

Keys Traveler

THE MAGAZINE

New Old Seven Mile Bridge
Reunite, rediscover
Wide-open spaces
Small Keys resorts

fla-keys.com



For travelers to the Keys, the famed Florida Keys Overseas Highway ends in Key West. The Keys highway features 42 bridges over water and is a designated All-American Road. Beyond Key West are miles of wide-open spaces, protected refuges and the historic Dry Tortugas National Park.

— *Photograph by Rob O'Neal*

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Cover: The refurbished Old Seven Mile Bridge, at left, connects
Marathon with historic Pigeon Key.
Photograph by Andy Newman



10 Experiences to savor 'only in the Keys'

By Carol Shaughnessy
Photographs by Rob O'Neal

The Florida Keys & Key West are known worldwide for their unparalleled natural beauty, laid-back atmosphere and year-round warmth. But they also offer environmental, cultural and adventure activities that can't be enjoyed anywhere except in the island chain.

Make lasting vacation memories by experiencing these "only in the Keys" activities.

Cruise on the original **African Queen**. Take an unforgettable 90-minute Key Largo canal cruise on the African Queen, the actual

vessel from the 1951 film starring Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn. Step aboard the venerable boat, restored to look much like it did in the film, and imagine yourself on the silver screen.

Relax at a one-of-a kind hotel — underwater. Book a stay at **Jules' Undersea Lodge**, the world's first and only underwater hotel, permanently anchored beneath the surface of a Key Largo lagoon. The two-bedroom air-conditioned facility offers comfortable accommodations and breathtaking views and is

popular for unique honeymoons.

Feed the "resident" tarpon at **Robbie's Marina**. Discover an eclectic mix of outdoor shops, food vendors and watersports options at Robbie's Marina in Islamorada. Buy a bucket of bait fish to feed the resident tarpon, getting up close and personal with the huge "silver kings" as they leap to grab their treats. The quirky activity is sure to elicit smiles.

Get hooked in the **Sport Fishing Capital of the World**. Book a skilled charter captain or guide in Islamorada, called the Sport Fishing

Capital of the World, for exhilarating offshore or backcountry angling. The Keys claim more saltwater fishing world records than any other location — and you can target everything from bonefish to powerful blue marlin.

Meet “patients” at a pioneering sea turtle hospital. Encounter rescued sea turtles during a behind-the-scenes tour of the planet’s first state-licensed veterinary hospital for these fascinating creatures. Marathon’s **Turtle Hospital** treats, rehabilitates and nurtures sick and injured turtles and, whenever possible, releases them back into the ocean.

Drive across the **Seven Mile Bridge**. It’s a “bucket list” experience to drive over the landmark Seven Mile Bridge, one of the longest segmental bridges in the world and the centerpiece of the iconic Florida Keys Overseas Highway. The majestic span, stretching above the blue Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, connects Marathon to the Lower Keys.

Discover tiny **Key deer**. On Big Pine Key, you can glimpse a real-



Tiny Key deer are indigenous to the Lower Florida Keys and should be viewed, but not fed.

life “Bambi” that’s about the size of a large dog. Tiny Key deer, an endangered species that lives only in the Lower Keys, can be seen grazing especially in the early morning and at dusk, but wildlife officials always caution not to feed the diminutive deer.

Help scientists with hands-on **coral reef restoration** at one of several facilities in the Keys. Among them is Mote Marine Laboratory’s Summerland Key location featuring the Reef Revival program. Volunteer divers can help the experts at Mote’s underwater coral nursery near Looe Key nurture corals destined for outplanting on the continental United States’ only living coral barrier reef.

Ride in **Truman’s presidential limo**. At Key West’s Harry S. Truman Little White House — Florida’s only presidential museum — take the VIP White Glove Tour that includes a ride in one of Truman’s official limousines. America’s 33rd president spent nearly six months in Key West during his 1945-1953 tenure, essentially governing the United States

from the island city.

Take a “southernmost selfie.” Key West’s red, black and yellow **Southernmost Point marker** isn’t terribly picturesque, but hundreds of visitors take their photos beside it every day. Why? Because the ungainly buoy replica marks the southernmost spot in the continental United States. Overlooking the Atlantic Ocean on Whitehead Street, its brightly-painted body bears lettering that proclaims it’s just 90 miles from Cuba. What better place for a photo op?

Of course, the Florida Keys also are home to many other one-of-a-kind adventures. Experience them personally, and you’ll realize why so many visitors agree that the most memorable vacations await “only in the Keys.”

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- jul.com
- Robbies.com
- fla-keys.com/islamorada/fishing/
- turtlehospital.org
- fws.gov/refuge/National_Key_Deer_Refuge
- mote.org
- trumanlittlewhitehouse.org

ANDY NEWMAN



The African Queen, the same boat piloted by Humphrey Bogart during its namesake movie, plies a Key Largo canal. Keys visitors can take a ride on the restored vessel that is more than 100 years old.

New

Old Seven Mile Bridge Reopens

By Laura Myers

The refurbished, historic Old Seven Mile Bridge that connects Marathon with Pigeon Key is at right, while its more modern counterpart that links Marathon with the Lower Keys is at left.

Once again, travelers can cycle, walk, run and skate along a 2.2-mile section of the Old Seven Mile Bridge that parallels the famed Florida Keys Overseas Highway. Reopened in January 2022, the landmark structure is the gateway to historic Pigeon Key, a tiny island nestled beneath it.

Stretching high above the brilliant azure waters of the Florida Keys, the bridge nicknamed “Old Seven” also is a recreational playground in the Middle Keys and Marathon area — a fresh-air “linear park” that offers prime sunset viewing, photography opportunities and the chance to spot sea turtles, rays and other marine life in the water below.

The bridge and Pigeon Key are both listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

“Old Seven” was built as part of railroad magnate Henry Flagler’s Florida Keys Over-Sea Railroad that was completed in January 1912. Extending more than 100 miles over open water, the railroad connected the Keys with each other and the

Florida mainland for the first time.

The \$44 million renovation of “Old Seven” began in 2017.

Contributing to funding the project were the Florida Department of Transportation, Monroe County and the City of Marathon. Another \$33 million has been earmarked for maintenance over the next 30 years.

Restoration work included structural steel, spalling and bridge joint system repairs; application of a new coatings system, crack injection, deck cleaning and sealing; new pedestrian and bicycle handrails, signage and pavement markings; and 35 nearby parking spots, although vehicular traffic on the bridge is prohibited.

Original construction in the early 1900s was grueling. The bridge’s four sections consisted of steel-girder spans, laid atop concrete foundation piers secured to bedrock up to 28 feet deep below the waterline. A swinging span let boats pass between the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean.

Pigeon Key, home to about 400

workers who helped build the Over-Sea Railroad, also served as a supply depot, dormitory with commissary and passenger train stop.

Today, the island is open to visitors. Eight buildings include one housing a museum and artifacts detailing the history of Flagler’s railway.

The newer Seven Mile Bridge (actually 6.79 miles long), which opened in May 1982, is one of the world’s longest segmental bridges. A 65-foot-high clearance allows boat passage between the Gulf and the Atlantic. Each April, some 1,500 runners compete in the annual Seven Mile Bridge Run staged on the newer span.

Salt-sprayed “Old Seven” is a lasting tribute to Flagler, a persevering dreamer who envisioned the Keys as a subtropical vacation destination.

Quite simply, the two bridges are intricate engineering marvels. Now as in the past, they are recognized throughout the world as enduring symbols of the Florida Keys.

pigeonkey.net
friendsofoldseven.org

Artist Abigail White's "conch shell home" images are featured at the Key West Art Center.

Key West Art Center has nurtured local artists since the 1930s

In the mid-1930s, when the Great Depression had devastated the Florida Keys and much of the United States, the federal Works Progress Administration helped bring artists and writers to Key West to paint murals, write guidebooks and teach craft classes to revitalize the economy.

Some of those classes were taught at the Key West Community Art Center, believed to be the WPA's first public art project, which grew into the Key West Art Center & Gallery. Today the facility, housed since 1960 in a historic structure near Mallory Square, is renowned as the oldest artist membership organization in the Keys.

Inside the picturesque gallery building, which dates back to the 1890s and features the work of some 50 Keys artists, a visual tapestry of color and creativity awaits visitors. Paintings in many mediums line the walls, interspersed with displays of ceramics and sculptures,



Key West artist Fran Decker discusses her work with a patron at the Key West Art Center.



prints and even handcrafted jewelry.

Art lovers can view Maggie Ruley's vibrant paintings, shipwright artisan Thomas Avery's multigenre creations, Jane Grannis' "Keysware" ceramics, Kim Workman's *gyotaku* fish prints, Abigail White's "conch shell home" images, Dawn Wilkins' nature-print designs and much more.

The upstairs gallery houses a permanent exhibit spotlighting the center's history and the works of the late Martha Watson Sauer, who was employed by the WPA to teach weaving and watercolor classes. She also produced artwork for WPA tourist brochures, the Key West Aquarium and other attractions. Her fine art is distinctive and rich in sun-dappled light, evoking a dreamlike sense of the past.

The Key West Art Center's other offerings include classes and workshops, some taught online via Zoom, to share insights into multiple aspects and disciplines of visual artistry.

In addition, the center presents the annual open-air Key West Craft Show in late January and Old Island Days Art Festival in late February, with proceeds supporting its programs and building. Juried to ensure high quality, the shows are a tradition for art lovers and talented exhibitors from the Florida Keys and around North America.

From the WPA era throughout its venerable history, the nonprofit center has remained true to its mission: providing a year-round "home" for local artists and their work, and safeguarding the heritage of Key West as a city of artists. — Carol Shaughnessy

keywestartcenter.com



Sharing an Islamorada sunset is a perfect way to deepen bonds between friends and loved ones.

For decades the Florida Keys island chain has been renowned as a realm of natural beauty, open spaces and infinite horizons — a relaxing, rejuvenating escape from the pressures of everyday life.

It's a place that values sustainability and the preservation of environmental wonders, and it's a uniquely exotic locale despite being located at the southernmost tip of the continental United States.

After global pandemic constraints and separations, people are hungry to reconnect with the individuals and activities that matter most to them. And the Florida Keys are an ideal location to do that.

Stretching 125 miles out into blue-green water, the Keys are a string of small, colorful island communities linked by the breathtaking Overseas Highway, one of two federally designated All-American Roads in Florida. Along the subtropical island chain visitors can find open-air natural areas of land and sea, offerings that support well-

ness and personal enrichment, and chances to reunite with valued people and rediscover meaningful pastimes and places.

The Keys' vast open expanses — including four national wildlife refuges and the protected waters of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary — offer seemingly endless opportunities to rediscover the natural world after coronavirus confinement, savor the renewal that comes from “unplugged” time spent immersed in nature and reunite with friends and family to share unforgettable experiences.

In the Keys, you can strengthen ties with family members while kayaking through the tranquil Lower Keys backcountry, observing the graceful sway and dance of sea birds and tropical fish, or delighting in the magic of a dolphin-watch excursion. Reunite with friends as you discover the rejuvenating rhythm and flow of paddleboard yoga, or dive into the blue depths



By Carol Shaughnessy • Photograph by Andy Newman

Reunite and rediscover in the Florida Keys

to encounter a fascinating undersea world.

Reawaken your creativity during intimate classes led

by Florida Keys artists and artisans, or renew the bond with your spouse or significant other on a slow, romantic sunset sail followed by a water's edge seafood dinner under the stars.

Rediscover the joy of giving back with a "voluntourism" adventure, helping to preserve the continental United States' only living coral barrier reef — an environmental treasure that parallels the Keys.

And because the island chain offers some of the best saltwater fishing in the world, there's nothing like heading out with a buddy or two and a Keys charter captain to share an interval of open water, clean salt air and a heart-pounding test of will and skill.

In fact, the Keys' easygoing vibe and rich variety of experiences mean you can make your visit an opportunity to rediscover whatever ... or whoever ... matters most in your life.

Today, while coming to terms with a world greatly changed, it's more important than ever to do just that — and to rediscover the activities and adventures that make your senses tingle and your smile spread from ear to ear. Because in those rare and magical moments, you also rediscover yourself.



ROB O'NEAL

A family walks back to a boat after exploring a sandbar off the Lower Keys.

By Julie Botteri
Photo by Rob O'Neal

The shallow-water backcountry flats of the Lower Keys are part of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

Wander the Keys' wide-open spaces

Florida Keys visitors can rediscover a place embracing sustainability and the preservation of environmental wonders, filled with hardwood hammocks and rainforest areas, sandy beaches and on-the-water relaxation. In the vast openness of the islands, seclusion is intrinsic, and horizons are endless.

For those seeking on-the-water activities, kayaking and paddleboarding combine mind and body relaxation, healthful exercise and eco-experiences. Ambitious stand-up paddlers can catch tradewinds on a “downwinder” to cover distance or use a board as a fishing or yoga platform when winds are nonexistent.

Few paddling experiences are more quietly enjoyable than isolated tours through backcountry flats and along the clear, shallow fringes of mangrove forests.

The Florida Keys also are among the world's top destinations for year-

round bird watching. Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park, Long Key State Park and Dry Tortugas National Park are among Keys native habitat stops along the South Florida segment of the Great Florida Birding Trail. Birders can view migrating species such as warblers, white-crowned pigeons, year-round tidal waders and spring-nesting sea birds, terns, noddies, boobies and resident mangrove cuckoos and roseate spoonbills.

The Lower Keys' National Key Deer Refuge's 9,000-plus acres of mangrove forests, freshwater and salt marsh wetlands, pine rockland forests and tropical hardwood hammocks are an

annual stopping point for thousands of migratory birds and a winter home to many North American bird species.

In the Middle Keys' Curry Hammock State Park, view or count thousands of falcons, raptors and eagles that fly through the Keys each fall between mid-September and early November — one of



Serenity Eco Therapy, based in Key Largo, offers paddleboarding meditation and yoga in the Keys.

SERENITY ECO THERAPY

the country's most prolific annual migration destinations for peregrine falcons.

The Florida Keys are dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation and release of native and migratory birds back to the wild. The nonprofit Florida Keys Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center, Key West Wildlife Center and Marathon Wild Bird Center provide sanctuary for sick, injured and orphaned birds, and permanent habitat for some that cannot safely return to the wild.

Also in Marathon is the 63-acre Crane Point Museum and Nature Center, a tropical oasis of hardwood trees, 2.5 miles of rustic interpretive nature trails with colorful exotic vegetation, educational displays, endangered native foliage, unusual geologic features and even ancient ocean fossils. Discover the Adderley House, the family homestead constructed by Bahamian immigrant George Adderley in the early 20th century.

The Keys' natural world provides the rejuvenation that comes from time spent outdoors, and this unique environment is just waiting to be explored.

fla-keys.com/eco-tourism



KRISTIE KILLAM

Beautiful pink wading birds called roseate spoonbills, shown here in the Lower Keys, wave their spoon-shaped bills underwater to feed.

ROB O'NEAL



Among the most remote wide-open spaces in the Florida Keys is Fort Jefferson in Dry Tortugas National Park.

Florida Keys rich in angling diversity

The subtropical weather of the Florida Keys, the nearby Gulf Stream and the unique geography of the arc of islands creates a year-round fishing environment unique in the world.

The Keys are at the center of the confluence of the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, Gulf Stream, Florida Bay and the Florida Everglades, enabling anglers to fish in different bodies of water on the same day.

According to the International Game Fish Association, more saltwater world records have been established in the Keys than any other angling destination on the globe.

An edible, even noteworthy catch is possible virtually any time. Each Keys region enjoys its own specialized fishery. Exceptional table fare comes from yellowtail snapper, blackfin tuna and the popular summer pelagic,



Julia Bernstein, 10, and Captain Dale Bittner show off a mutton snapper caught off Key West.

dolphin fish (also called mahi-mahi).

Pioneering Keys captains who fish at depths of 1,200 feet or more are successfully catching deep-water swordfish during daylight hours — a practice virtually unheard-of until

recent years.

Off the Keys' "inner" curve and the Florida mainland is Florida Bay, locally dubbed the backcountry or flats. This region of shallow waters is home to game fish such as bonefish, tarpon, permit, redfish and snook.

Hiring a backcountry guide is recommended since these oft-unmarked areas can be confusing and potentially treacherous for the inexperienced.

Permit can be found on flats everywhere in between the Lower Keys and far north Key Largo, showing up in the greatest numbers April through September.

Tarpon, or "silver kings," range from 60 to 150 pounds and are challenged Keyswide in the spring on flats and in deeper channels. Between April and July, they congregate near Middle Keys bridges, creating one of the finest tarpon fisheries.

A successful and educational day of fishing is best accomplished with one of the Keys' experienced charter captains. Much can be learned from the offshore captains and backcountry guides of the Keys, whose knowledge of local waters and local species is unparalleled. — Julie Botteri

fla-keys.com/fishing

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. It's low on eco-impact and high on fresh subtropical air.

Leave digital footprints. Share photos with friends and fans.

Catch dinner and release all fish you know you can't 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.

Dive into the secluded, distinctive Florida Keys

By Julie Botteri

Known around the globe as a paradise for ocean enthusiasts, divers and snorkelers, the Florida Keys island chain is home to the continental United States' only contiguous living coral barrier reef.

The reef tract is carefully protected by the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and contains stunning coral formations, brilliantly hued tropical fish and an incredibly diverse population of plants and animals.

Water temperatures range from the mid-70s Fahrenheit in winter months to the 80s in summer, virtually guaranteeing an enjoyable experience year-round. Professional operators from Key Largo to Key West offer excursions led by experts passionate about ocean conservation.

Keys diving and snorkeling are characterized by two unique programs created to spotlight secluded reefs and shipwrecks, each with a souvenir journal. The Florida

Keys Wreck Trek program challenges divers to explore nine shipwreck sites: Duane, Benwood, Eagle, Thunderbolt, Adolphus Busch Sr., Cayman Salvager, Joe's Tug, and two of the world's largest ships intentionally

sunk as artificial reefs — Spiegel Grove and Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg.

Ideal for first timers and families, the Reef Explorer program enables snorkelers and divers to collect validation stamps after they've visited one (or all!) of the journal's highlighted coral reefs. In lesser-known spots, take time to examine the reefs, soaking it all in — from critters in corals to starfish, seahorses, turtles and trunkfish.

Passionate divers can make an even deeper Keys connection, embarking on coral restoration dives as “citizen scientists” to witness firsthand how coral reefs are being revitalized and restored, and assist with monitoring the wellness of corals in existing colonies.

Divers can join Key Largo's Coral Restoration Foundation, Mote Marine Laboratory's Elizabeth Moore International Center for Coral Reef Research and Restoration on Summerland Key and Islamorada's I.CARE to help scientists outplant corals raised in land-based and offshore nurseries to Keys “iconic reefs” identified by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for restoration. “Mission: Iconic Reefs” is a \$100 million effort to fortify seven prominent Keys coral reefs over a period of 20 years: Cheeca and Eastern Dry Rocks, Newfound Harbor and Carysfort, Horseshoe, Sombrero and Looe Key reefs.

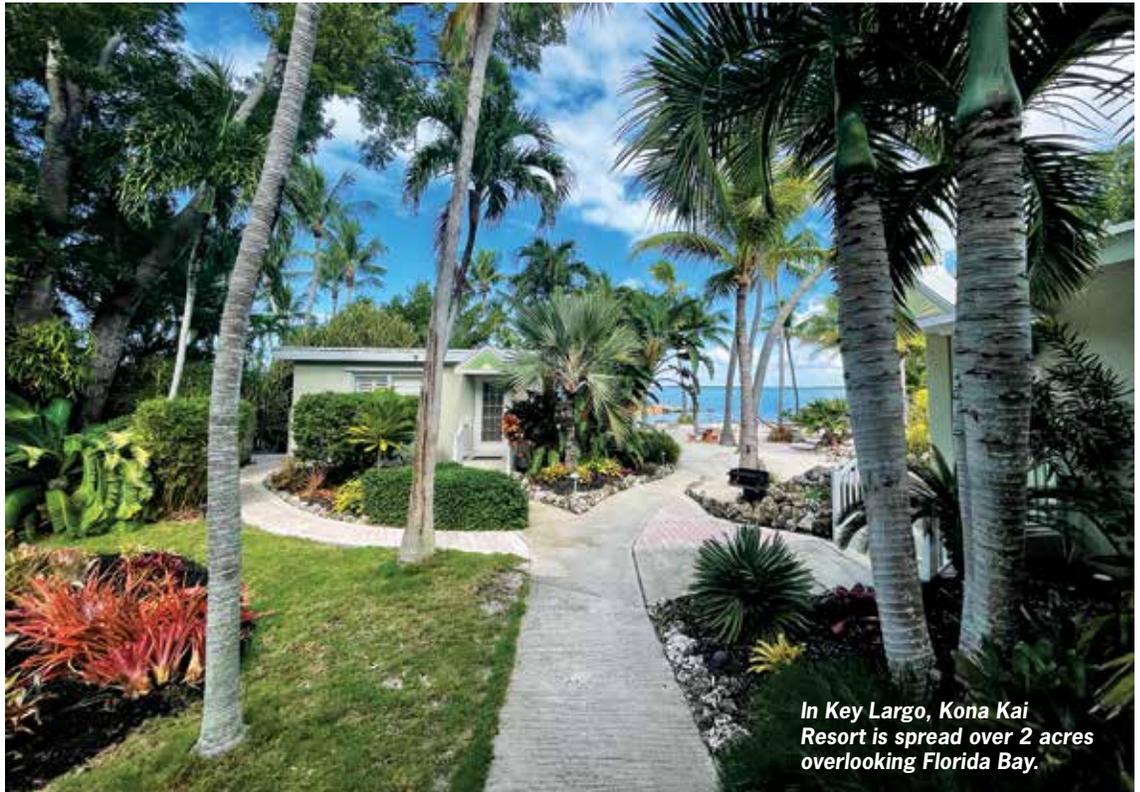
fla-keys.com/diving

TIM GROLLMUND



Divers tend to a coral nursery off the Upper Keys.

Warm welcomes await at small Keys resorts



In Key Largo, Kona Kai Resort is spread over 2 acres overlooking Florida Bay.

Florida Keys travelers seeking small “only in the Keys” resorts with big amenities have many options — cottage-style, palm-lined luxury, eco-properties, bed-and-breakfasts and historic inns.

“The Keys are fortunate to have some truly unique, intimate, independent properties,” said Jodi Weinhofer, president of the Lodging Association of the Florida Keys and Key West. “Each provides a unique stay for guests seeking to experience the real Florida Keys, rather than a more typical ‘brand’ experience.”

Here are just a few small properties where guests can enjoy a quintessential Keys experience.

Key Largo: At the boutique Kona Kai Resort, Gallery and Botanic Gardens, spread over 2 acres overlooking Florida Bay, guests age 14 and older can enjoy 13 unique cottage-style rooms and suites. An 800-square-foot on-site gallery showcases original curated local art and fine gifts.

Islamorada: Fans of the Netflix series “Bloodline” can stay at The Moorings Village resort, home to the Blue Charlotte house, a seven-night minimum stay vacation rental known as the “Rayburn House” because it was home to the series protagonists. Palm-fringed with 11 acres tucked among lush subtropical oceanfront grounds, the exclusively private Moorings boasts one of the Keys’ few natural sand beaches and seven individual cottages: six one-bedrooms and a three-bedroom, each with full kitchen. Two new cottages are planned in 2022.

Marathon: The 2.5-acre oceanfront Grassy Flats Resort & Beach Club has 10 suites, some with two and

three bedrooms, on Grassy Key. Eco-practices include use of plant-based detergents and composted seaweed to fertilize groves bearing fruit for signature cocktails at its expanded Tiki restaurant and bar. There’s floating cabana service on sand flats and two pools. An additional wing, with 28 oceanfront balcony rooms and kitchens, was completed in February 2022.

Big Pine Key & the Lower Keys: The boutique beachfront four-room Deer Run on the Atlantic in Big Pine Key’s National Key Deer Refuge is the Keys’ only Florida Green Lodging Program 4-Palm property. There’s organic bedding, a saltwater spa, bicycles, kayaks, daily full vegan breakfast, beach and private porches.

Key West: Built in 1897, the landmark pastel-hued nine-room Queen Anne–style Southernmost House sits along the continental United States’ southernmost shore with a zero-entry pool and daily continental breakfast. The adults-only property has hosted over 20 presidents and dignitaries, and features an on-site museum showcasing documents signed by Ernest Hemingway and Lyndon B. Johnson.

— Laura Myers

konakaioresort.com
themooringsvillage.com
grassyflats.com
deerrunontheatlantic.com
southernmosthouse.com

Exploring LGBTQ emporiums that helped shape Key West

Key West's eclectic contemporary vibe owes a lot to LGBTQ residents who, in the 1970s and '80s, helped spearhead renovation of then-shabby Old Town structures and invested in distinctive guesthouses, galleries, boutiques and shops.

Today, visitors can find a vast array of shopping venues and galleries on the 2-by-4-mile subtropical island — including some that influenced the island's long-ago retail scene and still flourish today.

For example, life partners Frank Romano and Joe Liszka, pillars of the LGBTQ community, launched Key West Aloe in 1971. Romano was inspired to create the company after treating a bad sunburn with a piece of aloe plant given to him by a Key West resident to ease the burn. Today Key West Aloe bills itself as producing the world's largest selection of aloe vera-based products.

In 1974, Gingerbread Square Gallery was opened by Richard Heyman, who later became Key West's mayor — the United States' first openly gay mayor. Located in a classic Victorian structure overlooking a courtyard, Gingerbread Square is the island's oldest private art gallery. It has showcased works by playwright Tennessee Williams and today houses a collection of vibrant paintings, glassworks, sculptures and other offerings.

Like Gingerbread Square, many of Key West's LGBTQ emporiums can be found on or near Duval Street. The island's 14-block main shopping thoroughfare features a wide variety of galleries, clothing boutiques and gift stores.

Graffiti, a premier men's shop for more than three decades, sells ca-



ROB O'NEAL

Neil Chamberlain, owner of Graffiti, arranges socks in his men's shop.

sual clothing, accessories and trendy swimwear. The retailer is a popular first stop for newly arrived visitors seeking to expand their island-wear wardrobes.

The Key West Butterfly & Nature Conservatory, founded in 2003 by longtime business partners George Fernandez and Sam Trophia, features a uniquely eclectic gallery and a gift shop brimming with fine butterfly artwork, jewelry and alluring gifts. Both adjoin the popular conservatory, a 5,000-square-foot glass-domed

rainforest-like habitat where visitors can stroll among hundreds of butterflies from 50 to 60 species.

LGBTQ-themed gift store In Touch has called Key West home for nearly 40 years, delighting shoppers with lighthearted cards, ornaments, candles, art and assorted novelties. The store's adopted motto, "We're a little classy, a little bit tacky and a whole lot of fun," mirrors the island's laid-back state of mind.

— Greg Tromba

fla-keys.com/gay

FlixBus offers car-free travel to the Keys

Travelers flying into Miami and Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood airports now have a convenient and affordable car-free option for getting to the Keys.

FlixBus, a well-known European intercity mobility company that offers bus and rail services, has added Florida and the Keys to its network.

FlixBus passengers can ride comfortably from the two Florida airports to stops in Islamorada, Marathon and Key West. Plans call for stops in Key Largo and Big Pine Key too.

Return travel to the two airports is offered as well.

FlixBus operates six days per week and utilizes single-level motorcoaches with seating for 56 passengers. Buses have free Wi-Fi, on-board entertainment, power outlets, reclining seats, ample luggage space and a restroom.

flixbus.com



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	58	93	1
Fort Myers	200	320	4
Tampa	300	480	6
Orlando	280	450	5.75
Jacksonville	490	780	10

Distance from Miami

REGION	MILES	KM	MILE MARKER
Key Largo	58	93	108-90
Islamorada	76	122	90-63
Marathon	111	178	63-40
Lower Keys	135	217	40-4
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

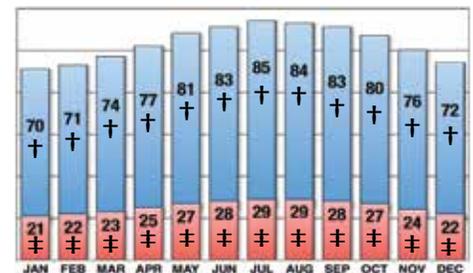
Weather/Climature

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 from 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 visitor assistance line at 800-771-KEYS. It's staffed 24 hours a day.

To contact visitor offices throughout the Florida Keys, call 800-FLA-KEYS, weekdays during normal business hours. The Florida Keys fact-filled website is at fla-keys.com.



Keys Info