnight before an early morning run under the bridge to the Gulf. The bridge opens every 15 minutes on the quarter hour between 11 AM and 6 PM, and on demand at other times, seven days a week.

This is a fair weather refuge at best. It is only well-protected from easterly winds and is regularly scoured by strong tidal currents. Minimum depth is 6 feet to within 150 yards of the eastern banks.

**Note:** The next five anchorages are reached via the Okeechobee Waterway, which has a marker system that is continuous to that of the Intracoastal Waterway. Hold all red markers to port while heading east in the main channel.

Use Chart 11427 for Navigation

#2 Glover Bight
Minimum Approach Depth: 7 ft.
Depth In Anchorage: 8-15 ft.
Lat 26°32.2'N / Lon 81°59.8'W

Coming up the Caloosahatchee River from San Carlos Bay, turn hard to the northwest just past red 92 to enter the Glover Bight channel. Follow it around Cattle Dock Point to the right. Anchor in the bay just past the marina (which has a ship's store, showers, a laundromat, pump-out and fuel). There's plenty of water, but watch out for the bars.

See "photomap" on Page 105 for additional information.
BIMINI BASIN

Off mile 145.8 on the Okeechobee Waterway: 4.5 statute miles from Glover Bight, 18.3 statute miles to Yacht Club Colony.

- LATE FLASH -

FT. MYERS WELCOMES BOATS TO ITS ANCHORAGE

Until recently, anyone who tried to anchor on the south side of the Caloosahatchee River off Ft. Myers (between Bimini Basin and Yacht Club Colony) was chased away for trespassing - the city owns the bottomlands almost to the opposite shore, an unusual situation in Florida.

Now the city welcomes boaters at anchor and, as this edition goes to press, is establishing a managed anchorage and mooring field adjacent to the city marina, behind Lofton Island between the two spans of the Edison Bridge. Try contacting the "Ft. Myers Dockmaster" on Channel 16. Our next edition will have a separate spread on this excellent anchorage.
Minimum Approach Depth: 6 ft.  
Depth In Anchorage: 6 ft.  
Lat 26°33.6'N / Lon 81°57.9'W  
Use Chart 11427 for Navigation

Although the chart shows a seemingly more direct channel into Bimini Basin departing from the Okeechobee Waterway to the north at red 86, the way-in shown here (beginning east of green 83) is the preferred route of most local mariners.

Sailing vessels: note 55 foot clearance power cable.

Tucked deep within a maze of canals, this anchorage offers outstanding protection in all weathers. It is about 15 minutes at idle speed from the Okeechobee Waterway.

East of green 83, head north into the privately marked channel and follow it left (keeping the red markers to PORT after your turn west), then right into the canal with homes lining each side.

The channel empties into a large, deep basin. There is a public park at one end. A convenience store is across the street from the park. A bank, bakery, service station, hardware store, ice and groceries are all within walking distance.