



Florida Keys "Girlfriends Getaway" Itinerary

Days 1 & 2: Upper Keys

On your way down to the Keys, preferably cruising in a convertible, iPod loaded up and sunscreen close by, take the a little detour via Card Sound Road; you will not be disappointed! Half way through this beautiful drive you will make your first stop at Alabama Jack's. Don't expect anything fancy... this place has what we call a "Key-zy" atmosphere. Alabama Jack's is one of the locals' favorite watering holes, so relax, enjoy a great lunch and the beauty of the surroundings. The view of the inlet and mangroves is spectacular! And if you are there on Sunday, leave all of your inhibitions behind and join in on the "clogging" dance ritual. I particularly recommend the fresh Snapper, Conch Fritters, Smoked Fish Dip, Mahi Mahi and Conch (pronounced "konk") Salad. Your first taste of the Keys will not disappoint!
Phone: (305) 248-8741

Being in the Keys means being close to nature, exploring the outdoors and finding an appreciation for wildlife. The Florida Keys and Key West is a perfect vacation destination with a relaxed atmosphere. Start your day at the John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park (MM102.5 Oceanside). Discover the **oldest underwater state park in the world**. You will be able to enjoy popular water activities including viewing the reef on glass-bottom boat, snorkel and scuba tours, as well as paddle boarding and kayaking through a maze of mangrove paths. A visitor center featuring a refurbished 30,000-gallon aquarium, as well as boat rentals, nature trails, picnic pavilions and two beaches round out the variety of offerings at John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park.

www.pennekamppark.com

Dolphin Encounters: There's nothing more precious and fun than getting up close and personal with adorable dolphins of the Florida Keys! Listed below are two options for a memorable experience with our friendly dolphins in Key Largo. Be sure to bring your cameras!

Dolphin Cove (MM 103, Bayside)

Meet and interact with dolphins in the hands-on Structured and Shallow Water Dolphin Swims, or Snorkel freely alongside the dolphins in the Natural Dolphin Swim program.

Phone: 305-451-4060

www.dolphinSCOve.com

Dolphins Plus (MM 99.5, Oceanside)

Here is a lifetime opportunity to get up close and personal with dolphins and sea lions for an unforgettable experience.

Phone: 305-451-1993

www.dolphinsplus.com

There are lodging and dining options to suit everyone's travel habits and palettes so check in to your room and check out from your everyday life.

Day 3: Islamorada/Marathon

Robbie's Marina (MM 77.5, Bayside)

On your way down to Marathon be sure to stop at Robbie's Marina and participate in the opportunity to feed the giant tarpon from your hand and stroll through the open air shops and market. Fishing, boat rentals, state parks tours and a full service restaurant are available on site.

www.robbies.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). This is a favorite place for local kite boarders to practice their sport and makes for great photos and people watching.

Dolphin Research Center (MM 59, Bayside)

www.Dolphins.org

What makes this facility different than other Dolphin Encounter experiences? This is a research facility that is open to the public for dolphin interactions and encounters. At the research center, staff designs studies and uses research games in order to discover how dolphins and sea lions think. Also, staff is able to observe the dolphin family on a consistent and interactive basis to determine baseline respiration rates during active and passive activity and social development amongst themselves and visitors. All kinds of programs are available for everyone's pleasure 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.

Feel good about spending your time and money at this not for profit agency.

Florida Keys Aquarium Encounters (MM 53, Oceanside). This is another spot where you can spend an hour or spend all day. They offer a plethora of different ways to encounter all sorts of sea life native to the Florida Keys waters, including Sting Rays, Goliath Grouper, Snapper, Eels, as well as a safely separated Shark Tank. They offer daily "Feed the Shark" encounters for those willing to get in the water and feed them by hand safely through a Plexiglas divider. If you're in the mood to stay dry, no worries! They have plenty of viewing tanks, guided tours and other dry activities. They are open 7 days a week so be sure this attraction is on your list of things to do!

www.floridakeysaquariumencounters.com

The Seven Mile Bridge (MM 47) is one of the most iconic vistas in the Florida Keys. You can walk the old bridge for some exercise and great panoramic photos, or visit the Sunset Grill pool and restaurant, which is situated on the Oceanside at the northern base bridge. The food is delicious, the drinks are cold and tropical and the pool is the perfect place for you and your girlfriends to hang out. Either way, you must stop here and take in the breathtaking scenery and reflect on the labors of those brave and hearty men who built this marvel known as the **8th wonder of the modern world.**

Days 4-6: Key West

On your way to Key West, make a stop at Bahia Honda State Park (MM37 Oceanside). Featuring an award winning beach and historic bridge, Bahia Honda State Park is one of the favorite spots in the Florida Keys. The park offers a quiet getaway with a gift shop, snack bar, kayak rentals and daily snorkeling tours to the fabulous Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary.

Once you have made your way to Key West, get a group picture in front of the Southernmost Point Buoy at the corner of South Street and Whitehead Street. Be sure to post it on Facebook right away so all your friends back home can see all the fun you are having in the Southernmost City in the continental United States.

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, 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 bike rentals!

For your first night in Key West, you are in for a treat! After arriving, get freshened up before sunset and head down to the nightly Sunset Celebration on Mallory Square. Each night, local artists, food cart vendors and street performers gather with the crowds to showcase a true flavor of Key West. Buy a locally made souvenir, enjoy a light snack, and watch some truly amazing and talented performers such as Sword Swallower, The One Man Band, and a perennial favorite, Dominique the Cat Man!

After the sun sets in the horizon and you've loaded your camera with postcard-worthy photos, start making your way to the famous Duval Street, where the party doesn't stop until 4am! Some of the most famous watering holes to visit are, Hog's Breath Saloon (great live music), The Smallest Bar, Sloppy Joe's (Ernest Hemingway's favorite bar), Rick's/Durty Harry's, Irish Kevin's, Lazy Gecko and Margaritaville are all great choices for live music, dancing and lots of action! One of my favorite nightlife activities with a group of my girlfriends is going to a Drag Show! You won't be disappointed at La-te-da! The state-of-the-art cabaret theater plays host to shows as diverse as renowned female impersonators singing show tunes made famous by Broadway stars and comedians.

For a little more low key experience, keep heading up Duval Street and stop at the Little Room Jazz Club, or step over to Crawl Off Duval on Southard Street for great craft beer. Either way you decide to go, don't drive! There are plenty of taxis or even more fun get a Pedi cab ride back to your hotel.

Another one of my favorite activities is a Sunset Cruise through the Harbor on the Commotion on the Ocean with the Fury Catamaran. The Fury sails the tropical waters of Key West with a warm ocean breeze and a magnificent sunset as a backdrop. Enjoy free beer, margaritas and appetizers while listening to live entertainment!

www.furycat.com

Daytime activities include half day snorkeling trips, nighttime paddle boarding tours, parasailing and kayaking tours through our mangrove lined estuaries.

If you are more into culture, make a stop at the Hemingway Home and Museum (the six toed cats are waiting for you), the Butterfly Museum and Nature Conservatory or the Little White House. If you just want to relax, head over to Fort Zachary Taylor State Park, which has a cove style beach, plenty of shade trees and a concession stand for a picnic style lunch.