You’ve finally purchased the boat you’ve always wanted and foresee many years of enjoyment with your family and friends on the water. With this purchase, however, comes the responsibility for its care. When you are not using your vessel, you will have to think about how to store it. The two most popular kinds of boat storage are wet slip storage and dry slip storage. Wet slip storage involves leaving your boat in a water slip covered or uncovered during the off-season or whenever you are not using it. If you opt for dry slip or dry stack storage your boat will be stored out of the water on vertical stacked racks, either indoors or outdoors. Your boat is lifted with a crane from the water to the rack and vice versa. Storage is vertical and usually several feet off the ground.

Now the decision is yours. Which option do you choose? Before making your decision be sure to weigh the pros and cons of both wet and dry slip storage.

**THE PROS AND CONS OF WET SLIP STORAGE**

**PROS:**

**QUICK ACCESS TO AND** **MORE TIME ON THE WATER**. If you can live aboard your boat or like to take frequent and spontaneous trips, wet slip storage is the best option. Since your vessel is already in the water, you’ll save the time that it takes to unhook and transport it to dock. Hence, you’ll be able to spend as much time as possible on your boat without a wait.

**ELECTRICAL CHARGING**. Wet storage marinas offer electrical power that allows you to keep batteries charged, using a battery keeper.

**COVERAGE OPTION**. Some marinas offer covered storage for smaller boats.

**CONS:**

Although you have more freedom in terms of taking your boat out when you want to, the following are some downsides of storing your boat on the water.

**ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS**. Exposure to salt water, barnacles, seaweed, wind, and sun tend to eat away at the metal and paint on the hull and other areas, causing corrosion, rust, mold, and mildew.

**THEFT AND VANDALISM**. It is difficult to keep your craft safe from damage and theft in an open, outside area that is publicly accessible, especially if it is a large luxury boat with expensive accessories that can readily be tampered with or dismantled.

**MORE TIME SPENT ON MAINTENANCE**. When you opt to store your vessel in a wet slip, the onus is on you for the upkeep. Unless you are paying for a concierge service that can do the cleaning and repair, you will have to do it yourself. Boats that remain on the water are subjected to a higher speed of deterioration, thus need more attention which can be labor intensive. Scrubbing the deck, pumping out waste, painting, waxing, and replacing parts are some of the duties that will keep an owner busy during both the early and post-season.

**THE PROS AND CONS OF DRY SLIP OR DRY STACK STORAGE**

**PROS:**

**CLIMATE-CONTROLLED STORAGE.** The boat is stored in a dry, warm garage-like building to protect from the elements, particularly water damage. After being lifted from the water, the hull is washed with fresh water to clear of any residue. This can keep the exterior’s finish and upholstery looking like new for years, thus increasing its resale value.

**HIGH SURVEILLANCE.** Dry slip storage offers more security from theft and vandalism due to often being an indoor facility with a gated structure and high, vertical stacking.

**KEEP TRACK AND FIX DAMAGES**. Having your boat in a dry slip storage can make it easier for an owner to notice any damages that might otherwise be missed if the boat was in the water. Many dry slip facilities allow the owner on-site to work on repairs to their boat. Some repairs, like replacing a propellor is easier to do in dry storage.

**WINTERIZATION SERVICES.** For a cost you can opt to have a facilities mechanic take care of preparing your boat for the winter months to save you the time and labor. (this usually involves changing anti-freeze, replacing filters and spark plugs, anti-fouling, and detailing)

**CONS:**

Dry slip storage offers much protection, however it is not without its caveats, as boat owners are restricted by certain rules and procedures, as well as having to pay high service fees.

**CALL AHEAD FOR BOAT USE**. If you are looking to take a spontaneous trip, you will be out of luck. You will have to call a few days in advance to get your boat out. There will be waiting time as it is transported to a dock and loaded with supplies.

**COSTLY FEES.** In addition to leasing costs,facilities charge a large sum each time you undock your boat onto the water. They also require fueling at their sites which is often more expensive than local pumps.

**SIZE LIMIT**. Large boats typically over 50 feet high and in excess of 800 lbs. may not fit into the stacks. It is better suited for smaller power boats and is not practical for boats with large masts.

**RISK OF A FALL FROM SUSPENSION.** Although large crafts are carefully secured, the potential for human error is still there. With large, heavy vessels many feet in the air, the impact from a fall can be dangerous and bring costly damage.

Your choice for either wet or dry slip storage should reflect what works best for you. No one storage option is necessarily better than the other. It all depends on your boating habits, needs, size of your vessel, the climate and what is offered in your area. Ask yourself these questions to determine the choice that is best for your situation.

1. Is 24-hour access important to you?
2. Do you regularly hook up to shore power?
3. Where do you live in relation to your boat launch?
4. Do you have a vehicle with towing capabilities?
5. What size is your boat?
6. Do you live in a tropical or seasonal climate?
7. Does your craft have an outboard or inboard engine?
8. How much of your own maintenance are you willing to do?
9. Is it worth your time to pay for concierge services?
10. Do you have space on your property to store your boat?
11. How often do you use your boat?

**WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN CONSIDERING A BOAT STORAGE FACILITY OR MARINA**

Whether you opt for dry or wet slip storage, you should consider the following qualifications when shopping for a place to store your watercraft. While budget is a huge consideration for most of us, it should not be the only determining factor. Facilities with cheaper rates may be easier on your pocket but not necessarily give you the kind of service that is required.

1. Professionalism and helpfulness of staff and management
2. Insurance and Bonding
3. Convenient location and parking
4. Slip amenities such as electrical hook up and wi-fi access
5. Security and cameras
6. Severe weather precautions
7. Size and space of slips and racks
8. Dock utilities
9. Cleanliness
10. Dry boat cleaning services
11. Shelter from wind, waves, and boat traffic

After you have chosen a suitable storage option, make sure your boat is prepared for storage. Always check to see if anything needs fixing by taking your boat out for a final ride. Then give it a good cleaning and waxing, and make sure to protect your boat for the winter if you are going to store it in a wet slip. A sturdy weather-proof cover or shrink wrap is recommended.

Whether fishing, water sports, sunning or living aboard, no doubt you and other boat lovers value the time you spend on the water. In return, you accept the investment of time and money that is necessary to keep your boat safe, clean and in good working condition. Choosing the most suitable storage option for your boat is no different than protecting other assets such as a home or car. You want to enjoy your asset for as long as you can by taking steps to preserve it for as long as you can.