

# Keys Traveler

The Magazine

The Keys' Local  
Experience

Keys Paddleboarding

Film Festival Fun

Athletic Vacations

Keys Beaches

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# Make a splash at Keys beaches

Sombraero Beach in Marathon offers a wide expanse of sand and a number of park facilities.

Florida Keys attractions provide visitors opportunities to explore a rich environment filled with wooded hammocks and rainforest areas, but strolls along sandy beaches offer prime examples of the island chain's pristine beauty.

A small oceanside beach located at mile marker (MM) 80, named Anne's Beach and dedicated to local environmentalist Anne Eaton, attracts waders and kiteboarders cruising along the shallows off Islamorada. Great views and scenic walkways please passersby and visiting families, and the shallow water typically means no breaking waves. Bathrooms and picnic tables are available.

Sombraero Beach, located at the end of Sombraero Boulevard at MM 50 oceanside in Marathon, is a well-maintained Middle Keys gem. The free-access public park and beach features a kayak launch, volleyball courts, children's playground, shady picnic pavilions equipped with cooking grills, freshwater showers, restroom facilities and handicap access.

In the Lower Keys, just off the ocean side of Little Palm Island and Summerland Key sits Picnic Island, a popular spot for pulling up the boat for a day of playing with kids and pets in the shallow water. During the "dog daze" of summer, boating revelers gather there

for Wetstock, a locals' favorite on-the-water event filled with food, libations and music.

Several Florida State Park strands consistently are voted among the nation's best beaches. Popular spots include Cannon Beach and Far Beach at Key Largo's John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park and the 1,200-foot beach at Marathon's Curry Hammock State Park, recommended for sandcastle building.

In addition, pristine sandy expanses can be enjoyed at Bahia Honda State Park, part of a 524-acre site located on Bahia Honda Key between MMs 36 and 37.

In Key West, popular beaches include Smathers Beach on the south end of the island and the oceanfront at Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park.

— Julie Botteri



Bahia Honda State Park in the Lower Keys was named among top 10 beaches in America by Stephen "Dr. Beach" Leatherman.

## Keys Traveler

The Magazine

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Rob O'Neal

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Karrie Carnes, left, and Jenni Franke enjoy their bicycle ride in Key West.

# See the Keys like a local

By Carol Shaughnessy Lead Photographs by Rob O'Neal

Two days after arriving in the Florida Keys, as I strolled along the Gulf of Mexico shore, the realization hit me: I had found my home. This crescent of subtropical islands, where blue-green water unrolled to the horizon and palm trees rustled in the balmy February breeze, was where I belonged.



Shaughnessy

Forever. Unlikely? Not really. That sense of absolute belonging has turned scores of casual Keys visitors

into longtime “locals” who create satisfying lives close to nature and far from the mundane pressures of the “real world.”

Surprisingly, you don't have to be a local to share some of the elements that make Keys life so happily addictive — as long as you're willing to explore, experience and embrace the unexpected people, places and moments you encounter.

While many destinations encourage vacationers to stay in “tourist areas” removed from favorite local hangouts, the Keys'

attitude is entirely different. Sit down at a bar or coffee house in the Keys and you might find yourself next to a local shopkeeper, dive instructor or second-generation fishing guide who is happy to suggest activities and places to check out.

For example, I often encourage visitors to try one of my favorite Key West pastimes: biking or strolling through the Old Town neighborhood as evening falls. Just off Duval Street, the island's lively shopping and dining center, you'll pass lovingly restored Victorian homes

and cottages with lights blossoming in their windows and the luscious scent of jasmine drifting from flower-filled yards. Though I've done it hundreds of times, roaming those residential lanes at dusk still carries a quiet magic.

Speaking of favorites, a trip to the Hogfish Bar & Grill, a hard-to-find hideaway on Stock Island just off Key West, tops my list of treats.

Most customers at the funky locals' watering hole sit outdoors at weathered picnic tables overlooking picturesque vessels moored at the adjacent dock. Sample the world-class smoked-fish dip and fresh hogfish, a diver-caught fish with a light flavor.

After eating, stroll down the dock, greet the resident dogs and cats, and discover offbeat sculptures by local artisans living and working in dockside lofts. This small haven for live-aboard houseboats and sailboats is a true hidden gem.

If you're spending time in the Lower Keys, you'll probably explore the backcountry shallows, a nature-lover's paradise. But for a weekend “sport” enjoyed by locals, head for the Big Pine Flea Market at mile marker (MM) 30.2.

Open Saturdays and Sundays from October through July, the outdoor market draws scores of people searching for bargains. Friendly vendors raise pop-up “stores” featuring everything from nautical gear and lobster floats to semiprecious jewelry, comfortable T-shirts and sundresses. Exploring the lively marketplace has been a Lower Keys tradition for more than 25 years, and the socializing is as much fun as the “treasure hunting.”

In the Middle Keys — a boating hotspot that's home to the famed Seven Mile Bridge — downtime means being on the water. Kayaking is a preferred pastime and a popular launch at Sombrero Beach,

MM 50, makes water access easy.

Marathon-based outfitters offer rentals and trail maps for those eager to explore on their own, as well as escorted eco-tours through Sister Creek and the Boot Key Nature Preserve. Don't forget your camera, since the quiet winding trails lead through mangrove forests alive with native birds like herons, egrets and cormorants.

And while the Keys are famous for their blazing sunsets, many Middle Keys residents favor the sunrise. For an unrivalled view, join early risers — some accompanied by their dogs — strolling along the Old Seven Mile Bridge over the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico.

A historic landmark that parallels the modern bridge, the span was the centerpiece of the Florida Keys Over-Sea Railroad from 1912 to 1935. Today a 2.2-mile section of it is open to pedestrians and bicyclists.



Al Nelson and Lindsey Rader take a stroll along the dock near the Hogfish Bar & Grill.



Loren Rea casts to a bonefish as the sun slips below the horizon off the Lower Keys.

In Islamorada, life is mostly about fishing. Backcountry sport fishing and saltwater fly fishing were pioneered in the Upper Keys area, and it's home to scores of world-class charter captains, some of them second- and third-generation with an inherited passion for the respected Keys profession.

Soak up their tales and tips over cocktails at the Lorelei, a favorite local hangout whose on-site marina is headquarters for both offshore

and backcountry captains.

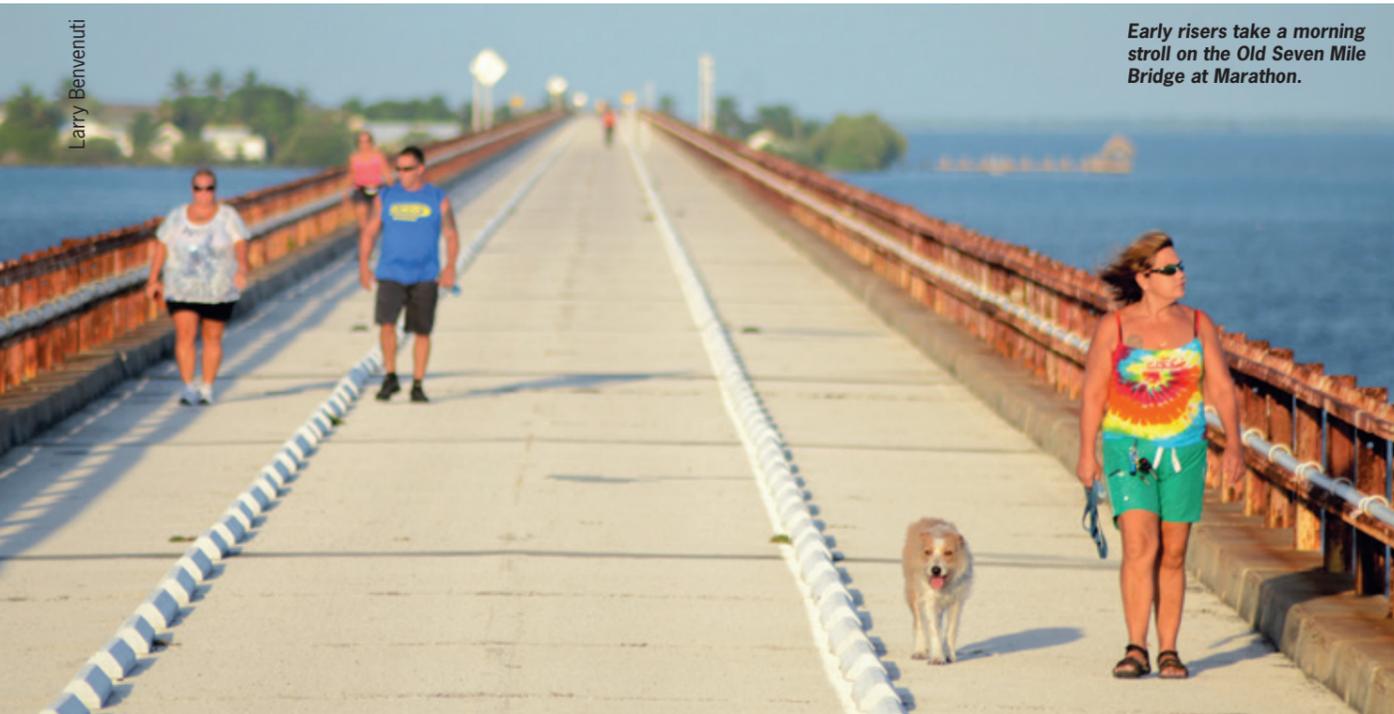
The Lorelei is easy to find — a super-sized mermaid sign reclines at its entrance at MM 82. Its casual dockside bar overlooks Florida Bay, making it a great sunset-watching spot.

Key Largo residents might be tempted to keep one of their beloved eateries a secret, but fortunately they don't. Ask where to have a great home-style meal and chances are you'll be directed to

Mrs. Mac's Kitchen at MM 99.

Founded in 1976, the unassuming café was named for the mother of original owner Jeff MacFarland in honor of her recipes. Sisters Angela and Paula Wittke purchased it in the late 1980s, and today's menu features dishes ranging from biscuits and gravy for breakfast to fresh fish straight off the dock.

Mrs. Mac's is decorated with license plates donated by guests who wanted to leave their mark on



Larry Benvenuti

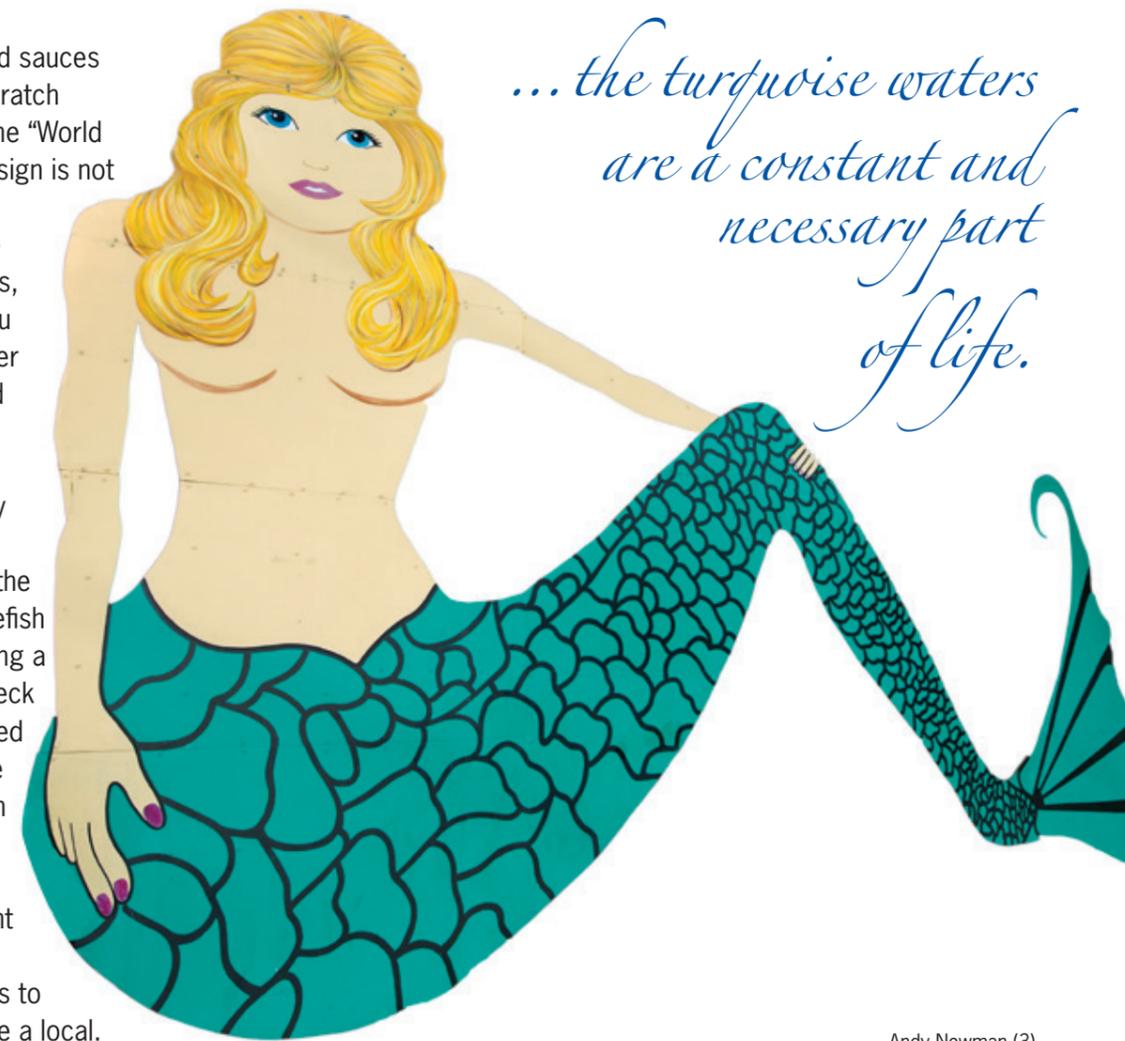
Early risers take a morning stroll on the Old Seven Mile Bridge at Marathon.

the place. All dishes and sauces are homemade from scratch with Keys flair — and the "World Famous Key Lime Pie" sign is not an exaggeration.

Whatever you choose to do in the Florida Keys, however, make sure you indulge in plenty of water activities. For seasoned Keys denizens, the turquoise waters are a constant and necessary part of life. Free time is often spent snorkeling the shallows, stalking gamefish in the backcountry, diving a starkly beautiful shipwreck site, lazing on a secluded beach or hitching a ride on a friend's boat for an impromptu cruise.

From on-the-water adventures to restaurant picks, the suggestions here are just a few ways to experience the Keys like a local.

But be warned — you might become mesmerized by the offbeat island and find yourself returning again and again, powerless to resist their magical appeal.



*...the turquoise waters are a constant and necessary part of life.*

Andy Newman (3)



A collection of state auto license plates adorns the sign at Mrs. Mac's in Key Largo.



An iconic mermaid (top) greets patrons at the Lorelei, a favorite hangout in Islamorada that attracts locals for libations and gossip on a covered deck (bottom) known as "City Hall."

Kevin "Dot Com" Brown, right, leads a panel discussion at the inaugural Key West Film Festival.

Tom Gallo

Andy Newman (2)

## Keys film fests showcase artistry and atmosphere

The island chain that was a location for films including the James Bond adventures "Tomorrow Never Dies" and "License to Kill," Arnold Schwarzenegger's "True Lies" and the classic "Key Largo" now draws cinema fans to experience unique film festivals in a subtropical setting.

The Key West Film Festival, held each November, offers five days of screenings and related events. Approximately three dozen films are featured annually, chosen for their excellence in storytelling and ability to capture Key West's essential values of creativity, diversity, sustainability and beauty.

Films are screened at venues including the historic San Carlos Institute and independent film multiplex Tropic Cinema. Associ-



Kevin Brown discusses the Key West Film Festival.

ated receptions and events showcase Key West's lush natural beauty and lively creative atmosphere, which over the years has drawn residents

like playwright Tennessee Williams, literary legend Ernest Hemingway and contemporary author Judy Blume. Blume's film "Tiger Eyes" was screened at the 2012 festival.

Attendees can meet and mingle with filmmakers, directors and producers connected with many of the featured films. Past and scheduled celebrity guests include Kevin "Dot Com" Brown from the television series "30 Rock," filmmaker/actor John Waters and actress Mariel Hemingway, granddaughter of Ernest Hemingway.

"When you do a film festival, part of it is having the film community embrace it, but you also want to have a place that's sort of a get-away so that the filmmakers can make this *the weekend*," Brown said. "This is the weekend that I bring my girlfriend or my boyfriend ... that I come down and have a good time.

"This (Key West Film Festival) has all the ingredients for a great festival," he said.

Cinema icon Humphrey Bogart

takes top billing in Key Largo each May, honored with a film festival in the setting for one of his most famous movies. "Key Largo," starring Bogart and his wife Lauren Bacall, was partially filmed on the island at the head of the Florida Keys.

The festival celebrates the life and work of the man the American Film Institute named "America's greatest male screen legend." It is the only event of its kind to be backed by the Bogart Estate, and typically features the actor's son Stephen Bogart and others including film critic Leonard Maltin.

"Key Largo is a very laid-back place and that's kind of what my father was like," said Stephen Bogart, whose mother is legendary actress Lauren Bacall.

Bogart films are screened each year alongside other classics from selected genres. Attendees can enjoy in-theater showings and presentations under the stars in Key Largo's



Catch a glimpse of the first Bogart Film Festival.



Stephen Bogart, left, and Leonard Maltin ride the original African Queen in Key Largo.



Brad Davis shows his right leg tattoo of legendary film actor Humphrey Bogart at the 2013 festival.

balmy subtropical climate.

Other attractions include cruises on the original century-old African Queen, the boat used in the Bogart film of the same name that provided him his only Academy Award.

Registered as a national historic site, the fully restored vessel is based at Key Largo's Holiday Inn and offers daily excursions as well as weekly dinner cruises to the Pilot House Restaurant for visitors.

Event organizers hope the festival will motivate young film fans to discover Bogart and his contributions to classic cinema.

"If something is good or great, it lasts and it's worth discovering and rediscovering," Maltin said. "And it's the same with great movies and he (Bogart) is great in them."

— Carol Shaughnessy

[keywestfilmfestival.com](http://keywestfilmfestival.com)  
[bogartfilmfestival.com](http://bogartfilmfestival.com)

# Paddleboarding appeals to water enthusiasts

By Julie Botteri • Photograph by Rob O'Neal

Many Florida Keys visitors enjoy outdoor adventures such as kayaking the pristine waters and snorkeling or diving along the Keys' living coral barrier reef. But other on-the-water activities also enable participants to explore the intriguing natural environment while treating body and mind to some "unplugged" relaxation.

The relatively simple, straightforward sport of paddleboarding, or standup paddling, appeals to a diverse cross-section of people and has gained tremendous popularity throughout the island chain. Board sales and rentals are available at watersports and paddling outfitters as well as several Keys resorts.

Paddlers use the board, ranging in length from 12 to 14 feet, for traversing on a "downwinder," otherwise known as riding the board backed by tradewinds to cover distance. If the winds are nonexistent, the board can double as a fishing platform or a vehicle for quietly enjoying secluded, environmentally friendly eco-tours through the backcountry flats.

Outdoor adventure companies put a twist on the board sport with paddleboard yoga classes, combining mind and body relaxation with healthful

exercise and a Keys eco-experience. Beginners through experienced yoga practitioners can participate, and typical two-hour classes are divided between paddling time and yoga practice.

Participants first paddle out to calm backcountry waters, spotting sea life and wading birds along the way. The yoga experience is designed to still the mind and increase flexibility and strength through chanting, breathwork and seated and standing postures — all using the (anchored) board as a "mat" while connecting with nature in a tranquil mangrove setting.

Keeping on-the-water fun hip and innovative, the Paddle Sports center at Ibis Bay Beach Resort in Key West offers a revolutionary after-dark paddling experience. Glass-bottom kayaks and paddleboards are equipped with waterproof LED light bars that illuminate the waters and sea life during nighttime paddling trips through the shallow Florida Bay region.

Notable Keys paddling events include the 12-mile Key West Paddleboard Classic each May, where paddleboard and self-propelled watercraft enthusiasts circumnavigate the continental United States' southernmost island. Also, the Hemingway 5k Sunset Run and Paddleboard Race in July tasks competitors with paddling a 3-mile ocean course.



Sarah Fitzsimmons navigates her paddleboard near Snipe Keys in the Lower Keys.



View a video on paddleboarding in the Keys.



## Historic key embraces modern solar technology

**A** tiny island near Marathon that once served as a base camp for workers who built the historic Florida Keys Over-Sea Railroad has gone green.

Pigeon Key recently converted to solar-powered energy, making the educational facility and visitor attraction energy efficient.

A 105-by-11-foot solar array is being used to satisfy nearly 95 percent of the electrical needs for the 5.3-acre islet that lies beneath the landmark Old Seven Mile Bridge.

Two banks of 24-cell batteries store electricity that feeds 240-volt inverters to meet most power needs on Pigeon Key, which formerly relied fulltime on a diesel-operated generator.

Energy efficiency is essential for the island and especially important in the warm summer months during Pigeon Key Marine Science Camp sessions. Over the past 15 years, the island has provided customized programs to some 30,000 participants from more than 1,000

schools throughout America and other countries.

Hands-on daily programs include workshops on marine mammals, reef fish, coral reef systems and invertebrates. Groups from as far away as the outskirts of Alaska, on the Bering Sea, and China have traveled to Pigeon Key for its educational opportunities.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Pigeon Key housed more than 400 workers in the early 1900s during the building of Henry Flagler's Over-Sea Railroad that connected the Keys with the mainland.

Today the tranquil, picturesque island is open to visitors, providing them an opportunity to step back in time to Flagler's era. A museum in one of the original 1909 structures is dedicated to the railway's builders, with exhibits including maps, historic photos, models and a picture postcard collection of the unique railroad.

Visitors to the island can enjoy activities including exploring the fully restored turn-of-the-20th-century buildings, snorkeling the tidal shoreline and absorbing the history of the early Florida Keys.

— Julie Botteri



Watch a video on Pigeon Key.

## Snorkeling is easy way to see Keys sanctuary

**S** snorkelers in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary can kick from shore just beyond the seagrass beds to find structures such as coral heads, rocks or outcroppings teeming with fish. Gaining offshore access to the Keys' underwater reef system, the third-largest barrier reef system in the world, is just as easy.

Key Largo brims with fine snorkeling spots, beautiful and shallow strips of lush reef with schooling blue striped grunts, sergeant majors, horse-eyed jacks and Bermuda chubs. Many of the best reef highlights are in or near John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, as well as the north end of Molasses Reef, Carysfort and Pickles reefs.

Off Islamorada, Alligator Reef is located approximately 6 miles south-southwest of Windley Key, easily identified by the iconic 136-foot-tall lighthouse tower. The no-take sanctuary preservation area features coral ravines, nooks and crannies where hard and soft corals, shells, fish and abundant marine life flourish among the spur and groove formations.

One of the Keys' oldest wrecks is located off Islamorada's Indian Key



Snorkelers explore coral formations in the clear shallow waters off the Florida Keys.



Alexa Frink explores a shallow-water wreck off northern Key Largo.

STEPHEN FRANK (2)

in 18 feet of water. The San Pedro was a member of the 1733 Spanish treasure fleet. Today, the site is marked by mooring buoys and features replica cannons among aging ship timbers.

One of Marathon's most photogenic offshore spots is the area surrounding the historic lighthouse beacon at Sombrero Reef. Impressive corals and colors make this locale one of the top picks among novice snorkelers and divers. Gorgonians, sponges and plenty of fish occupy a natural limestone arch that's ideal for memorable underwater photos.

In the Lower Keys, Looe Key is legendary for its glorious finger reef seascape, dense marine life and brilliant corals. It's also the site of a unique reef gathering — the annual Lower Keys Underwater Music Festival — a submerged songfest that promotes preservation of Keys

reefs in entertaining fashion. Near shore at Bahia Honda State Park in Big Pine Key, snorkelers might even see queen conch and the elusive, beautiful flamingo tongue snails found clinging to purple sea fans waving in water currents.

Key West's largest protected coral reef is Western Sambos, part of an ecological reserve created in 1997. Several other extensive shallow reefs off Key West including Eastern Dry Rocks, Rock Key and Sand Key are abundant in corals, gorgonians and fish, and range from 5 to 45 feet in depth.

The ease and slow pace of snorkeling makes it appealing for people of all ages and experience levels to take their time to explore sea life underwater, from critters in corals to starfish, seahorses, turtles and trunkfish.

— Julie Botteri

[fla-keys.com/diving](http://fla-keys.com/diving)



## Monthly strolls spotlight Keys art and spirit

Patrons examine an art exhibition at The Studios of Key West during a Walk on White event.

The Florida Keys are characterized by a freewheeling exuberance, zest for life and healthy irreverence — qualities mirrored in the visual art created in the island chain. Aficionados can view art and meet the creative spirits behind it during neighborhood art strolls held each month in Islamorada and Key West.

These strolls offer a visual feast for attendees, as well as a chance to discover off-the-beaten-path galleries spotlighting established artists and emerging talents. Depending on the event, featured



See Morada Way's Art Walkabout.



Artist Michelle Lowe shows her creations at the Morada Way Art Walkabout.

pieces might range from vivid oils and bronze sculptures to collages, handcrafted jewelry and woodwork, nature photographs or even unusual fish prints known as *gyotaku*.

Prime among the strolls is

the Morada Way Arts & Cultural District's Third Thursday Art Walkabout in Islamorada. Scheduled the third Thursday of every month, festivities feature national and Keys-based artists and art galleries at Morada Way between mile markers 81 and 82 — plus culinary art from nearby eateries and performances by local musicians and entertainers.

In Key West, among several regular art strolls is the Walk on White, held on White Street and onto Truman Avenue the third Thursday of each month. As well as galleries, highlight locations include The Studios of Key West, offering regular exhibitions, performances and workshops.

Equally popular is the Upper Duval Street Stroll, where a portion of Key West's famed Duval Street comes alive with openings, exhibitions and receptions, usually during the first Friday of each month.

Periodic Key West art events also spotlight creative offerings in the Greene and Caroline streets neighborhood and the museum district near Mallory Square.

In addition galleries throughout the Keys are open daily, enticing visitors to meet local artists eager to share their creative passion.

— Carol Shaughnessy

[fla-keys.com/culture](http://fla-keys.com/culture)  
[keysarts.com](http://keysarts.com)

# Keys lure athletic vacationers

Every day is an adventure in the Florida Keys, where the subtropical climate and natural setting make ideal backdrops for high-energy sporting activities.

While the Keys are well known for watersports, not everyone realizes they also are a venue for organized sports including running marathons, swim competitions, triathlons and cycling excursions.

For those with stamina to spare, several running events challenge athletes to compete on scenic routes that test physical limits and personal resolve. Chief among them is the KEYS100 Ultramarathon, where U.S. and international contestants race 100

miles from Key Largo to Key West.

Other Florida Keys running competitions include the Seven Mile Bridge Run each April and the Key Largo Bridge Run each November. In addition, Key West visitors can participate in the renowned Key West Half Marathon in January and the new Southernmost Marathon and Half Marathon in October. For those looking for a shorter challenge, the Middle Keys' Sombrero Beach Run and the Lower Keys' No Name Race offer scenic trails and camaraderie.

Besides running, the Florida Keys are home to swimming events that have tested athletes for many years. They include the Florida Keys Community College Swim Around Key West and Key Largo's Orange Bowl Swimming Classic.

For those who enjoy sports and history, Islamorada's 8-mile Swim for Alligator Lighthouse raises awareness about the need to preserve Keys lighthouses.

Additionally, the Florida Keys host triathlons and cycling races that attract thousands of participants. Among them is the Key West Triathlon, drawing endurance-sports enthusiasts to compete in a fast-paced swim in ocean waters, bike ride and run.

The Keys island chain also offers numerous opportunities for cyclists to enjoy bike vacations and tours. Among the most popular are the annual 200-mile BubbaFest Bike Tour and a variety of excursions hosted by Key Largo Bike and Adventure Tours.

— Nicola Facchin

Followed by teammates in kayaks, a swimmer heads for shore during the inaugural Swim for Alligator Lighthouse.



Learn about the Swim for Alligator Lighthouse.

## When and where to fish for popular Florida Keys game fish

SPECIES	SIZE	HABITAT	SEASON	TACKLE *
Amberjack	30-75 lbs.	reef, wreck, humps	March-May	20-80#
Barracuda	7-35 lbs.	all areas	year round	fly, spin, baitcast
Bonefish	5-16 lbs.	flats	May-Oct.	fly, spin, baitcast
Cobia	15-80 lbs.	reef, wreck, humps	Nov.-April	fly, spin, baitcast
Dolphin (Mahi-Mahi)	5-65 lbs.	reef, wreck, humps	April-Oct.	fly, spin, baitcast
Grouper (multiple species)	10-500 lbs.	reef, wreck, humps	May-Dec.	spin, 20-50#
Cero Mackerel	3-10 lbs.	reef, wreck, humps	Nov.-April	fly, spin, baitcast
King Mackerel	8-70 lbs.	reef, wreck, humps	Oct.-April	spin, 12-30#
Spanish Mackerel	3-7 lbs.	bay, bridge, reef	Nov.-March	fly, spin, baitcast
Blue Marlin	80-600 lbs.	blue water	May-Oct.	50-80#
White Marlin	30-125 lbs.	blue water	April-Sept.	12-30#

SPECIES	SIZE	HABITAT	SEASON	TACKLE *
Permit	8-40 lbs.	flats, wreck	March-Nov.	fly, spin, baitcast
Redfish	3-20 lbs.	backcountry	year round	fly, spin, baitcast
Sailfish	30-80 lbs.	reef edge, blue water	Nov.-May	fly, spin, 12-20#
Shark (multiple species)	10-600 lbs.	all areas	year round	fly, spin, baitcast, 30-80#
Snapper (Mangrove)	1-6 lbs.	bridges, bay and reef	year round	spin
Snapper (Mutton)	5-20 lbs.	flats and reef	April-Sept.	fly, spin, baitcast
Snapper (Yellowtail)	2-6 lbs.	reef	year round	spin
Snook	6-35 lbs.	backcountry	March-Nov.	fly, spin, baitcast
Swordfish	70-700 lbs.	blue water	year round	50-130#
Tarpon	25-150 lbs.	bridges, flats, bay	March-Aug.	fly, spin, baitcast
Tuna (Blackfin)	5-38 lbs.	blue water, offshore humps	year round	fly, spin, 20-30#
Wahoo	15-80 lbs.	blue water	Nov.-June	spin, 30#

\*Tackle is specified as spin, fly, baitcast or conventional with appropriate line class (# means line test breaking strength in pounds).

The Florida Keys lay claim to more world saltwater angling records than any other destination on the globe, according to the International Game Fish Association.

A saltwater fishing license is required to fish from a pier, bridge, boat or from shore in all Florida waters. Visitors who fish on a certified charter, party or backcountry boat do not need a license because the captain and boat carry necessary documentation.

More information on fishing licenses and saltwater fishing regulations is available at [myfwc.com/fishing](http://myfwc.com/fishing).

Charterboat skippers search for live bait off the Upper Keys.



## Womenfest rocks Key West every September

Thousands of women flock to Key West in early September each year for the lively Womenfest celebration in the island city known for its diversity.

The six-day festival draws singles, couples and groups of lesbians and their friends to experience the warm welcome and anything-goes atmosphere that have helped make Key West an internationally acclaimed LGBT vacation spot.

Presented by the Key West Business Guild, America's oldest gay-oriented business organization, Womenfest features events for ocean- and party-loving attendees.

Highlights each year include comedy and musical performances by top talents including Suzanne Westenhoefer and Sister Funk.

Attendees can explore Key West's natural world on excursions ranging from kayaking and paddleboard eco-tours to women-only snorkeling and dolphin-watching cruises.

Womenfest also features afternoon pool parties with games and live entertainment, offbeat art experiences for those eager to develop their creative side, sizzling late-night action at local emporiums and a trolley tour spotlighting Key West's LGBT history and landmarks.

[womenfest.com](http://womenfest.com)

## Little Palm Island ... An elegant Lower Keys escape for 25 years

Complete seclusion is the objective at Little Palm Island Resort & Spa, an award-winning private island enclave in the Lower Florida Keys that recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. Located 3 miles off Little Torch Key in the Atlantic Ocean, the 5.5-acre property is accessible only by boat or seaplane, and provides the ultimate in island-flavored luxury.

Each of its 15 spacious thatched-roof bungalows offers ocean views and plush interiors. Amenities also include a private pool, library, boutique and gourmet restaurant that delights diners with French and pan-Latin cuisine and an extensive wine and cocktail selection.

Guests can indulge their senses

at Little Palm's signature SpaTerre, incorporating the style and traditions of Eastern and Western cultures with exclusive body treatments.

The property also is a sought-after destination for yachting enthusiasts. Dock slips can accommodate vessels up to 120 feet long, while the marina offers 575 feet of dock space bordering a protected lagoon for smaller boats.

As well as a luxury getaway for travelers, Little Palm Island is so exotic that it was used as a set for the 1963 film "PT-109." Starring Cliff Robertson, the film depicted John F. Kennedy's World War II naval heroics in the South Pacific.

[littlepalmisland.com](http://littlepalmisland.com)



For more than 25 years, Little Palm Island in the Lower Florida Keys has offered secluded island vacations.

## Guy Harvey Outpost Resort debuts in Islamorada

Islamorada's popular 139-unit Islander Resort is now a member of the Guy Harvey Outpost Resort family, and renovations are underway on its existing oceanside and bayside properties.

Renowned for a casual Keys ambiance and the historic slanted sign at its entrance at mile marker 82, the Islander has joined the hotel group named for marine wildlife artist and conservationist Harvey.

Enhancements and renovations are transforming guestroom interiors, the lobby, public spaces and facilities. A Guy Harvey Outfitter is planned to assist guests with adventure experiences.

Rebranding efforts also include converting the resort's tiki bar into Guy's Beachside Bar & Grill and renovating former meeting rooms into the Trophy Room, a social lounge area for guests and small special events.

The property's recently completed Florida Keys Conference Center accommodates groups of up to 250 for weddings, corporate meetings, fishing tournament gatherings and other events.

Additional resort amenities include a pristine private beach, two oceanside swimming pools and a lighted 200-foot fishing pier.

The Guy Harvey Outpost brand showcases destinations dedicated to marine research and conservation, as well as providing families with a vacation experience that celebrates the outdoor lifestyle in a waterfront setting.

[guyharveyoutpostislamorada.com](http://guyharveyoutpostislamorada.com)



Brewmaster Jim Brady inspects his creation at Bone Island Brewing.

## Crafted in Key West

Two new attractions are brewing in Key West, luring beer and rum lovers to the island chain to savor their favorite drinks infused with Florida Keys ingredients. A brewery and a rum distillery are opening in Old Town.

From the minds of brewmaster Jim Brady and Restaurant Store owner Richard Tallmadge comes Bone Island Brewing. The nanobrewery plans to serve four different styles of craft beer, from pale ales to Irish stouts, that will only be available for sale on site. Bone Island Brewing will offer tours and beer tastings.

The Legal Rum Distillery, conceived by renowned kiteboarder and restaurant owner Paul Menta, pays tribute to the days of illegal alcohol manufacturing in 1920s Prohibition America. Visiting the distillery is to be an interactive experience, featuring activities including chef-inspired rum tastings for adults and sugarcane tastings for children.

"The sky is the limit when it comes to rum flavors," Menta said. "The possibilities are endless, and

everyone will get the chance to take something home from the Florida Keys that is truly unique."

[facebook.com/BoneIslandBrewing](https://facebook.com/BoneIslandBrewing)  
[legalrumkeywest.com](http://legalrumkeywest.com)

### 'Tweencation' trips draw parents, preteens

Parents can bond with their "tweens," or preteens, at a picturesque private island resort just off Key West during "Tweencation" Relation vacations, featuring activities that appeal to both adults and kids ages 9 to 12.

The three-night package is offered by Sunset Key Guest Cottages, A Westin Resort, and families can choose from two "Tweencation" options.

"Spaaah" Total Wellbeing includes a series of mini wellness treatments and a culinary demonstration, among other attractions, while Wet & Wild Adventure is geared for action lovers with parasailing, charter fishing and kayaking sessions. Both packages feature an enriching Florida Keys "voluntourism" experience.

[westinsunsetkeycottages.com](http://westinsunsetkeycottages.com)

# Traveling tips to the Florida Keys



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.

## Commercial Airlines Serving Key West International Airport

American Airlines	aa.com
Cape Air	capeair.com
Delta	delta.com
Southwest	southwest.com
United Express	united.com
US Airways	usairways.com

## Driving Directions

From Miami International Airport (MIA), take LeJeune Road south to 836 West. Take the Florida Turnpike 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 are now in the Florida Keys.

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

From the north, take the Florida Turnpike south to just below Fort Lauderdale, where Exit 4 joins the southern portion of the Turnpike. The Turnpike 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) east 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	45-4
Key West	159	254	4-0

## Via Bus

Bus/shuttle connections from MIA and FLL to the Florida Keys allow traveling to the Florida 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/gettinghere.cfm](http://fla-keys.com/gettinghere.cfm)

# The Florida Keys & Key West

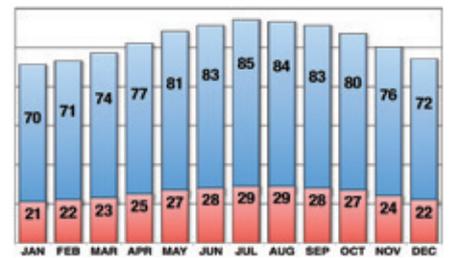
[fla-keys.com](http://fla-keys.com)  
[fla-keys.co.uk](http://fla-keys.co.uk)

## 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 the peak of summer, 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 subtropical 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 the average monthly air temperatures for the past 30 years, according to the Key West weather office. Temperatures in blue shades are Fahrenheit and those in light 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 1-800-771-KEYS. It's staffed 24 hours a day. To contact visitor offices in the Keys, call 1-800-FLA-KEYS. The Keys websites at [fla-keys.com](http://fla-keys.com) and [fla-keys.co.uk](http://fla-keys.co.uk) have a live chat feature with visitor information specialists available during regular U.S. weekday business hours to aid travelers in vacation planning.