

Eco Itinerary:

Day 1: Key Largo

If you visit an ecotour outfitter in Key Largo, chances are that you'll be looking out the window at the environmentally fascinating place where freshwater from the Everglades mixes with the saltwater of Florida Bay. Key Largo is unique among the Keys in that it abuts Everglades National Park along its southeastern-most border. Some Key Largo outfitters also offer extended kayak and canoe trips for those who enjoy wilderness camping. They will arrange 7-day paddling trips from Flamingo, a national park outpost where the Everglades meet the sea, to Everglades City on Florida's west coast. For those who do not kayak or canoe, there are also tour boat operators who are happy to introduce you to the wildlife and wilderness. You can even arrange an air-boat ride through the grassy interior of the Everglades, which is less than an hour's drive away!

Spend the day at the John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park (MM102.5 oceanside)

www.pennekamp.com

Discover the oldest underwater park in the world. You will be able to enjoy the park's popular water activities: viewing the reef on a glass-bottom-boat, snorkel and scuba tours, as well as canoeing and kayaking.

Day trip and overnight trip:

Backcountry Cowboy outfitters

http://www.backcountrycowboy.com/everglades_kayaking.html

Day 2: Islamorada

Indian Key on the Atlantic Ocean side of Islamorada is another site that is exclusively reachable by private boat or tour. Take a walk on this island and retrace ancient footsteps of the American Indians who frequented the island thousands of years ago! In the 1830s, a Staten Island businessman set up an outpost here to salvage cargo from ships stranded on the nearby reef. Unfortunately for him, success was short lived for the settlers. In the early morning of August 7, 1840, in a desperate attempt to escape from an Indian camp attack, settlers hid their attackers by hiding in a turtle kraal. In the keys, we used kraals as a pen used to raise sea turtles for food. Today, the island is home to Indian Key State Historic Site.

By Boat

Robbie's Island Heritage Tours are a perfect way to experience the raw beauty and wonder of the Florida State Parks, right here in Islamorada leaving from Robbie Marina

77522 B. Overseas Highway, (305) 664-8070 <http://www.robbies.com/statetours.htm>

By Paddle board

The Kayak Shack

Pack your snorkel gear and cooler, and head for Indian Key State Park! Both first-time and experienced paddlers find the 20-minute paddle to the island very enjoyable and easy. Park your kayak on our sandy beaches and explore the remnants of the old wrecking colony destroyed by the infamous surprise Indian

attack. Tour includes walking and snorkeling the key. The tour lasts about 3 hours.
<http://www.kayakthefloridakeys.com/> also located in Robbie's Marina

Day 3: Marathon

Crane Point

Crane Point, a slightly elevated patch of land we refer to as a 'hammock,' is tucked away amid the heart of Marathon. On this 64-acre tropical oasis you can experience the natural beauty of our native hardwood trees, nature trails and educational displays for adults and children. Crane Point was originally set up as a homestead by George Adderly, a Bahamian man, and his family. Adderley and his family lived a simple life among exotic tropical trees, such as the lignumvitae, whose incredibly hard wood was once used to make bowling balls! The Adderleys survived by making charcoal and gathering and selling sponges from the crystal clear waters of the Keys. The Adderleys no longer live here, but their home and its beautiful surroundings remain. The Adderley home has been restored and is a popular stop along the 2.5 miles of trails and wooden walkways crisscrossing the hammock. Trolley tours of the botanic gardens and historic sites can also be arranged.

Today, the entire area is owned and managed by the Florida Keys Land and Sea Trust, a private organization working to protect the Keys.

THE TURTLE HOSPITAL

The Turtle Hospital opened its doors 1986 with four main goals: rehab injured sea turtles and return them to their natural habitat, educate the public through outreach programs and visit local schools, conduct and assist with research aiding to sea turtles (in conjunction with state universities), and to work toward environmental legislation to make the beaches and water safe and clean for sea turtles.

Guests are invited to take a guided educational tour of the hospital facilities and the sea turtle rehabilitation area. This educational experience lasts approximately 90 minutes and provides a presentation on sea turtles as well as a behind the scenes look at the hospital facilities and rehabilitation area. At the end of each program guests are invited to feed the permanent resident
Phone: 305-743-6509 2396 Overseas Highway Marathon , FL 33050 www.turtlehospital.org

Dolphin Research Center (MM59 bayside)

www.Dolphins.org

Spend an hour or the whole day learning all about our family of Atlantic [bottlenose dolphins](#) and [California sea lions](#)

Day 4, 5 and 6: Big Pine, the Lower Keys and Key West

On your way to Key West, make a stop at Bahia Honda State Park (MM37 oceanside)
www.bahiahondapark.com

Featuring an award winning beach and historic bridge, Bahia Honda State Park is one of the favorite destinations. The beach at Bahia Honda State Park was rated the second most popular beach in the keys by the patrons of TripAdvisor.com. Bahia Honda's pristine sandy expanse is part of the 524-acre state park located on Bahia Honda Key between mile markers 36 and 37. One of the Florida Keys' most popular camping and recreation areas, Bahia Honda offers deep near-shore waters for swimming and snorkeling as well as camping, water sports including kayaking and fishing, a marina

Another great place, unique to the Florida Keys is Key Deer Refuge (MM30 bayside)
www.fws.gov/nationalkeydeer

You don't have to set foot in the ocean to have a true ecotour in the Lower Keys! Big Pine Key is famous for its pine trees and the miniature version of the white tail deer that has evolved among them. Park along one of the roads passing through the National Key Deer Refuge and you are almost certain to see one of these odd and unique deer. Please don't feed or pet them! Managers want to keep the Key Deer as wild as the Lower Keys backcountry itself.

Key West is the gateway to a vast ecotourism playground extending 70 miles westward to the uninhabited sand spits and coral formations of Dry Tortugas National Park. If you want to stay relatively close to the island, you can take a catamaran sailboat tour into the shallow waters and uninhabited keys that frame the island's famous sunsets. Locals call this area 'The Lakes', and once there, you can hop onto a kayak and paddle over patch coral formations or along mangrove fringes. You can even grab your snorkel gear and study the fish, grasses, and soft corals. Some tours will take you all the way to Boca Grande Key, an uninhabited island favored by locals for its white sandy shoreline and beautiful coral patch reef. Other tour operators will take you in the opposite direction to the mangrove backcountry northeast of Key West.

If you prefer a bird's eye view of the watery wilderness collectively known as West of Key West, we can arrange a front row seat! Small seaplanes leave several times a day from Key West International Airport for historic Fort Jefferson, a Civil War-era fortress in the Dry Tortugas.

Danger Charters

[Snorkel & Kayak Day-Sail](http://dangercharters.com)
dangercharters.com

Explore the wondrous and mysterious mangrove islands with one of our very knowledgeable nature guides. Learn all about the mangrove eco-system while paddling through a maze of mangrove-canopied canals and streams. While there, be sure to take note of the incredible tropical array of birds, sting rays, sharks, sport fish, and more! And, if your kayak skills range from novice to non-existent, no worries! Our

kayaks are very stable sea kayaks that novices from ages 6 to 90 and beyond can easily paddle with a few simple instructions from your guide!

All our day excursions feature guided kayaking through our labyrinth of mangrove islands, snorkeling on pristine and uncharted patch reefs and wrecks, and, of course, sailing!

Danger's specialty shallow-draft vessels visit a variety of private and pristine patch reefs in the calm and protected waters of the Florida Keys backcountry to provide you with an exceptional and personal underwater experience. And, due to the topography of islands and flats that surround the wildlife refuge, you can be assured of great visibility and calm seas while you snorkel amid a beautiful collection of corals, sponge gardens, tropical fish, and dramatic marine life.

Fort Jefferson Dry Tortugas National Park

Ferry Service : Yankee Freedom
<http://www.yankeefreedom.com>

Air: Key West Sea Planes
<http://keywestseaplanes.com/>

A 46-square-mile area of Dry Tortugas National Park is a Research Natural Area, a no-fishing, no-anchoring ecological preserve that provides a haven for species to live and breed.

The new RNA is located in the northwest portion of Dry Tortugas National Park, a remote offshore preserve positioned approximately 70 miles west of Key West in the Gulf of Mexico. The park contains the Civil War-era Fort Jefferson, believed to be the largest masonry structure in the Western Hemisphere.

If you love Key West snorkeling, then Dry Tortugas National Park offers some of the best offshore snorkeling in North America, just 70 miles from Key West, Florida. The shallow waters (5-15 feet) make snorkeling at the **Dry Tortugas** fun for everyone. Whether beginner or expert, you can enjoy an abundance of colorful tropical fish and living coral among the waters. Directly accessible from the brilliant white sand beach, you'll find the **Fort Jefferson** snorkeling areas. Look for majestic corals, many varieties of tropical fish, starfish, queen conchs, and much more in this protected marine sanctuary.