

The ABA Beacon[®]

Publication for American Boating Association Associate Members

Boating Destination

Cruising The Gulf of Mexico & The Gulf Coast - 1st in a Series

by W. Lynn Seldon Jr. - Boating and Travel Writer

Ranging from the southern tip of Florida to the Mexican border, the United States portion of the Gulf Coast and the Gulf of Mexico offers a premier boating experience. From numerous and varied inland waterways to classic open water cruising, the Gulf of Mexico and accompanying coastline is southern cruising at its best.

Though it's hard to come up with an exact figure, there's more than 1,500 miles of coastline between southern Florida and the Rio Grande River marking the border between Texas and Mexico (the Gulf of Mexico is about 1,000 miles wide from Florida to the Texas coast). Much of the coastline features excellent coastline cruising, as well as a wide array of inland boating opportunities.

Along with charts, the best way to stay safe and happy while boating in the Gulf of Mexico is with



The Gulf Shore off St. Petersburg, Florida

Intertec Publishing's *Southern Waterway Guide*. Founded in 1947, the *Waterway Guide* is a comprehensive full-color resource. The fun-to-read guide offers more than 450 pages packed with information on boating from Florida to the Mexico border.

Buying this guide provides the perfect introduction to Gulf Coast boating. Whether you're heading across the Gulf or just around the Big Bend of Florida, it's a great start to a great adventure on and off the water.

The Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) runs for a total of more than 1,000 miles through five states to its terminus at Brownsville, Texas. The minimum depth is stated to be 12 feet, but dredging brings it only to 10 feet (and sometimes less) in some spots. There's a minimum overhead

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ABA Member Benefits

- *The ABA Beacon*[®] Newsletter
- *ABA Online*[™]: www.americanboating.org
- ABA Visa[®] Credit Card: 800-FIRSTUSA
- ABA Marina Alliance Program: www.americanboating.org
- ABA Signature Items Catalog: 800-480-2053
- *Lakeland Boating Magazine* Discount: 800-827-0289, #ZABA
- *Great Lakes Ports O' Call* Cruising Guides: 800-892-9342, #ZABA
- ABA Magazine Discount Program: 800-289-6247
- Avis Auto Rental Discounts: 800-331-1212, AWD# B853101
- Enterprise Rent-A-Car Discounts: 508-432-8846
- Comfort Inn, Comfort Suites, Clarion, Sleep Inn, Quality Inn, MainStay Suites, Rodeway Inn, and Econo Lodge Discounts: 800-258-2847, #00058336
- Cendant Hotel Discounts: #60093:
 - Days Inn, 800-268-2195;
 - Howard Johnson, 800-769-0939;
 - Knights Inn, 800-682-1071;
 - Ramada, 800-462-8035;
 - Travelodge, 800-545-5545;
 - Wingate Inn, 877-202-8814
- ABA Calling Card: 800-657-4711
- ABA Theme Park and Zoo Discounts: 508-432-8846
- Royal Caribbean and Celebrity Cruise Line Discounts: 888-226-2100, #ABA
- Movie Discount Program: 800-565-3712 or www.americanboating.org Reference code CORP073100 and member I.D. #99110303
- Passport Health: 888-499-PASS (7277) I.D. #ABA
- Citizens Against Crime Discounts: 800-466-1010
- ABA Travel Safety and Advisory Pamphlets: 508-432-8846

You can access all of these benefits at www.americanboating.org

New and Improved ABA Onlinesm

Have you recently visited *ABA Onlinesm*, www.americanboating.org? Our website has been completely renovated with a new look and new sections to better serve you. You will still find the same valuable information that you always have, but now you can find even more!

Meet ABA members, the Andersons, in our "Cruising" section. The Andersons, (Mike and Alison) and their three children (Scott, Tyler, and Meghan) are living full-time aboard their 42' sailboat, *Moonraker*. The Andersons send in logs of their experiences, which are posted on the website. Based on their experiences, the Andersons also offer practical advice for other cruisers, do's and don'ts, the joys and heartaches of full-time cruising (and home schooling), as well as advice on how to get started on a cruising trip of your own.

The "Clean Boating" section offers valuable and insightful information on a variety of topics. Read about how the water quality of our waterways is important to our economy, our family's health and safety, our environment, and our future. Learn about the impact of our actions as boaters and how those actions affect the environment. Practical tips



are offered that will minimize your contribution to waterway pollution. Also listed are sources of information and ways that you can get involved to help encourage clean boating and good environmental stewardship. You can pose your questions and comments to "Mr. Clean Boating" in this section of the site as well.

"Boating Safety" addresses the many aspects of being a safe boater. You can read boating safety articles, take a boating safety quiz, get U.S. Coast Guard

information, learn how to file a float plan, read practical safety information regarding children and boating, learn how to buy a properly fitted PFD, and more.

ABA members can now take advantage of discounts at marinas participating in the ABA Marina Alliance Program (MAP). Go to the "Marina Discounts" section of the site for a complete list of participating marinas, the discounts they offer and other services that are available. The discounts vary by marina, and ABA is at work to expand the list of MAP marinas. Read more about this new benefit below. †

Magazine Discount Program Added to Member Benefits

ABA members can now receive guaranteed lowest rates on many of the most popular boating and general interest magazines. Take advantage of savings of up to 50% off magazines such as *Boating*, (regularly \$28, you pay only \$21.97), *Boating World*, (regularly \$18, you pay only \$10), *Power & Motor Yacht*, (regularly \$19.95, you pay only \$9.98), *Sailing*, (regularly \$28, you pay only \$17.64), *Trailer Boats*, (regularly \$17.97, you pay only \$14.97), and many other boating magazines.

Similar discounts can be found on many popular magazines like *Reader's Digest*, (regularly

\$24.76, you pay only \$13.96), *Family Circle*, (regularly \$16.98, you pay only \$11.97), *Car & Driver*, (regularly \$21.94, you pay only \$11.97), *Golf Digest*, (regularly \$27.94, you pay only \$16.77), and *Ladies Home Journal*, (regularly \$16.97, you pay only \$12.00), and 1000 other titles. You can subscribe online through Member Benefits at www.americanboating.org or call our magazine subscription line at 800-289-6247. Plus, for each magazine you subscribe to, you help to support ABA's mission to keep boating growing, safe, clean, affordable, and fun! Place your order today! †

ABA Announces Marina Discounts Benefit

The American Boating Association is proud to introduce its *Marina Alliance Program (MAP)*. ABA members can now take advantage of numerous savings at marinas nationwide! The majority of marinas participating in MAP offer ABA members 25% off transient dockage, a money-saving benefit when you're cruising away from home. Other discounts vary by marina and may include discounts on fuel, service and repair, towing service, pump out, the marina store, and restaurant.

A comprehensive list of participating marinas may be found at *ABA Onlinesm* - www.americanboating.org. In addition to listing

the discounts offered to ABA members, the website provides other pertinent marina information such as address, phone number, e-mail and website address (if applicable), and manager's name. Other information may include GPS coordinates, types of docks, hookup availability, and services offered.

ABA is actively working to expand the marinas participating in MAP, so be sure to check out *ABA Onlinesm* often for an up-to-date list. If your favorite marina is not listed, send ABA (via e-mail at admin@americanboating.org or by phone at 508-432-8846) their name, address, phone number, and contact name and we will invite them to participate in the program. †

Boat Shows

Representative boat shows are listed below. For a full boat show listing, please visit *ABA Online™*, www.americanboating.org.

Nov 2-5, 2000

Sail Expo St. Petersburg, FL
(401) 841-0900 www.sailexpo.com

Nov 4-5, 2000

Florida Sportsman Fishing Show, FL
(813) 839-7696 www.flsportsman.com

Nov 9-12, 2000

Ft. Meyers Boat Show, FL
(954) 570-7785

Nov 16-19, 2000

St. Petersburg Boat Show, FL
(800) 940-7642 www.showmanagement.com

Jan 3-7, 2001

Atlanta Boat Show, GA
(305) 531-8410 www.boatshows.com

Jan 4-7, 2001

International Sportsmen's Exhibition, OR
(360) 693-3700 www.sportsexpos.com

San Diego Boat Show, CA

(858) 274-9924 www.boatshows.com

Jan 6-14, 2001

New York National Boat Show, NY
(212) 922-1212 www.boatshows.com

Portland Boat Show, OR

(503) 246-8291 www.oloughlintradeshows.com

Jan 8-14, 2001

Denver Boat Show, CO
(719) 590-7717

Jan 9-14, 2001

Kansas City Sportshow, MO
(612) 827-5833 www.generalsportshows.com

Jan 10-14, 2001

Nashville Boat & Sports Show, TN
(314) 567-0020 www.boatshows.com

Jan 12-14, 2001

Quad City Boat, Fishing & Vacation Show, IA
(319) 232-0218 www.iowashows.com

Stuart Boat Show, FL

(305) 864-7333

Jan 12-21, 2001

Cincinnati Travel, Sports & Boat Show, OH
(513) 281-0022 www.hartproductions.com

Lake Union Boats Afloat Show, WA

(206) 545-8804 www.yachtworld.com

Seattle International Boat Show, WA

(206) 634-0911 www.seattle-boatshow.com

Jan 17-21, 2001

Denver Sportsmen's Show, CO

(503) 246-8291 www.oloughlintradeshows.com

Philadelphia Boat Show, PA

(610) 449-9910 www.boatshows.com

International Sportsmen's Exposition, CA

(360) 693-3700 www.sportsexpos.com

The Boat Show, MN

(612) 827-5833 www.generalsportshows.com

Jan 18-21, 2001

National Capital Boat Show, VA

(804) 288-5653

Marine Expo, AR

(314) 567-0020 www.boatshows.com

Jan 19-21, 2001

Iowa Boat & Vacation Show, IA

(319) 232-0218 www.iowashows.com

Jan 24-28, 2001

Chicago Boat, RV & Outdoor Show, IL

(312) 946-6262 www.boatshows.com

Washington Sportsmen's Show, WA

(503) 246-8291 www.oloughlintradeshows.com

Jan 27 - Feb 4, 2001

Louisville Sport, Boat RV, & Vacation Show, KY

(502) 244-5660 www.boatsportrv.com

Chesapeake Bay Boat Show, MD

(212) 922-1212 www.boatshows.com

Jan 30 - Feb 4, 2001

Birmingham Sport & Boat Show, AL

(800) 574-9650

Jan 31 - Feb 4, 2001

Int'l Sportsmen's Exposition, CA

(360) 693-3700 www.sportsexpos.com

Pontiac Silverdome Boat, Sport & Fishing Show, MI

(616) 560-1919 www.showspan.com ⚓



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Association

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Don't forget to visit our website at www.americanboating.org to register to receive regular e-mail notification of exclusive ABA members-only prices!

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Cruising The Gulf of Mexico & The Gulf Coast - *continued from page 1*

clearance of 50 feet.

The Florida coastline of the Gulf Coast starts down in the swamps of the Everglades and runs north up through several great boating communities and large cities before hitting the Big Bend and turning westward along the Florida Panhandle. There's about 600 miles of coastline, as well as several nice stretches of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (which starts where the Okeechobee Waterway, a popular cross-Florida route, ends).

Florida's west coast over to Alabama is different from Intracoastal Waterway boating on the east coast. Inland waterways tend to be less stable, in general, with more bends and turns and varying channel depths. Off the coast, though, Gulf of Mexico cruising is very much like open water Atlantic Ocean cruising on the east coast of the Sunshine State, though with more barrier islands and lots of shoals to keep boaters alert.

The southern portion of Florida's Gulf Coast, up through the Dunedin area, is marked by small towns, large cities, and many barrier islands. There are dozens of marinas and anchorages from which to choose all along the way. North of Dunedin and leading up to Carabelle, the Big Bend coastline is low, marshy, and quite undeveloped. Many boaters choose to make the 170-mile open water run from the Tampa Bay area, which is well marked by a string of navigational aids. The Panhandle over to the Louisiana line features deep and uncrowded waters, great beaches, and many excellent marinas.

From Pensacola to the Rio Grande, the GIWW arcs 870 miles. There's a wide variety of inland boating, with the open water of Mobile Bay and Mississippi Sound contrasted by several narrow canals. Of course, actually boating in the Gulf of

Mexico can bring the heavy effects of wind and waves, as well as lots of commercial traffic (vessels are often 1,000 or more feet long and sometimes travel in packs). With the Gulf, it's important to monitor weather and traffic both offshore and inland.

From Pensacola onward, the Gulf coastline is marked by modern southern cities like Mobile,

Biloxi, New Orleans, and Galveston, as well as long stretches where marinas are scarce (watch the fuel tank carefully). After Pensacola, the coasts of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, lead to the long curve of the Texas coastline. Many mariners choose to make the 240-mile open water run to New Orleans, but the inside GIWW route is prettier, easier, safer, and actually shorter (180 miles).

After New Orleans, boaters enter true Cajun country, where radio traffic can include a mix of English, French, and more. The quiet run to Galveston must be planned carefully, with few facilities along the way.

South of Galveston, the stunning Texas coastline offers quiet and inexpensive marinas, nice anchorage opportunities. Outlying islands make the GIWW easy to navigate, with it's end at South Padre Island and Port Isabel actually marking an exotic launching point to further Gulf boating adventures in Mexico.

DETAILS

As mentioned above, the *Southern Waterway Guide* 800-262-1954, www.waterwayguide.com, (regularly \$36.95, but just \$33.26 for ABA members) is a great resource for Gulf of Mexico cruising. They also publish the *Mid-Atlantic Waterway Guide* and the *Northern Waterway Guide*.

Upcoming Issues: More Gulf of Mexico boating coverage. ±

Attention ABA Members!

Get your *Southern Waterway Guide*, *Mid-Atlantic Waterway Guide*, or *Northern Waterway Guide* for only \$33.26. That's a 10% savings* (normally \$36.95)! To receive this discount, phone or fax your order to the following numbers: call 800-262-1954, use promo code UWGABA; fax your order to 800-633-6219. Include the name of the guide, your name, street address, phone number, and credit card number with expiration date. Also include the promo code of UWGABA to receive the discount. Please allow 2 weeks for delivery.

**Discount offer good through 12/31/00.*

Boater's Quiz

Real Numbers

Boaters are used to talking in numbers, whether about speed in knots or distances in nautical miles. But there may be reason to suspect that not all of us are using the lexicon of boating mathematics with equal precision.

How closely can you match the maritime terms or concepts below with their likely meaning, assuming you heard the word at sea and not on land?

- | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. Mile | 3. Liter | 5. Fathom | 7. Foot | 9. Cable length |
| a. 5280' | a. 0.36 USG | a. 8' | a. 12" | a. 600' |
| b. 6072' | b. 0.8 quart | b. 6' | b. 5 toes | b. 340 meters |
| c. 6834' | c. Cubic decimeter | c. 6 yards | c. Bottom of sail | c. 12 fathoms |
| 2. Knot | 4. Meter | 6. Yard | 8. Breeze (in MPH) | 10. Deep |
| a. Nautical mph | a. Parking timer | a. 36" | a. 4-31 | a. Thoughtful |
| b. 23 meters | b. 39.75" | b. Spar | b. 2-12 | b. 3000+ fathoms |
| c. 1.67 on-land mph | c. 39.37" | c. 39.75" | c. 8-25 | c. 1000+ feet |

Key to Answers: 1b; 2a; 3c; 4c; 5b; 6b; 7c; 8a; 9a; 10b