ROOSEVELT CHANNEL/
TWEEN WATERS

Off mile 12.7 on the ICW: 7.5 statute miles from Chino Island, 8.2 statute miles to Captiva Pass/ Safety Harbor.

Entering and Leaving an Anchorage: The Use of the Tide

Nobody likes to run aground, but there aren't too many cruising boaters who, at one time or another, haven't found themselves in that position. You can often kedge off by taking your anchor and most of its rode in the dinghy, rowing out into deep water, dropping the anchor, and winching off. Otherwise, you have no alternative but a long, tedious wait. There's a simple rule to protect against this: ALWAYS ENTER OR LEAVE OVER SUSPECT DEPTHS AT MID TIDE WHEN THE TIDE IS ON THE RISE. Go as slowly as you can. If you hit and can't get off, wait a bit and you'll float free. Never try to power off forward.
Minimum Approach Depth: 5 ft.  
Depth In Anchorage: 5-14 ft.

Lat 26°30.5'N / Lon 82°11.3'W  
Use Chart 11427 for Navigation

Minimum depths of 5 feet lead from marker 37 on the Intracoastal Waterway on an approximate heading of 240 to the flashing red #2 leading mark.

Watch the next markers carefully. There is plenty of water in the channel, but don't stray. Note that red #6 is the last of the charted marks. After that, uncharted marks lead you in.

Southwest of red #6 there is a marina that serves mainly small craft, with only gasoline and a bait and tackle store.

On the eastern side of the channel as you continue south, between markers 14 and 15, there is a patch of water with depths of 5-14 feet. The best depths are closer to marker 15. Shelter is not good in heavy weather and 4-5 foot shoals are all around. Use caution if you anchor here.

To reach the preferred anchorage, providing more protection from easterlies in the shelter of Buck Key, go past the docks of Tween Waters and put your hook down in the deeper waters beyond and to the south. Here you will find 1/4-mile of 6 and 7 foot depths. Going further leads to a narrowing channel and a four-foot bar.

Tween Waters is a beautiful resort which, for a nominal fee, will allow the use of its facilities. It accepts transients, but space is limited. Showers and a laundromat, a ships store and boutique, fuel, power, water and pump-out are available. There are four restaurants, tennis courts and a pool in the complex and the beach is right across the street. The dock area is frequented by manatees and, surprisingly, sea otters!

Buck Key to the east is in its natural state. The shores of Captiva Island to the west are heavily developed with homes and condominiums.

See "photomap" on Page 107 for additional information.
This inlet between North Captiva Island and Cayo Costa is lovely and frustrating. The seaward passage is unmarked and full of shoals. Even the channel from the Intracoastal Waterway is flanked by unmarked shoals. But the interior reaches of Captiva Pass are deep and offer two delightful anchorages.

The first anchorage lies south from the deep water adjoining the easterly reaches of Captiva Pass, just around the point from an almost landlocked lagoon called Safety Harbor. This once secret refuge used to house a fishing village. It has now been destroyed, with the exception of one stilt house restored as a private home. Safety Harbor is being developed as a modern housing and condominium complex called the Safety Harbor Club.

The second anchorage, off the beautiful beach at the south end of Cayo Costa, a state park almost entirely in its natural condition, is popular with weekend boaters.

There are two ways in to these anchorages. From the south, set course from just south of marker 48 at a heading of about 280 and watch for a break in the trees. Stay lined up on the break until the entrance markers to Safety Harbor are abeam. Turn left toward the well-marked channel, then stop and anchor near shore just northwest of the stilt house. It used to be possible to go between the stilt house and the beach into Safety Harbor itself, but the passage has shoaled, making it impassable for all but shallow draft boats. Two restaurants, walking paths, beautiful beaches and a general store make dinghying around the point worthwhile.
CAPTIVA PASS

#2 Captiva Pass
Minimum Approach Depth: 6 ft.
Depth In Anchorage: 8-10 ft.
Lat 26°36.8'N / Lon 82°13.3'W
Use Chart 11427 for Navigation

The northern route, to Cayo Costa, is more popular. Leave the ICW just north of marker 51 and curl back around to the west on a heading of about 270 to avoid the charted shoal southwest of 51. As the eastern banks of Cayo Costa come abeam, consider dropping anchor before entering the interior of Captiva Pass. Minimum 8 foot depths run to within 50 yards of shore.

In spite of its popularity, this anchorage does not provide sufficient shelter in heavy weather; tidal currents are strong at all times. Set the hook firmly before dinghying ashore.

Off mile 18.6 on the ICW: 8.2 statute miles from Roosevelt Channel/Tween Waters, 3.8 statute miles to Useppa/Cabbage Key.
Anchor Lights

Remember, an anchor light must be shown at night unless you're anchored in a Coast Guard designated "Special Anchorage". As this is published, there are only two on our southwest coast. One is in the Manatee River at McKay point. The other, at Factory Bay off Marco Island, is shoaled in to two feet. However, several cities are planning managed anchorages, and, as part of the process, they intend to apply to the Coast Guard for "Special Anchorage" status. Until then, you can assume that you must light up the night sky with your anchor light.
Minimum Approach Depth: 8 ft.
Depth In Anchorage: 6-12 ft.

Lat 26°39.4'N / Lon 82°13.0'W
Use Chart 11427 for Navigation

Off mile 21.6 on the ICW: 3.8 statute miles from Captiva Pass/Safety Harbor, 1.4 statute miles to Point Blanco.

This open, deep water anchorage lies northeast from marker 60. Waters hold to minimum 6-foot depths within 75 yards of the island shoreline to the east; some depths are greater than those shown on the chart.

There is good shelter from east, northeast and southeasterly breezes, but only slight shelter from westerlies. Don’t Anchor south of marker 60, where boat traffic is heavy around the south end of Useppa Island.

This anchorage lies near the ICW, and can be affected by wakes from power boats, tugs and barges. A Bahamian moor is advisable to keep from swinging too widely.

Useppa is a private island; visitors are not welcome. There is not even a dinghy dock.

From the anchorage it is a short trip by dinghy to the restaurant and docks on Cabbage Key, west of Green 61. The restaurant, inspiration for the song “Cheeseburger in Paradise”, serves three meals a day in a unique atmosphere. The island offers a nature trail and has a rich history. To use the docks, call ahead.

See "photomap" on Page 108 for additional information.
POINT BLANCO

Off mile 23 on the ICW: 1.4 statute miles from Useppa/Cabbage Key, 3.1 statute miles to Pelican Bay.

Anchorage #1 is outside of the photo view to the right, on the near side of the island.

Wakes and the First Mate

Slow speed in anchorages is vital. First Mates and galley hands get very upset when the wake from a passing vessel flips their just finished casserole on the cabin sole (the old casserole-on-the-sole syndrome). Prudence requires dead slow as you enter, navigate or leave an anchorage. That way you can show good anchorage manners and take pity on your fellow skippers at the same time. Remember that, in more ways than one, you are responsible for any damage caused by your wake.
In westerly winds, cruising craft of any size can anchor just off the Intracoastal Waterway in 8 foot depths off Point Blanco, west of marker 67.

Begin easing west of the ICW channel as the southeastern portion of Point Blanco comes abeam to the west, between markers 65 and 67.

Good water runs to within 75 yards of the shore, which is lined with tall Australian pines. Anchor between marker 69 and the point.

This anchorage is open to wakes from passing boats on the ICW, and is not recommended for heavy weather.

South of Point Blanco, where an old stilt house once stood, only the pilings remain, the house having burned to the waterline.

Between the pilings and the southern shore of the island is a narrow but navigable channel marked with privately maintained stakes which leads around the point to a thoroughly sheltered hole perfect for riding out heavy weather. The shoreline is completely natural.

Take this passage dead slow and watch the depth sounder. Charts show enough water to enter, but local reports conflict, with as little as 4 feet possible, especially around the western point. Preliminary soundings from the dinghy might be in order.

In the anchorage itself, depths run 8-9 feet, with 5-8 foot depths to the southwest. Despite the demands of the approach channel, this is a popular spot, and crowding may require bow and stern anchors.
Off mile 24.8 on the ICW: 3.1 statute miles from Point Blanco, 12.7 statute miles to Matlacha, 4.3 statute miles to Boca Grande, 19.7 statute miles to Punta Gorda.

Just south of Boca Grand Pass, west of marker 72, in Pelican Bay, is an outstanding anchorage, one of the best in Pine Island Sound.

The water is shallow, but boats carrying 5 feet can enter by staying close to the Cayo Costa side to avoid the shoal building out from the northwest end of Punta Blanca Island. Inside, depths improve to 6 feet along a broad band.

Come abeam of marker 72 in the ICW and set a compass course of roughly 240 degrees through the northern third of Pelican Pass, staying to the Cayo Costa side. Curve slowly around to the south into the main body of the pass on its mid width. Consider anchoring northeast of the docks. From the docks south lie many unmarked shoals.

Cayo Costa State Park maintains a fixed wooden dock along the western shore. There is a $2 charge for landing in the park. Garbage may not be brought ashore; picnic tables and refuse cans have been removed from the dock area.

The bay is sheltered enough for light to moderate airs from almost any direction, but might not offer adequate protection in heavy weather.

Pelican Bay is surrounded by natural
Minimum Approach Depth: 5 ft.  
Depth In Anchorage: 6-9 ft.

Lat 26°41.0'N / Lon 82°14.5'W  
Use Chart 11427 for Navigation

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beauty, with undeveloped Punta Blanca Island to the east and Cayo Costa State Park to the west.

There is virtually no development along the entire 7 mile length of Cayo Costa. The only human residents are park rangers. Unfortunately, their electric generator can be quite loud at night.

The rangers run a tram from the dock across the island to the gulf, where there are picnic tables, campsites and rustic cabins with common bathrooms and running water, but no electricity. Hiking trails also are part of the park.

Cayo Costa and Punta Blanca are bird sanctuaries, harboring, among others, magnificent frigate birds, ospreys and bald eagles. Vegetation is lush. For almost their entire length, Cayo Costa's powdery gulfside beaches are utterly deserted.

The bay side of Cayo Costa is riddled with coves, some containing remnants of old fish houses. One, Murdock Bayou, leads to a watery tunnel through the mangroves that cuts the island nearly in two and empties onto the back side of a gulf beach.

See "photomap" on Page 109 for additional information.