

# Keys Traveler

The Magazine

New Florida Keys  
Resorts Debuting

*Saving 'Old 7'*

Keys Fishing Captain  
Marks His 50th Year

Sidewalk Poetry

Your Recipe to the Keys

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## Keys Traveler

The Magazine

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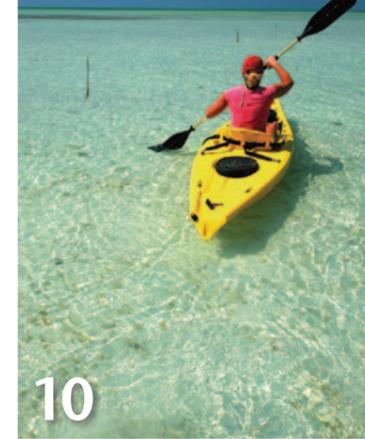
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NANCY TOBIN

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### What's This?

You'll find this QR code accompanying many stories in this issue of "Keys Traveler." The QR codes can be scanned by most smartphones. Activate the app, aim your phone at the bar code and you'll be automatically taken to a corresponding website or video for more information. For iPhones and iPads, QR readers can be downloaded free at the Apple App Store.



Cover photo of a sun worshiper enjoying the beach in Key West by Rob O'Neal

# New Keys Resorts Welcoming Travelers



Artist's rendering of Playa Largo Resort & Spa in Key Largo, which is set to open in late 2015.

Accommodations options in the Florida Keys, like the 125-mile-long island chain itself, reflect a colorful diversity of cultural and historic influences.

Visitors can discover these influences by staying in resort hotels frequented by playwrights and presidents, inns evolved from stately homes that sheltered cigar barons and shipwreck salvagers, Victorian gems built by merchants and millionaires, or even former fish camps exuding rustic waterfront charm.

Whether new or carefully restored, the lodging properties from Key Largo to Key West are rich in atmosphere and amenities.

From late 2014 through 2015 nine new properties, comprising just over 1,000 rooms, and a number of renovated lodgings are to welcome Keys visitors. Like the current accommodations options, each will showcase aspects of the island chain's attractions and appeal.

They begin at the head of the Keys in Key Largo with the elegant Playa Largo Resort and Spa, the

*By Carol Shaughnessy*

newest hotel to join Marriott's Autograph Collection, set to open in late 2015. The 14-acre waterfront resort is to feature 144 luxury rooms and suites.

Amenities include a private marina, multiple bars and restaurants, full-service spa and fitness offerings, a beach house for private or corporate functions, wedding and conference facilities including a ball-

room, a secluded white sand beach and much more.

In Islamorada, four leading lodgings — Postcard Inn Beach Resort at Holiday Isle, La Siesta Resort, Pelican Cove Resort and Marina and the Islamorada Resort — now comprise the Islamorada Resort Company and are seeing significant enhancements.

The first of this group of properties to complete renovations was Pelican Cove Resort and Marina,



The new lobby at the Amara Cay Resort.

which re-opened in January 2015. All of the 63 waterfront guestrooms and suites were redecorated and upgraded with modern amenities. In addition to enhancements to the meeting areas, pool and restaurant, Pelican Cove now offers a variety of programs including yoga, paddleboarding, sunrise oil painting and a macramé beading class.

Particularly notable is the recent re-launch of the Islamorada Resort as Amara Cay Resort, an upscale boutique hotel. Property renovations included increasing the number of rooms and suites to 110, updating outdoor amenities and creating Oltremare, an upscale Italian-style eatery. Guests can anticipate daily food and beverage experiences and a Mercedes shuttle to Islamorada's most popular locales.

Also in Islamorada, after a year-long multi-million dollar renovation, the Islander Resort has joined the expanding collection of Guy Harvey Outpost Resorts. Renovations include upgrades throughout both the main 114-unit oceanside property and the 25-unit bayside marina townhouse compound. The small collection of Guy Harvey resorts and lodges showcases Harvey's marine wildlife art, scientific research and conservation advocacy.

Vacationers should be able to spot The Faro Blanco Resort &



It has a new Hyatt Place hotel, but the iconic Faro Blanco Lighthouse remains and is shining once again at the Faro Blanco Resort & Yacht Club.

Yacht Club with ease: it incorporates the famed Faro Blanco Lighthouse, a Middle Keys landmark since the 1950s.

With the lighthouse as its "beacon," the recently opened Marathon property features an upscale

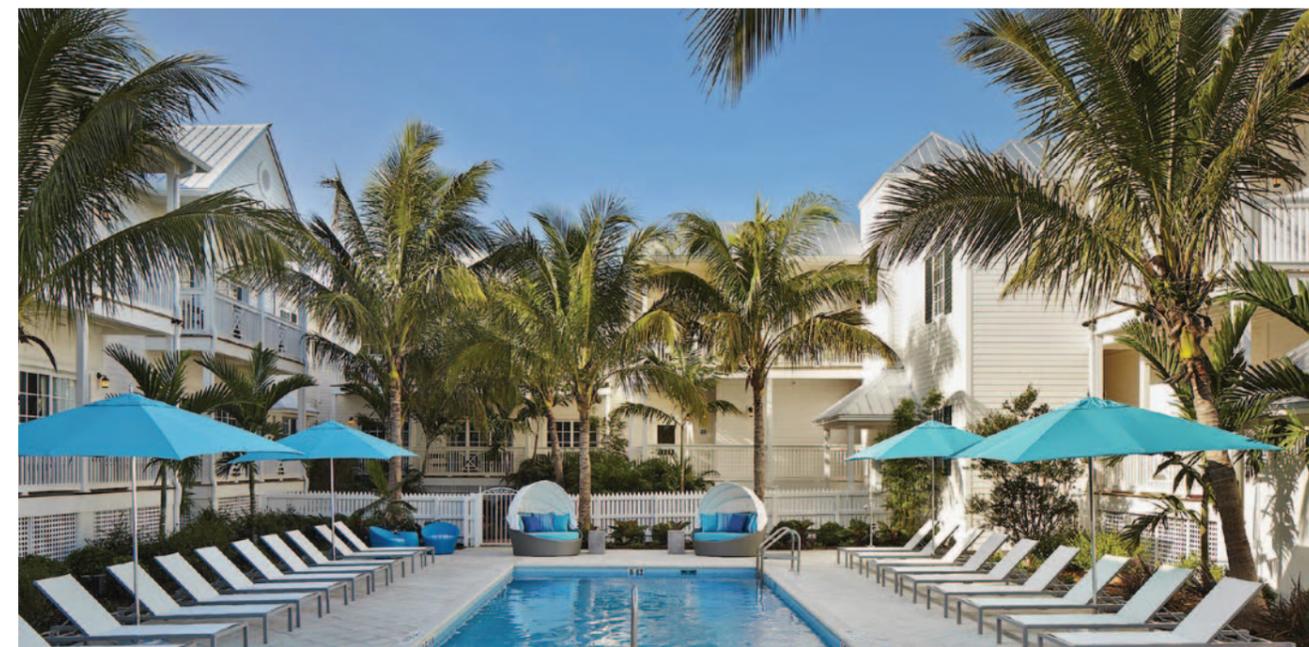
125-room Hyatt Place hotel with two pools, a fitness center, meeting space and a waterfront restaurant and outdoor bar called Lighthouse Grill. Boaters can enjoy a 74-slip state-of-the-art marina that can handle vessels up to 100 feet long.

At the southernmost tip of the Keys island chain lies eclectic, artistic Key West — and travelers now are welcomed at the island's entrance by The Gates Hotel Key West. With the first building opened in spring 2015 and the second set for later in 2015, the new 245-room hotel blends refined luxury, minimalist design, artwork, food and music into a chic and comfortable lodging experience.

Guest rooms feature whitewashed beams, custom cypress platform beds and photography from an exclusive local gallery.

Other highlights include the Rum Row bar, two large swimming pools with cabanas and daybeds, a restaurant featuring breakfast, lunch and dinner, fitness and business centers, and an atmosphere reminiscent of "old Key West."

The southernmost city's Historic Seaport, one of the most popular gathering places for visitors and residents alike, houses a lively diversity of restaurants, shops and attractions. The district's newest gem is The Marker Waterfront



The Marker Waterfront Resort features 96 rooms and is conveniently located in Key West's Historic Seaport district.



**The Islander Resort features the Florida Keys Conference Center.**

Resort, a two-acre luxury property that debuted in December 2014.

The 96-room resort combines a modern and timeless aesthetic with the free spirit and tropical nature of the Key West community. Four room categories are available, offering marina, pool, garden and Old Town views.

Surrounded by lush landscaping, guests can relax and swim at multiple swimming pools, complete with poolside cocktail service, savor Cali-Mex-inspired cuisine at the on-site Cero Bodega or enjoy the ocean view.

Located on the heart of Duval Street, the classic Crowne Plaza Key West La Concha has recently

undergone significant renovations to the 160-unit property. The hotel lobby has been upgraded with stylish parquet flooring and shades of ivory, white and mahogany adorn all interiors from the seating area to the bar lounge.

La Concha guests can enjoy enhanced restaurant offerings at the new 430 Duval and a vast selection of fine wines from around the world at the Wine-O wine bar. La Concha also has completed Top Spa, a new spa located on the top floor of the building. The indulgent spa menu includes three- and four-hour packages including everything from body treatments and facials to nail services and massages.



**Among accommodations offerings at The Gates Hotel Key West is this king room.**

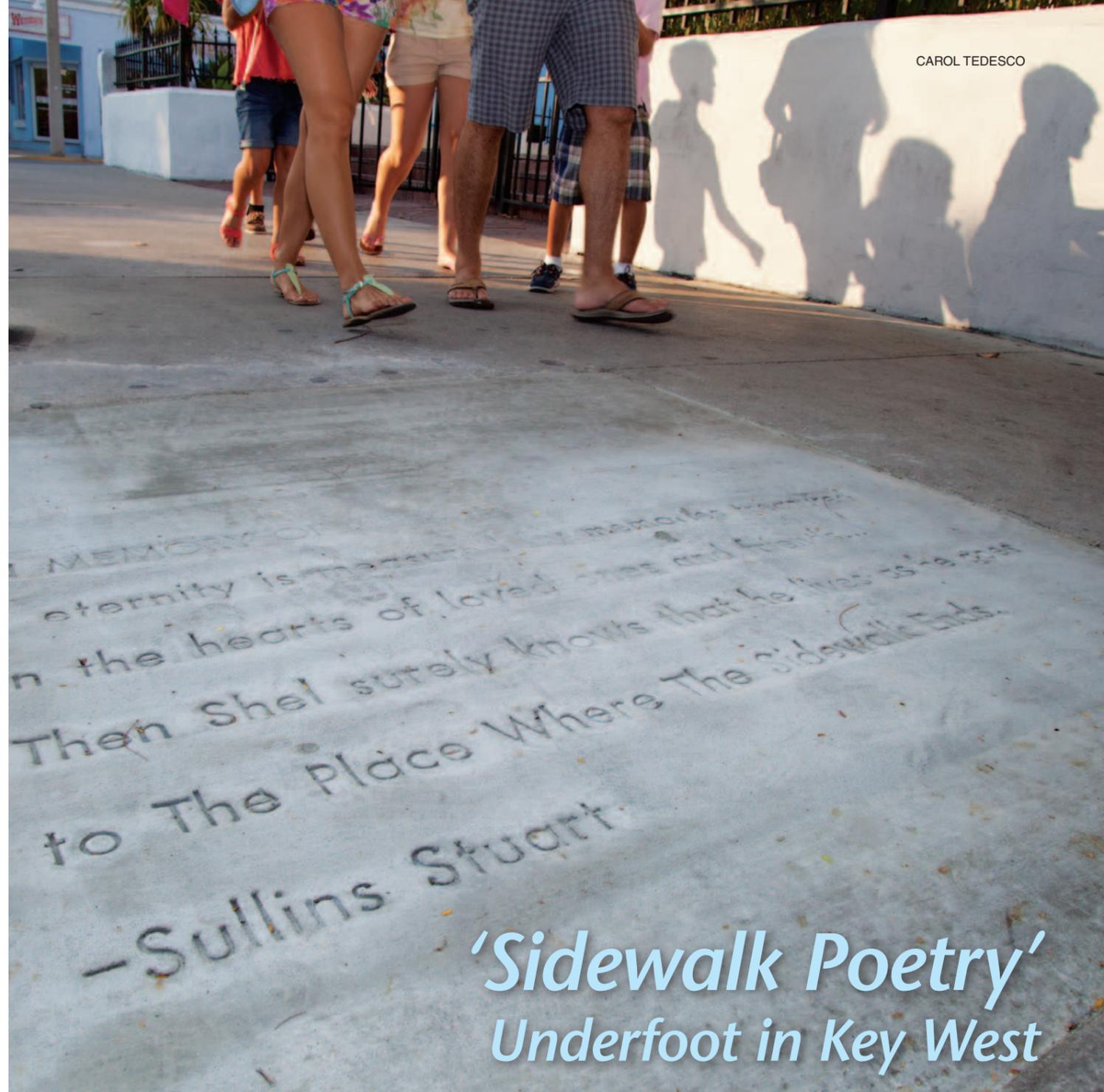
Another Duval Street property is seeing a major change in 2015. The Southern Cross Hotel has been purchased by the owner of the Saint Hotel New Orleans and has transformed and rebranded into the Saint Hotel Key West. The historic two-story building features 37 renovated guest rooms and six suites. Also featured are a large landscaped pool, cabana area, sprawling lobby bar and 75-person balcony overlooking Duval Street.

Appealing as they are, these are only a handful of the Keys properties debuting enhancements or opening. Others include Islamorada's renovated Smuggler's Cove Resort and Marina, Marathon's new Courtyard by Marriott, the renovated Tranquility Bay Beach House Resort, Captain Pip's Marina & Hideaway and the recently purchased Banana Bay Resort & Marina. Key West is set to see several new properties including the Fairfield Inn & Suites and Hilton Garden Inn, as well as renovations to the recently purchased Doubletree Grand Key Resort, Gardens Hotel, Spindrift Hotel, Southwinds Motel, Ocean Breeze Inn, Olivia by Duval and La Te Da Hotel.

These new and revitalized Florida Keys properties — with their diverse designs, amenities, prices and locations — will add their own unique flavors to the Keys' intriguing mix as they welcome visitors eager to experience and explore the island chain.

**Information**

- [amaracayresort.com](http://amaracayresort.com)
- [faroblancoresort.com](http://faroblancoresort.com)
- [gateshotelkeywest.com](http://gateshotelkeywest.com)
- [guyharveyoutpostislamorada.com](http://guyharveyoutpostislamorada.com)
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- [themarkerkeywest.com](http://themarkerkeywest.com)



**'Sidewalk Poetry'  
Underfoot in Key West**

**P**edestrians strolling the sidewalks of Key West, former home of literary notables from Ernest Hemingway to Tennessee Williams, should look down while they're walking — because they just might encounter a poem.

Spearheaded by the city's Art in Public Places Board, 17 concrete-etched "sidewalk poems" by local writers are being installed around the island city. Poems were chosen from more than 200 submissions by Florida Keys writers competing to stop passersby in their tracks with their words.

"This project expands our understanding of Key West's literary tapestry and gives poets their own pal-

ette on our pavements — the pages of our city," said board chairman Michael Shields.

The first "sidewalk poem" was unveiled outside Captain Tony's Saloon, the former site of Sloppy Joe's Bar, which was a frequent haunt of Ernest Hemingway during his residence in Key West throughout most of the 1930s.

Among others is a tribute in verse to the late Key Wester Shel Silverstein, a poet and songwriter whose notable works include the best-selling children's poetry book, "Where the Sidewalk Ends."

— Carol Shaughnessy

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



Diver Penny Bailey observes tiny eggs and sperm erupt from a portion of the Florida Keys' coral reef off Key Largo.

## Annual Coral Spawn Is a Key Largo Ritual

Divers and snorkelers observing the Keys' reefs at night can witness a fascinating reproductive phenomenon when corals release eggs and sperm during synchronized mass-spawning events, usually triggered around the August and September full moons.

In a display likened to an "upside-down underwater snowstorm" millions of gametes enter the water in a massive white excretion over a broad geographic area, maximizing the chances of fertilization and overwhelming predators with more food than they can consume.

Fragile, newly united egg and sperm form "planulae," larvae that ascend to free-float in surface currents, eventually settling to the bottom to become polyps and later form coral colonies.

The underwater exchange means the continued survival of coral reefs, including boulder corals such as brain and star corals, and branching corals like elkhorn and staghorn.

Cultured corals, a direct result of wild transplant efforts by Keys scientific research agencies, also actively spawn. Key Largo's Coral Restoration Foundation founder Ken Nedimyer reported increasing numbers of elkhorn and staghorn corals at CRF's offshore nurseries and outplanting sites on reefs that spawned in 2014.

Scientists hypothesize the coral spawn may be connected to seasonal lunar cycles and environmental cues such as water temperatures and tidal and 24-hour light cycles.

— Julie Botteri

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

## Through the Looking Glass

Though snorkeling and diving are great ways to discover the undersea world of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, glass-bottom boat tours provide an alternative for those who prefer to view marine life without getting wet.

Up to 130 passengers can travel in style and comfort aboard the 65-foot high-speed glass-bottom catamaran Spirit of Pennekamp. Daily 2.5-hour excursions that depart from John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park at mile marker (MM) 102.5 oceanside include plenty of viewing time to see reefs and diverse marine life.

Guests also can explore the underwater world aboard the Key Largo Princess, a 75-foot glass-bottom yacht offering seating on an outside sun deck or inside an air-conditioned salon. With 280 square feet of viewing windows, each passenger can get an unforgettable look at the Keys' marine environment. The vessel sails from the Holiday Inn Key Largo at MM 100 oceanside.

Ocean Vue I, a high-speed hydrofoil vessel outfitted with a special curved glass-bottom window that doubles magnification, combines the glass-bottom boat experience with snorkeling and a memorable dolphin encounter. The boat accommodates six guests and is based at Jimmy Johnson's Big Chill complex at MM 104 bayside.

— Chloe Lykes

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

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

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



Resembling a dolphin, the Ocean Vue I features a curved glass-bottom window.



## Roasted Florida Keys Lobster

Prepared by Cheeca Lodge's Richard Smith

By Briana Ciraulo • Photography by Nancy Tobin

From the unique locals and vibrant turquoise waters to the exciting history and home-grown cuisine, every element of the Florida Keys is colorful.

Executive Chef Richard Smith of Islamorada's iconic Cheeca Lodge & Spa showcases the lively colors of the subtropical island chain in his mouthwatering roasted Florida Keys lobster dish.

The dish features ingredients that reflect the Keys' tropical ambiance including fresh succulent Florida lobster, organic black rice, baby zucchini and tropical fruits like mango and dragon fruit.

Born and raised in Kingston, Jamaica, Smith has a rich professional background, including an advanced culinary degree from Johnson & Wales University and 14 years' experience as a chef in luxury hotels around Florida. He has been executive chef at Cheeca Lodge & Spa since January 2012.

"This dish really represents what the Florida Keys have to offer in terms of flavors — and the colors of the dish give it a tropical island

feel that is indigenous to the Keys," said Smith.

For those without access to Keys lobster, several other seafood delicacies can be substituted including langoustines, jumbo prawns or Maine lobster.

"My advice to those trying to recreate this dish is to have fun with it," Smith said. "Don't take cooking too seriously. It doesn't have to come out perfect — just make it your own."



Cheeca Executive Chef Richard Smith

## INGREDIENTS

Two 2 lb. (.9kg) .....	Florida Keys lobsters
1 cup (237ml).....	organic black rice
One .....	orange (segmented)
1/2 lb. (226g) .....	baby zucchini (cut on a bias)
1/4 lb. (113g).....	medium brussels sprouts
One .....	dragon fruit
1 cup (237ml).....	mango puree
1/2 lb. (226g) .....	whole butter
One .....	sprig of thyme
One .....	fresh bay leaf
Two .....	cloves of garlic (crushed)
One .....	medium shallot (rough cut)
1/2 cup (118ml).....	white wine
1/4 cup (59ml).....	lemon juice
1/4 cup (59ml).....	heavy cream
	Salt and pepper to taste

Full recipe, with cooking instructions, can be found at [cheeca.com/flkeys-lobster](http://cheeca.com/flkeys-lobster)

# Follow the Florida Keys Overseas Paddling Trail

By Mary and Bill Burnham  
Photography by Rob O'Neal

Mary and Bill Burnham are the authors of "Florida Keys Paddling Atlas," and lead multi-day kayak trips ranging from three days to an annual 100-mile expedition from Key Largo to Key West. Visit them at [BurnhamGuides.com](http://BurnhamGuides.com).

Imagine the sense of fulfillment — and memories you'll savor and share for a lifetime — after paddling from Key Largo to the southernmost point in the continental United States on the Florida Keys Overseas Paddling Trail.

The clear, shallow, Caribbean-blue waters elevate Florida Keys paddling above any other in the continental U.S. Beneath your kayak or stand-up paddleboard lies an aquarium of colorful sponges and patch coral, schooling fish, small sharks and rays.

From an easy two-hour float through quiet mangrove tunnels or passing under Henry Flagler's century-old bridges, to the 10-day trip of a lifetime paddling from Key Largo to Key West, the trail connects you to the history, nature and culture of the Keys.

Here's a sampling of some of our favorite paddling spots along the Florida Keys Overseas Paddling Trail:

#### Upper Keys

- In Key Largo, launch from Florida Bay Outfitters into Florida Bay or from John Pennekamp Coral Reef State

Park to follow the marked trails on the ocean side.

- Launch your kayak or SUP from Robbie's Marina in Islamorada, paddling past giant tarpon to visit historic Indian Key.

#### Middle Keys

- Launch on the ocean side from either Curry Hammock State Park or Long Key State Park, which has a marked canoe/kayak trail through shallow bays and mangroves.

- From Marathon, have kayaks delivered to Sombrero Beach and explore Sisters Creek's mangroves.

#### Lower Keys

- Launch from Sugarloaf Key to experience the Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuge, a mass of mangrove islands unreachable by road.

- From Lazy Dog Outfitters on Stock Island, take a tour to explore the mangrove creeks around Key West International Airport.

- Head to Key West's legendary Smathers Beach to rent a paddleboard or kayak and surf the ocean swells.



## Saving 'Old 7'

**A \$77 million restoration and maintenance program should preserve the Old Seven Mile Bridge, right, for the future.**

A portion of the historic Seven Mile Bridge, a Florida Keys icon, is to be saved for future generations thanks to a \$77 million restoration and maintenance program that is to continue for 30 years.

Three government entities, including the Florida Department of Transportation, Monroe County (Florida Keys) Commission and City of Marathon are to cooperatively fund the effort to restore and maintain a 2.2-mile segment of the bridge between Marathon and tiny Pigeon Key.

FDOT's Gus Pego said some \$30 million is to be expended during initial stages to shore up the existing structure. He said he hopes construction can begin sometime in 2016.

The span was built more than a century ago, when Henry Flagler constructed the Florida Keys OverSea Railroad.

In 1938 the bridge was converted for use by automobiles and in 1982 the federal government built a new span. "Old 7" was retired and became a fishing pier and walking area, but the harsh marine environment has taken its toll.

"Almost every major component of the bridge needs to be repaired," Pego said, "[including] the substructure, the superstructure and hand railings in order to make it safe for pedestrians."

Pego said the refurbished span will remain under state jurisdiction and will be designed to support up to 17-ton vehicles.

"We're going to design it so

emergency vehicles can [go] back and forth from Pigeon Key," he said. "We also envision a light tram taking tourists back and forth to the island."

Today, Pigeon Key, the minuscule island beneath the old bridge that once housed about 400 workers who built Flagler's railroad, is a historical and educational center. Visitors are transported there by ferry because the old bridge was deemed unsafe for motorized vehicles.

"Folks come from all over the world to see this iconic structure," said Monroe County Administrator Roman Gastesi. "It's utilized by more than 100,000 people every year for walking and biking."

— Julie Botteri

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

## G... Gho... Ghost Tours in Key West

According to paranormal expert David Sloan, Key West is one of the most haunted cities in the entire United States — and Sloan should know. He created the island's first ghost tour in 1996, has authored volumes including "Ghosts of Key West," and recently researched and launched a unique interactive ghost-hunting tour in historic Old Town.

Dubbed Sloan's Key West Ghost Hunt, the 90-minute nightly walking tour spotlights some of the island's most noteworthy and well-documented spirits: the famous resident who refuses to leave the building placed over his grave, the judge still lurking around his own murder site and the children who play ghostly games in a secluded garden.

But the tour, which incorporates some of Key West's notoriously haunted locations, offers far more than well-researched tales. Sloan and his guides instruct participants in the use of state-of-the-art "ghost hunting" equipment to detect supernatural activities.

"Haunted stories start to lose a lot over the years and become mere legends," Sloan said. "I wanted to go back to the roots."

Rather than creating effects to "spook" tour participants, Sloan and his guides take their guests on an



**David Sloan leads a ghost tour in Old Town Key West.**

intriguing, authentic excursion that provides opportunities to glimpse and better understand inhabitants of the supernatural realm. They encourage guests to open their minds — and are sometimes as surprised as anyone when the ghost-hunting equipment picks up otherworldly influences.



Sloan's may be the only interactive ghost hunt in Key West, but several other walking and trolley tours blend views of haunted sites with

vignettes from Key West's history.

Notable among them is Old Town Trolley's Ghosts & Gravestones Tour, featuring a costumed "ghost host" who recounts strange but true stories of tragedies, murders, burials, curses and other unnerving events. The tour's highlight is a stop at Fort East Martello Museum for a visit with Robert the Doll, an eerily mischievous century-old toy that still mystifies ghost hunters today.

— Carol Shaughnessy

[keywestghosthunt.com](http://keywestghosthunt.com)  
[ghostsandgravestones.com](http://ghostsandgravestones.com)

# Lights, Camera, Action: Shot in the Keys

While enticing Florida Keys locales inspire tourism, they also attract advertising, film and television industries that cast the interconnected islands as characters in their productions.

Key Largo's Caribbean Club bar has appeared in movies — most famously in John Huston's 1947 classic, "Key Largo," starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall. The movie's release created subsequent tourist attention for the island. Key Largo honors the man the American Film Institute named "America's greatest male screen legend" with an annual Humphrey Bogart Film Festival.

Advertisements feature iconic Keys roads, bridges, beaches and crystalline waters. Jeep and Ford recently used Marathon and Key West as backdrops, and a Fiat 500 "swim" from Italy spot was partially shot in the Upper Keys. A 1996 Ralph Lauren Polo extravaganza featured Terra's Key, a private Atlantic Ocean island with a four-bedroom home, tennis court, pool, dock, saltwater lagoon and beach. The Moorings Village, a luxury resort in Islamorada, is favored by fashion photographers, including Bruce Weber.

Before becoming California's governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger starred in a 1994 film with Jamie Lee Curtis called "True Lies" that was shot partially in the Keys. The madcap caper, about a spy whose personal and professional lives collide, involved action sequences of helicopter stunts, a warehouse explosion and a bridge blast that required constructing a replica of the Middle Keys' landmark Seven Mile Bridge on Sugarloaf Key.

Scenes from 2002's "Red Dragon" starring Anthony Hopkins were filmed in Islamorada at a resident doctor's home.

The Keys also have appeared in reality television shows. Recently,

Destination America's "Buying the Beach" documented a local musician's pursuit of buying a private island for himself and his wife.

"Platinum Weddings" was filmed on location in Islamorada to document the million-dollar wedding of two New York investment bankers and their guests at Cheeca Lodge and Spa. Other shows include MTV's "The Real World" (2005-06) and "Burn Notice" (2013), among others.

Notable too is the "Bloodline" original series that premiered in March 2015 on Netflix, an online streaming media provider. The 13-episode psychological thriller starring Oscar-winner Sissy Spacek and Emmy-winner Kyle Chandler uses several Upper Keys locations and follows the dramatic accounts of an Islamorada family.

— Julie Botteri

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



Actor Humphrey Bogart starred in the 1947 classic "Key Largo." Today, Key Largo is the setting for the annual Humphrey Bogart Film Festival.

# Feed the Fishes at Keys Aquarium Encounters



Visitors to the Florida Keys can enjoy a new immersive experience, including feeding reef fish, invertebrates, stingrays and even sharks.

The Florida Keys Aquarium Encounters in Marathon features a coral reef exhibit and a predatory fish habitat housed in a 200,000-gallon interconnected saltwater aquarium.

"It's an interactive aquarium where you get the opportunity to go in and encounter all different species we have in the Florida Keys," said Ben Daughtry, the facility's managing owner. "And it's really a unique learning opportunity where you get the ability to touch, feel ... feed any of the species we have here."

Feeding the marine life at the aquarium provides an opportunity not allowed in open waters off the Keys. Fish feeding in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary is prohibited, because it disrupts their natural behavior, sanctuary officials said.

The encounter uses tethered diving

technology, enabling individuals without prior scuba experience to enjoy the in-water opportunity with supervision from dive instructors.

A fortified Plexiglass window divides the coral reef tank from a shark and other predatory fish section, and participants can safely hand-feed these creatures through small underwater feeding ports in the divider.

Other interactive facilities include shallow touch tanks that house starfish, conchs and horseshoe crabs, and allow feeding of de-barbed stingrays and docile baby nurse sharks.

Staff marine biologists provide educational instruction and guidance.

"You swim around a bunch of fish," said Doug Boring, a recent guest of the facility. "It gives you a whole new perspective on the world that doesn't get to be seen regularly."

— Julie Botteri

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





## Skip Bradeen Marks 50 Years in the Fish Biz

Text and Photography by Andy Newman

Captain Skip Bradeen is in the cockpit of his beloved Blue Chip Too, barking instructions to his angler.

“Now listen to me,” says Bradeen in his New York–staccato dialect. “He might be eating it. All right, hit him.”

The angler reels down, raises the rod and a nice dolphin (mahi mahi) leaps into the air off the Florida Keys.

Bradeen, 72, is in his 50th year in the Florida Keys charterboat fishing business. The legendary skipper is best known for his enthusiastic personality and quick wit.

Bradeen’s love for the Keys began in September 1964 when he was 22 years old. He had just finished a stint in the U.S. Air Force and was destined to become a New York butcher.

In a Long Island, N.Y., bar he told some friends about plans to travel to Fort Lauderdale, Fla., for a vacation in his new Chevrolet Impala convertible.

“I had a few jingles (dollars)

in my pocket and was going to Lauderdale to chase women for a couple of weeks before going back to Long Island and meat-cutting school,” he said. “A buddy of mine asked if he could come and share expenses because he had a job offer as a deckhand on the Tradewinds party boat in Islamorada.

“I had never even heard of the Florida Keys, but he talked me into passing Lauderdale to bring him down,” Bradeen recalled. “I stopped at the dock to drop him off, got out of my car, walked around and this captain says to me, ‘You wanna go fishing tomorrow?’”

Bradeen explained he didn’t have money to go fishing, but the charterboat skipper offered him the opportunity to work as a mate.

“We went out the next day for a half day,” Bradeen remembered. “Caught eight barracuda and went back to the dock at noon. He gave me a \$5 bill after I cleaned the boat and the party gave me a \$5 tip.”

Thrilled with making \$10 in a

half day, Bradeen decided to stick around for a little while to learn the charterboat business while he painted the captain’s motel.

“So I called mom and told her I wasn’t going to be home until Thanksgiving,” he said. “And then when Thanksgiving came, I was doing even more charter work and told mom I wouldn’t be home until Christmas.”

Bradeen kept postponing his return to Long Island, and in the spring of 1965 he called his mother to deliver a final message.

“‘Mom, you know my cold weather clothes?’” he said. “‘Give ‘em away. I’m not coming home no more.’”

In 1966 Bradeen purchased that first boat he had worked on as a mate for \$3,200, including fishing gear. He’s been a captain ever since.

The charter fee back then for the boat, called the Always, was \$60 for a full day and \$40 for half. According to Bradeen, gas cost 13 cents per gallon.

“So we fished a lot of blue-collar people,” he said. “Pretty much everybody could afford that trip.”

Today, due to soaring costs of fuel, insurance and other needs, Bradeen’s charter fee is \$1,300 for a full day and \$900 for a half day.

And over the years, Bradeen’s clientele has shifted to professionals and their families seeking to experience the skipper’s entertaining style.

“I started fishing with Captain Skip when I was 7,” said Barron Pritt, now 27. “My family and I came down here on vacation.

“We just picked a boat and we went,” he said. “Now, we make it a reunion to come down here and always fish with Skip — nobody else.”

Bradeen’s style is to let his customers become fully involved in the angling experience. That’s one of the reasons Saltwater Sportsman magazine named him one of 50 top charterboat skippers.

“The mate hooking a fish is not allowed on this boat, no matter what it is,” Bradeen said.

And his clients appreciate that.

“He wants it to be a hands-on ex-

perience for you, so you know what fishing is,” Pritt said. “He’s always so happy and energetic and outgoing.”

“He’s going out there and wants to make sure everyone catches fish and has a good time,” he said.

That’s exactly what Bradeen’s goal has been for more than 14,000 charter fishing trips.

“When they get off the boat, whether we catch a lot of fish or not, people say they had a wonderful time,” said Bradeen, who has skippered for American presidents, rock stars and sports celebrities.

But the popular captain wants to be remembered best for his community benevolence. He coached Little League Baseball for 28 years and has served as master of ceremonies for countless fundraisers.

“I want people to remember me not as the greatest fisherman perhaps, but how I gave back to the community,” he said.

Will Bradeen ever retire?

“That word is not in my vocabulary right now,” he said. “I’m on a journey, no retirement in sight.”



## Key West Fishing Tournament Celebrating 50th

Half a century ago, Captain Gainey Maxwell conceived a way to encourage people to visit and fish Florida Keys waters — and then return to do it again. He called it the Key West Fishing Tournament.

Maxwell, now in his 90s, had an impressive set of credentials even in 1965.

A Navy veteran who ran fishing boats while he served, he subsequently skippered the Lookout III, a 50-footer with two staterooms for overnight trips.

He formatted the tournament to showcase the variety of species awaiting anglers in Keys waters.

“I started it to get people interested in coming back and catching different fish,” Maxwell said. “We’d go fish over wrecks or in shallow water just to change and get different kinds of fish.”

Today, 40 backcountry and off-shore species are targeted during the free-entry tournament’s seven-month span. The 2015 event, the 50th, began in early April.

With divisions for men, women, junior anglers ages 10 to 14 and Pee Wees under 10 years old, the tournament motivates newcomers eager to fish, parents sharing their favorite sport with kids and veteran anglers seeking a challenge.

The Key West Fishing Tournament draws thousands of entries each year. Organizers encourage releasing all game fish, and the event upholds Maxwell’s goal of showcasing the Keys fishery and providing a positive angling experience.

“The main thing,” said Maxwell, “is to enjoy and have fun doing it.”

— Carol Shaughnessy



Gainey Maxwell



Skip Bradeen poses with clients Veronica Pereira and Barron Pritt and their catch.

What’s Biting and Where in the Florida Keys:  
[fla-keys.com/fishing](http://fla-keys.com/fishing)

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

# Birding Takes Flight in the Florida Keys

Famous for extraordinary underwater beauty, the Florida Keys also are among the world's top destinations for year-round bird watching where avian rarities abound. Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park, Long Key State Park and Dry Tortugas National Park are among a dozen Keys native habitat stops along the South Florida segment of the 12-county, 116-site 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 some unique Keys residents — mangrove cuckoos, ospreys, herons and roseate spoonbills.

In the Lower Keys, the National Key Deer Refuge's 9,000-plus acres of mangrove forests, fresh-water 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.

Florida Keys Hawkwatch spearheads the southernmost migration count in the continental United States at the Middle Keys' Curry

Hammock State Park, offering visitors the opportunity to count the thousands of buteos, accipiters, falcons, raptors and eagles that fly through the Keys. It's generally agreed that more peregrine falcons pass through the Keys on their annual migration than through any other location in the U.S.

—Julie Botteri



floridakeysbest.com/audubon  
floridakeyshawkwatch.wordpress.com

An osprey returns to its nest in the Florida Keys with nourishment.

ANDY NEWMAN



## Charters Offer Unique Excursions

Key West's all-accepting diversity has helped make it an internationally renowned gay and lesbian vacation spot — but no getaway is complete without spending time in the turquoise waters that lap the island's shores.

Visitors can choose from exclusive water excursions to experience snorkeling, fishing, sunset sailing, dolphin watching and other adventures above, on or below the sea.

Guys can hop aboard the 37-passenger Blu Q for all-male snorkel trips that include relaxation, kayaking and clothing-optional swimming and tanning on a secluded sandbar. Offerings also include a scenic harbor tour and sunset party aboard the comfortable 42-foot catamaran.

Private customized trips for two to four passengers can be booked aboard the Q2 powerboat.

The lesbian-owned Venus Charters offers excursions on a 25-foot, six-passenger powerboat. Trips can be customized to include snorkeling the backcountry or reefs, light-tackle fishing, observing dolphins, swimming, beachcombing, exploring remote uninhabited islands or viewing a renowned Keys sunset. Clothing-optional excursions are available as well.

All Venus Charters are private to ensure memorable experiences on the water.

[blukeywest.com](http://blukeywest.com)  
[venuscharters.com](http://venuscharters.com)



The Blu Q catamaran sails off Key West, providing all-male excursions.



BOB CARE

August Powers' whimsical 'musical instruments' are 'played' each year at the Lower Keys Underwater Music Festival at Looe Key Reef.

## Lower Keys Artist Sculpts 'Fishy' Creations

If August Powers' mother hadn't wanted a fountain, one of the Lower Florida Keys' most talented artists might never have discovered his creative calling. But she did — so she sent her son to a metal arts class at the Keys community college, sparking a career that has lasted some 25 years.

Sculpting that initial fountain and others inspired Powers to begin crafting different types of leaves to decorate them, grasshoppers and other bugs, snails and birds, and ultimately fish and denizens of the deep.

Working in bronze, steel and copper, fusing hammered pieces together with a torch, he sculpts creatures ranging from life-size to gigantic. His favorite subjects include marine life such as barracuda and flying fish, wahoo and prehistoric-looking crabs.

Powers is particularly well known for the unique "musical instruments" he creates for the quirky Lower Keys Underwater Music Festival, an undersea broadcast each July that encourages preservation of the Florida Keys' living coral reef.

His skillful pieces combine

elements of marine creatures and traditional instruments, resulting in whimsical hybrids like a "mantalin," "sitarfish," "clamborine" and "trombonefish" that are "played" by the festival's participating divers on the ocean floor.

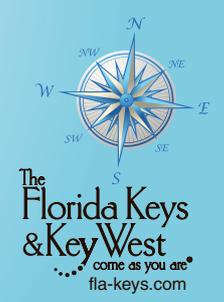
— Carol Shaughnessy



SUSAN MILLER

August Power with a few of his creations displayed at a gallery.

# 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
Delta	delta.com
Silver Airways	silverairways.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:

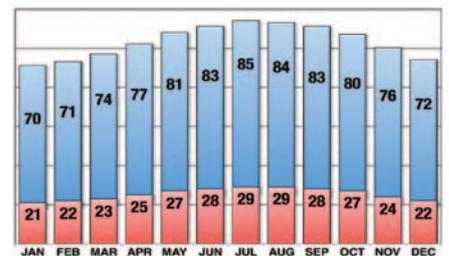
[fla-keys.com/gettinghere.cfm](http://fla-keys.com/gettinghere.cfm)

## 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.

The Florida Keys & Key West  
[fla-keys.com](http://fla-keys.com)  
[fla-keys.co.uk](http://fla-keys.co.uk)