



Ten Most-Asked Cruiser Questions about St. Augustine

By Barb Hart, SSCA Communications Coordinator & Jane Lunsford, s/v Cinderella

As a cruising organization, SSCA prefers to present the November Gam in a town with an active cruising population, mooring, dock, and anchoring space with access to a dinghy dock. St. Augustine has all of that, plus an historic town with a lot to offer the visiting cruiser.

First, St. Augustine has an active Cruisers' Net with a VHF Net at 8:00am seven days a week on Channel 72 during the cruising season. They also have an active Facebook Group @St. Augustine Cruisers Net (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/CruisersNet>), with over 1700 members who check in and ask and answer questions year-round. These Nets are primarily managed by a group of cruisers who've been active in St. Augustine for a number of years, including the following SSCA members: Michelle Bennett and Tony Boldt, Alex and Lisa Tarlecky, Stew and Barb Hart, Dan and Jaye Lunsford, and Lori and Michael Steinbrunner.

Here are some of the most asked questions from the St. Augustine Cruisers' Net:

1. How's the inlet? As of this writing, it's fine. It was dredged after Hurricane Matthew, and shows 15-20 feet all the way through and the Coast Guard works to make sure the buoys stay on station. Watch the chart and follow the marks. Wait offshore if the winds are 15-20 or more from

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the east with an outgoing tide. If there's a weather event between now and your visit, you may want to call the local Tow BoatUS for an update.

2. When does the Bridge of Lions open? During the week, the bridge opens for boat traffic, *if requested*, on the hour and half hour from 7am to 6pm—except there are NO openings at 8am, 12 noon, and 5pm. On Saturday, Sunday and federal holidays, the bridge opens upon request at 7am to 6pm, on the hour and half hour, INCLUDING 8am, 12 noon, and 5pm. The Bridge of Lions will open upon request, Monday through Sunday, 6pm - 7am. As do all Florida bridges, the Bridge of Lions monitors Channel 09.

3. What's with the current? Slack tide occurs at the Bridge of Lions about 35 minutes after both high and low tide, and it's best to wait for slack current before docking. When going through the bridge, usually those being pushed by the current have the right to go first, but it's nice to confirm with the bridge tender so that all understand your intentions.

4. What about docking? The Municipal Marina has recovered from the two hurricanes. On shore, they've raised the sea wall, repaired the lawn, replaced trees, and added walkways, park benches, and an improved bike rack. On the water, they have had all docks replaced or repaired, run new electrical and fuel lines, repaired the existing dinghy docks and added more. Transient slips and tie-ups to their well-maintained moorings will be available for over 30 SSCA cruisers during the Gam. Note, if there are winds from the north, it's a longer but much calmer dinghy ride from the south field.

5. Can we anchor in St. Augustine? Yes. Transient cruisers are welcome to anchor north or south of the Municipal Marina mooring fields and on the east side of the river, just north of the Bridge of Lions. You must anchor at least 100 feet from the established mooring field. The Municipal Marina allows those on anchored vessels to use the dinghy docks and marina facilities for a daily fee.

6. Where can I get marine supplies? There is a West Marine in St. Augustine, 1.8 miles from the Municipal Marina and the famous Sailors' Exchange with used boat parts is just 1 mile from the Marina. First Mate Yacht Services is located 2.3 miles north of the Municipal Marina at Camachee Marina near Vilano Bridge and will deliver supplies to the Municipal Marina. In addition, St. Augustine has diesel and refrigeration mechanics, riggers, and outboard mechanics. Most will require the use of an OPC (Other Person's Car). Some services will work on your boat on the dock at any of the marinas.

7. How about groceries and a pharmacy? While St. Augustine is a charming town, generally a car ride (Uber, taxi, or OPC) is required for major provisioning. There is a Publix with a pharmacy available near the dinghy dock on Vilano, north of the inlet on the ICW. Heading south on Route One, there's a Winn Dixie store in the same shopping plaza as West Marine while Target, Home Depot, Publix, CVS, Walgreens,

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Walmart and other shops can be found farther south on One about 2.5 to 3.5 miles from the Municipal Marina. All of these are accessible by the Sunshine Bus Blue Line, which runs every two hours Monday-Saturday, and picks up about five blocks inland from the Municipal Marina.

8. Is fresh produce available? There is an excellent farmers market every Saturday from 8:30 to 12:30 at The Amp over on Anastasia Island. It's a longish walk, but the local Sunshine Bus does have a route that runs by the market. Just about a half mile south of King Street on Route One, there is a local produce stand that's open until early afternoon, Monday-Saturday.

9. Where's the nearest beach? That would be back at Vilano, the fixed bridge north of the inlet. The city turned the former bridge into a recreation and fishing pier with a dinghy dock where we can tie up for up to four hours while cruisers enjoy the beach and beach bars.

10. What can we do in town? St. Augustine is a vibrant tourist center, and the fun begins right next to the Municipal Marina with an 18-hole mini-golf course, advertised as being "Florida's Oldest Mini-Golf". From the Alligator Farm and Lighthouse on Anastasia Island, to the federal park Castillo San Marco, Ripley's Believe It or Not, and a myriad of touristy and historical sites in the city proper, St. Augustine has a lot to offer everyone. In addition, there's an active restaurant and music community with events and performances nightly. Most of the returning cruisers have a few favorite places or musicians they follow. There are local event guides online as well as weekly information on the St. Augustine Cruisers' Net Facebook Group.



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