

Why You Should Go to St. Pete for Your Cruising Course . . .

There are not many places to learn to cruise in Florida as interesting and diverse as Tampa Bay and the beautiful waters on the Gulf Coast around and north of St. Petersburg. Here is a description of some of the anchorages and harbors you may visit as you learn the skills, gain confidence, and achieve bareboat cruising certification on a 47' Jeanneau 479 monohull or Fountain Pajot Lucia 40' catamaran – while enjoying the warmth of Florida sunshine!



Your Course Starts and Ends in St. Petersburg

This easy-to-get-to city has fantastic restaurants, art galleries, museums, and shops all on the waterfront. Your package includes accommodations at the [downtown Hampton Inn & Suites](#), recently renovated in art-deco motif, located next to the St. Petersburg Yacht Club. This is where we recommend you stay, and where classroom sessions are held, during the first two days of the [Fast Track to Cruising Course](#), learning the basics on a Colgate 26 before boarding the cruising



yacht Monday morning. Whether in the Fast Track course or starting with [Live Aboard Cruising](#), your yacht will be available to board Monday morning at either the Municipal Marina across the street from the Hampton Inn & Suites or at docks in the Vinoy basin at the [Vinoy Renaissance Hotel](#).

Longboat Key



Longboat Pass, not far from where you pick up the yachts, has an excellent anchorage between Anna Maria Island and Longboat Key. Beer Can Island on the northwest end of Longboat Key is known for its picturesque sand bar, soft white-sand beaches, abundant seashells, and dolphin sightings. Your yacht will be provisioned for breakfasts, lunches and three dinners. Should your instructor suggest dining out at this location, there are several options including low-key Tide Tables Restaurant and Marina on the Intercoastal Waterway, Anna Maria Oyster Bar on the Pier, or

further south at Mar Vista Dockside Restaurant where you can enjoy authentic “old Florida” vibes and a signature cocktail. This is also the location of the Gulf coast’s largest deep-water location at Longboat Key Club Moorings. Near Longboat Key is the home of [Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium](#), dedicated to protecting our waters, reefs and marine life.

Venice Inlet South

The #1 beach in America (named by TripAdvisor’s 2020 Traveler’s Choice Awards™) is at Siesta Key as you sail to Venice. Approaching the Inlet, you will likely spot many marine mammals around North Jetty Beach and manatees that frequent the jetty swim area. According to treasure hunters, Venice’s Caspersen Beach is a good place to find genuine shark teeth because of the deep fossil layer hidden beneath the surface throughout this region of the Gulf. Waterfront restaurants with fabulous sunset views include Sharky’s on the Pier and The Crow’s Nest, where there is also a marina. If there’s time to explore (which with all you need to learn may not be possible), downtown Venice boasts what locals say serves up “the best ice cream ever!” at Venice Avenue Creamery.



De Soto Point



Relaxing and remote, De Soto Point has an excellent anchorage located in peaceful [Fort De Soto Park](#). To get there you’ll sail under the picturesque Sunshine Skyway Bridge, rated #3 of the “Top 10 Bridges” in the world by The Travel Channel, so be ready to take lots of photos! The natural beauty of Fort De Soto, with superb beaches and hiking trails, is where you’ll find historic landmarks – Battery Bigelow and Battery Laidley – and a relaxing tidal pool at North Beach. As you sail to De Soto Point you might have time to stop at nearby Egmont Key, a [National Wildlife Refuge](#)

accessible only by boat, with Civil War ruins of Fort Dade and a more than 160 year-old lighthouse that still guides boat captains to safety.

Little Harbor

Across Tampa Bay is Ruskin's [Resort & Club at Little Harbor](#)—a Caribbean-style island resort with a private beach, full-service marina, and many recreational activities including three heated pools fire pits for sunset viewing. Your instructor may instead head northwest of Little Harbor Marina to Apollo Beach, where you'll find Tampa Electric's [Manatee Viewing Center](#), a protected marine reserve with a boardwalk, 50-foot observation tower, trails, a butterfly garden, and [Circles](#), Tampa's historic, award-winning waterfront restaurant with reserved slips for patrons.



Tierra Verde

Heading west is the exclusive island of Tierra Verde, a celebrated boating community with the new 10-acre PORT 32. It's premier resort-style marina provides exceptional service and many facilities. To enjoy a little relaxation, you might head to Tierra Verde's [Shell Key Preserve](#), dedicated to preserving and protecting sensitive marine habitats. One of the largest undeveloped barrier islands on Florida's Gulf Coast, Shell Key Preserve is accessible by boat, where you can enjoy top-rated seafood at The Island Grille & Raw Bar. Then in pursuit of more ice cream, get a double-dipped treat at Andy's Ice Cream Shop.



Clearwater Beach

World-renowned Clearwater Beach is classified as a [Blue Wave Beach](#) ("clean, healthy and environmentally well managed"). Here you'll find a variety of shops, and many island-inspired restaurants, including the dockside fish shack, Bait House, and popular Frenchy's, "where they serve up their famous fresh-caught grouper sandwich six different ways," according to The Moorings which is based in Clearwater. The [Clearwater Marine Aquarium](#),



houses a special dolphin, rescued animals, stingrays you can feed, and more. If you come back to cruise this area on your own, you may want to spend a day in Tarpon Springs, the "Sponge Capital of the World." This so-different town has a distinctly authentic Greek culture, with many restaurants serving Greek specialties. Its historic brick-paved streets are lined with antique stores, art galleries, and specialty shops.

Gulfport

This laid-back, funky “old Florida town” is great for your last night aboard. South of Treasure Island Causeway and Paradise Island, is the Florida Shell Shop and Sea Dog Brewing Co., where craft beer enthusiasts enjoy locally brewed IPA’s on a bayside patio. You might get more docking practice at Gulfport Municipal Marina, then head to Beach Boulevard to explore eclectic shops, art vendors, and restaurants; or to quaint Pass-A-Grille, with super casual restaurants, cute shops, and a last chance to dip your toes in pristine white-sand under the Florida sun.



The Boats You Learn and Live on During the Course

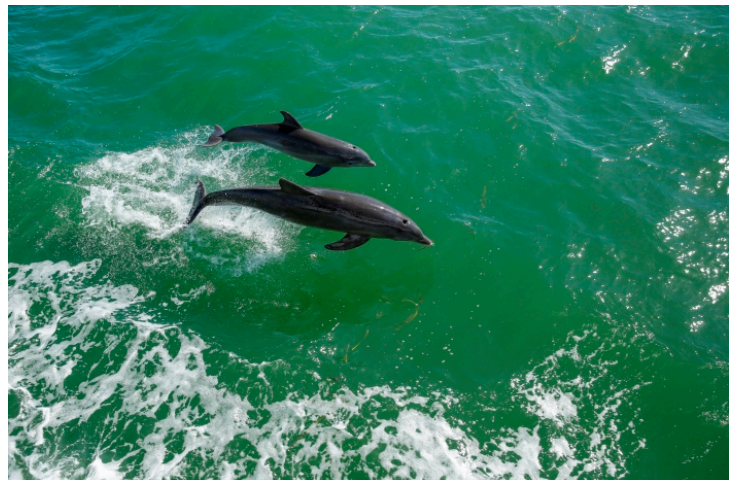


[The Jeanneau 479](#) – A Lively Four Cabin Monohull
Image by Bill Black



[Fontaine Pajot Lucia 40](#) – A Fun 4-Cabin Catamaran

So, What Are You Waiting For?



Incredible coastal and aquatic scenery surrounds this unique adventure, as you pursue US Sailing Bareboat Cruising Certification. Dolphins play in your wake. Curious manatees visit. Exotic shorebirds greet you.

Call 800-221-4326 or 239-454-1700 today to reserve your Fast Track to Cruising or Live Aboard Cruising Course! Email Sail@OffshoreSailing.com.

Location photos courtesy of The Moorings. Sailing shots by our students in cruising courses out of St. Pete on Florida’s Gulf Coast.

