

THE Florida Keys & Key West

TRAVEL GUIDE

Sustainable Travel

Protecting the environment
for future generations

**MAKE YOUR
OWN HISTORY**
in The Florida Keys
& Key West

**FISHING
CALENDAR & TIPS**
A fish for every season

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Sombrero Reef Lighthouse

AN OVERVIEW OF The Florida Keys & Key West



Pigeon Key Express on the Old Seven Mile Bridge

There's no place in the world quite like The Florida Keys. In fact, there's not even two places in The Keys that are exactly alike. The Keys are made up of five distinct districts encompassing Key Largo, Islamorada, Marathon, Big Pine Key and Florida's Lower Keys and, of course, Key West...all tied together by a legendary ribbon of road known as US 1, the fabled Overseas Highway.

No matter where you go, you'll be ensconced in an island paradise of epic skies, crystal waters and one-of-a-kind experiences. And with five distinctly different flavors, there's truly something for everyone.

From B&Bs, small inns, and hotels with five stars, to campgrounds with millions of them. Fishing on the flats to diving in the Atlantic. World-class restaurants to laid-back fish shacks. There's art and music and history at every turn. No matter what you're looking for, you'll find it in The Keys.

And here's the best part: Every square-inch of The Florida Keys is part of a 2,900 square-nautical-mile National Marine Sanctuary, which means everything that makes The Keys so special for so many will be preserved forever.

Key Largo

PREPARE FOR DEPARTURE



Fire Coral Cave at Molasses Reef, Key Largo

Situated just south of the hustle, bustle and drama of Miami, Key Largo is the perfect spot to dip your toe in the water for a completely different vibe. It's amazing what a little salt sea air can do to clear your head and calm your soul.

Whether you come to Key Largo to grab a frozen Rum Runner and chill with live music, to snorkel or dive in the pristine waters of America's first underwater park at John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, or to experience the unspoiled wilderness of the Florida Everglades,

Key Largo will satisfy your natural instinct to explore.

Silver screen legend Humphrey Bogart helped put Key Largo on the map in 1948, and today you can ply our waters aboard the actual African Queen from his Oscar-winning 1951 film of the same name. It's a wonderfully fitting way to begin your journey back to a simpler time.

To learn more about Key Largo, visit the Chamber of Commerce at mile marker 106, call 1-800-822-1088, or go to www.fla-keys.com/keylargo





Alligator Reef Lighthouse

Islamorada

IT'S EASY TO GET HOOKED ON THE SPORT FISHING CAPITAL OF THE WORLD



You'll be amazed by what sun and water can do for your attitude. Perched between the Atlantic Ocean on one side and the Gulf of Mexico on the other, Islamorada is known as the Sport Fishing Capital of The World. But there's so much more to the story.

Whether you're stalking a bonefish in the backcountry or enjoying a fresh mahi sandwich at a waterfront café, Islamorada offers a beautifully balanced taste of The Keys. Here, you'll find a vibrant community of anglers, artists, sculptors and chefs living in perfect harmony.

The waters surrounding Islamorada are teeming with marine life, but you can also catch fish on dry land with interactive programs at the Theater of the Sea. And a stop at Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park is certain to be a high point of your visit, as it is the highest elevation in The Florida Keys, a dizzying 18-feet.

To learn more about Islamorada, stop by the Chamber of Commerce at mile marker 87, call 1-800-322-5397, or go to www.fla-keys.com/islamorada

Marathon

FORGING CONNECTIONS FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY



Situated in the center of The Florida Keys, Marathon is best known for the iconic Seven Mile Bridge that served as the linchpin connecting Henry Flagler's Overseas Railroad to the Lower Keys and Key West and formed the basis for today's Overseas Highway.

Wherever you go in Marathon, you'll find ways to connect with your family, with nature, and with a rich, diverse history. Between the Dolphin Research Center, the Turtle Hospital and Aquarium Encounters, you can get up close and personal with dolphins, turtles, and sharks.

Walk, ride a bike or take the train to Pigeon Key to learn about Flagler's railroad, or hike Crane Point Hammock and see how early settlers lived. And no visit is complete without a romp in the surf at Sombrero Beach.

Whether you fly into Marathon for the day to pick up a platter of conch fritters or stay a while at one of our luxury resorts, you can be certain that your visit will stay with you forever.

To learn more about Marathon, drop by the Chamber of Commerce at mile marker 53.5, call 1-800-262-7284, or go to www.fla-keys.com/marathon





Big Pine Key and the Lower Keys

KEEPING IT REAL



Stock Island Marina

With two national wildlife refuges, a national marine sanctuary and miles of unspoiled wilderness, a visit to the Lower Keys is like a journey back in time to when Calusa and Tequesta tribes roamed these lands. Despite more than a century of development in The Keys, the Lower Keys remain largely untouched, surrounded by crystal waters brimming with marine life.

The Lower Keys are home to one of the world's most beautiful beaches at Bahia Honda State Park where you can snorkel straight off the sand. For a deeper dive, explore the artificial

reefs of the Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary.

The Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge is the only place in the world where you can encounter these fragile creatures in the wild. And for a taste of civilization, be sure to visit Stock Island...a working fishing village that's evolved to include a hip artist colony and some of the trendiest resorts in The Keys.

To learn more about Big Pine Key, Stock Island and Florida's Lower Keys, visit the Lower Keys Chamber of Commerce at mile marker 31, call 1-800-872-3722, or go to www.fla-keys.com/lowerkeys

Key West

AN AMAZING STORY WITH AN EPIC ENDING EVERY NIGHT



History. Art. Music. And madness. All in perfect harmony. That's the beauty of Key West. There's simply no place else quite like it. Key West is an island city of palm-lined streets boasting Victorian homes, gingerbread conch houses and mansions listed on the National Register. You'll find cozy B&Bs and lavish five-star resorts. Elegant restaurants and local dives. It's these endless dichotomies that keep everything in balance.

Key West is a study in contrasts. John Audubon and Ernest Hemingway lived here. One had a passion for preservation. The other, an insatiable zest for living. You'll see pirate flags on one corner, and rainbow flags on the next. Because Key West has always been a haven for people who venture out of the mainstream and swim against the tide. The moment you set foot on world famous Duval Street, you'll become a part of this never-ending story.





Key West Lighthouse



It's easy to think of Key West as tin roofs, Key Lime pie and glorious, life-affirming sunsets. But it's also Bahama Village. Historic forts. Galleries. Festivals. Open-air markets. Sidewalk cafes. And legendary bars where you just might catch the next rising star while they're still down to earth.

You won't need a car in Key West. It's easy and fun to tour the city on foot, by bike or by trolley. Mingle with some of the world's most fun-loving characters. Or just sit back

with a frozen cocktail and the closest thing to a Cuban cigar you can get on this side of the Florida Straits.

Key West is unique. And unspoiled. A feast for your heart and your soul. In short, if you're planning to visit Key West, don't be surprised if you never want to go home.

To learn more about Key West, stop by the Chamber of Commerce at 510 Greene Street in Old Town, call 1-800-572-8539, or go to www.fla-keys.com/keywest



A Brief History

OF THE FLORIDA KEYS & KEY WEST



Benwood Wreck, Key Largo

It all starts with the reefs. Everything that makes The Florida Keys & Key West one of the world's most unique and intriguing destinations is a result of the living, breathing coral reefs that form, surround and protect this exotic archipelago. Originally inhabited by native Tequesta and Calusa tribes,



The Keys were claimed by the Spanish during Ponce de León's 1513 expedition. They saw little of value in the stony islands, but they mapped and named The Keys to help their ships navigate The Florida Straits as they carried vast cargoes of gold and silver from the Old World to the new one.



Upper Keys Lime Festival 1953



As fate would have it, the maps weren't always...accurate. And frequent shipwrecks created a lucrative industry for wreckers who amassed untold fortunes rescuing crews and salvaging cargo. For a time, Key West was the richest city in America.

By the mid 1800s, The Keys were home to a thriving cigar industry, attracting skilled cigar workers from Cuba, and adding another chapter to the region's rich cultural story. A great fire in 1886 largely extinguished the cigar industry in Key West, but the Cuban culture left an indelible mark that remains to this day.





Postcard featuring Flagler's Overseas Railroad

It wasn't until industrialist Henry Flagler's Overseas Railroad arrived in 1912 that The Florida Keys began to look like the place we cherish today. Washed away in the devastating Labor Day Hurricane of 1935, the remains of the railroad became The Overseas Highway, and the rest is history.

In 1990, the entire area was named a National Marine Sanctuary, ensuring the protection of North America's only living coral barrier reef for generations to come. From Key Largo to Key West, you'll find artifacts of another era, evolving and adapting like the coral that surrounds us.



Fort Jefferson, Dry Tortugas



The Keys Geology and Ecosystems

LIKE NO PLACE ON EARTH



Windley Key Fossil Reef Geological State Park

The Florida Keys were formed during the Pleistocene age and began as a coral reef. A trip to the old quarry at Windley Key will give a glimpse into the layers of coral that make up The Keys. Key Largo limestone runs from the Upper Keys to the Dry Tortugas and is the bed for a variety of unique and amazing ecosystems.

The reef is where The Keys began and today North America's only living coral barrier reef can be found here. And it's full of life. An endless variety of sea creatures spawn and raise their young in the protection of our reef. Seagrass feeds and shelters

endangered species like manatees and sea turtles. Our flats are like magical little islands that appear at low tide and harbor gamefish like tarpon and bonefish.

Heading to shore, Red, Black and White mangroves not only protect our coast, they provide sanctuary for juvenile fish and invertebrates. From Flamingo to Fort Jefferson, the variety of natural environments and unique plant life is endless. Cypress Domes, Freshwater Marl Prairie, Coastal Lowlands and Hardwood Hammocks give life to Mahogany trees, Lignum Vitae, Gumbo Limbo and the mysterious Ghost Orchid.



National Key Deer Refuge, Big Pine Key

Key Deer can only be found in the Lower Keys, but bring your binoculars and you can find a naturalists' paradise throughout the destination. Roseate Spoonbills, White Pelicans, Ibis and Frigatebirds fill the sky and you won't be disappointed by the abundant

birding opportunities at the Blue Hole or Dagny Johnson State Park.

In essence, The Keys are a lot like they've always been. Not endless gates and manufactured beaches, but a place where animals and people can coexist together in a natural state.





Sustainable Travel

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



Take nothing but pictures. Leave nothing but footprints or bubbles. That is a pretty good way to look at sustainable travel in The Keys. We all want to be able to enjoy our natural resources, but we must understand how fragile these ecosystems are and how we can protect them.

For example, never anchor on a reef. Use a mooring buoy. Reefs are damaged by anchors, by standing on coral or even by using sunscreen. Respect no-motor zones. Our sea turtles and manatees will thank you, because the sea grass gives them food and protection. Never take undersized or out of season fish or lobster. Learn the joy of catch and release so we can fish another day.

You will see wild dolphins and Key Deer but please don't feed them. Let them stay wild. Use alternative energy like riding a bike or paddling a kayak or paddle board. You'll see more wildlife, get some exercise, and reduce your carbon footprint.

Let's do everything we can to keep plastic out of the ocean. Use reusable water bottles and avoid plastic straws. And to get even more out of your visit, try volunteering at places like The Turtle Hospital or the Wild Bird Center. If we respect our environment and do the right thing, our kids will be able to share it with their kids and keep The Keys wild and free for generations to come.



Scan for Voluntourism Opportunities

THE FLORIDA KEYS
National Marine Sanctuary
THE TREASURE OF THE FLORIDA KEYS



Fire Coral Cave at Molasses Reef, Key Largo

The moment you dip your toe into the water, you are in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. That's because 2,900 square-nautical-miles of waters surrounding The Keys are a protected national treasure. Over 6,000 species of marine life call this sanctuary home, but that's not all. The Sanctuary includes North America's only living coral barrier reef, extensive seagrass beds, and mangrove islands.

The Sanctuary also protects our nation's history. From shipwrecks to archaeological sites, the potential

to learn about nature and history is limitless. The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary is off limits to oil exploration, mining, and large commercial shipping. Anchoring on, touching, or collecting coral is also prohibited. But the Sanctuary isn't a hands-off nature museum. It's meant to be experienced and enjoyed responsibly. Diving, snorkeling, boating, and fishing can be enjoyed in a sustainable way. Just obey the rules and regulations and be enriched by one of the most beautiful, protected, natural areas on the planet.



City of Washington Wreck, Key Largo



National Parks and Preserves

SEE THE WONDERS OF THE WORLD



Fort Jefferson, Dry Tortugas

It's no exaggeration that our national parks are like no place else on earth. A trip to The Keys allows easy access to four national parks that are simply unparalleled. Though vast areas of the parks are extreme wilderness, there are endless trails, boardwalks and access points that will allow adventurers of every skill level to experience these world treasures.

Everglades National Park

There is only one Everglades. This world-renowned park spans 1,509,000 acres. 350 species of birds, 40 species of mammals, 300 species of fish, and 50 species of reptiles call this place home. It is the largest breeding ground for tropical wading birds in North America and the largest mangrove ecosystem in the Western Hemisphere.

Biscayne National Park

Just north of Key Largo, this 207-square-mile park is ninety five percent water, which means it's a diver's paradise. Elliott Key,

a mangrove-fringed island, is mainly made up of fossilized coral reef and is considered to be the first of the true Florida Keys.

Dry Tortugas National Park

Accessible by seaplane or passenger ferry, this legendary park lies sixty-eight miles off Key West and covers 101 square miles of water, flats and islands. It was designed to protect historic Fort Jefferson and the Dry Tortugas Islands. Famous for shipwrecks, sunken treasures and where the infamous Dr. Mudd was imprisoned.

Big Cypress National Preserve

It's hard to imagine a more magical and mysterious place than Big Cypress. Deep within its 729,000 acres of Cypress Domes and Hardwood Hammocks, you may see endangered species like the elusive Florida Panther and encounter rare orchids and air plants. Big Cypress National Preserve is a designated International Dark Sky Site because of its remoteness and lack of development, so it's a mecca for stargazers.

State Parks in The Keys

WHERE NATURE AND HISTORY COEXIST



Indian Key Historic State Park

The Florida Keys are home to ten state parks. Some are famous and some are our best kept secrets. Our parks are a must for history buffs who want to learn the story of Indian Key, once the most populated place in The Keys or to learn about Fort Zachary Taylor and its role in both the Civil and

Spanish American Wars. Nature lovers will need their bird books for places like Dagny Johnson Botanical State Park in Key Largo or Bahia Honda State Park in The Lower Keys. And no trip is complete without checking out John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park in Key Largo, the nation's first underwater park.



A complete list of our State Parks

Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park (MM106)

John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park (MM102.5)

Windley Key Fossil Reef Geological State Park (MM85.5)

Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park

Indian Key Historic State Park

San Pedro Underwater Archaeological Preserve State Park

Long Key State Park (MM67.5)

Curry Hammock State Park (MM56.2)

Bahia Honda State Park (MM36.5)

Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park



Florida Keys Sanctuaries and Animal Rehabilitation Centers

Crocodile Lake National Wildlife Refuge

Laura Quinn Wild Bird Sanctuary (MM93)

Florida Keys Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center (MM92)

Aviary Island Wildlife Refuge

The Turtle Hospital (MM48.5)

Marathon Wild Bird Center at Crane Point Hammock (MM53.5)

The Dolphin Research Center, Marathon (MM59)

Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuge, Big Pine Key (MM30.5)

National Key Deer Refuge (MM30.5)

Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuge

Key West National Wildlife Refuge

Key West Wildlife Center

Key West Tropical Forest & Botanical Garden

Wildlife Sanctuaries

PROVIDING REFUGE FOR ANIMALS AND PEOPLE ALIKE



National Key Deer Refuge, Big Pine Key

Protecting wildlife and providing areas for threatened species to recover is a major priority in The Keys. There are several sanctuaries and refuges where animals like Key Deer, White Heron and the American Crocodile can make a stand. These areas are

accessible but with a priority given to the protection of the creatures that live there. There are also nature rehabilitation centers where sea turtles, dolphins, manatees, and wild birds are nursed back to health by caring volunteers. Visit or volunteer to enrich any trip to The Keys.

Boating

ON THE WATER AND OFF THE CHARTS



With the Atlantic Ocean on one side and the Gulf of Mexico and Florida Bay on the other, The Florida Keys are arguably the boating capital of the world. Boating is literally the key to The Keys, giving everyone equal access to the hidden wonders of this stunning archipelago. Whether you're a seasoned sailor, an old fishing salt, or don't know a bow line from a bowtie, The Keys offer endless opportunities to head out on the water and explore. And with numerous boat ramps, rentals, tours and charters, you'll never run out of ways – or reasons – to leave

the dock. Join a sunset sail, snorkel a coral reef or enjoy a glass bottom boat tour. Or go fishing for everything from behemoth bonefish to mammoth marlin. But boating in The Keys isn't limited to captains of industry. Prefer a more relaxed pace at which to explore the countless bays, cays, coves and channels? There are dozens of kayaking and paddleboarding opportunities throughout The Keys and the Florida Everglades. With 1,700 islands, bustling marinas and waterside restaurants from Key Largo to Key West, you definitely don't want to miss the boat.





Blue Water Fishing

OH, THE STORIES YOU'LL TELL



Offshore fishing in The Florida Keys & Key West is the stuff of legend, of novels and, more than anything, record books. More IGFA records have been set here than anywhere else. In The Keys, Ernest Hemingway, Zane Grey and Thomas McGuane are fishing household names, just a few of the literary giants who've been lured to The Keys' prolific waters. Hemingway, known for his love of big-game fishing, penned some of his greatest works while residing in Key West in the 1930s. *The Old Man and the Sea* is a classic tale of one fisherman's struggle to

land a giant blue marlin from a tiny boat, a story that continues to resonate with those who live to chase these piscatorial leviathans. Today, sailfish, tuna, mahi-mahi, marlin, grouper and wahoo are just some of the deep-water denizens that prowl the nearby Gulf Stream, reefs and wrecks. Keys' charter boat captains are old salts at the techniques and tactics you'll need to hook into these mighty gamefish. The thrill of the fight, the camaraderie of fellow anglers, and the natural allure of the sun and sea make for an unforgettable day on the water. It's really all she wrote.

Backcountry Fishing

DEEP INTO THE SHALLOWS FOR THE THRILL OF A LIFETIME



Whether you call it backcountry, flats or sight fishing, the quest for shallow-water gamesters in The Florida Keys is what separates the men from the boys (and often their spouses). Truth be told, with hundreds of square miles of grass flats, shallow-water banks and undercut mangrove shoreline, fishing The Keys' backcountry and Florida Everglades on a fly rod or light spinning outfit has become a lifelong pursuit for many. No activity defines The Florida Keys outdoor experience quite like

backcountry angling. Requiring eagle eyes, accuracy and a near-obsession for a game of cat and mouse, fishing The Florida Keys backcountry is the holy grail of angling. Of course, if you want to be truly successful at a "grand slam" – landing a bonefish, permit and tarpon all in the same day – be sure to hire a Florida Keys backcountry guide. These professional captains are worth their salt, knowing every flat, every tide and every nuance to help you return to the dock with a smile on your face and unforgettable moments captured on your camera.





Fishing Calendar & Tips

A FISH FOR EVERY SEASON

It's been said that the best time to go fishing is when you can. Here in The Florida Keys, there are certain times of year when you'll have an even better chance of landing a trophy. Because while The Keys are home to some of the world's most sought-after game fish, and you can fish 365 days a year, a little planning will go a long way towards success.

FISHING SEASONS

Winter (December-February): Winter is prime time for sailfish in The Florida Keys. These acrobatic fish are known for their incredible jumps and high-speed runs, making them a favorite among sport fishermen. Winter is also a good time to target other species like kingfish, tuna and wahoo.

Spring (March-May): As the waters begin to warm up, the fishing action heats up as well. Spring is a great time to target tarpon, one of the most challenging and rewarding game fish in The Keys. Bonefish and permit are also active during the spring months.

Summer (June-August): Summer is peak fishing season in The Florida Keys. Mahi-mahi (also known as dolphin fish) are abundant during this time, as are blackfin tuna, snapper and reef fish such as grouper and yellowtail.

Fall (September-November): Fall is another great time to target sailfish, as well as other pelagic species like marlin and swordfish. The cooler temperatures also bring in schools of baitfish, which in turn attract larger predators.

FISHING TIPS

No matter what time of year you plan to fish The Florida Keys & Key West, here are some tips to help you achieve angling fame.

Hire a pro: The waters in The Florida Keys can be tricky to navigate, especially if you're not familiar with the area. Hiring a captain or guide can help you fish the best spots and increase your chances of hooking up.

The right stuff: The type of fish you're targeting will determine the type of equipment you use. Do some research to make sure you have the right rods, reels and tackle for the job.

Be patient: Fishing is a sport that requires patience and persistence. Don't be discouraged if you don't hook anything on your first cast. Stick with it and eventually you'll be doing a jig.

Practice catch & release: The Florida Keys are known for their conservation efforts. Releasing fish unharmed is an important part of sustainable practices. If you do catch a fish that you plan to release, handle it carefully and release it quickly to minimize stress on the fish.

A Breathtaking Experience

FOR EVERY LEVEL



Duane Shipwreck, Key Largo

Beyond its blue skies, clear water and sandy beaches, The Florida Keys are a treasure trove of natural wonders. These enchanted isles boast everything from fishing and boating to sunbathing and, of course, sipping cocktails at sunset. But the real magic of The Keys lies just below the surface. Exploring this undersea world is a must-do for every traveler, whether you're a seasoned diver or a first-time snorkeler. The warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean provide easy access to a vibrant ecosystem of coral reefs,

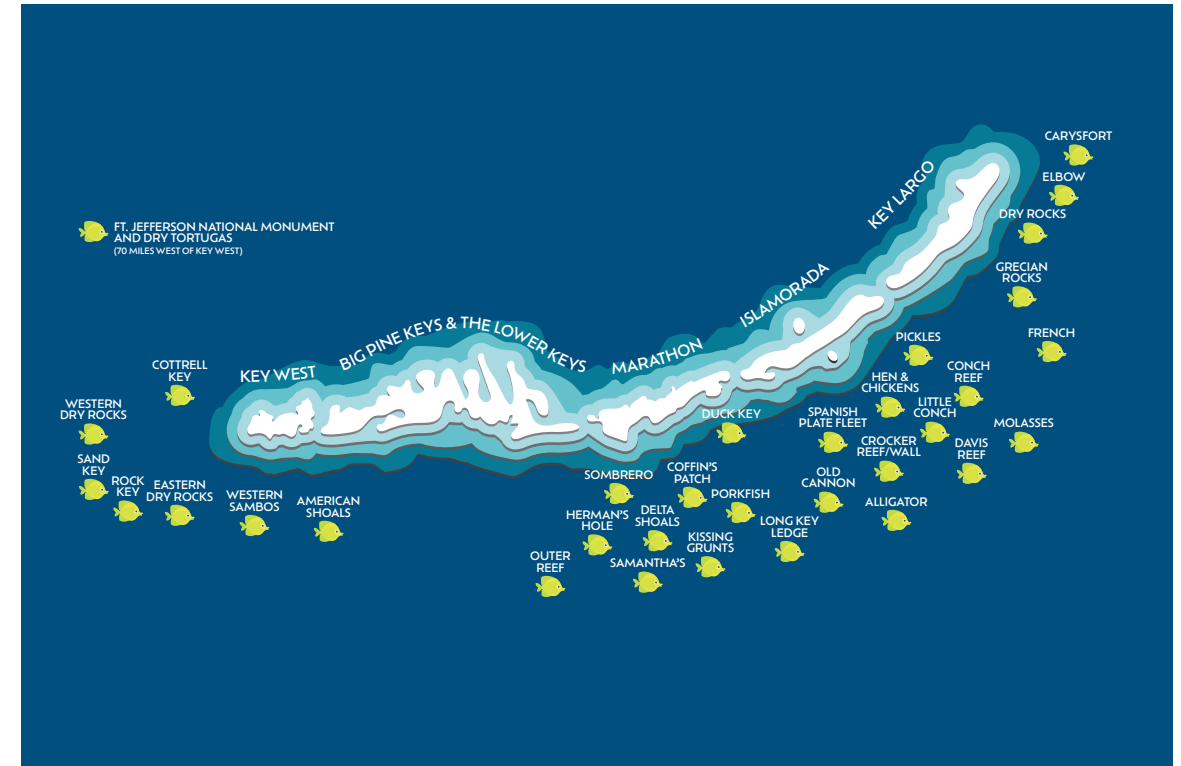
colorful fish and fascinating marine life. From the famous Christ of the Abyss statue in Key Largo to the breathtaking coral formations of Dry Tortugas National Park, there are endless underwater sights to behold. For those who prefer to stay close to the surface, snorkeling and glass bottom boat tours are great ways to immerse yourself without the need for specialized equipment or training. From shallow reefs teeming with sea creatures to the wrecks of sunken ships, diving in The Florida Keys is an incredible opportunity to connect to the natural world.





The Reefs of The Keys

A PASTIME WORTH PROTECTING



With names like Pickles Reef, Molasses Reef and Hen & Chickens, The Florida Keys might not sound like a serious dive destination. But take the plunge on any one of nearly three dozen designated reef sites throughout The Florida Keys, and you'll quickly discover why The Keys remain one of the most popular dive and snorkeling destinations in the world. Stretching for more than 150 miles from John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park in Key Largo to the Dry Tortugas, The Florida Keys are home to the only living coral barrier reef system within the Continental U.S. In other words, the things you see here, you'll see only here.

From breathtaking coral formations teeming with colorful fish to over 5,000 species of marine life, it's truly a sight to behold. And because it's all part of a national marine sanctuary, this precious natural resource will be protected for generations to come.

Dive note: Reefs act as natural barriers, protecting coastlines from the damaging effects of storms and erosion. Yet these vital ecosystems are fragile and easily damaged. Never touch, stand on, or anchor on a reef, and use only reef-safe sunscreens. By taking care of these ecosystems today, we can ensure that this incredible undersea world will be enjoyed well into the future.

Florida Keys Wreck Trek

GO DOWN WITH THE SHIPS



Want to take a deep dive into Florida Keys' maritime history? There's no better opportunity – or challenge – than The Florida Keys Wreck Trek. This self-guided underwater expedition takes divers on a nine-ship odyssey through some of the most fascinating shipwrecks in The Florida Keys. The Wreck Trek includes a series of intentionally sunken ships, ranging from a 100-foot freighter to a 524-foot former missile-tracking ship, all of which have become artificial

reefs. It's a unique opportunity for divers to explore the rich biodiversity of The Florida Keys, while also getting a first-hand look at one of the largest concentrations of shipwrecks in the world. On each wreck, divers will encounter a fascinating range of marine life, including tropical fish, sea turtles, great barracuda and occasional sharks. The Wreck Trek is open to skilled divers, who are looking for an experience that combines history, nature and excitement in one unforgettable adventure.



Eagle Shipwreck, Key Largo



Scan for Culture Calendar

Cultural Activities

SEE THE BIG PICTURE



Crane Point Hammock, Marathon

Culture in The Florida Keys is not something that can be easily defined. It's as varied as the landscape, with influences from Native American tribes, Spanish conquistadors, pirates and poets. The result is a unique and colorful cultural tapestry that is both a reflection of the past and a celebration of the present. From Hemingway's six-toed cats that roam the streets of Key West to the Native American artifacts on display, The Florida Keys are an eclectic mix of history, art and entertainment. Gold from shipwrecks can be found

in the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum, and song lyrics are often inspired by the stories of days gone by. But what makes the culture of The Keys unique is that it is not confined to one place or time. It is a living, breathing entity that is constantly evolving and changing. Visitors can explore museums and historic sites, or experience the vibrant art scene in theatres, galleries and public art installations. Whether you are a history buff or an art or music lover, the inimitable spirit of this one-of-a-kind place is always on display.

Museums for Every Taste

IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE WONDERS OF THE KEYS



Museums might not be the first thing you think of when visiting The Florida Keys & Key West, but they're certainly the most thought provoking. Because of all the cultural opportunities in The Keys, museums are like a porthole into the past, present and future. In Key West, The Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum offers a rare look into the life and work of one of America's greatest authors. The Key West Art and Historical Society is comprised of four culturally distinct museums, each committed to preservation of

the island's historic structures, art and artifacts. The Marathon Turtle Hospital is dedicated to turtle rescue and rehabilitation, while the Crane Point Hammock Museum and Nature Center provides a glimpse into the natural and cultural history of the region. And in the Upper Keys, the Florida Keys History and Discovery Center in Islamorada is an interactive museum focusing on the history and culture of the area. Whether you're into history, art, architecture or science, there's a museum in The Florida Keys just waiting to capture your imagination.



Scan for Museums



Galleries and Public Art

HAVE A BRUSH WITH GREATNESS



Nowhere does art imitate life more than The Florida Keys. With its lush landscape, painted skies and cobalt-blue waters, The Florida Keys & Key West have inspired artists for centuries. Today, The Keys are home to a thriving art community, with galleries and public art installations welcoming visitors from Key Largo to Key West. From backyard studios and roadside galleries to bustling artist collectives and sculpture trails, the colorful palette of the islands is reflected in the works of local and visiting artists

who draw inspiration from the sand, sea and sky. Stop anywhere along the famed Overseas Highway and you'll discover a rich tapestry of artistic expression in virtually every medium imaginable, from oils, watercolors and woodcarving to collage, pottery, blown glass and handcrafted jewelry. In Key West, the art scene is particularly dynamic, with galleries and outdoor art at every turn. Whether you're an art aficionado or simply appreciate the beauty of artistic expression, The Florida Keys are a sight to behold.



Scan for Gallery Guide

All The Keys Are a Stage

IT WOULD BE A TRAGEDY TO MISS IT



As American playwright Arthur Miller once said, “The theatre is so endlessly fascinating because it’s so accidental. It’s so much like life.” Nowhere is this truer than The Florida Keys, where unexpected drama awaits around every corner. Whether it’s a breathtaking sunset or a mighty marlin jumping at the end of your line, The Keys are a treasure trove of captivating events and stories just waiting to be told. And it makes perfect sense to find compelling and diverse theatre in a place like The Keys, where there’s no shortage of venues or

colorful characters to bring these tales to life. From the intimate Red Barn Theatre in Key West to the Marathon Community Theatre in the middle of The Keys, theatrical productions here are diverse, ranging from classic plays to contemporary works and experimental pieces. But what truly sets The Keys apart is the unique blend of local actors and visiting performers. The theatre scene here is a melting pot, showcasing talent from near and far. Don’t miss the opportunity to catch a show – or a giant fish – in The Florida Keys & Key West.



Scan for Theatre Guide



Music All Around

ALWAYS JUST A LITTLE OFFBEAT



If you think the idea of a visit to The Florida Keys sounds good, just wait until you get here. Wherever you go in The Keys, you'll find a lively music scene that's as eclectic as the performers who live and play here. This might be one of America's most musically diverse regions, where rock, country, jazz, blues, reggae, calypso and classical come together in perfect harmony. And since the weather's great all year round, the music never stops playing at outdoor venues throughout The Keys.

Not to toot our own horn, but The Keys have hosted some of the world's most celebrated singers, songwriters and musicians, including many who came here to find inspiration in the atmosphere before their careers skyrocketed to the stratosphere. On any given day, you can see everything from a one-man band on a street corner to Pops in the Park with a complete symphony orchestra. From Beethoven to bluegrass, the musicians of The Florida Keys always march to the beat of a different drummer.

Keys Cuisine

ONE PART MELTING POT. ONE PART PAELLA PAN.



As an island chain sitting between two oceans in one of the world's most fertile fishing grounds, fresh seafood holds a prominent place on every table in The Florida Keys. And thanks to our cultural diversity, you'll find a mix of international flavors from the Caribbean, Latin America and the U.S. mainland, and daily menus that are determined as much by our captains as our chefs. Some of the best tasting fish in the world can be found in these pristine waters, along with stone crab, lobster and Key West

Pink Shrimp. If you can't find what you're craving on the menu, you can always bring your own. Our chefs will cook your catch any way you want it.

Of course, you don't have to love seafood to enjoy dining in The Keys. There's always fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables, poultry, steaks, and the kind of cheeseburgers people have been known to write songs about. Don't forget to save room for dessert, because no meal is complete without a refreshing slice of sweet and tangy Key Lime pie.



Key Lime Pie Recipe

INGREDIENTS

One 9-inch graham cracker pie crust
1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
4 egg yolks (The egg whites can be saved to make a meringue topping, if desired. See meringue recipe below.)
3 ounces of Key lime juice

Meringue (optional):
4 egg whites
5 tablespoons sugar
Pinch of cream of tartar
1 teaspoon vanilla

PREPARATION

Blend milk and egg yolks at slow speed until smooth. Add Key Lime juice and finish blending. Pour into pie crust. Bake in preheated 350°F oven for 20 minutes. In the meantime, if you desire, prepare meringue recipe below. Cool pie 20 minutes before refrigerating. Serve chilled Key Lime pie with whipped cream topping or meringue.

Beat egg whites, sugar and vanilla at high speed. Add cream of tartar. Continue beating until whites are stiff. Spoon meringue on top of pie and bake for 10 more minutes.



Where to Stay

THERE'S A PLACE FOR YOU HERE



Beyond the perfect weather, the breathtaking sunsets, the crystal waters and the vibrant reefs, the most beautiful thing about The Florida Keys may just be something you can't see, but you'll most definitely feel. It's the unmistakable Keys vibe. A laid-back, easygoing, live-and-let-live attitude where everyone is welcome.

That attitude permeates everything. Which means,

whether you stay in a historic five-star resort, or just camp out in a tent beneath a blanket of stars, you'll always have a Florida Keys experience that simply can't be duplicated anywhere else. From Key Largo to Key West, you'll find a remarkable assortment of unique resorts, hotels, motels, inns, lodges, cottages, B&Bs, RV parks, campgrounds, rental homes and marinas that are certain to capture your idea of a perfect Keys escape.

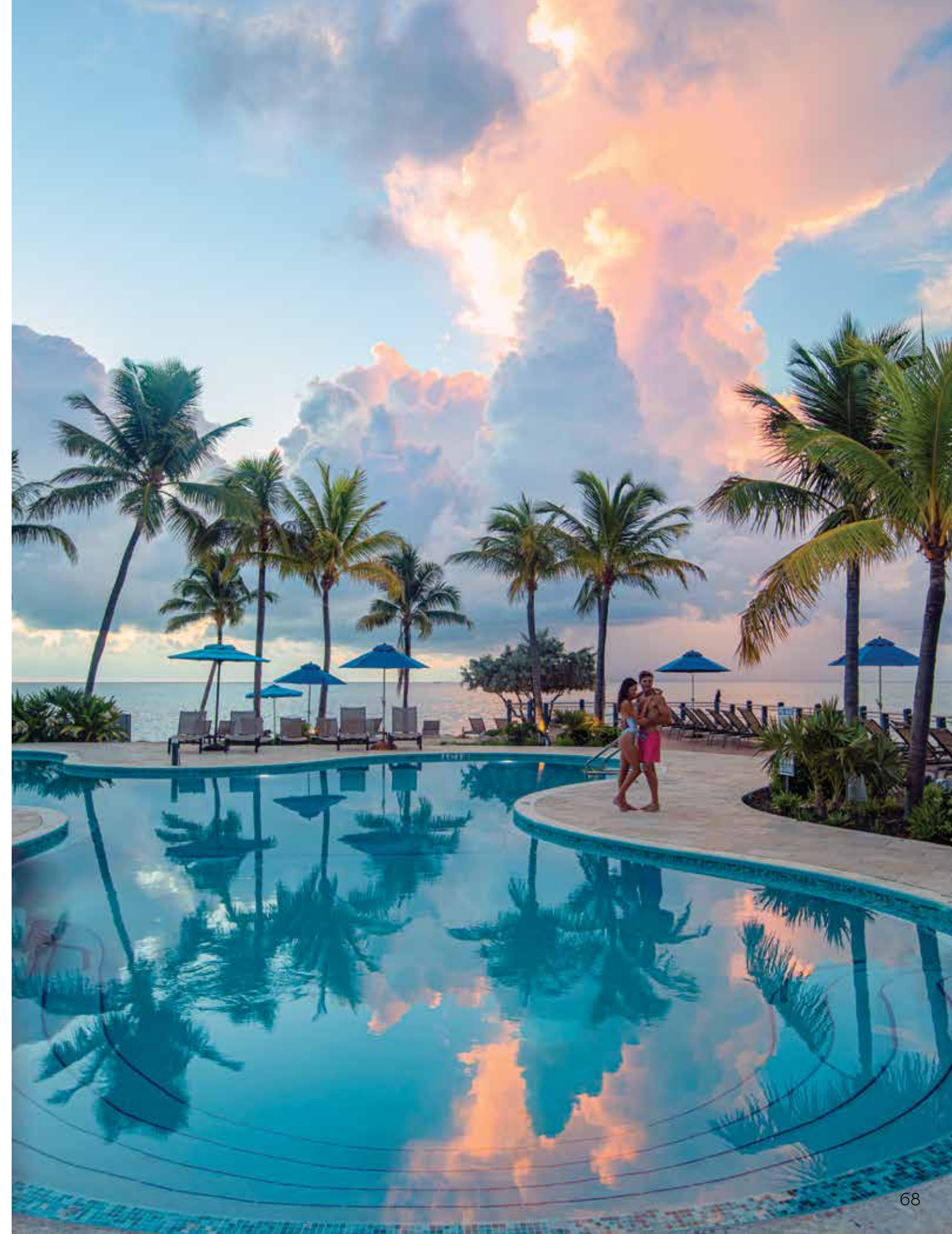


Scan for Places to Stay



Some are located on the glass smooth waters of Florida Bay. Some, on vast expanses of Atlantic oceanfront. And if that doesn't float your boat, The Florida Keys is home to the world's only underwater hotel, where you have to scuba dive to reach your room.

Here in The Keys, we celebrate diversity and welcome all guests with open minds and open arms. We are one human family, and visitors will find LGBTQ+-friendly accommodations throughout The Keys.





Come As You Are

A HISTORY OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



Key West Historic Seaport

As much as The Florida Keys & Key West have been celebrated for warm weather, clear water and breathtaking sunsets, their true beauty lies in an unapologetic embrace of human diversity and inclusivity. Throughout history The Keys have been influenced by countless cultures and ideals, including Native American, Spanish, Cuban, and Bahamian – creating a melting pot of traditions, customs and values. Today, visitors to The Keys can experience these

fascinating contrasts firsthand, through cultural events that highlight an endless variety of local food, music and art. This celebration of the region's multicultural heritage creates a welcoming experience for all residents and visitors, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity. Not surprisingly, The Keys continue to be a haven for writers, artists and free spirits, attracting people from all walks of life. It's a warm and culturally rich experience that is hard to find anywhere else.

Out Before It Was In

IN KEY WEST, OUR PRIDE RUNS DEEP



In Key West, the only thing hidden in closets are clothes. Beyond this two-by-four-mile island's natural beauty and eclectic charm, Key West's One Human Family ideology continues to place it among the world's top gay destinations. In this gay-friendly oasis you can be open, relaxed, make new friends and savor Key West's live-and-let-live vibe. So be out and about. Hold hands. No one will bat an eye. For a small town, Key West is big on gay history and culture. Carpenter gothic gingerbread houses and lovingly restored Victorian homes have hosted

gay novelists, playwrights, painters and poets. Today, gay travelers continue to find hidden charms that might go unnoticed by the mainstream. Canopied streets are lined with bougainvillea, royal poinciana and hibiscus, bursting in a rainbow flag of colors. When it comes to playfulness, Key West is all in. The nightlife here is the stuff of legend. And with accommodations ranging from elegant resorts to clothing-optional guest houses, along with year-round gay tours, LGBTQ+ events and celebrations, any time is a good time to come as you are.



Scan for LGBTQ+



Destination Weddings

CREATE A LOVE STORY FOR THE HISTORY BOOKS



They say marriage is all about compromise. While that may be true, nobody ever said anything about the wedding itself. Since this is a once-in-a-lifetime affair, we think it should be the epic, no-compromises nuptials you've always dreamed of. Maybe that's why so many couples have fallen in love with the idea of a wedding in The Florida Keys. With its stunning turquoise waters, breathtaking sunsets and endless array of world-class venues, a wedding in The Keys is the perfect backdrop to beautiful memories.

The Keys has never been the kind of place to stand on ceremony, so your wedding can be anything from barefoot on the beach to black tie in the ballroom, from underwater to totally over-the-top. And as one of the world's foremost wedding destinations, we're home to some of the industry's best planners, caterers, photographers, entertainers and anything else you can possibly imagine, along with many things you may have never thought of. When it comes to creating a walk down the aisle that's uniquely your own, the sky's the limit.



Scan for Weddings

Love Is All You Need

HONEYMOONS, VOW RENEWALS AND COMMITMENT CEREMONIES



Maybe it's something in the water. Maybe it's the sultry tropical breezes. Or the stirring skies at sunset. Whatever it is, there's magic in the air throughout The Florida Keys that brings people together and fosters an atmosphere of romance. This is a place that celebrates love in all its forms.

Whether you're escaping to The Keys for a romantic rendezvous or returning to the place where it all began to do it all over again, it's hard to imagine a more comfortable,

welcoming place to express your feelings for each other.

Here in The Keys, you can steal away on a secluded island all to yourself, living entirely on a diet of love and room service, or partake in a boisterous street celebration where everyone's invited. And we've been out long before it was in, so however you choose to celebrate your love is entirely your business and our pleasure. Love is love, and nobody embraces it better than The Florida Keys & Key West.





Getting to The Florida Keys is Easy

LEAVING IS A WHOLE OTHER STORY

Whether you come for the weather, the atmosphere or just to fulfill a lifelong dream, there are a million reasons to visit The Florida Keys, and it couldn't be easier to get here. Between convenient transportation by air, land and sea, simple road markings to help you navigate and a host of ways to get around once you're here, you'll have such a good time exploring, you may never want to go home. You wouldn't be the first.

A MARKER FOR EVERY MILE

The fabled Overseas Highway, also known as US 1, is our Main Street, and the best way to get around in The Keys is to know the mile marker of your destination. If you look carefully, you'll notice little green signs every mile that start just south of Florida City at MM 127, and run all the way down to 0 in Key West. They're like our addresses. If you know the mile marker of where you're going, getting there is easy. And since there's only one road in and out, it's almost impossible to get lost.

DISTRICT	MILE MARKER	DISTANCE FROM MIAMI
Key Largo	118 - 90.7	58
Islamorada	90.7 - 63	76
Marathon	63 - 47	111
Big Pine Key	47 - 4	128
Key West	4 - 0	159

BY AIR

Key West International Airport has commercial service, and both the Key West and Marathon airports have charter service, General Aviation, and rental service. For an up-to-date roster of charter operators serving Key West International and Florida Keys Marathon International Airports, go to www.fla-keys.com/how-to-get-here

BY LAND

The drive from Miami to Key West is an opportunity to experience the only designated All-American Road in Florida. Only 30 other roads in the nation have received this highest recognition possible under the National Scenic Byways program. To reach The Florida Keys Overseas Highway, bypass traffic of the City of Miami by taking I-95, I-75, or FL-836 to the Florida Turnpike, south. Card Sound Road offers an alternate route to Key Largo.

Once you arrive in The Florida Keys, you may not even need a car. In Key West you can park at the Park-n-Ride garage at 300 Grinnell Street in Old Town. You'll do and see more on foot. Potential RV Camping visitors should consult with our RV Camping Grounds for advance reservations.

BY SEA

Sail through America's Caribbean. All channels are well-marked, marinas abound, and dock space is available. Key West Express offers a 3 to 3.5 hour daily passenger ferry departing from Ft. Myers year-round, and seasonal service from Marco Island. For details, call 239-463-5733 or visit www.keywestexpress.net For ferry service to Dry Tortugas National Park, call 800-634-0939 or visit www.drytortugas.com





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



Key West Big Pine Key & The Lower Keys

Marathon

Islamorada

Key Largo

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