



Cruising South: 5 Must-See Stops Along the Intracoastal Waterway

As the days grow shorter and the temperatures drop, boaters across the East Coast set their sights on a timeless tradition — heading south along the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) for the winter.

Whether you're a seasoned cruiser or making your first voyage down the "Snowbird Highway," the journey offers incredible scenery, charming towns, and unforgettable experiences. Before hitting these **five standouts stops**, make sure to make a quick stop in North Carolina at [Coinjock Marina and Restaurant](#). It's the perfect spot to fuel up- or even have a hearty steak- before continuing your adventures. Here are those standout spots, plus few tips and "don't miss" moments for your trip.



Beaufort, North Carolina – Small Town Charm with Nautical Soul



Often called the "Coolest Small Town in America," Beaufort is a true gem. Its historic waterfront is lined with marinas, seafood restaurants, and boutique shops.

Don't miss: The wild horses grazing across Taylor's Creek on Carrot Island, best viewed from your deck at sunset.

Boater tip: Dock at [Beaufort Docks Marina](#) for easy walking access to town and excellent shore power service.



Charleston, South Carolina – Southern Hospitality at Its Best

A blend of antebellum elegance and vibrant coastal life, Charleston is a must-stop on any ICW route.

Don't miss: A stroll down Rainbow Row, a meal of shrimp and grits at [Fleet Landing](#), and sunset drinks at [The Vendue Rooftop Bar](#).

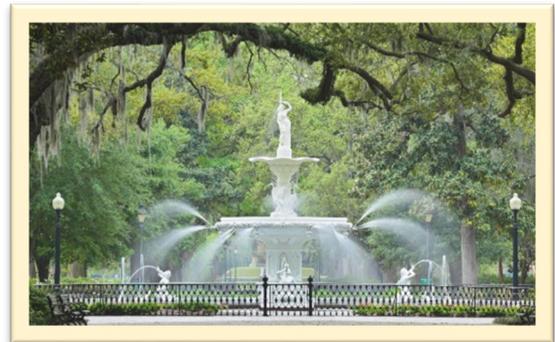
Boater tip: [Charleston City Marina's](#) "MegaDock" welcomes yachts of all sizes and offers courtesy transportation into the historic district.

Savannah, Georgia – Riverfront Magic

Savannah's historic district is dripping with Southern charm — moss-draped oaks, cobblestone streets, and centuries-old architecture.

Don't miss: A walk through Forsyth Park, and if time allows, a spooky after-dark ghost tour through the historic homes.

Boater tip: Dock at [Isle of Hope Marina](#) — peaceful, secure, and just a quick Uber to downtown Savannah.



St. Augustine, Florida – The Nation's Oldest City

Founded in 1565, St. Augustine offers a rare blend of history, coastal beauty, and marina-side fun.

Don't miss: Exploring Castillo de San Marcos, the Spanish fort overlooking the harbor, and sampling local spirits at [St. Augustine Distillery](#).

Boater tip: [Camachee Cove Yacht Harbor](#) is a boater favorite — full-service with on-site restaurants and easy access to town by dinghy or bike.

Stuart, Florida – The Sailfish Capital of the World

By the time you reach Stuart, you'll be fully immersed in tropical breezes and turquoise waters. It's a fitting reward after your ICW adventure.

Don't miss: Waterfront dining at [Sailor's Return](#) and exploring nearby sandbars by dinghy.

Boater tip: [Sunset Bay Marina](#) is perfectly located near downtown and offers transient slips, mooring balls, and an active liveaboard community.



Bonus Tips for the Voyage

Plan your tides: Some sections, especially in Georgia, can be shallow at low tide — time your travel accordingly.

Mind the bridges: Know your mast height and check bridge opening schedules in advance.

Fuel smart: Marinas can vary in price — use apps like [Dockwa](#) or [ActiveCaptain](#) to find the best deals and plan ahead.

Document the trip: Keep a logbook or photo journal — your southbound ICW cruise is a memory worth preserving.

Smooth Sailing Ahead

Whether your destination is the Florida Keys, the Bahamas, or just warmer waters for the season, the ICW offers more than a route — it's a rite of passage for cruisers. With a bit of planning, a sense of adventure, and maybe a freshly refinanced yacht loan, your journey south will be as smooth as a calm morning tide.

Fair winds and following seas from the Sterling Acceptance Team — helping you chart the course to your next adventure.

