

Keys Traveler

THE MAGAZINE



Stewards of the Keys
Marathon Evolves
Dive Voluntourism
Key West Food Tours

fla-keys.com

For travelers to the Keys, the famed Florida Keys Overseas Highway provides sweeping turquoise vistas as far as the eye can see. The Keys highway features 42 bridges over water and is the only designated All-American Road in Florida. This aerial image, shot near Islamorada, shows the Channel 5 Bridge.

— Photograph by Scott Herder

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THE MAGAZINE

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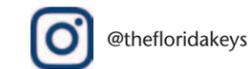
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CONTENTS

- 4 Stewards of the Keys Protect the Islands' Natural World
- 6 Dive into Environmental Protection
- 7 Blue Star Diving, Fishing Programs Help Sustain Keys Ecosystems
- 8 Marathon's New Eco-Friendly Resorts Help Lead Area's Evolution
- 10 'Connections Project' Bridges the Keys with Creativity
- 11 Captain Will Benson ... Obsessed with Florida Keys Fishing
- 12 Free Apps Spotlight History, Special Sites
- 13 Key West Food Tours: Spiced with Flavorful Heritage
- 14 11 Milestones in Key West's LGBTQ History
- BC Traveling Tips to the Florida Keys



Cover: Shelby Robertson, left, gets a tour of Lower Keys shallow-water marine habitats led by Captain Andrea Paulson of Relax Charters. Photograph by Rob O'Neal.

Stewards of the Keys Protect the Islands' Natural World

By Carol Shaughnessy

Visitors from around the globe come to the Florida Keys to experience the island chain's wealth of natural wonders. And local residents who live among those wonders — including the continental United States' only living coral barrier reef, an environmental treasure that parallels the Keys — are committed to protecting and nurturing them.

Maybe it's because the people of the tiny Keys islands live so close to the ocean, almost instinctively absorbing the rhythm of the tides and subtle seasonal changes. Or it might be that residents who love the Keys forge personal connections to the unique environment and therefore are motivated to preserve it.

Whatever the reason, scores of locals from Key Largo to Key West enrich their days with eco-activities and -experiences — and many have become stewards of the Keys' natural world and way of life, passionate and proactive about protecting those elements.

They include sustainable fishing and dive charter operators, hoteliers and innkeepers who manage green-focused properties, coral restoration innovators, leaders in



Islamorada artist Michelle Nicole Lowe paints images that reflect the need to protect Florida Keys marine life.

“voluntourism,” wildlife rehabilitation experts and those who offer on-the-water eco-tours and cultural excursions.

Many impart their earth-friendly mind-set to visitors, encouraging them to share the local passion for conservation while having memorable vacation experiences.

For example, Captain Andrea Paulson, owner-operator of Reelax Charters on Sugarloaf Key, takes clients on custom kayak eco-tours to the Lower Keys' pristine back-country and urges them to respect the environment as they would their own homes.

Bette Zirkelbach at Marathon's Turtle Hospital — the world's first state-licensed veterinary hospital for sea turtles — is dedicated to healing ill or injured turtles. Every day she inspires visitors touring the hospital to discover their own passion for the endangered reptiles.

The Keys offer travelers a remarkable variety of earth- and sea-friendly options to enjoy, guided by residents who cherish their close-to-nature lifestyle, strive to preserve it and have intriguing stories to tell.

They include Captain Billy Litmer of Honest Eco Tours, whose sense of environmental responsibility led him to design and build Key West's first electric-powered charter boat for sustainable dolphin-watching excursions.

Artists too are guardians of the Keys' natural world. Michelle Nicole Lowe is known for the vivid images of indigenous fish, birds and sea turtles found in her Islamorada gallery. Painted with skill and sensitivity, her pieces underscore the need to protect those creatures and their habitats.

You can discover the islands' unique environment — and meet the people who have become its stewards — during eco-travel experiences, paddleboard treks, explorations of wildlife refuges and rehabilitation centers, soft-adventure activities and visits to environmental attractions.

Meet coral restoration experts who are replanting new growths from coral nurseries to the reef, learn about



The Turtle Hospital's Bette Zirkelbach, front left, and founder Richie Moretti, front right, both longtime stewards of the Keys, release "Judy," a subadult loggerhead sea turtle.

their vital work and assist in their efforts during Keys voluntourism experiences. Dive or fish with a certified Blue Star operator, increasing your awareness about environmentally responsible dive techniques and catch-and-release fishing.

Or explore the campus and exhibits at Key Largo's Reef Environmental Education Foundation, where experts like Dr. Alli Candemmo share their commitment to marine conservation through citizen science, informative programs, research and special events like the annual REEF Fest.

Throughout the Keys, you can revel in nature's rich-

ness, immerse yourself in eco-experiences, enjoy opportunities for volunteer and learning vacations, and discover why local residents are so passionate about protecting their environment and lifestyle.

Once you make a personal connection to the Florida Keys' fascinating natural world, chances are you'll start embracing practices that preserve it ... and you too will become a steward of the Keys.

Florida Keys & Key West
**Connect
& Protect**

Dive

Into Environmental Protection

Travelers who want to add an enriching element to their Florida Keys scuba diving vacation can get involved in a rewarding volunteer experience, giving back to the destination and its unique marine ecosystems.

“Voluntourism” contributes to the self-sufficiency and sustainability of the Florida Keys. It makes the island chain a better place through environmental education and enables divers to learn about impacts on Florida’s reefs, the environment and how the average person can become a citizen scientist and support the only coral barrier reef in the continental United States.

Hands-on dive programs are offered regularly by Key Largo’s Coral Restoration Foundation. Each program’s educational element addresses coral health, corals’ func-

tion in marine ecosystems, identification of natural and manmade threats to coral and the means to protect the resource in the Florida Keys. Participants go on working dives to a coral nursery, discovering how nursery “trees” are cleaned and corals are prepared for outplanting, and to a reef restoration site.

Hundreds of divers make a difference each June during CRF’s annual CoralPalooza, an expansive coral outplanting effort from Key Largo to Key West.

The organization’s free OKCoral iOS smartphone app enables divers to distinguish differences among corals, identify whether corals have grown or fused together, and collect information and images at reef restoration sites they see on dives. That information can be submitted via the app.

On Summerland Key, Mote Marine Laboratory’s Elizabeth Moore International Center for Coral Reef Research and Restoration offers complimentary public tours on Tuesdays and Fridays, geared toward those interested in learning about the science behind coral restoration.

Divers also can collect survey data on reef fish populations for Key Largo’s Reef Environmental Education Foundation and participate in its annual Lionfish Derby Series, removing the invasive lionfish from Florida Keys waters.

In addition, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary’s Blue Star dive program enlists certified dive charter operators to reduce the impact of divers and snorkelers on the coral reef system through education, reef etiquette and conservation-related specialty courses for participating divers such as underwater naturalist, reef fish identification or buoyancy control.

— Julie Botteri

10 ‘Keymandments’ for the Florida Keys

Lighthearted but educational guidelines for residents and visitors; stewards of Florida Keys’ natural resources, to live and play by.

Plant a coral. Or adopt one of the cute little things, but don’t touch them on the reef.

Support the wildlife. Volunteer food, funds or time to a local wild bird center.

Take out the trash. Especially if it’s floating in the water.

Capture a lionfish. Any time and size — we can show you how.

Hike it, bike it or hoof it. They are low on eco-impact and high on fresh subtropical air.

Lease digital footprints. Share photos with friends and fans.

Catch dinner and release all fish you know you can eat.

Use a mooring buoy at dive sites. Save your back and leave the anchor aboard.

Conserve. Don’t consume. Reduce, reuse and recycle — even on vacation.

Get off the beaten path. Hike, bike, walk or kayak along trails throughout the Keys.



Divers from the Coral Restoration Foundation tend to a coral nursery ‘tree’ off Key Largo.

Tim Grollmund

Look before you book and help sustain the only barrier coral reef in the continental U.S. That’s the message the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary has for travelers booking Keys fishing, diving and snorkeling trips. The sanctuary covers some 2,900 square nautical miles of waters surrounding the Keys, including the coral reef that parallels the island chain.

Blue Star Diving, Fishing Programs Help Sustain Keys Ecosystems

The sanctuary’s Blue Star program, at sanctuaries.noaa.gov/bluestar, promotes sustainable recreational fishing, diving and snorkeling through practices that help conserve the Keys’ unique marine ecosystem. Blue Star fishing guides and dive and snorkel operators know sanctuary regulations and how to practice sustainability to protect the Keys’ underwater treasures.

Blue Star guides take online tests and are annually certified to become sanctuary partners and share educational information with clients.

Visitors can be assured that these operators are dedicated to reef sustainability, habitat conservation and proper fishing, diving and snorkeling etiquette.

— Laura Myers

By Laura Myers

Photographs by Bob Care



The Isla Bella Beach Resort spans 24 acres at the west end of Marathon.

Marathon's

New Eco-Friendly Resorts Help Lead Area's Evolution

Two new Middle Keys resorts — the boutique Grassy Flats Resort & Beach Club and the 24-acre Isla Bella Beach Resort — are helping transform the laidback destination of Marathon and inspiring longer overnight stays.

As it evolves, the 15-mile-long Marathon region still retains its roots.

"While we have the roots of a commercial fishing village, Marathon has been evolving into a destination with a rich variety of offerings," said Daniel Samess, CEO of the Marathon Chamber of Commerce and visitor center. "Isla Bella and Grassy Flats provide unique experiences."

Long known for marine animal centers and a family-friendly boating atmosphere, Marathon offers intriguing attractions for visitors to explore during extended stays.

Among them is the Turtle Hospital, the world's first state-licensed veterinary hospital for sea turtles, where experts treat and rehabilitate ill and injured turtles. Dolphin Research Center shelters dolphins and sea lions and offers interactive visitor programs. Florida Keys Aquarium Encounters' immersive experiences include snorkeling or diving in a 200,000-gallon saltwater coral reef tank.

Art lovers can enjoy the Shady Palm Art Gallery, show-

casing the work of artists from throughout the Keys.

On Grassy Key, oTHERside Boardsports cable adventure park offers kiteboarding, wakeboarding, paddleboarding and eco-products.

"In addition to that, we have activities such as kayaking and great trails like Boot Key Island that are untouched and undisturbed," said Samess.

Luring boaters since the 1950s is Faro Blanco Resort, with an on-site upscale 125-unit Hyatt Place and the Faro Blanco Yacht Club & Marina. Tours to the tiny island of Pigeon Key, which once housed workers who built the remarkable Florida Keys Over-Sea Railroad, depart from the marina.

The historic Old Seven Mile Bridge is undergoing a \$77.5 million renovation to preserve a 2.2-mile stretch for cycling and walking that is scheduled for completion by December 2021.

Marathon's two newest resorts have initiated in-house programs to help preserve the Keys' fragile environment.

The oceanfront, all-suite, energy-efficient Grassy Flats Resort & Beach Club at mile marker 58 on Grassy Key features the Humidor House with four queen suites, the four-bedroom Rhum House and the 10-unit Conch House with eight two-bedroom and two three-bedroom units.

Its on-site Barrel and Bale is a zero-waste Tiki bar built with locally sourced materials. The resort also has 12 aeroponic tower gardens and raises local fruit, vegetables, flowers, luffas and sugarcane.

When fully completed by 2021 with more than 30 units, Grassy Flats, through 270 solar panels, is to be the only Keys resort "exclusively powered by locally produced sustainable energy," said principal Matt Sexton.

The full-service 199-unit Isla Bella Beach Resort opened in April at mile marker 47, at the oceanside foot of the Seven Mile Bridge. It accommodates families, groups, meetings and weddings.

The resort uses eco-friendly to-go containers, utensils and paper straws. Locally sourced seafood is a priority.

Isla Bella amenities include complimentary bicycles, guided fishing expeditions, five pools, four food and beverage venues, a marina and more than 24,000 square feet of event space.

Also in the region, the 60-acre Hawks Cay Resort, with 427 villas and hotel rooms, is a long-time favorite destination resort as a Preferred Hotels & Resorts Lifestyle Collection member and AAA Four-Diamond Award-winner. Its Camp

Hawk Environmental Education Program for kids 5-12 has implemented an Everglades Literacy Program about Everglades National Park.

The resort features a \$50 million refurbishment that includes a sleek contemporary lobby, adults-only pool area with grill and bar, full-service spa, kids' activity center and Sixty-One Prime and Angler and Ale restaurants.

A 3,000-square-foot, two-story Keys-themed Marathon Jet Center is set for completion as a new full-service fixed base operator in 2020, adding to general aviation facilities at Florida Keys Marathon International Airport.



The Grassy Flats Resort & Beach Club is oceanfront and energy-efficient.

By Carol Shaughnessy

'Connections Project' Bridges the Keys with Creativity

The Florida Keys & Key West are connected by more than the iconic Overseas Highway and its 42 bridges. The quirky, charismatic islands are also connected by a vibrant community of creative spirits — and each year, pieces of their work are collected into a mural that bridges the Keys with colorful artistry.

Spearheaded by the Florida Keys Council of the Arts, it's called The Connections Project: A Mosaic of the Keys.

A new 24-foot-long mosaic mural is assembled each winter, made up of several hundred 6-inch-square canvases adorned by Keys artists and arts-minded residents.

The tiny canvases typically feature oils, watercolor, photography, col-

lage, mixed media, quilting, bead-work and more — depending on the individual artist's whim and talent. Subjects include tropical flowers, birds and sea life, palms and waterfront scenes, blazing sunsets, abstract symbols and local landmarks.

"We ask them to create art on the canvases in whatever medium or style they choose," said Elizabeth Young, executive director of the arts council. "The work is outstanding and really reflects the beauty and the uniqueness of the Keys."

Once the mural is assembled, it embarks on a "road show" tour that includes Key Largo, Islamorada, Marathon, the Lower Keys and Key West. Visiting and resident art lovers can view it during receptions and exhibitions, where it illustrates the enduring connection between cultural

initiatives and the Keys community.

The variety of subject matter, mood and color palette of the individual canvases make the mural distinctive and intriguing. Viewers are impressed by its vivid nature and the number of contributing Keys talents.

Art enthusiasts can forge a permanent connection to the mural, and to the local cultural scene, by donating predetermined amounts to the arts council during the road show. In return, they receive randomly selected 6-inch canvases after the mosaic is disassembled.

Proceeds from The Connections Project benefit Keys artists through grants from the council — making more "connections" that help the creative community continue to enrich and enliven the island chain.



Art fans examine a past Connections Project mural at a Florida Keys government building in Key Largo.

By Julie Botteri



Captain Will Benson... Obsessed with Florida Keys Fishing

Captain Will Benson, a premier fishing guide and filmmaker on Sugarloaf Key, makes his living sight-fishing, pursuing permit on fly. It's something he considers the hardest, most challenging type of outdoor recreational activity in the Florida Keys.

Saltwater fly-fishing is Benson's obsession. Born in Key West, he was raised around marinas and captains, absorbing the full-time guiding community's professionalism, etiquette and awareness.

"I learned pretty quickly to find my own fishing spots, do my own thing and pay really close attention to where the fish are or I'd screw up the fishing," said Benson.

"To this day, I try to really be mindful of where I'm running the boat around and not disturb the habitat and the fishery," he said.

A leader among the current generation of fly guides, Benson has led four permit-on-fly anglers to grand championships in prestigious challenges including 2019's Del Brown Permit Tournament. Another notable accomplishment was landing a grand slam — catching and releasing a tarpon, permit and bonefish on the same day — on fly, solo and capturing it on film.

His efforts to build and strengthen unifying partnerships between the recreational fishing community and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary include involvement in the Blue Star Fishing Guides program,

which identifies charter boat captains committed to sustainable fishing and educating their customers about resource protection. The sanctuary recognized Benson's outstanding contributions by naming him 2017's Volunteer of the Year.

Benson also instills an appreciation for protecting Keys resources in his two young children.

"To have something that we're passionate about, and you're focused and concentrating on the environment ... that is so healthy, it's Zen-like," Benson said.

His business, WorldANGLING, employs guides to deliver flats, bay boat, light-tackle and offshore fishing experiences in waters from Key West to Everglades National Park. WorldANGLING.com features action-filled fishing films and photography.

"This place, this brotherhood, this community of fishing guides is the singular best on the planet," Benson advised. "And if you want to do fly-fishing and you want to do it at the highest level, there's no other place to go — no better place to start than the Florida Keys."

Captain Will Benson shows off a permit caught on fly while being videotaped for a production.



The Harry S. Truman Little White House museum is highlighted on the Key West Historic Marker Tours app.



Andy Newman

Free Apps Spotlight History, Special Sites

Key West is a paradise for history and architecture buffs, combining a rich multicultural heritage and one of the United States' largest historic districts with the densest accumulation of frame vernacular buildings.

Historic sites and insights into



the island's culture can be discovered via a free smartphone app that showcases more than 120 notable locations in the colorful Old Town district.

Launched by Key West Historic Marker Tours, the app guides visitors on a self-led walking tour past gems that include restored cigar-makers' cottages, 19th-century homes adorned with wooden "gingerbread" trim, former haunts of Ernest Hemingway and Tennessee Williams, a Civil War-era fort and the southernmost house in the continental U.S.

Selected by local historian Bruce Neff, each site bears a Key West Historic Marker plaque commemorating its place in the island's past. Tour participants can learn about the area's cigar industry, literary community, Cuban heritage, churches, early shipwreck salvage and more.

Overseen by the Key West Art & Historical Society, the Key West Historic Marker Tour's smartphone

app can be accessed at kwhmt.com.

Enthusiasts also can find a free "Voices in History" phone tour at 305-507-0300 and visit KWHMT.org for a virtual tour, vintage photographs, maps and intriguing information about Key West's bygone days.

For visitors exploring other Keys, northbound and southbound Overseas Highway Driving Tours are part of the free Florida Keys & Key West Travel App.

The tours spotlight iconic and historic locations, scenic vistas and unique activities along the famed highway that connects the entire Florida Keys island chain. Users are alerted about them in advance so they can plan safe stops.

As well as containing the driving tours, the Florida Keys & Key West Travel App is a comprehensive guide designed to enrich visitors' experiences in the island chain. It can be downloaded free from the App Store or Google Play through links at fla-keys.com.

— Carol Shaughnessy

KEY WEST FOOD TOURS: SPICED WITH FLAVORFUL HERITAGE



Want to sample savory Florida Keys signature dishes, walk off a few calories and learn about Key West's unique history in about three hours?

Key West Food Tours, created and curated by island city native Analise Smith, enable visitors to experience the island's vibrant food scene and rich cultural heritage while gaining insights into the local way of life.

"With our position between the Atlantic and Gulf, we have access to some of the best and most abundant seafood in the country," Smith said. "We are lucky to have strong influences from not only Cubans, but Bahamians and the rest of the Caribbean."

The original Southernmost Food Tasting & Cultural Walking Tour covers 1.4 miles and five venues, celebrating Cuban and Caribbean influences with roast pork, fresh fish, a rum drink and Key lime pie.

The Seafood Lovers Tasting & Cultural Walking Tour, "curated with Sea-Foodies in mind," includes six venues

and features fish tacos, lobster mac and cheese and locally crafted beer.

On each tour, local guides share knowledge and recommendations of architectural gems, tropical flora, colorful Key West attractions and restaurants.

Key West Bar Crawl and private custom tours also can be booked.

Planned to launch in 2020 is a Hemingway Experience for private groups. Its itinerary includes visits to the Ernest Hemingway Home & Museum and Papa's Pilar Hemingway Rum Co. Distillery, and samplings of famed author Ernest Hemingway's rum cocktails, Cuban food and Key lime pie.

The tours give participants an insider's glimpse into eating and imbibing like a local.

"We truly believe that food tastes better when you know the story behind it," Smith said.

— Laura Myers



Photos courtesy Key West Food Tours (3)



Analise Smith shows a conch shell to Key West Food Tours participants.

Key West Food Tours guests photograph Florida Keys cuisine.



11 Milestones in Key West's LGBTQ History

For some 250,000 gay and lesbian visitors each year, Key West offers a welcome as warm as its subtropical temperatures. Lying at the southernmost end of the Florida Keys, surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, the island was one of the first popular gay vacation meccas — and remains a consistently top-ranked LGBTQ travel destination.

In fact, Key West's modern-day history was shaped by LGBTQ personalities, influences and events.

1941: Tennessee Williams first visits Key West. He subsequently buys a house and lives there until his death in 1983, helping form the literary and cultural community that still flourishes. A museum and annual festival celebrate his Key West connection.

1941: Leonard Bernstein writes his first published piece of music, "Sonata for Clarinet and Piano," during his initial visit to Key West. He also begins writing a ballet titled "Conch Town." Bernstein spends significant time on the island throughout his life.

1978: Key West Business Guild is established to support the LGBTQ community and encourage tourism. One of North America's oldest gay and lesbian destination marketing organizations, it helps Key West become and remain a world-renowned LGBTQ vacation spot.

1983: Richard Heyman is elected mayor of Key West, becoming the United States' first openly gay mayor. His legacy endures both in politics and in the Gingerbread Square Gallery he founded in 1974.

1996: The Red Shoe Drop (a.k.a. Drag Queen Drop) debuts on New Year's Eve at the New Orleans House complex on Duval Street. Drag queen Sushi, perched in a super-sized red high-heel shoe, is lowered from the balcony at midnight, spoofing New York's Times Square "ball drop." CNN has featured the event many times on its national New Year's Eve broadcast.

1997: The Key West AIDS Memorial overlooking the Atlantic Ocean is completed. Believed to be world's only official municipal monument of its kind, it is inscribed with

the names of over 1,000 men and women who died of AIDS.

2000: One Human Family is unanimously adopted by the Key West City Commission as the city's official philosophy — and later is adopted for the entire Florida Keys. Local designer J.T. Thompson began the One Human Family movement by printing bumper stickers with the message, "All people are created equal members of ONE HUMAN FAMILY."

2003: A 1.25-mile-long rainbow flag is unfurled along the length of Duval Street from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic Ocean during Key West's 2003 Pride celebration. The banner was sewn on the island by Gilbert Baker, creator of the original rainbow flag, to mark its 25th anniversary.

Sections of the Key West flag have been displayed at Pride events worldwide.

2015: The Florida Keys' first same-sex wedding is performed Jan. 6, moments after marriage equality begins in Florida. The ceremony unites Aaron Huntsman and William Lee Jones, who won a lawsuit to overturn Florida's same-sex marriage ban.

2015: Four permanent rainbow crosswalks are installed by the City of Key West at the intersection of Duval and Petronia streets — the heart of the LGBTQ entertainment district.

2018: Key West's first lesbian mayor is elected. Teri Johnston, a former city commissioner, is the first openly gay woman elected mayor of a major Florida city.

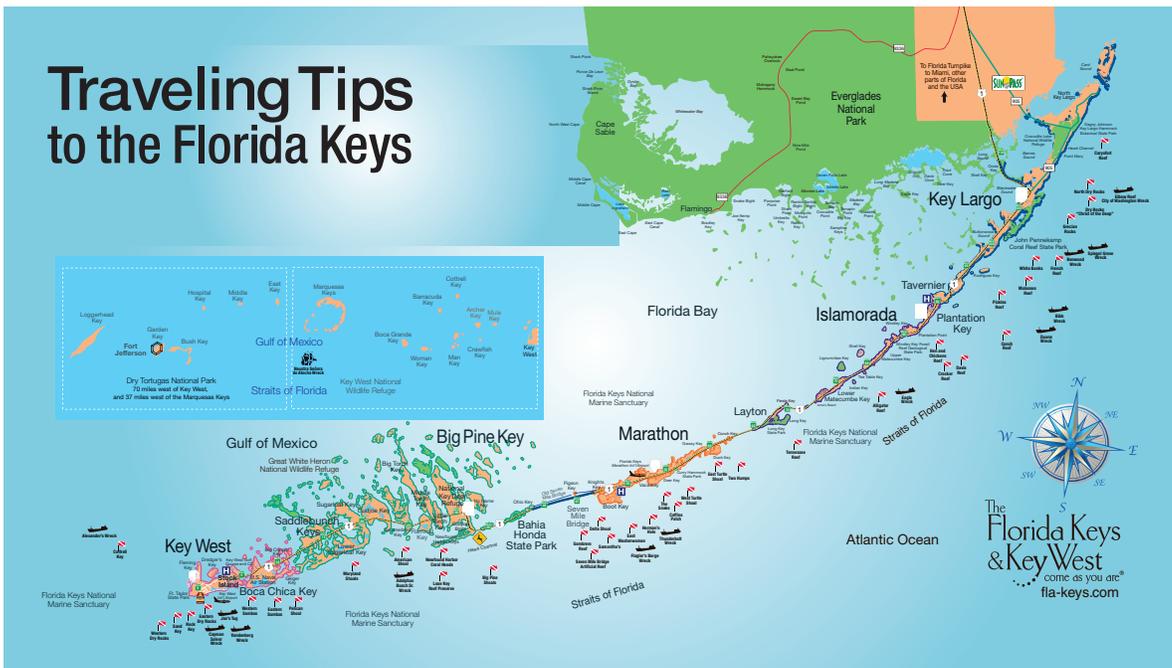
— Carol Shaughnessy

ALL PEOPLE ARE CREATED EQUAL MEMBERS OF
ONE HUMAN FAMILY



Clockwise from top, photos by Andy Newman, courtesy of Monroe County Public Library and Rob O'Neal (2)

Traveling Tips to the Florida Keys



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FloridaKeysTV



keysvoices.com

The 125-mile-long Florida Keys island chain is linked to mainland Florida by U.S. Highway 1, the Overseas Highway. Visitors can fly into Miami International Airport (MIA) or Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL) and from there can reach the Keys by airport shuttle bus or rental car. Travelers can reach Key Largo, the gateway to the Keys, in about an hour from Miami or an hour and 45 minutes from Fort Lauderdale.

Air Service to the Florida Keys

For an up-to-date roster of commercial airlines and on-demand charter operators serving Key West International and Florida Keys Marathon International Airports, go to fla-keys.com/how-to-get-here.

Driving Directions

From Miami International Airport (MIA), take LeJeune Road south to 836 West. Take the Florida Turnpike (State Road 91) south toward Key West.

The Turnpike ends at U.S. 1 in Florida City. Follow U.S. 1 south about 22 miles to Key Largo and you and your travel companions will be in the Florida Keys.

From Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL), exit the airport and follow the signs for I-595 West. Take 595 to the Florida Turnpike and follow

the signs for the Florida Keys.

From farther north, take the Florida Turnpike south to just below Fort Lauderdale, where Exit 4 joins the southern portion of the Turnpike that ends at U.S. 1 in Florida City. Follow U.S. 1 south into the Florida Keys.

From Florida's west coast, take I-75 (Alligator Alley) south to the Miami exit, and south to the Turnpike Extension.

Driving Data to Keys/Key Largo

FROM	MILES	KM	HOURS
Miami	50	80	1
Fort Myers	200	320	4
Tampa	300	480	6
Orlando	280	450	5.25

Distance from Miami

REGION	MILES	KM	MILE MARKER
Key Largo	50	80	107-90
Islamorada	76	122	89-66
Marathon	111	178	65-45
Lower Keys	128	205	44-5
Key West	159	254	4-0

Via Bus

Bus/shuttle connections from MIA and FLL to the Florida Keys allow traveling to the Keys without renting a car.

Via Boat

Ferry connections from Fort Myers or Marco Island to Key West are offered via the Key West Express. Voyages take approximately 3.5 hours.

Extensive details on getting to the Florida Keys & Key West are available at:

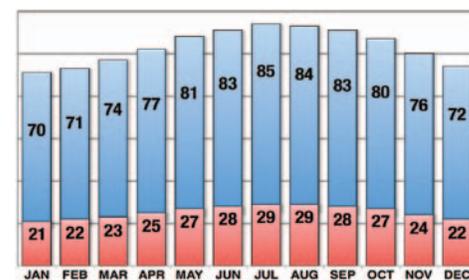
fla-keys.com/how-to-get-here

Weather/Climat

Wherever you are right now, chances are the weather is better in the Florida Keys. That's true even on a summer day. The hottest it's ever been in Key West is 97° F (36° C), and that was in 1880. At summer's peak, the average high air temperature is about 89° F (32° C). The Keys are devoid of superhighways or urban sprawl to absorb and radiate the sun's heat. And the islands are cooled by sea breezes.

In the winter, the Keys are typically the warmest region in the continental U.S. There has never been a frost in Key West, according to the U.S. Weather Service.

Below are past 30-year monthly air temperatures, according to the Key West weather office. Temperatures in blue shades are Fahrenheit and those in red are Celsius.



Help and More Information

If you're traveling in the Keys and need any help, call the toll-free visitors assistance line at 800-771-KEYS. It's staffed 24 hours a day. To contact visitor offices in the Keys, call 800-FLA-KEYS. The Keys website at fla-keys.com has a live chat feature with visitor specialists available during U.S. weekday business hours to aid travelers.

