

# The Caloosahatchee River

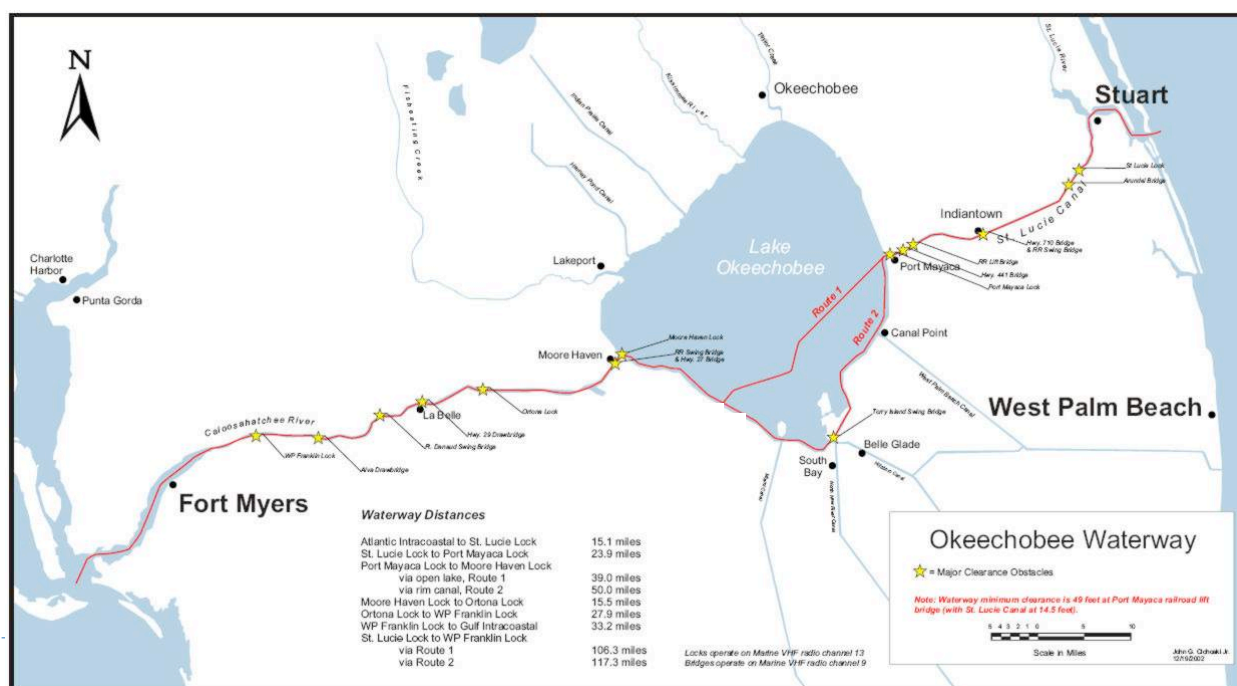
Beautiful Deep Water access connecting the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic Ocean as part of The Okeechobee Waterway.



The **Caloosahatchee River** is a river on the southwest Gulf Coast of Florida in the United States, approximately 75 mi (121 km) long. It drains rural areas on the northern edge of the Everglades northwest of Miami. An important link in the inland waterway system of southern Florida, the river forms a tidal estuary along most of its course and has recently become the subject of efforts to restore and preserve the Everglades.

The 5 mi (8 km) Caloosahatchee Canal connecting Lake Hickpochee to Lake Okeechobee allows continuous navigation from the Caloosahatchee to the Okeechobee Waterway system.

**The Okeechobee Waterway** was built in 1937 by the Army Corps of Engineers after two floods caused by hurricanes destroyed the areas surrounding the lake. A series of 5 locks helps boats through the 152 mile long waterway. The canal depth of the waterway is approx. 8 feet, and the width of the canal varies from 80 to 100 feet.



**Lake Okeechobee** is the second largest fresh water lake in the US. The lake covers over 730 square miles and is connected to both of Florida's coasts via the man made Okeechobee Waterway. The Lake is 33 miles wide from north to south, and 30 miles wide from east to west. Largemouth bass, blue gill, Okeechobee catfish, and black crappie are some of the species of fish that can be found in the Lake. Birds, beautiful scenery and the water all combine to make this a nature lover's paradise, as well as a mecca for boaters.

Many cruisers access the waterway from the ICW through Stuart, shortening their trip to the west coast of Florida and bypassing the Florida Keys.

### **Locks**

Operating hours are from 6 am to 9:30 pm daily, unless otherwise noted in Coast Guard published "Notice to Mariners." Hail locks on Channel 13. Remember to call the Lock master and ask which side to put your fenders on. We found mostly it was starboard side to going East and port side to going West. All of the locks will throw you lines for fore and aft. If possible try not to be the first, or last, boat in the lock. The first and last boats get the most turbulence when the lock is filling or emptying. Move into and out of the locks only on the green light unless the Lock master tells you to move on the yellow. Some of the walls inside the locks are quite dirty and if you have fender covers, and leave them on the fenders, you will need to throw away the covers - take them off before using them in the locks!

Other notes - Have your boat documentation (or registration) number handy as the Lock master will often ask you for your boat name, your name, your boat number, where you came from, and where you are heading. They do this while the lock is filling or emptying and you're trying to handle the line thus you don't have time to go look for your boat number papers. Also, check at the first lock to see if all the locks are open and working. - sometimes a lock can be damaged or down for repair and this closes down the entire passage. Another option is to call ahead by telephone: Corps of Engineers at Clewiston (813) 983-8101, or Jacksonville (904) 791-2539. Call these numbers before planning your trip - the locks often close for a couple of months each year (in the summer) for painting and maintenance. That could ruin your trip if you didn't know they were closed until you got there - it's a long way back at 7 knots !!

There are five locks on the waterway (west to east):

W.P. Franklin Lock	56 x 400 feet	239-694-5451
Ortona Lock	50 x 250 feet	863-675-0616
Moore Haven Lock	50 x 250 feet	863-946-0414
Port Mayaca Lock	56 x 400 feet	561-924-2858
St. Lucie Lock	50 x 250 feet	772-287-2665

### **Distances**

W.P. Franklin Lock to Gulf Intracoastal	33.2 miles
Ortona Lock to W.P. Franklin Lock	27.9 miles
Moore Haven Lock to Ortona Lock	15.5 miles

Port Mayaca Lock to Moore Haven Lock	
Via open lake, route 1	39.0 miles
Via rim canal, route 2	50.0 miles
St. Lucie Lock to Port Mayaca Lock	23.7 miles
Atlantic Intracoastal to St. Lucie Lock	15.1 miles

#### W.P. Franklin Lock

There are docks and dolphins on the East side of the lock on the North side of the river. There is plenty of swinging room in the anchorage and there are picnic tables on shore. This is a nice place to dock or anchor, as are most of the areas adjacent to the locks.

#### Ortona Lock

There are dolphins on both sides of the lock as there are at all of the locks. No problem anchoring here or tying off to the dolphins - many have cleats on them.

#### Moore Haven Lock

There are dolphins and a city dock on the West side of the lock, the city dock looks pretty run down, but if you like to tie up instead of anchoring, there seem to be a few lateral slips for transients. No power or water is available. On the East side of the lock there are two choices. North of the lock past a small fish camp, you can drop an anchor in the river and back down to the east bank of the river where you can put out a small stern anchor just to keep from swinging. South of the lock you will find dolphins to tie to. Either one is a satisfactory solution. It may be easier to drop an anchor than try to lasso a pole.

#### Port Mayaca Lock

On the East side of Lake Okeechobee. There is limited anchorage on the lake side although there are dolphins, this area is prone to strong wind and wave action, If you anchor on the East side of the Lock, it is much more calm.

#### St. Lucie Lock

There are dolphins on both sides of the Lock.

#### **Bridges on the Okeechobee Waterway:**

There are many closed RR bridges across the waterway. Hail these on channel 9 to open. After hours openings require three or four hours notice. There are several fixed bridges with a maximum clearance of 53 to 55 feet; however, there is one lift bridge which has a maximum opening of 49 ft which is the limiting height for masts.

Bridge information is not for navigation and should not take the place of a proper chart and local knowledge. We are not responsible for incorrect or out of date information.

Bridges listed from East to West

Mile 17: SR 717 55' fixed bridge

Mile 28.2: SR 710 54' fixed bridge

Mile 28.2: CSX RR Bridge. CH 9. Opens on demand, 6AM - 10PM. Call 239-656-7800 before 5 pm or 239-656-7838 for special help. CSX Railroad - 813-664-6240

US 98 & 441 53' fixed bridge  
 Mile 37: FEC Lift Bridge opens on demand, maximum open clearance of 49' when lake is at normal level of 14.5'.  
 Torry Island Bridge: SR 71 Mon - Thurs. opens on demand 7AM - 6PM. Closed at night. Fri-Sun opens 7AM - 7PM.  
 Moore Haven SCF RR Bridge Opens on demand from 6AM - 10PM  
 Mile 78.4: US 27 55' bridge  
 LaBelle Bridge, SR 29 Closed 28'. Opens on demand 6AM - 10PM, except between 7-9AM and 4-6PM Mon-Fri.  
 Mile 108: Fort Denaud Bridge Closed 6'. Opens on demand 6AM - 10PM.  
 Mile 116: Alva Bridge Closed 21' Opens on demand 6AM - 10PM.  
 Mile 126.3: Wison Pigott Bridge SR 31 Closed 27'. Opens on demand 6AM - 10PM.  
 Mile 129 Beautiful Island Seminole Gulf RR Bridge, open unless train approaching.  
 Mile 130 Fixed Bridge I-75  
 Mile 134.5 Edison Memorial Bridge 55' fixed bridge  
 Mile 135: Caloosahatchee Bridge US 41. 55' fixed bridge  
 Mile 138.5: Mid Point Bridge 55' fixed bridge  
 Mile 142: Cape Coral 55' fixed bridge

**Public Boat Ramps**

W.P. Franklin Lock & Dam (North) 239-694-8770  
 W.P. Franklin Lock & Dam (South) 239-694-5451  
 W.P. Franklin Visitor Center 239-694-2582  
 Alva Access Area, 17200 Josephine St. on the Caloosahatchee River, Alva.  
 Alva Community Park, 21471 N. River Rd., Alva.  
 Bob Mason or Labelle Lion's Club Park, SR 78 & SR 29, Caloosahatchee River, LaBelle.  
 Belle Hatchee Marina, 121 Riverbend Dr., & Hwy 29 N, LaBelle.  
 Port Labelle Marina  
 Ortona Lock & Dam (North), off SR 80 & SR 78 on the Caloosahatchee River, Ortona. 863-675-0616  
 St. Lucie Visitor Center 772-219-4575

**Fuel Docks:**

G - Gas / D -Diesel / B - Both

Caloosa Isle Marina - G	239-656-1700
Port La Belle - B	863-675-2261
Cape Coral Yacht Basin - B	239-574-0809
Prosperity Pointe Marina - B	239-995-2155
Everglades Adventures RV & Sailing Resort - B	561-924-7832
Ft. Myers Yacht Basin - B	239-334-8271
Indiantown Marina - B	772-597-2455
Marina RV Resort - B	863-946-2255
Port LaBelle - B	863-675-2261
Roland Martin's Marina - B	863-983-3151
Slim's Fish Camp - G	561-996-3844
Sweetwater Landing	239-690-2003
Tarpon Point Marina	239-549-4900
The Landings	239-481-7181

# Bon Voyage!

From your friends at  
River Landings