

SOUTHERN[®] BOATING

South Florida Marinas

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Club Hopping – the FCYC Way

Yacht club membership now has even more privileges.
By Marty Richardson

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Teresa Scott MYC Photo

Times are tough and current economic conditions cause mariners to seek ways to “boat smarter,” plan trips to maximize fuel efficiency, gunkhole more often and search for reasonable docking options. Surprisingly, many Florida cruisers have found that yacht club membership can help hold down boating costs.

Here’s how it works. There are 36 Florida yacht clubs that comprise a group known as the Florida Council of Yacht Clubs (FCYC). Any active cruiser who belongs to one of these FCYC member clubs receives the first night dockage free (that’s right, free) at each club, once every 30 days. Tom Smith, 2012 FCYC Secretary and member of Marathon Yacht Club, notes, “The Council is so interested in encouraging our members to visit member clubs that we sponsor an annual contest with awards going to the members who visit the most clubs.”

Members of each club are provided with the FCYC’s Guide to the Clubs by Land and Water in printed and CD formats. This handy and comprehensive reference includes nautical chart reproductions of club locations and approaches by water, nearby anchorages, radio contact information, directions for those arriving by car, distances to shopping and dining establishments, as well as services offered

by each club and hours of operation. FCYC members enjoy dining, social and facilities privileges at any of these clubs; many have swimming pools, health and fitness clubs, tennis courts, golf, loaner bicycles, cable TV hookups, Wi-Fi, fuel and pumpouts. After the first free night of dockage, additional nights can be booked at reduced rates. Charges for dockside power, restaurant, bar and fueling (where available) will be billed to the cruiser's home club. A few clubs have limitations on draft, lengths of boats accommodated, and number of guest slips, so it's important to call the individual club dockmaster in advance for reservations.



The Council was founded in 1961 by 13 yacht clubs on the west coast of Florida, and they celebrated 50 years in operation just last year. The FCYC sponsors interclub cruises for member boats along both Florida coasts and the Bahamas, and organizes professional cruises for members to exciting locations like Monte Carlo, Greece, Denmark, Germany, the Panama Canal and the St. Lawrence Seaway. Active in water-oriented organizations such as the National Boating Federation



and the Florida Ports and Water Resources Association, the Council also supports the interests of its boating members in legislative matters.

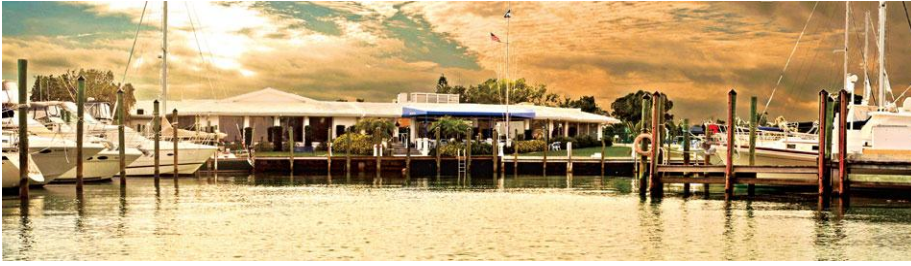
Now you know what a bargain and pleasure FCYC membership can be. So, if you're not already a member of a participating club, join up and put these (and other) member clubs on your cruising plan. Check the FCYC website at floridacouncilofyachtclubs.com for further information.

A Few Noteworthy FCYC Member Clubs:

Marathon, the Heart of the Keys Marathon Yacht Club (MYC), in Marathon on Vaca Key, is one of the most popular clubs among FCYC cruisers, and just celebrated its 60th year in operation. In the heart of the Florida Keys, it's noted for its friendly, casual atmosphere and spectacular sunsets across beautiful Florida Bay.

MYC is famous for the Friday bring-your-own-entrée outdoor cookout, complete with live entertainment. Try the club's Happy Hour Sunday, with free hot dogs (bring a dish to pass) and half-priced drinks, or Tuesday's Blue Plate Specials with an all-you-can-eat ice cream sundae bar. Check out the monthly Raw Bar and Prime Rib nights, or the weekly Wednesday Burgers at the Bar night. Members enjoy many boating rendezvous (Key West and Islamorada are favorite destinations), plus an annual bus trip to February's Miami International Boat Show. The club also sponsors a popular quarterly fishing derby.

MYC is just across the isthmus from Vaca Key's famous Boot Key Harbor mooring field and is convenient to a number of private marinas that offer all the services cruisers may need. While there, keep the family busy at the many area attractions, including Crane Point Museum and Nature Center, and the Turtle Hospital which rescues and rehabilitates sea turtles. Mark your calendar for March 10-11, when the city hosts the annual Marathon Seafood Festival. This family-friendly event has been held for over 30 years and features fresh, locally-caught Keys seafood at amazing prices. Just dock at the MYC, walk across Highway A1A, and you're there.



Bird Key, boating paradise

Bird Key Yacht Club (BKYC), in Sarasota, has an outdoor pool, tennis courts and a fully-equipped health club. The clubhouse sports a new main entrance and lobby and while inside, choose from three dining rooms. I recommend the Compass Bar where you can take part in Wednesday night's Happy Hour accompanied by Pub Fare featuring small plates at small prices. There are a dozen items to choose from, like crispy calamari, Ahi tuna, soft shell jumbo crab, Margarita-grilled flatbread pizza or Black Angus sliders. Don't miss Friday's TGIF halfprice drinks and make sure to try a Manhattan or martini, served in an individual iced mini-carafe. While at BKYC, explore Sarasota's attractions. Two miles west of the club is the luxury shopping district at St. Armand's Circle. Downtown Sarasota is about two miles in the opposite direction, across the Ringling Bridge. Just a cab ride away is the John and Mable Ringling Museum, possibly the Ringling's greatest legacy to the area, with a world-class art collection and of course, the circus exhibit.

All new Isles Yacht Club

Isles Yacht Club (IYC), in Punta Gorda, has a warm and welcoming hospitality committee which delivers homemade cookies to visiting FCYC member boats, along with the offer of a free ride to the grocery or liquor store. Member Ray Starsman, FCYC's 2012 Vice Commodore, notes that the IYC's heated swimming pool, fitness center and tennis courts help mitigate the caloric effects of the Club's renowned clam chowder. Arguably the best in Florida, it's on the menu in their fine dining room or casual Commodore's Grille in their post-Hurricane Charley state-of-the-art clubhouse.

Not far from IYC you can visit Fishermen's Village, a waterfront mall and full-service, 97-slip yacht basin with themed boutiques, day spa and salon, casual dining and entertainment. If you haven't had enough boating, catch a sightseeing or sunset cruise departing from the village docks. Nearby, historic Punta Gorda exemplifies a quaint waterside Florida town, with restored period homes. While there, make sure to visit the many boutiques and restaurants. On the third Thursday of each month, gallery walks are the evening's entertainment, with art exhibits, live music and fine food.

Future issues of Southern Boating will feature additional FCYC member clubs. Wherever you decide to dock, make sure to visit the individual club websites to check monthly calendars for special events and features. Happy club-hopping!