THE HEART OF FORT LAUDERDALE: 17TH STREET YACHT BASIN

by **Lauren Beck**

Fort Lauderdale is often heralded as the Venice of America for its 300 miles of winding waterways. It's a combination of natural beauty, ample water for exploration, and the concentration of yacht services that make it a vital superyacht destination.

Perhaps there is no more iconic sight than gateway to the city, the SE 17th Street Causeway Bridge – and just north of it is the 17th Street Yacht Basin, opposite Port Everglades on the Intracoastal Waterway's west side. It's the closest marina to the inlet, easing ocean access for yachts on the move. It's convenient when timing is crucial – the SE 17th Street Causeway Bridge, with its 55-foot clearance, is the only bridge between the marina and the ocean, and with opening times on the half-hour, boats can be off the dock and out to sea in minutes.



850-foot face dock

The 17th Street Yacht Basin marina can accommodate some of the largest yachts in the world along its impressive 850-foot face dock.

"We could actually take Jeff Bezos's new boat – which everybody says can't go anywhere but the port – on the one face dock," said Kevin Quirk of US Marina Group, the marina's current operator.

Quirk has worked at the marina in its various iterations for the past 30 years. It was opened in the spring of 1980 as Portside Marina, a Marriott property. The Blackstone Group then purchased it in 2006. Quirk previously worked for Blackstone, which also owned Pier Sixty-Six and Bahia Mar Marina, as VP of Operations for Marinas. In 2018, Blackstone sold the marina to Brookfield Asset Management, and the property was renamed 17th Street Yacht Basin.

Quirk and business partner Jim Bronstien at US Marina Group have held the marina management contract since 2018, with Hilton managing the adjoining Hilton Fort Lauderdale Marina hotel.

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Upgraded facilities

Since the US Marina Group began managing the property, it has upgraded the facilities; the latest improvement was the new fixed concrete face dock in November 2023. The inner basin has 33 slips and can accommodate vessels up to 70 feet, while the 850-foot face dock can comfortably hold the largest superyachts with room to spare. The face dock offers the deepest draft at 17 feet (MLW) inside the bridge.

Marina amenities include fuel bunkering, WiFi, 600-amp and 480-volt electric power with direct feeds on the face dock, and 50 or 100 amps available at each interior slip. The inner basin is also a protected hurricane hole.

Marina guests are afforded access to the Hilton Fort Lauderdale Marina hotel amenities just steps from the marina. There are plenty of entertainment options at the hotel, including Olive & Sea, a brand-new Mediterranean rooftop restaurant on the Intracoastal that offers a fantastic view. Other hotel amenities to check out include lobby lounge Dockside Provisions for daily coffee and snacks, plus a pool and fitness center. On-site parking is also available for marina guests.

The 17th Street Yacht Basin also is positioned to make hitting the town simple, with hotspots Fort Lauderdale Beach and Las Olas just minutes away by car. Proximity to 17th Street makes provisioning a snap, as most superyacht services are easily reachable along the street or within a short drive.

The marina is currently working toward becoming a marine foreign trade zone (FTZ) in Fort Lauderdale, which helps to ease duty and taxes for imported boats and foreign-flagged vessels within the zone. "It will be the deepest FTZ slip available inside the bridge, which is huge," Quirk said.

US Marina Group also manages three additional Florida marinas: Hutchinson Island Marina in Stuart, Marina Palms Yacht Club in North Miami Beach, and River Cove Marina in Miami. Outside of the U.S., the group manages Buenaventura Marina and Dry Stack in Rio Hato, Panama, and Marigot Bay Yacht Haven in St. Lucia.

For more information, visit 17streetyachtbasin.com and usmarinagroup.com.