



the bohting company



Tampa Bay's Hidden Anchorages Guide

The Ultimate Navigator's Guide

We've compiled 25+ years of active knowledge and 5,000+ guest experiences into this guide to Tampa Bay's best-kept anchorages. Each location includes GPS coordinates, approach strategies, seasonal tips, and Captain Jay's Navigation Intelligence—insider wisdom tested by decades on the water.

⚠ Important Safety Notice

These anchorages require intermediate to advanced boating skills. Always check conditions, tides, and weather. Use proper navigation equipment and local knowledge before attempting approaches.

1. Whiskey Key Shallows

- GPS: 27°42'18"N, 82°37'45"W
- Depth: 4–6 ft (MLW)
- Best Tide: Mid-high
- Protection: Southwest winds

Approach Strategy: Enter from Bunces Pass channel, holding 6+ ft until final approach. Look for the dead tree on the eastern shore as a landmark. Anchor just north of the sandbar.

Captain Jay's Tip: "Read the water color—light green means go, dark patches are grass beds. I've been using this spot for 15 years when the bay gets choppy."

2. Mullet Key North Pocket

- GPS: 27°39'42"N, 82°44'28"W
- Depth: 8–12 ft
- Best Tide: Any
- Protection: North & east winds

Approach Strategy: From the ship channel, head northeast toward the beach line. Clear the shallow bar (marked by a stake), then favor the western side.

Seasonal Notes: Reliable year-round. Excellent in summer storms and winter northeasters.

Special Features:

- Beach access
- Grass flat fishing
- Close to Egmont Key

Captain Jay's Tip: "Looks unremarkable on the chart but is perfect for overnights. Position in deeper water near the old pilings."

3. Shell Key Backwater

- GPS: 27°43'15"N, 82°46'12"W
- Depth: 5–8 ft
- Best Tide: High tide entry
- Protection: All except NW

Approach Strategy: Enter via the north cut (visible from Pass-a-Grille). Follow the natural deeper channel curving southeast.

Seasonal Notes: Best in spring–fall. Winter storms shift sandbars—scout first.

Safety Alert: Shallow entrance; never attempt on a falling tide. Max draft: 4 ft.

Captain Jay's Tip: "The backside feels like another world—crystal-clear water and white sand most boaters never see."

4. Egmont Key Northwest Cove

- GPS: 27°36'08"N, 82°45'55"W
- Depth: 12–18 ft
- Best Tide: Any
- Protection: South & southeast

Approach Strategy: Round Egmont from the south, stay deep, and anchor in 14–16 ft avoiding rocks.

Seasonal Notes:

- Winter: best protection during cold fronts
- Summer: prime for diving/snorkeling
- Spring/Fall: most comfortable

Special Features:

- Historic fort ruins
- Great fishing structure
- Severe-weather haven

Captain Jay's Tip: "When the Gulf gets angry, this is sanctuary."

5. Passage Key Hidden Harbor

- **GPS: 27°31'22"N, 82°44'35"W**
- **Depth: 6–10 ft**
- **Best Tide: Mid–high**
- **Protection: North & east**

Approach Strategy: From Anna Maria Sound, head southwest. Anchor behind the sand spit in deeper water.

Seasonal Notes: Great year-round. Winter solitude, summer clear waters.

Special Features:

- **Exceptional shelling**
- **Wildlife viewing**
- **Some of the clearest water in Tampa Bay**

Captain Jay's Tip: "Most miss this, anchoring on the exposed Gulf side. This hidden spot is like a private marina."

6. Bunces Pass Secret Spot

- **GPS: 27°41'55"N, 82°45'08"W**
- **Depth: 8–14 ft**
- **Best Tide: Any**
- **Protection: West & southwest**

Captain Jay's Tip: "In the busiest pass, there's this calm pocket almost everyone skips. The current eddy gives protection and top-notch fishing."

7. Tierra Verde Tucked Bay

- **GPS: 27°40'28"N, 82°42'15"W**
- **Depth: 6–9 ft**
- **Best Tide: Mid–high**
- **Protection: Northwest**

Approach Strategy: From ICW, turn east toward Tierra Verde. Anchor in southern portion for consistency.

Seasonal Notes:

- **Winter: refuge from cold fronts**
- **Summer: walk to restaurants**
- **Fall: most pleasant**

Special Features:

- Walkable to provisions
- Strong protection
- Near Fort De Soto

Captain Jay's Tip: "Deep enough, well-protected, and close enough to kayak to dinner."

8. Fort De Soto Hidden Cove

- GPS: 27°37'45"N, 82°43'02"W
- Depth: 10–15 ft
- Best Tide: Any
- Protection: East & southeast

Approach Strategy: Round Fort De Soto from the north, anchor in 12–14 ft.

Seasonal Notes: Excellent in winter and mild in spring/fall. Summer can get crowded.

Special Features:

- Park access
- Historic fort
- Great sunsets

Captain Jay's Tip: "The real gem is the cove on the park's west side—anchors hold like concrete."

9. Manatee River Secret Bend

- GPS: 27°31'48"N, 82°33'22"W
- Depth: 12–20 ft
- Best Tide: Any
- Protection: Complete

Approach Strategy: Follow channel to marker 47, then hug the eastern shore. Best holding mid-channel.

Seasonal Notes:

- Summer: cool water, storm protection
- Spring/Fall: great fishing
- Winter: watch for manatees

Special Features:

- Total weather protection
- Freshwater mix for cooler temps
- Scenic tree-lined shores

Captain Jay's Tip: "It's like anchoring in a natural harbor—peaceful and secure."

10. Little Manatee Quiet Waters

- GPS: 27°29'15"N, 82°31'05"W
- Depth: 8–12 ft
- Best Tide: Rising tide entry
- Protection: Complete

Approach Strategy: Enter on rising tide, pass the entrance bar, and anchor in the deep pool at first bend.

Seasonal Notes:

- Hurricane season: ultimate protection
- Summer: cool freshwater escape
- Spring: top fishing and wildlife

Safety Alert: Need 3-ft tide minimum for safe entrance.

Special Features:

- Storm shelter
- Great fishing & kayaking
- Unique freshwater/saltwater ecosystem

Captain Jay's Tip: "Deep, protected, and peaceful—if you time the tide right."

About Anchor & Trade

We're based in Greater Tampa Bay, offering premium charters, expert brokerage, and concierge boat buying. Our Boht Captain Network brings decades of local expertise to every navigation and charter.

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Note: Content created in September 2025. Water depth, businesses, restaurants, and market costs/trends change often. Always verify before you go out or purchase. Boating and monetary investments carry risk(s). Consulting a financial or legal advisor is recommended for decisions beyond general guidance.

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