

Heavenly harbors

CHARLOTTE HARBOR, FLORIDA

Indecisive sailors may want to avoid Charlotte Harbor. Twenty miles long and 10 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, it provides cruising



Charlotte Harbor

options galore. Lined with mangrove forests and protected by barrier islands, the harbor offers wide-open sailing areas, limited boat traffic, an abundance of anchorages, and (unusual for some parts of Florida) a lack of bridges. Gasparilla Island, the historic town of Punta Gorda, and Cayo Costa State Park on Pelican Bay are three of the area's cruising hot spots. Charlotte Harbor's sailing season is

Charles Major

Charlotte Harbor: year round

Average wind speed	7 knots
Average air temperature	74°F
Average water temperature (June)	85°F
Sunny days	67%
Rainy days	31%
Monthly slip	\$10-\$15/foot
Annual slip	\$10-\$11/foot
Overnight slip	\$1-\$1.55/foot

year round. Local cruisers and trailersailors are spoiled by water temperatures that top 85 degrees in summer and sea breezes that register 12 to 15 knots.

Once you're out of the harbor, the gulf is your playground. "It's wide open once you get past our red marker number two," says Mike McCartan of the Burnt Store Marina. There's Venice to the north, Naples to the south, and scenic Captiva and Sanibel islands.

