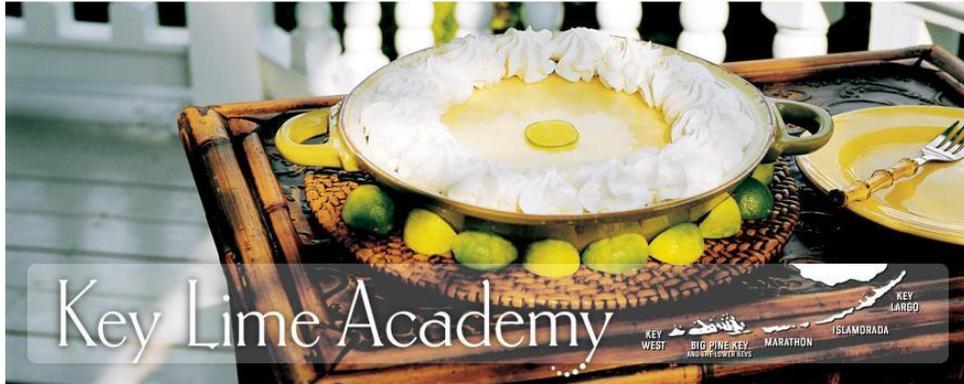


The Florida Keys & Key West  
... come as you are®



## Florida Keys Travel Itinerary: Romance



*Written by Sabine Chilton*



## Days 1 & 2: Upper Keys

One of the best ways to experience the Florida Keys & Key West is getting out on, in or under the water. The Upper Keys boasts some of the best places for water activities, so make this a priority.

Start your day at the **John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park** (MM 102.5, Oceanside) which is one of the best ways to access the beautiful blue/green tropical waters in the Upper Keys. **This is the only underwater state park in the United States.** Begin by exploring the maze of trails through mangroves by paddleboard or kayak, or get in the water and investigate the living coral reef on the shallow water snorkeling trips, which leave several times daily!

[www.pennekamp.com](http://www.pennekamp.com)

The iconic original vessel from John Huston's classic 1951 film **The African Queen**, starring Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn, is still making trips in Key Largo's nearshore waters and canals! The African Queen sets sail daily, offering a 90-minute canal cruise, and on select evenings, a dinner cruise is offered for up to six passengers. For more information reserving your spot on the nostalgic and historic African Queen, visit [www.africanqueenflkeys.com](http://www.africanqueenflkeys.com).

### **Bungalows Key Largo** (MM 99, Bayside)

Indulge and pamper yourselves on this island oasis for downtime and disconnecting, Bungalows Key Largo rewrites the rule book on inclusive getaways. This intimate adults-only (ages 21+ only) resort sits within a botanical garden edged by 1000 feet of ocean shoreline, just a few miles from the warm waters of the Gulf Stream. Bungalows' numerous restaurants with breathtaking views serve from the catch of the day seafood, bold Mexican flavors to five-course feasts. You can count on inspired cuisine presented at the peak of freshness. Guests can enjoy spacious bungalows and spend their day with daily yoga sessions, stand-up paddleboarding in the bay relax at the full-service spa sail, snorkel, or soak days with relaxed romance. Slow down and reconnect with nature, yourself, and each other. [www.bungalowskeylargo.com](http://www.bungalowskeylargo.com)

### **Anne's Beach** (MM 73, Oceanside)

This small beach offers a scenic walkway and great views of the shallows surrounding Islamorada. Pack a picnic and spend hours of fun in the sun (It has bathrooms and picnic tables).

Witnessing the famous sunrise or sunset in the Florida Keys is probably one of the most romantic activities couples can partake in during their visit. Whether your preference is the serenity of the early morning with a cup of Cuban coffee Con Leche, or the relaxing reflections of the past day watching the sunset with a refreshing Mojito, the skies over the Florida Keys offer an amazing palate for one of nature's most incredible light shows. Experiencing this for yourself will surely be one of the highlights of your romantic getaway with your loved one. Seek out a quiet place along the waterfront or on one of the old railroad bridges for your slice of heaven.

After spending the day out in the warm sun and salty water, a Romantic Dinner for Two at one of the myriads of fine dining establishments between Key Largo and Islamorada provides the perfect setting to wind down and experience what locals call "the afterglow" of another magical Florida Keys sunset.

### **Day 3: Marathon, Big Pine & the Lower Keys**

Heading farther south and deeper into the Caribbean, consider stopping in Marathon and check out the Dolphin Research Center, located in the northern part of Marathon called Grassy Key, which has plenty of parking. They offer a lot of options for everyone including Dolphin Encounters (swim with the dolphin), Dolphin Dip, Paint with a Dolphin, Dolphin Explorer, Meet a Dolphin, even an all-day, interactive experience as Trainer For A Day. The Dolphin Research Center provides a unique, up close, and personal experience with some of the Florida Keys's most precious creatures and is loads of fun. For more information visit [www.Dolphins.org](http://www.Dolphins.org)

#### **Sunset alongside the world-famous Seven Mile Bridge**

There are several areas to watch one of the Florida Keys magical sunsets, but none more iconic in the Middle Keys than from the area surrounding the Seven Mile Bridge. There is a parking area at the north side of the old bridge, and this area is perfect for picture taking, viewing, and for closing out another memorable day in the Florida Keys.

#### **Bahia Honda State Park (MM 37, Oceanside)**

On your way to Key West, make a stop at Bahia Honda State Park. Featuring an award-winning beach and historic bridge, Bahia Honda State Park has been voted as one of the top ten beaches in the U.S. This state park offers a beach/picnic area with gift shop, snack bar, kayak rentals, daily snorkeling tours to the protected **Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary**, as well as swimming on both the bay and oceanside of the Florida Keys and iconic vistas of the old Bahia Honda Bridge. [www.bahiahondapark.com](http://www.bahiahondapark.com)

#### **Full Moon Kayak Tours: Old Wooden Bridge Fish Camp, Big Pine Key (MM 31 Bayside, at 1791 Bogie Drive, Big Pine Key)**

The marine ecosystem in the nearshore waters of Big Pine Key come to life at night and a full moon provides a window into this diverse and interesting night time world. Imagine you and your special someone kayaking through calm dark waters and hearing key deer wading through the salt ponds or fish jumping in the distance. These full moon tours are offered every month; 2 nights before the full moon and the evening of the full moon. The tours begin with light paddling along a protected shallow shoreline as the sun descends and the moon rises. When the moon comes into view you will hear and see nocturnal birds and sea life that hide during the daylight hours. Don't miss this experience; it is one you will never forget! [www.floridakeys kayaktours.com](http://www.floridakeys kayaktours.com)

#### **Little Palm Island (MM 27.5, Oceanside)**

Indulge and pamper yourselves on Little Palm Island Resort and Spa. Experience the internationally-acclaimed private island paradise! Accessible only by boat, the resort offers a relaxing romantic getaway. This private island offers an amazing "off the grid" experience where the use of personal electronic devices is strongly discouraged, allowing you to focus your time on each other and the beautiful scenery. Overnight guests can enjoy spacious bungalows, lagoon-style pool, meditative Zen Garden, or lounge the day away on a hammock for two. The Resort also has a spa and world-class restaurant experience, called The Dining Room. Their books will fill up quickly, so be sure to call ahead for reservations! Some of the world's finest cuisine can be experienced in The Dining Room. Led by world-renowned Chefs and their culinary teams, they have been recognized as the Best Hotel Dining in Florida and number three in the United States by Zagat, as well as being rated "extraordinary to perfection" in every category - Food, Decor, and Service. They said "Lover's laud this exquisite oasis at a private island resort off Little Torch Key as a piece of absolute paradise, voting it Top Décor in the Keys; words cannot do justice either to the French-Pan-Latin fare." [www.littlepalmisland.com](http://www.littlepalmisland.com)

### **Sugarloaf Marina (MM 15)**

What is so romantic about a marina? This little slice of old school Keys charm is the launching point for what will be one of the most memorable days (or half days) of your visit to the Florida Keys! Hire a knowledgeable captain for a visit to what locals call our 'backcountry', and witness a myriad of marine and bird life in an unspoiled, private habitat. Pack a picnic lunch, wade over to one of the many mangrove islands, swim au natural and enjoy the beauty of our marine sanctuary just the two of you. It's as if the entire world has just melted away.

### **Days 4-6: Key West**

Exploring the island is great on two wheels! Key West is only approximately two miles wide and four miles long; what better way to explore the lazy streets of historic Old Town than on a bike? The Old Town architecture and flora and fauna are yours to discover at your own pace. Check with your accommodations concierge or front desk staff and they can help arrange your two-wheeled transportation or a bicycle built for two!

### **Meander through the Key West Cemetery**

Now that you have your bicycles, be sure to tour one of the most unique and intriguing cemeteries in the U.S. Located in the heart of Old Town, the main entrance and Sexton's office are at the intersection of Angela and Margaret Streets. The cemetery sits in a 19-acre park-like setting where Bahamian mariners, Cuban cigar makers, Spanish-American War veterans, soldiers and civilians, millionaires and paupers, people of all races, Catholics, Protestants, and Jews rest side-by-side echoing the island city's diverse heritage. Learn the history of Key West, trace the marriages between the founding families, and enjoy the peaceful setting while meandering through this diverse area.

### **Experience Fort Zachary Taylor State Park**

One of Key West's best beaches and picnic areas, this state park offers beautiful shoreline, breathtaking scenery of the active Key West harbor, hammocks, and picnic tables, snorkeling amongst the breakwater rocks, and a concession stand. It's the perfect spot to laze away an afternoon swimming, reading, napping together in the shade of the pine trees, and enjoying a picnic lunch or BBQ dinner while winding down the day capturing the last bit of light as the sun melts into the ocean.

### **Unique Dinner Cruise for Two**

Islescapes is the only dinner cruise that caters to couples looking for an alternative to the quintessential 'table for two' landside. Islescapes dinner cruises depart about two hours before sunset, include a brief harbor tour and then find secluded, calm anchorage to enjoy an incredible five-course dinner, watch the sunset and leisurely enjoy appetizers while your captain/private chef prepares your main entrée. The menu, the music, and the view are suited to your personal preferences and the explosion of color that comes with a Key West sunset is the backdrop. Enjoy the afterglow with a dessert to cap off a memorable evening offshore.

<https://islescapesyachtcharters.com>

Danger Charters also offers romantic cruises and sets sail where others can't, and without the huge crowds. You can choose between daily sunset sails, sail/snorkel/kayak trips

<https://www.dangercharters.com>

### **Lunch or dinner on Sunset Key**

Latitudes Restaurant is a favorite among visitors and locals alike. Located on the private island called Sunset Key, Latitudes can be accessed by ferry boat service provided by the Sunset Key Guest Cottages which is the sister property of the beautiful Westin Key West Resort and Marina.

For couples on a romantic getaway, this is MUST! They offer a fresh, flavorful island cuisine with free ocean breezes and breathtaking views of the Gulf of Mexico. And if the name of the island didn't give it away, the views are among the most beautiful and unobstructed as they get in Key West. So sit back, relax, and enjoy some delicious Caribbean island-inspired cuisine, a nice bottle of wine and the company of each other. Reservations are required. Call 305-292-5394 or visit [www.sunsetkeycottages.com/latitudes-key-west](http://www.sunsetkeycottages.com/latitudes-key-west).

### **Key West Historic Seaport Stroll**

Along the downtown waterfront, couples can walk from Mallory Square (the famous sunset viewing area) and hug the shoreline to the Key West Historic Seaport while sipping a cocktail, holding hands, exploring boutiques, enjoying live music and several restaurant options. It's a contradiction of themes; the atmosphere is lively yet the vibe is relaxed. You are alone together with people from all over the world enjoying the workings of the historic waterfront.

### **Better than Sex: a Key West Dessert Restaurant**

Spoil your soul with the best things in life: Dessert, Wine & Romance. Better Than Sex is a full-service dessert-only restaurant and lounge unlike any other. Come spend an intimate time and a double entendre or two with that special someone. Be sure to try one of their specialty drinks with dark chocolate, white chocolate or caramel rimmed glass of red wine, white wine, or champagne. The restaurant is small and intimate with limited seating, so be sure to make reservations in advance! Reservations suggested after sunset and taken up to 7 days in advance. Voted #1 "Decadent Dessert Restaurants Worth Traveling To in 2012" from TripAdvisor. [www.betterthansexkeywest.com](http://www.betterthansexkeywest.com)

No trip to Key West is complete without the U.S. National Parks Service most remote park: **Ft. Jefferson Dry Tortugas National Park**, located just 70 miles west of Key West in the Gulf of Mexico. Accessible only by boat or seaplane, this all-day excursion includes a narrated 2 ½ hours ride out to the civil war-era fortress, a guided history tour once on the island, continental breakfast served on board with a full picnic-style lunch served on the island, a plethora of opportunities to witness rare birds nesting in this remote rookery and frequent sea turtle and dolphin sightings. The **Yankee Freedom** departs Key West at 8 AM and will return around 5 PM. <http://www.drytortugasinfo.com/yankee-freedom>

