

We anchor a lot. The big difference between anchoring on the East Coast and Southern California is the weather. Southern California has predictable prevailing winds from the northwest with occasional winter storms from the southeast or fall Santa Ana's from the northeast. On the East Coast the low-pressure cells move east from the Great Plains every few days causing the wind to clock around the compass all the time. It does settle down a little in summer when the low-pressure cells pass less frequently and the prevailing southeast winds take over but then one also has to keep an eye out for hurricanes in the summer.

Fortunately, the East Coast has some great anchorages that are unlike anything that exists in Southern California. The difference is these anchorages provide 360-degree wind protection. I will describe a few of them here.

Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway

This is a 1,000-mile waterway stretching from Norfolk, VA to Plantation Key, FL. With few exceptions it is completely sheltered, and a boat can simply pull off the waterway, where it is deep enough, and anchor. It is not what I would call a holiday since there is a lot of vessel traffic, but it is doable. Fortunately, along the waterway are several side routes that are more sheltered and interesting.

Traveling from south to north below are some of our favorite 360 degree protected East Coast anchorages. Another feature that all these anchorages have is good internet data service which is important to have for many reasons including watching the weather.

Cape Lookout Bight, North Carolina

Cape Lookout juts far out from the coast of North Carolina into the Atlantic Ocean and on offshore passages it provides a convenient place to stop and rest. It is completely surrounded by a sandy barrier island. Since it is out in the ocean it can be windy at times but between blows it is very pleasant. There is no "civilization" except the National Park Service, Cape Lookout National Seashore, maintains a visitor center at the lighthouse. Inside the anchorage we see dolphin, turtles, fish and birds. It is a wonderful place to spend a few days in any weather. We have experienced blows exceeding 35 knots and felt very secure.

Ocracoke, North Carolina

Silver Lake anchorage is at the heart of Ocracoke Island. This beautiful island in the Outer Banks is reached only by boat. While the island itself is low and offers little wind protection the water remains calm inside the anchorage. Another great feature of Ocracoke is the laid-back town. Imagine a couple of beach bars, a seafood restaurant or two, one grocery store, and folk or bluegrass music and you are imagining Ocracoke. It is restful, fun, and when we are at anchor in Silver Lake we are completely stress free. At least in these times we are. Many years ago Edward "Blackbeard" Teach and his band of pirates used Ocracoke as a base of operations. Blackbeard met his demise near the inlet of Silver Lake.

The only downside of Silver Lake is that it can be crowded during the summer. Especially the first weekend in June when the Ocracoke Music Festival takes place.

Chesapeake Bay

While Chesapeake Bay is not an anchorage, it is completely protected and there are many branches and tributaries that offer peaceful quiet places to anchor. I'll not describe all of our favorites but there are many.

Northport Bay, New York

We have weathered a tropic storm here. It is a large Bay but completely surrounded by land. I know of others who have holed up in Oyster Bay, a few miles away, to ride out a hurricane. It is a little shallower than Northport which makes it a poor choice for our deep draft.

Block Island, Rhode Island

The Great Salt Pond is a large and completely protected anchorage. The ample fetch causes some chop on windy days, but it is never too bad. There is room for hundreds of boats to anchor. Some of the anchorage is consumed by rental moorings and it is hoped that they don't add any more. Very large yachts anchor in The Great Salt Pond. There are a couple of water taxi services. In the summer trash and pump-out boats circulate, and coffee, donut and other enterprising vendors are heard and seen hawking their offerings as they cruise around the anchorage in small boats. Block Island is a resort and very different from Ocracoke. It has expensive restaurants, expensive shops, huge summer homes, and one is far more likely to hear hard rock or classical music than folk and bluegrass at Ocracoke. Still, we always enjoy our time at Block Island and in contrast

to Ocracoke where it takes only a one hour golf cart rental to see the entire island, Block can take a couple of days to explore.

I know of a competent cruiser who chose The Great Salt Pond to ride out a hurricane.

New Bedford, Massachusetts

New Bedford has a hurricane barrier across its entrance so if you can find a place to park it would be safe.

Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts

Behind Vineyard Haven is Lagoon Pond, a large basin with plenty of room to anchor in adequate depth. The only catch is you have to get the bascule bridge to open unless you can get under 15 foot vertical clearance.

Cuttyhunk Pond, Massachusetts

Cuttyhunk Island is another place we will not be anchoring Congrio. It is full of moorings and the few placed open for anchoring are too shallow for us.

Onset, Massachusetts

Located at the southern end of the Cape Cod Canal, Onset is a very protected anchorage in any weather condition. The town is small but interesting and has most everything available including excellent lobster rolls. For us it is a place to wait for favorable current in the canal and a good weather window when traveling north or south.

Seal Bay, Maine

There are many great anchorages throughout the state of Maine, but Seal Bay located on the eastern side of Vinalhaven Island is one of our favorites in bad weather. We have waited at Seal Bay for days for the weather to calm down. There are no services, only a few homes but it is beautiful and now and then an eagle will pass us by. There used to be a lot of tasty mussels but that is another story.

One thing that must be in mind about Maine is the lobster trap floats that are everywhere. There are many "hurricane holes" that appear on a chart to be ideal but we have explored many of them and found them full of lobster traps and moorings. Keep that on mind.

Smith Cove, Maine

At the northern end of Penobscot Bay next to the town of Castine is Smith Cove. It is another of our go to places to wait out bad weather. While not as small as some hurricane holes we would stay here during a hurricane because of the very few lobster traps around and the high bluffs surrounding the Cove. Another great feature of Smith Cove is that it is near Castine which, while small, is a favorite town for us to visit. A place we never miss is the student store at the Maine Maritime Academy. We carry on board Congrio many textbooks on subjects such as weather, electricity, diesel technology, and seamanship that were purchased at the Academy bookstore.