Off mile 130.5 on the Okeechobee Waterway:
18.3 statute miles from Bimini Basin,
3.8 statute miles to Power Plant Slough.

Off mile 128.3 on the Okeechobee Waterway: 3.8 statute miles from Yacht Club Colony, 26.6 statute miles to Intracoastal Waterway mile "0" at green marker 101.
Yacht Club Colony
Minimum Approach Depth: 4 ft.
Depth In Anchorage: 6 ft.
Lat 26°41.7'N / Lon 81°49.9'W
Use Chart 11427 for Navigation

A sheltered anchorage in a private development, Yacht Club Colony is reached by leaving the Okeechobee Waterway at marker 22. Turn west and follow the markers to a 90 degree turn in the channel - you are now heading north. This is the entrance to Daughtries Creek.

The channel is close but carries four feet at MLW. Upon entering the basin, which is almost landlocked, anchoring is available in all directions. Since this is a private development, no landing is possible without permission.

If you are in danger of being caught in a squall or heavy weather this could be a good place to ride out the storm.

Power Plant Slough
Minimum Approach Depth: 4 ft.
Depth In Anchorage: 6 ft.
Lat 26°42.3'N / Lon 81°47.2'W
Use Chart 11427 for Navigation

This is one of the many oxbows formed by the Caloosahatchee River before it was straightened to create the Okeechobee Waterway (our cover photograph was taken in one of them).

Leave the Waterway heading to the northeast when you are west of marker 13 and anchor in more than 6 feet of water.

You may want a closer view of the beautiful manatee sculpture in the river east of the I 75 bridge. Go up and have a look ... it's lovely!

Sailing vessels: note 55 foot clearance bridge.
Section II

The five anchorages covered on the preceding pages are on the Caloosahatchee River, part of the Okeechobee Waterway, which crosses Florida between Stuart on the East Coast and San Carlos Bay on the West. Continuing upriver to the East, the Caloosahatchee reaches Lake Okeechobee, with one lock roughly 10 miles east of LaBelle and another at Moore Haven on the west shore of the lake.

The waterway continues across the lake (Route 1) or around its south shore (Route 2) to the St. Lucie Canal, with one lock at Port Mayacca right at the entrance from the lake and a second five miles from the end of the canal, opposite Palm City. (The locks are sometimes closed to boat traffic, so check ahead!) Minimum bridge clearance is 55 feet.

Green 101, the terminal mark on the Okeechobee Waterway, is also the beginning of your journey through the magnificent estuary of San Carlos Bay and beautiful Pine Island Sound to the northern tip of Cayo Costa and Charlotte Harbor. This is probably some of the most beautiful cruising water outside the Bahamas. Largely unspoiled and undeveloped, it is alive with the magic of old Florida.

We ask that you treat it tenderly: be extra careful about keeping trash afloat until you can find receptacles ashore, stay away from areas of sea grass when the time comes to anchor and use your holding tank until local pump-out opportunities are available.

We have been blessed with an environment well worth saving, and we'd like to think that boaters are in the vanguard of those who agree.

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Miserable Mile

From quick flashing green marker 101 near Punta Rassa begins the Intracoastal Waterway, leading west and north to Tampa Bay and beyond.

The first three miles run perpendicular to sometimes vicious tidal currents that sweep the San Carlos Bay passage, creating a navigational nightmare commonly known by the misnomer "Miserable Mile".

Stay alert to the possibility of being swept out of the channel and running aground!
Note: For pass-to-pass distances on the outside see page 74.
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: 9 ft.
Depth In Anchorage: 8-11 ft.

Lat 26°27.8'N / Lon 82°02.8'W
Use Chart 11427 for Navigation

Off mile 3.3 on the ICW: 5.8 statute miles from Punta Rassa, 3.5 statute miles to York Island/St. James City.

It is nice to know that after struggling through the “Miserable Mile” a pleasant day anchorage awaits at Sanibel, west of the bridge.

From the Intracoastal Waterway, just before marker 11, bear southeast toward marker 5 on the Sanibel Island channel. Be sure to pass this aid at least 50 yards to its northeasterly side because it marks a shoal building into the channel from the southwest.

Along the eastern edge of this shoal, from marker 5 south to Dixie Beach, is an anchorage offering 8-11 feet of water. It is exposed to almost all winds and is recommended only for calm weather.

Stay close in to shore and away from boat traffic using the natural deep water channel running south to Pt. Ybel. Also, there is a strong current that sets both on the ebb and flood; a Bahamian moor (see page 58) is recommended.
York Island and MacKeever Keys Grass Flats

Lee County has identified a substantial area of sea grass located west of St. James Point on York Island, and another around MacKeever Keys north of Chino Island.

The first area (west of St. James Point) is one you should watch out for, since it is near the anchorage area we have identified. Note that floating red #20 west of the anchorage is at the southwest corner of the sea grass area. Exercise great care to remain clear, and be advised that the area may soon be closed to any vessels driven by “combustion engines”. (Break out the oars!)

The flats around MacKeever Keys are in such shallow water that it is unlikely any cruising vessel could enter the area, but we mention them lest any dinghy from vessels in the anchorage area on the southwest side of Chino Island venture there on a voyage of exploration.
Minimum Approach Depth: 9 ft.
Depth In Anchorage: 7-9 ft.

Lat 26°28.9’N / Lon 82°05.8’W
Use Chart 11427 for Navigation

Off mile 5.0 on the ICW: 3.5 statute miles from Sanibel-Dixie Beach, 4.0 statute miles to Chino Island.

In northerly breezes, boaters can anchor in minimum 7 foot depths off the southern shore of York Island, well west of marker 13 on the Intracoastal Waterway.

Leave the ICW between markers 13 and 13A and head toward the island’s southeastern point, turn west and parallel the shore along to a small beach and anchor when it is abeam. Good water runs to within 100 yards of the all-natural banks.

There is some protection from northerly blows, but this anchorage is wide open to winds from any other quarter. If shelter from southerly winds is needed, consider Ding Darling, 2 miles to the south across the ICW. If in doubt, the York Island anchorage offers a bit more protection because the shoals to the south help break up waves coming from that direction.

When leaving the anchorage, don’t try to rejoin the ICW by going west. Go out the way you came in.

See "photomap" on Page 106 for additional information.
Off mile 5.0 on the ICW: 4.3 statute miles from Sanibel-Dixie Beach, 4.7 statute miles to Chino Island.

Off mile 8.3 on the ICW: 4.0 statute miles from York Island / St. James City, 7.5 statute miles to Roosevelt Channel / Tween Waters.
Ding Darling / Tarpon Bay
Minimum Approach Depth: 5 ft.
Depth In Anchorage: 5-6 ft.

The wide and mostly deep cove south of flashing daybeacon 16 abuts the 5,000 acre Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Good depths of 5-1/2 to 6 feet run to within 200 yards of the banks. Look for small signs set atop equally small pilings, which denote the north boundary of the wildlife refuge. Best depths are to the north of these signs. Protection is excellent from all but northerly winds.

The shoreline around Tarpon Bay is in its natural state, and is worth extensive exploration by dinghy. Bicycle rentals are available in Tarpon Bay for exploring the five miles of roadway in the park. All plants and other natural resources are protected here. Do your part and do no damage.

These waters are under Sanibel’s 48-hour anchoring limit, although a properly equipped vessel can get a permit from city hall for a longer stay.

Chino Island
Minimum Approach Depth: 7 ft.
Depth In Anchorage: 7-9 ft.

Lat 26°29.9’N / Lon 82°07.7’W*

North of marker 24, boaters can carry 7 feet of water to within 50 yards of the southwest shore of Chino Island.

The anchorage is well protected from north and northeasterly winds, but wide open to breezes from all other directions and to wakes from passing boats on the ICW.

The shore is shrouded with lush vegetation, but the island is private, so it is not possible to go ashore.

*Use Chart 11427 for Navigation