

Diving Florida's shipwrecks

From Pensacola to the Florida Keys, the Sunshine State offers divers several historic sites that provide a home for all kinds of marine life.

IF YOU GO

Some wrecks are in shallow water and can be viewed by snorkeling. But if you intend to dive to them, here is what you should know.

SCUBA WRECK DIVING

It's a water sport, but scuba diving is risky, and you must be formally trained to do it. If you intend to dive inside a wreck, you must have an advanced certification beyond open water certification.

OPEN WATER DIVER CERTIFICATION

Required for people 15 or older (those ages 10 to 14 take different training for a junior certification).

PHYSICAL CONDITION

Exam by a physician is required.

SWIMMING ABILITY

You need not be an expert, but good basic skills are required.

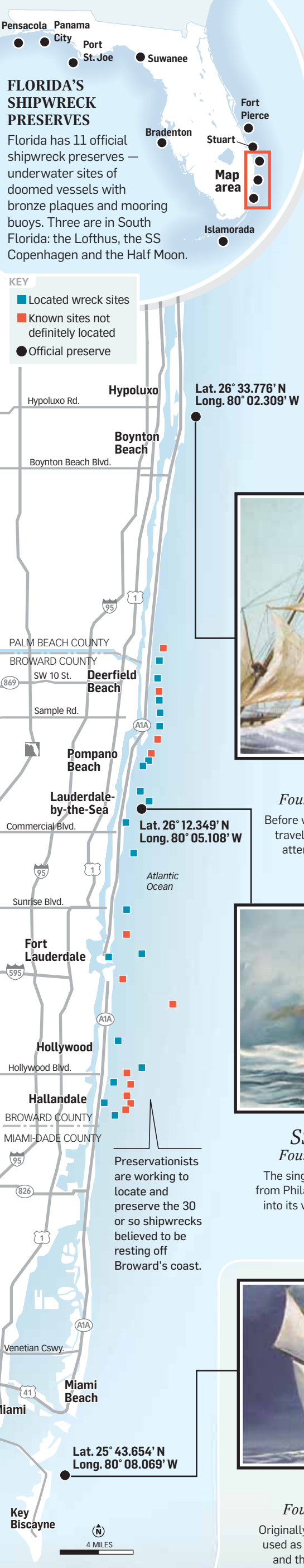
EQUIPMENT YOU WILL NEED

Besides a boat to get you to the sites, these are the basics, and some can be rented.



ALSO REMEMBER

- Do not anchor your boat on the site; tie your boat only to mooring buoys.
- Display a "diver down" flag.
- Florida laws forbid the disturbance, excavation or removal of artifacts.
- Do not disturb or harvest marine life.
- Photography is allowed.



LOFTHUS

Found in 15 to 20 feet of water

Before wrecking in 1898, the sailing vessel traveled the world as a merchant ship, attempting to avoid pirates with her painted-on gunports.



SS COPENHAGEN

Found in 16 to 30 feet of water

The single crew steamer, transporting coal from Philadelphia to Havana, crashed six days into its voyage on an offshore reef in 1900.



HALF MOON

Found in 8 to 10 feet of water

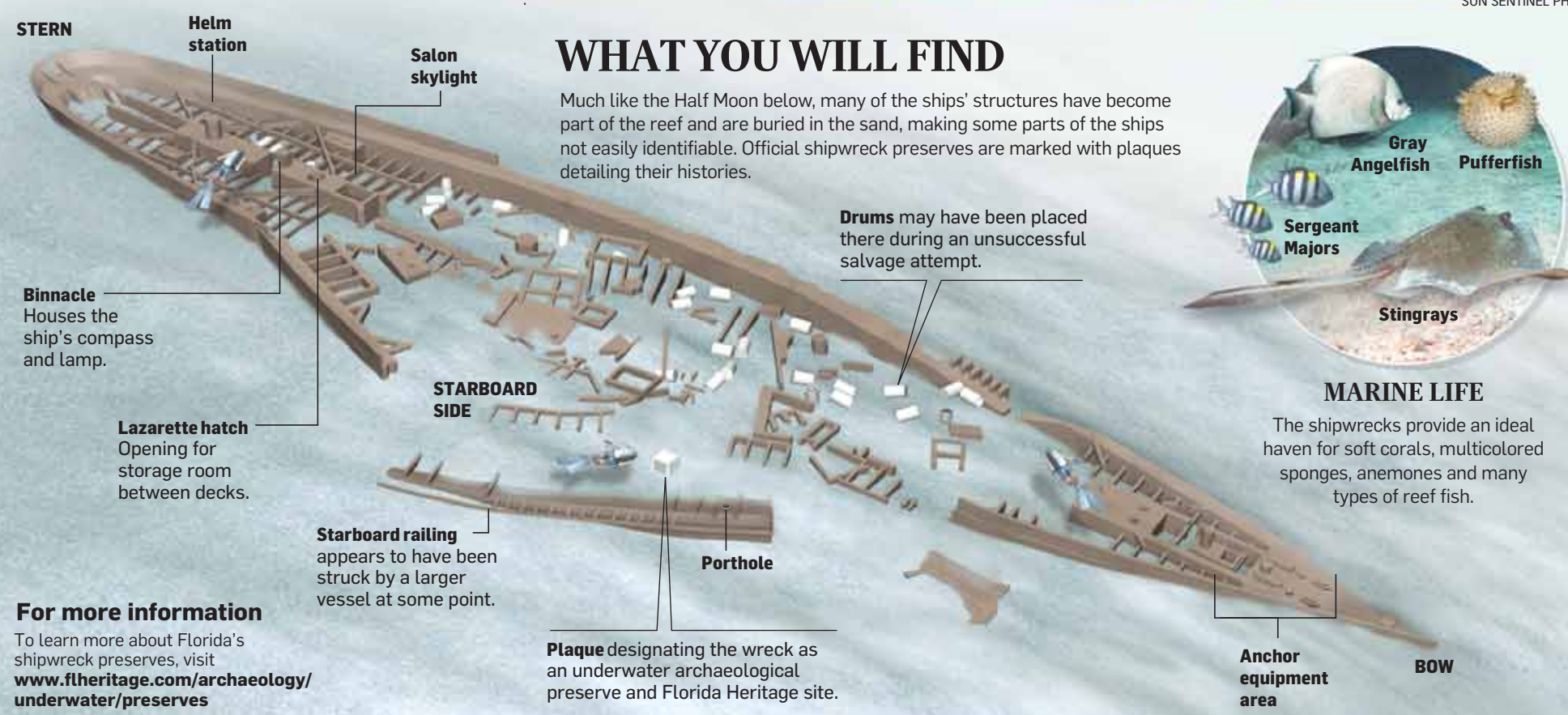
Originally named Germania, the sailboat was used as a floating restaurant, fishing barge, and then home to a family when it sank during a severe storm in 1930.



SUN SENTINEL PHOTO

WHAT YOU WILL FIND

Much like the Half Moon below, many of the ships' structures have become part of the reef and are buried in the sand, making some parts of the ships not easily identifiable. Official shipwreck preserves are marked with plaques detailing their histories.



MARINE LIFE

The shipwrecks provide an ideal haven for soft corals, multicolored sponges, anemones and many types of reef fish.

For more information
To learn more about Florida's shipwreck preserves, visit www.flheritage.com/archaeology/underwater/preserves

Plaque designating the wreck as an underwater archaeological preserve and Florida Heritage site.