A Guide to Anchorages in Southwest Florida

SECOND EDITION
A Guide to Anchorages
In Southwest Florida

QUICK ACCESS INDEX

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TWO WAYS TO USE THIS GUIDE:

If you are looking for the anchorage nearest to your position, refer to the Anchorage Index and Locator Chartlet on pages 10 and 11.

If you want to choose an anchorage by its characteristics (facilities, privacy, beauty etc.) flip to the back of the book and consult the “Site Selection Guide” starting on page 117 (Addendum B).

PRODUCED BY:

Boaters' Action and Information League, Inc.
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Florida Sea Grant College Program
Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council
West Coast Inland Navigation District

... and people like you ...
Acknowledgments

We are especially indebted to Claiborne S. Young, author of the recently updated, definitive “Cruising Guide to Western Florida”, who graciously permitted us to quote from his narrative in order to more fully describe many of the anchorages in this guide.

Our appreciation is extended to the many people who helped select, sound and chart the anchorages included herein. We have also been invaluably assisted by the feedback received from the many boaters who used the Preview and First Edition of the guide and took the time to offer their input. Thank you all!

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International Sailing Supply of Punta Gorda, publisher of waterproof chart #22, gave us permission to use its data in describing the anchorage in Terra Ceia Bay in Manatee County.

The Florida Sea Grant College Program (FSG) has provided the full-color benchmark survey photomaps prepared by their Cartographic Research Laboratory, other (extensive) technical support, publishing and editorial assistance. FSG is, however, not responsible for any inaccuracies that may be associated with specific information contained in the guide.

Finally, the BAIL Board of Directors offers its sincere admiration to Walter Stilley, BAIL’s founder and president, for conceiving the idea of protecting a series of safe-harbor anchorages throughout Southwest Florida, and promoting an experiment in participatory democracy - the establishment of non-regulatory, boater-guided oversight of those anchorages. His inspired leadership and dogged persistence led to the formation of the Southwest Florida Regional Harbor Board and the adoption of his point of view by the signatories to its establishment. Cruising boaters in this area owe him an inestimable debt of gratitude.

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A Guide by Boaters for Boaters

The first edition of "A Guide to Anchorages In Southwest Florida" was developed and assembled by the Anchorage Advisory Committee of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (SWFRPC), the Boaters' Action and Information League (BAIL), volunteer members of local boating organizations and members of the Florida Sea Grant College Program (FSG). It was published by SWFRPC through a contract funded by Sea Grant and the West Coast Inland Navigation District (WCIND).

A preview edition of the guide, published in 1993, experienced broad use by some 3,000 Floridian and visiting boaters. The first edition (1994) incorporated their comments and suggestions on every page, including several additional anchorages, improved "chartlets" and photographs and numerous other revisions.

This "Second Edition" contains many copy changes, both in the introductory section and in the descriptions of a number of the anchorages. It highlights dangers in anchorages where lack of protection from storms, poor holding, obstacles, or other hazards to safe navigation exist. Local ordinances or harbor management rules are noted. The "Shielded Quadrants" wind roses have been realigned to coincide with the "North" arrows on the chartlets. Two new addenda are included, the results of FSG's ongoing research related to this publication and the pilot program of which it is a part:

Addendum A includes 14 "photomaps" produced by the FSG Cartographic Research Laboratory at the University of Florida. They provide a visual representation of bathymetric data derived from on-site diving and DGPS technology. Anchorages for which these data are available are denoted in the indices and text with the "flying bird" logo.

Addendum B presents three tables summarizing the opinions of hundreds of surveyed boaters who used the 47 anchorages included in the "Preview Edition" of the guide, and other anchorage characteristics identified by FSG designed to provide both resident and transient boaters with an easy-to-use site selection guide to these anchorages.

Check the FSG web site at www.flseagrant.org/ANCHOR.HMT for a full description of the anchorage management program. You will find useful and informative links to all aspects of the guide, pilot program and other important resources.

Probably most interesting and pertinent to the cruising boater will be the "Anchorage Inventory" link, which will take you to flseagrant.org/INVENTORY.HTM. This page contains almost all of the anchorage information included in the guide at the link for "Maps and Photos" (listed in order from south to north). At this time the quoted text is from the "First Edition", but the site is continually being updated to reflect the most current information. Available photomaps are linked to the page as ".jpg" files.

At the top of the Anchorage Listing Page (flseagrant.org/MAPS.HTML) before the "Index of Anchorages", is a line that says, "Click here to find out about local restrictions". This link will take you to a page (flseagrant.org/LOCALRESTRICTS.HTML) compiled by the Center for Governmental Responsibility of the University of Florida College of Law (UFLCGR). This is the most current resource for finding out what ordinances you are expected to comply with while cruising in this area! You may still have to take your lawyer along with you to be certain, but if you check this site you will at least have a clue. (Also see "Success Stories" on page 7.)

For those of you who don't have internet capability aboard your boat, it seems that more and more marinas are offering access to the internet for their customers. If you are really dedicated to anchoring out it won't help you much, but if you occasionally tie up to a dock it's a good possibility that you will be able to access the web while you are there.

The future is upon us, in more ways than one - good cruising and good luck!
A Recreational Boating Pilot Program

At this writing, a recreational boating pilot program is under way in Southwest Florida, with the objective of "preserving the ecological and recreational values of Southwest Florida waterways in a manner that maintains the widest possible degree of freedom for users" through "a regional management framework that is non-regulatory in nature and relies heavily upon active participation by boaters."

These quoted words are contained in the founding Memorandum of Agreement with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), which has jurisdiction over the state's submerged lands. It was signed by the Boaters' Action & Information League (BAIL), the Florida Sea Grant College Program (FSG), the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (SWFRPC), and the West Coast Inland Navigation District (WCIND).

The Memorandum established the Southwest Florida Regional Harbor Board (RHB), which grew out of the work of SWFRPC's Anchorage Advisory Committee (AAC), and includes members of the five signatories to the pilot program, as well as one official representative and one civic-minded boater from each of the five waterfront counties in Southwest Florida: Collier, Lee, Charlotte, Sarasota and Manatee. All five counties, as well as most of the waterfront cities and towns in those counties, have signed Memoranda of Agreement with the Harbor Board, and are participating in efforts to achieve its goals. Many of these jurisdictions have suspended or modified enforcement of their restrictive ordinances, primarily restrictions on length of stay.

In general, few anchorages designated in the guide carry restrictions, other than the "Umbrella Standards" promulgated by the RHB, which apply to all anchorages. These standards incorporate federal and state laws concerning navigation, as well as a number of commonly accepted standards of seamanship with which all experienced mariners can agree. (The Umbrella Standards are printed on page 6.)

Several cities with harbors experiencing overcrowding, user conflicts, or environmental damage are contemplating the establishment of harbor management plans - Fort Myers, Fort Myers Beach (Matanzas Pass), Venice, and Sarasota. All but Sarasota are working with the RHB, with an eye to finding solutions that support the objectives of the pilot program. If the program succeeds, the FDEP will consider adopting it statewide.

FSG, with the assistance of the FDEP (especially the Aquatic Preserves field staff), NOAA and WCIND, has produced baseline environmental and sustainable use data by which the impact, if any, of recreational vessel anchorage can be evaluated. This information has been carefully analyzed and is being made available, in separate Sea Grant technical publications, to local and state agencies and planning boards as well as other interested parties. (Printed copies maybe obtained from WCIND, PO Box 1845, Venice, Fl. 34284 - phone (941) 485-9402.)

BAIL, which provided the impetus for the pilot program, carries much of the Harbor Board responsibility, along with Sea Grant, for boater aid and education in Southwest Florida. It has published this guide as well as "Welcome Wallets", which are distributed at many marinas and shoreside establishments and on the water by cooperating authorities. It also maintains contact with boating organizations and other interested parties throughout the region, and seeks feedback and ideas from them. To contact BAIL, call Walter Stilley at (941) 922-5835, write to P.O. Box #15014, Sarasota, Fl. 34277-1014, or eMail bailinc@home.com

(continued on next page)
A Recreational Boating Pilot Program (cont’d.)

We urge all mariners who use these anchorages to exercise great care to avoid any kind of environmental damage. Some are pristine and must be treated extra gently. Others have modest facilities.

Although you normally can anchor anywhere you wish so long as you do not interfere with the navigation of other vessels or damage sensitive bottom habitat, we hope you will enjoy these anchorages, which have been so carefully selected for your particular attention.

Please subscribe to the following standards and live up to them...

THE REGIONAL UMBRELLA

1. All federal and state laws continue to apply to all vessels, including laws concerning overboard discharge of petroleum products, waste, garbage and litter. Local laws regarding nuisance, noise, etc. continue to apply to all persons, including those at anchor.
2. Vessels may not anchor in a manner that:
   a. jeopardizes other vessels at anchor or underway;
   b. might cause damage to other property or persons;
   c. impedes access to docks, slips or public or private property.
3. Areas of seagrass, living coral or rock outcroppings as identified by Florida Sea Grant (FSG), the Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), or the regional National Estuaries Programs cannot be used for anchoring. Special care must be taken to avoid anchoring impacts in Aquatic Preserves.
4. Vessels must be capable of navigating under their own sail or power, or have ground tackle capable of holding the vessel until winds are fair or a tow or repairs can be arranged. A reasonable amount of time must be allowed for such situations.
5. In emergencies, the safety of the crew and the vessel will be of paramount importance until the emergency is past or the vessel has been moved to safety. Each mariner remains responsible for damages caused by his vessel or its wake.

The freedom to anchor and navigate in Florida’s waters depends on YOU!
SUCCESS STORIES

Of the five counties with anchorages in Southwest Florida, all have signed agreements with the Southwest Regional Harbor Board. Only one (Sarasota) has restrictions on length of stay (48 hours), and it has agreed to give the Regional Harbor Board 20 days to resolve any conflicts arising with anchored or moored boats.

Only four of the towns or cities with anchorages have not signed agreements, and three of those have not been approached by the Harbor Board. Marco Island has only recently become incorporated; Palmetto, in Manatee County, and Longboat Key, which stretches through both Manatee and Sarasota counties, have yet to be given presentations. Only the City of Sarasota has made a conscious decision not to come aboard. A few cities have kept their restrictions in effect, but most have made concessions.

Naples no longer has room for anchoring in the city harbor, but offers free use of city moorings on a first-come, first-served basis, and of the city dock and its facilities for 14 days out of 30.

Sanibel will continue to enforce its 48-hour restriction because its only access to the mainland (the causeway) has been threatened many times by boats at anchor that have gone adrift, but it will provide permits for longer stay to vessels that are properly anchored and equipped to dispose of waste according to Federal law.

Cape Coral has extended its length-of-stay ordinance to 15 days in any month, and welcomes boats at Bimini Basin. It plans to install dinghy facilities and other amenities.

Fort Myers used to chase anchored boats away, or require them to dock at marinas. It now welcomes boats at an anchorage between the two spans of the Edison bridge, behind Lofton Island, adjacent to the city marina.

Most recently, Punta Gorda has passed an extension from 24-hours to five days length-of-stay for cruising vessels, and has adopted the State definition of "liveaboard" which should permit even longer stays.

Other cities have length-of-stay restrictions, but they are seldom enforced because they are difficult to interpret and may conflict with State law.

In other words, in part because of the efforts of the Regional Harbor Board and its signatories, Southwest Florida's idyllic cruising grounds now welcome you more than ever.
Comments on our Conventions

All references to distances along and near the Intracoastal Waterway and other inland routes are in statute miles. Distances in the Gulf of Mexico are in nautical miles.

Sheltered quadrants are illustrated for each anchorage, highlighting the best wind protection. In this example, the best protection (indicated by the black shading) is from Southeast through Northwest.

We have made every effort to clarify the relationship of the aerial photographs to the chartlets. Each chartlet includes a “camera view” symbol, placed to indicate the approximate orientation and area of the corresponding photo.

In many cases, a dashed line has been superimposed on the photo which corresponds to the section of the “way in” that lies within the camera view on the chartlet. The anchor symbol indicates the anchorage site, or an arrow points toward it.

The buoy symbol indicates that there are transient moorings available in the anchorage. (Several cities are considering establishing mooring fields as we go to press.)

Not all the anchorages described in this book are suitable for overnight anchoring. Some are little more than day anchorages, or are relatively open roadsteads. Only a few from all quadrants. The where there are serious sun symbol appears potential anchoring problems. Check current weather conditions and forecasts before choosing any anchorage.

This logo alerts you to the availability of a “Photomap” included in Addendum A showing depths, bay bottom type, sea grass beds and hazards. Some photomaps also include soundings along the “way in”.

Aids to navigation, signs, piles and other structures have been identified wherever possible and relevant.

Each Section (I-IV) is marked by a black bar on the edge of the right-hand page (progressing from south to north) for easy “ripping”.
For Special Attention

The chartlets included in this guide are oriented to the “way in” to the anchorage. They are provided to assist boaters in locating anchorages and facilities, and give the boater general knowledge of the area. They are not intended to be used for navigation, nor are any of the comments, directional, safety or anchoring tips meant to be other than advisory in nature.

The mariner must bear all responsibility for seamanship, equipment and the use of proper navigational charts as published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and referred to by number in this guide.

It is strongly recommended that you monitor your depth gauge and maintain a minimum clearance of one foot over any bottom lands or tops of seagrasses, measured from the bottom portion of the keel, propeller or drive unit, whichever is lower.