

A close-up photograph of a surgeonfish, likely a species of Surge wrasse, swimming in a coral reef. The fish has a bright blue body with a yellow stripe along its back and a yellow patch on its head. Its eyes are large and yellow with blue rings. The background shows the intricate, branching structure of a coral reef.

# REEF EXPLORER

The  
Florida Keys  
& Key West  
...come as you are®

[fla-keys.com/diving](http://fla-keys.com/diving)



# GULF OF MEXICO

 FT. JEFFERSON NATIONAL MONUMENT AND DRY TORTUGAS  
(70 MILES WEST OF KEY WEST)



Miami



# HOW IT WORKS

Congratulations! You are on your way to becoming a Reef Explorer — enjoying at least one of the unique diving and snorkeling experiences in each region of the Florida Keys: Key Largo, Islamorada, Marathon, Big Pine Key & The Lower Keys and Key West.

Beginners and experienced divers alike can become a Reef Explorer. This Reef Explorer Guide highlights the underwater world of the Florida Keys, including unique coral reefs from Key Largo to Key West. To participate, pursue validation from any dive or snorkel operator in each of the five regions. Upon completion of your last reef exploration, email us at [reefexplorer@fla-keys.com](mailto:reefexplorer@fla-keys.com) to receive an access code for a personalized Keys Reef Explorer poster with your name on it.

Suitable for framing!

For more information, visit [fla-keys.com/diving/reefexplorer](http://fla-keys.com/diving/reefexplorer)

## LEGEND



ARTIFICIAL REEF



CORAL REEF



# TEN KEYMANDMENTS

1. **Plant a coral** (or adopt one of the cute little things, but don't touch them on the reef).
2. **Support the wildlife** (volunteer food, funds or time to a local wild bird center).
3. **Take out the trash** (especially if it's floating in the water).
4. **Capture a lionfish** (any time and any size — we can show you how).
5. **Leave a digital footprint** (share pictures with fans, friends and followers).
6. **Hike it, bike it or hoof it** (it's low on eco-impact and high on fresh tropical air).
7. **Catch dinner** (and release all the fish you know you can't eat).
8. **Use a mooring buoy at dive sites** (save your back and leave the anchor alone).
9. **Conserve vs. consume** (reduce, reuse and recycle even on vacation).
10. **Get off the beaten path** (you can hike, bike, walk, kayak or paddleboard along Keys trails).







# KEY WEST

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

If you've ever wondered why much of the inspiration for Key West's art community comes from the sea, take a look below the surface. Just minutes from Key West Harbor you'll discover a fascinating, multi-hued world of brilliantly colored sea life and living coral. *Western Sambos* is Key West's largest protected coral reef, and holds one of the last remaining stands of living elkhorn coral in the Lower Keys. This popular snorkeling site is part of the *Western Sambo* Ecological Reserve, created in 1997. Here, anemones, starfish, sea cucumbers, crabs, sand dollars and sea urchins hold tight to the spur-and-groove coral formations, while surgeonfish, neon gobies, grunts, damselfish, huge gray angelfish and hogfish meander the shallows. Several other extensive shallow reefs include *Eastern Dry Rocks*, favored for its abundance of corals, gorgonians and tropical fish in depths ranging from 5 to 45 feet.



## CORAL REEFS

WESTERN SAMBOS | EASTERN DRY ROCKS | ROCK KEY | SAND KEY  
WESTERN DRY ROCKS | COTTRELL KEY | DRY TORTUGAS





# KEY LARGO

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

For as long as divers have prowled the seas, Key Largo has prevailed as one of the top dive destinations in the Western Hemisphere. At the center of it all is famed *John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park*, one of the crown jewels of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. Established in 1963, these 2,900 square nautical miles of protected waters harbor the nation's only living coral reef. *Molasses Reef*, the world's most popular dive site, is revered for its consistently clear water, massive brain coral, hordes of tropical fish and easy access. Key Largo is also the final resting place of the 510-foot *U.S.S. Spiegel Grove*, one of the largest wrecks in U.S. divisible waters. Of course, no dive would be complete without being welcomed by the eternally outstretched arms of the submerged *Statue of Christ of the Abyss* – a Key Largo icon.



## CORAL REEFS

CARYSFORT | ELBOW | DRY ROCKS | GRECIAN ROCKS  
FRENCH | MOLASSES

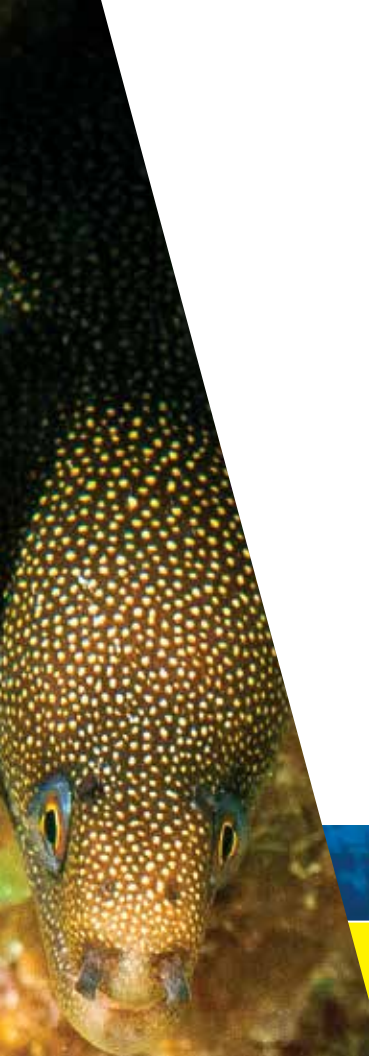




# ISLAMORADA



*Hen & Chickens? Pickles Reef?* While Islamorada might not sound like a serious dive destination, slip below the surface and behold a strange and wonder-filled world rich with diversity and teeming with sea life. Islamorada's underwater ecosystem includes nine reefs in all, each sporting predominantly different corals and sea creatures. With its broad coral ledge running north to south, *Davis Reef* is admired for its incredible concentrations of grunts and snapper, along with an abundance of large grouper and curious moray eels that glide along the cliffs and canyons. On the south side of *Crocker Reef* is *Crocker Wall*, a 450-foot sea slope boasting rare black coral, spur and groove formations, small canyons and mounding coral heads in 35 to 110 feet of water. Islamorada also boasts a number of unnamed patch reefs, each one home to colorful parrotfish, angelfish, turtles and even reclusive nurse sharks.



# BIG PINE KEY & THE LOWER KEYS



The Lower Keys are the least developed of The Florida Keys and in many ways the most natural. Located about five nautical miles offshore sits famed Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary, home to more varieties of tropical marine species than perhaps anywhere else in the hemisphere. Long recognized as one of the premiere dive sites of the Florida Keys reef tract, *Looe Key Reef* is home to more than 150 species of fish in waters sloping from 20 to 40 feet deep. Expect to see yellowtail, angelfish, parrotfish, sergeant majors, barracuda and moray eels and occasionally sharks and rays. More than 50 species of coral are present here, including staghorn, elkhorn, star, brain and fire corals. A little further out in 4- to 90-feet of water is *American Shoals*, favored for its lighthouse structure, beautiful coral, abundant marine life and absence of other divers.



CORAL REEFS

OUTER REEF | AMERICAN SHOALS | LOOE KEY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY





## CORAL REEFS

PICKLES | HEN & CHICKENS | SPANISH PLATE FLEET | CROCKER REEF/WALL  
LITTLE CONCH | CONCH REEF/WALL | ALLIGATOR | DAVIS REEF



# MARATHON



With a name like Marathon, you'd expect the middle of the Keys to offer nonstop diving adventure. You won't be disappointed. Just offshore awaits untold treasures – a marine sanctuary comprised of crystalline waters, an extensive spur-and-groove coral complex and numerous well-developed patch reefs. Marked by a 140-ft. lighted tower in waters ranging from 15- to 60-feet deep, *Sombrero Reef* is one of the most magnificent coral reefs in the Middle Keys. Descend into this watery wilderness and you'll be greeted by brain coral, gorgonians, swaying sea fans and dramatic coral canyons and archways that provide refuge for large schools of fish. *Coffin's Patch*, home to *Pillar Patch*, the only pillar coral left in U.S., is a conglomerate of six distinct patch reefs better suited to snorkeling and novice diving. In short, for divers and snorkelers alike, there's plenty to love about diving in the heart of The Keys.



## CORAL REEFS

YELLOW ROCKS | COFFIN'S PATCH | DELTA SHOALS | SOMBRERO | HERMAN'S HOLE  
SAMATHA'S | KISSING GRUNTS | PORKFISH | HORSESHOE | OLD CANNON



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