



**nileGUIDE**

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Bob Jagendorf

# Florida Keys for First-Timers

## Florida Keys, 4 Days

### Table of contents:

Guide Description 2

Itinerary Overview 3

Daily Itineraries 5

Florida Keys Snapshot 18

# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** Visitors are drawn to the Florida Keys to experience the island chain's priceless natural resources to rejuvenate the mind, body and soul, and the Keys have celebrated a heritage of conservation - but let's face it: it's a great place to dip your toes in the water and just have some fun. What other islands can your drive to?

You'll find kayaking and paddle surfing, kiteboarding, diving & snorkeling, unique museums, crazy street performers, and at night, comfy accommodations - everything from high end resorts to the smallest and most intimate of bed and breakfasts.

The islands' fishing, diving, arts and culture, history, nightlife and award-winning seafood and ethnic restaurants draw visitors back again and again, because after their first visit they catch the "Keys disease" that just won't go away. Like a strange rash.

This first-timer itinerary offers the must-sees. Rental car is convenient, if you intend to see the entire island chain - very easy and attainable to do within a single vacation.

Once you get to Key West though, park the car, rent a bicycle and get around the island easier. Even the pedi-cabs are more fun. Parking is at a premium (and small streets get clogged quickly) on the southernmost island, which lends to a very pedestrian community. The airport in Key West is only minutes away from anywhere, so you can lounge until the last precious minutes of your stay!

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Florida Keys

**DAY NOTE:** Being in the Keys means being in nature, exploring the outdoors and finding an appreciation of wildlife again. Florida Keys islands are a destination yes, but they are also a series of working communities where locals strive to maintain a less-frenetic pace of life, strong communities and relaxed atmosphere. There is as much history as there is enjoyment in these natural outdoors-y things to do, so you don't want to skip them!

As of March 2010, the Key West home that author Ernest Hemingway lived in from 1931 through 1939 has been designated a literary landmark. So be sure to make a stop there and witness history.



### Pigeon Key

Historical home base for Flagler Railroad workers



### Curry Hammock State Park

Marathon's oceanfront park; picnic, kayak, kiteboard



### Theater of the Sea

World's 2nd oldest marine park; dolphins, sea lions, parrots



### Robbie's Marina

Tourist-y but fun marina with eco-tours and local art



### National Key Deer Refuge

See endangered wildlife up close



### Bahia Honda State Park

America's Top Ten Beaches



### Nancy Forrester's Secret Garden

Created by Nancy Forrester, this botanical gem is a living work of art.



### Mel Fisher Maritime Heritage Museum

Spanish galleon treasure and artifacts on display



### Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum

Author Ernest Hemingway lived in Key West for more than a decade, writing "A Farewell to Arms" and other novels.



### Dry Tortugas National Park

Offshore National Park and preserve in the Gulf of Mexico

## Day 2 - Florida Keys

**DAY NOTE:** Santiago's is one of those local secrets that is hard to reveal, because we selfishly like to keep it to ourselves. You'll be hooked after the first visit, and undeniably A-plus wine list, and super prices for every budget. All the restaurants listed here are some of the island chain's standouts - ones known for a specific kind of food and level of skill involved to continue putting out the best dishes.



### Santiago's Bodega

Great tapas bar



### No Name Pub

Best Pizza, Casual Dining & Florida Keys landmark since 1936.



### La Trattoria Italian Restaurant

Music for the stomach



### Pierre's

A celebration of French, Caribbean and American food and wine.



### Island Grill

At the bottom of Snake Creek Bridge, a fabulously hidden locals favorite

## Day 3 - Florida Keys

**DAY NOTE:** Nightlife in the Keys is a bit subdued, perhaps with Key West as the exception. Whether it's live music you are looking for, jazz, salsa or a the house band that has been together for decades, the Keys has it all. Throw in a little community theater for quirks, and you have a flavorful cultural stew.



### Looe Key Tiki Bar

Local hot spot with live music, drinks and food



### Virgilio's

Trendy spot for dinner, cocktails, or dancing



### Red Barn Theater

Local players, new playwrights



### Dockside Lounge

Young, hip, live-aboards

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife



## Snappers Waterfront Saloon & Raw Bar

Watering hole with live entertainment

## Day 4 - Florida Keys

**DAY NOTE:** Pennekamp Park, America's first undersea park, turns 50 this year! From December 1-11, 2010 there are special celebrations throughout Key Largo planned. Be a part of history!



### John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park

America's first undersea park, celebrates 50 years in 2010



### Indian Key State Historic Site

Hike around the island for a glimpse of history dating back to early 1800's



### Old Seven Mile Bridge

World's longest fishing pier, and only road to Pigeon Key



### Turtle Hospital

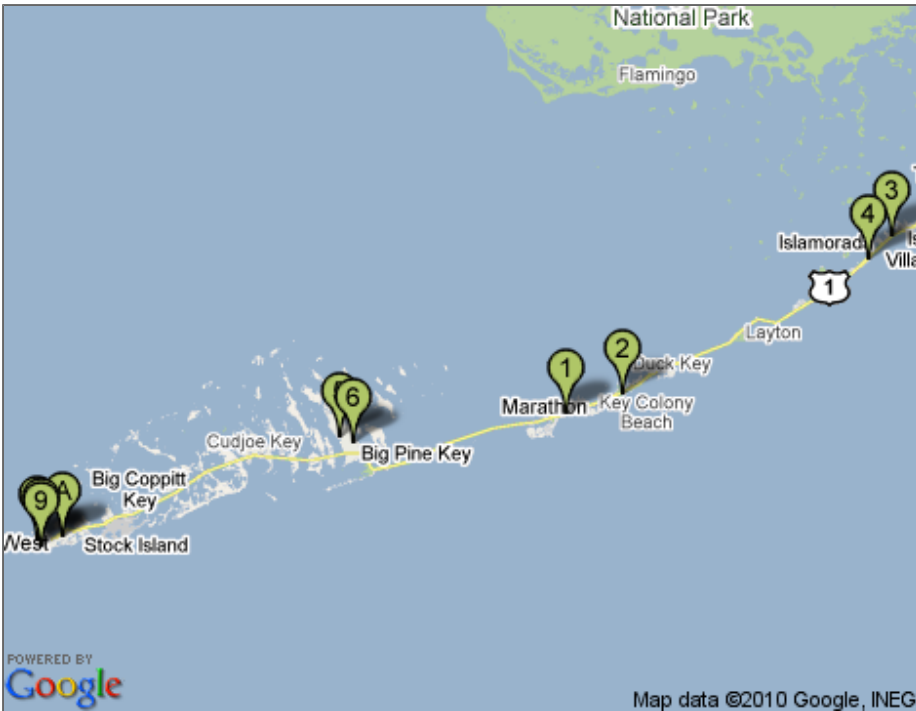
Only licensed vet turtle hospital in the world; educational tours



### Southernmost Point in the Nation

Mile Marker Zero is a mandatory stop

# Day 1 - Florida Keys



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Being in the Keys means being in nature, exploring the outdoors and finding an appreciation of wildlife again. Florida Keys islands are a destination yes, but they are also a series of working communities where locals strive to maintain a less-frenetic pace of life, strong communities and relaxed atmosphere. There is as much history as there is enjoyment in these natural outdoors-y things to do, so you don't want to skip them!

As of March 2010, the Key West home that author Ernest Hemingway lived in from 1931 through 1939 has been designated a literary landmark. So be sure to make a stop there and witness history.

**contact:**  
tel: +1 305 289 0025  
<http://www.pigeonkey.net/contactus.html>

**location:**  
Pigeon Key Foundation  
Marathon FL 33050

## 1 Pigeon Key

**DESCRIPTION:** Pigeon Key is a timeless, tiny island that played a tremendous role in the Florida Keys of today. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this five-acre property served as a home base for railroad workers erecting and later operating the final installment of Henry M. Flagler's Key West Extension of the Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway: the Old Seven-Mile Bridge. Pigeon Key is reached either by foot or ferry service. Vehicles are now prohibited from driving over the old Seven Mile Bridge, so walkers revel in the 2-plus mile scenic walk to the island. The Pigeon Key Visitor Center and Gift Shop is still located on Knight's Key, mile marker 47 oceanside. Admission to the island costs about \$11 per adult and proceeds benefit the Pigeon Key Foundation and its preservation and restoration efforts. It is absolutely worth the boat ride over, and is ideal for outstanding photos of the Keys. © NileGuide



editor

**contact:**

tel: +1 305 289 2690  
<http://www.floridastateparks.org/curryhammock/default.cfm>

**location:**

56200 Overseas Highway  
Marathon FL 33050

## 2 Curry Hammock State Park

**DESCRIPTION:** At MM 56 Oceanside in Marathon is the unspoiled, uncrowded Curry Hammock State Park, with beach and picnic facilities. It is an uncrowded oceanfront preserve, with outstanding beach and recreational facilities, kayak launch site, and just an idyllic spot. Curry Hammock is fast becoming a site for launching kiteboards, a sport that is gaining momentum in the Keys, especially in Marathon and Islamorada. A small RV park has been built at Curry Hammock, with approx. two dozen sites, but the RV area's private beach is unrivaled. Quiet, quiet, quiet. And close to any and all day trips throughout the islands. Curry Hammock is still an unspoiled gem in the Middle Keys. © NileGuide



editor

**contact:**

tel: +1 305 664 2431  
fax: +1 305 664 8162  
<http://www.theaterofthesea.com/>

**location:**

84721 Overseas Highway  
Islamorada FL 33036

## 3 Theater of the Sea

**DESCRIPTION:** Theatre of the Sea, located at 84721 Overseas Highway (MM 84.5) in Islamorada, offers a sit-down parrot show that is surprisingly entertaining and hilarious to watch parrots playing with shapes, ringing bells, playing poker and taking part in guessing games. This is an educational and entertaining marine-animal park and shows are up-close and personal, and is the second oldest park of its kind in the world; the animals live there in natural saltwater lagoons, such as Atlantic bottlenose dolphins, California sea lions, sea turtles, tropical and game fish, sharks, stingrays, crocodiles, alligators, marine invertebrates and birds of prey. While some of the animals were collected and others were born at Theatre of the Sea, many cannot be released because of prolonged contact with humans and/or injuries sustained in the wild. This is hugely important during hurricane season when the animals need to be moved or secured. The care and maintenance of the animals is supported by patrons' donations. Theater of the Sea is open 365 days a year, with tickets available from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. This is the place that pleases everyone in the family! © NileGuide



See live Dolphin, Sea Lion, and Parrot shows up close and personal!

**contact:**

tel: +1 305 664 9814  
<http://www.robbies.com/directions.htm>

**location:**

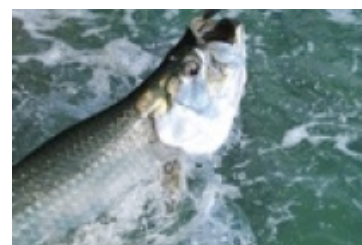
77-5 Overseas Highway  
Islamorada FL 33036

## 4 Robbie's Marina

**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

Buy a bucket of bait fish for three bucks and feed the tarpon! One of a kind experience, just watch out for feisty and greedy pelicans!

**DESCRIPTION:** Okay, this is where you need to drop all pretense and just have FUN. Not only is Robbie's a marina, but the business has one party boat, one offshore boat and a recently acquired snorkel boat in addition to backcountry captains and fishing guides. The owners strive to make it more of a tourist attraction/destination within Islamorada, by adding eco-tours and a cultural environment - they bring in artists on



editor

the weekends. Robbie's is a place where you come in and you feel you've stepped back in time to the Florida Keys of the past. As for the fishy residents, the beloved tarpon they have been hand feeding for over 30 years, they're part of the family just like a dog or cat might be. For a couple bucks you can get a bucket of bait fish and drop it into a 100-pound tarpon's mouth - watch your fingers! Robbie's Marina is located at mile marker 77.5 bayside in Islamorada. © wcities.com

**contact:**

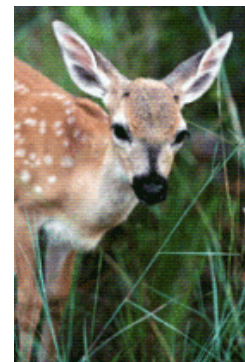
tel: +1 305 872 2239  
fax: +1 305 872 3675  
<http://nationalkeydeer.fws.gov/>

**location:**

28950 Watson Boulevard  
Big Pine Key FL 33043

**5 National Key Deer Refuge**

**DESCRIPTION:** The National Key Deer Refuge consists of approximately 9,200 acres of land that includes mangrove forests, freshwater and salt marsh wetlands, pine rockland forests and tropical hardwood hammocks, as well as more than 75,000 acres of state waters co-managed to support refuge objectives. Shallow nearshore waters are included as well. These native habitats sustain the tiny Key deer, a subspecies of the North American white-tailed deer, and 21 other threatened and endangered plant and animal species. Since the refuge was established, the Key deer, once nearing extinction because of over-hunting and habitat loss, has rebounded to a healthy population of between 600 and 700 animals. The refuge, which is over 50 years old, is also a stopping point for thousands of migratory birds each year, and a winter home to many North American bird species including the roseate tern and peregrine falcon. Birdwatching is one of the world's largest participatory sports, and the Keys are an ideal location for it, year-round. © NileGuide



ational Key Deer Refuge

**contact:**

tel: +1 305 872 2353  
<http://www.bahiahondapark.com>

**location:**

Mile Marker 37.5  
Key West FL 33043

**6 Bahia Honda State Park**

**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

Make reservations for winter campground space and cabins several months in advance. Entry fee, car with one occupant only \$3.50, with two occupants \$6, and boat ramp use \$10.

**DESCRIPTION:** In 2008, the New York Times listed this as one of the top '31 Places To Go This Summer' and it will not disappoint. In 1992, the beach there was named among America's Top 10 Beaches, by Dr. Stephen P. Leatherman, a.k.a. Dr. Beach. Bahia Honda is a days-off dream. With 492 acres, Bahia Honda boasts three sandy beaches -- some of the best in the Florida Keys, which are rare. This one is rivaled only by Marathon's Sombrero Beach. Shallow-water snorkeling and fishing from the beach, plus an abundance of wading and shore birds, kayaking and great views of the Old Bahia Honda Bridge complement the Sand and Sea Nature Center. © NileGuide



<http://www.bahiahondapark.com/bahia.jpg>

**contact:**

tel: +1 305 294 0015  
http://www.nfsgarden.com/

**location:**

1 Free School Lane  
Key West FL 33040

## 7 Nancy Forrester's Secret Garden

**DESCRIPTION:** Located right in the middle of crowded Old Town Key West, this place is an "island in the stream." Owner Nancy Forrester has somehow managed to face down the pressure of development and the tree-tearing fury of hurricanes in order to keep this 30-year-old garden pristine and magnificent. Here you will see the tropics in all its foliage glory with exotics such as orchids nestling in branches, huge ferns, bromeliads, red ginger, pink heliconias and a "sunburn" gumbo-limbo tree. Some plants are rare and endangered; others are extinct in their original habitats. A group of exotic birds resides among the lush foliage. Bring a picnic lunch and tour the onsite art gallery, as well. Admission fee. The entrance is on Free School Lane, off the 500 block of Simonton Street between Fleming and Southard streets.  
© wcities.com



editor

**contact:**

tel: +1 305 294 2633  
fax: +1 305 294 5671  
http://www.melfisher.org

**location:**

200 Greene Street  
Key West FL 33040

**hours:**

Daily 9:30am-5pm

## 8 Mel Fisher Maritime Heritage Museum

**DESCRIPTION:** Mel Fisher and his crew uncovered the "main pile" of the Spanish galleon Nuestra Senora de Atocha, her treasure and artifacts, hailed by world press as the shipwreck find of the century, on July 20, 1985, after an exhaustive 16-year search. The galleon was wrecked during a 1622 hurricane in approximately 55 feet of water 35 miles southwest of Key West. Since then, almost four million people have come to Key West to see the artifacts and treasures - including gold and silver bars and coins, a 77.7-carat emerald and thousands of smaller stones, religious objects, rare navigational instruments and weapons - that were excavated and conserved under the auspices of the Mel Fisher Maritime Heritage Society. Fisher died in 1998, but his family continues his legacy. Museum is open 365 days a year: Mon – Fri 8:30am – 5pm, Sat, Sun & holidays, 9:30am – 5pm. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Mel Fisher Maritime Heritage Museum.

**contact:**

tel: +1 305 294 1136  
fax: +1 305 294 2755  
http://www.hemingwayhome.com

**location:**

907 Whitehead Street  
Key West FL 33040

## 9 Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum

**DESCRIPTION:** Key West was to have been just a stopping-off point for Hemingway when he arrived on the ferry from Havana in 1928. But the Ford automobile that should have been waiting at the docks was delayed, so the embarrassed car merchant offered the author accommodations at the Trevor and Morris Apartments located above the dealership. During his stay there, Hemingway worked on "A Farewell to Arms" and became captivated by the island's easygoing ambiance. What he discovered fed his exuberance for living, heralded the beginning of the most prolific period of his career and inspired him to use Depression-era Key West as the locale for "To Have and Have Not" - his only novel set in the United States. In a short time, Hemingway moved into a Spanish colonial villa at 907 Whitehead St., which was his home through December 1939. Now a registered National Historic Landmark, the home is open to the public as a museum honoring the island's most famous literary resident. Ernest Hemingway wrote many of his best-known works in the second-story



editor



writing studio that adjoins the house. Among them were "Death in the Afternoon," "For Whom the Bell Tolls," "The Green Hills of Africa," "The Fifth Column," "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." Following his death in 1961, the unpublished manuscript that was to become "Islands in the Stream" was found in a vault in the property's garage. His zest for life, literary accomplishments and enduring affection for the island he called home throughout the 1930s are commemorated during the annual Hemingway Days celebration each July. The schedule includes a popular look-alike contest, authors' readings and presentations, an exhibition of rare Hemingway memorabilia, a three-day marlin tournament, an offbeat "Running of the Bulls" and the culmination of a short story contest directed by author and Hemingway granddaughter Lorian Hemingway. Hemingway Home & Museum open 365 days a year, 9am-5pm daily. © NileGuide

**contact:**

tel: +1 305 242 7700  
fax: +1 305 242 7711  
<http://www.dry.tortugas.national-park.com/>

**location:**

Garden Key  
Key West FL 33041



## Dry Tortugas National Park

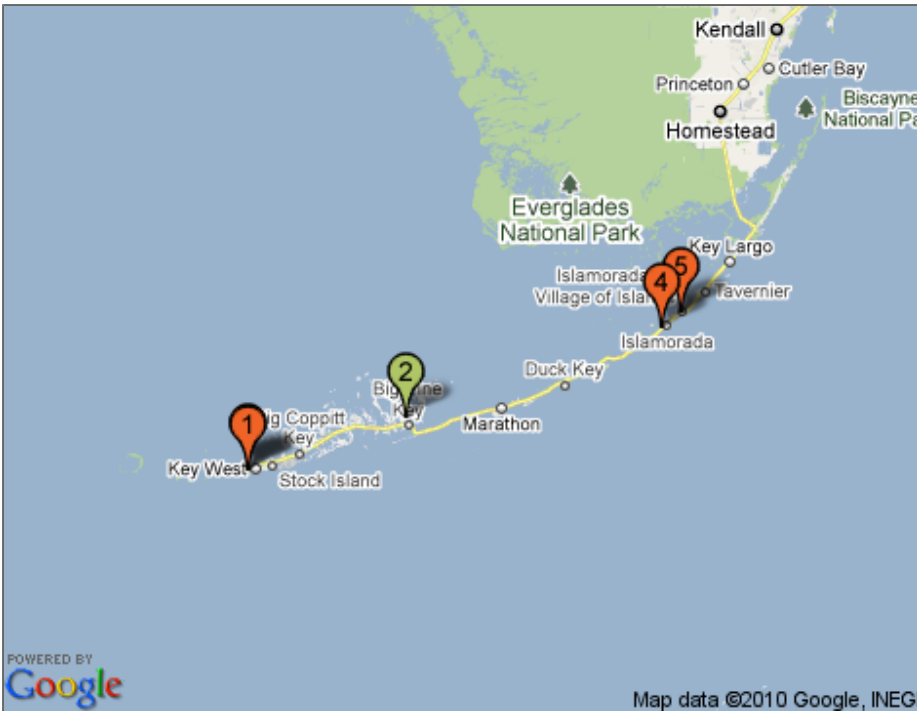
**DESCRIPTION:** Visit the Dry Tortugas by charter boat, catamaran or (my favorite) high-speed ferry. The trip is a well-spent day and the crew of Yankee Freedom II knows how to show you a good time. Once at the fort, you can camp overnight on its small beach, or snorkel for a while among the nearby corals. The Yankee Freedom II is state-of-the-art comfort, lunch is included, you cannot go wrong! Even among residents of the Keys, this is one of the favorite things to do with family and friends that visit, or to just a wile away a day exploring, away from phones and work. Book before 3p.m. the day before you want to go! © NileGuide

**MY NOTE:** Fort Jefferson, the 19th-century coastal fort that rises out of the sea in the remote Dry Tortugas National Park, is the apex of masonry art. A six-year restoration is under way, and a ferry ride over to the Park is without a doubt worth the time.



editor

# Day 2 - Florida Keys



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Santiago's is one of those local secrets that is hard to reveal, because we selfishly like to keep it to ourselves. You'll be hooked after the first visit, and undeniably A-plus wine list, and super prices for every budget. All the restaurants listed here are some of the island chain's standouts - ones known for a specific kind of food and level of skill involved to continue putting out the best dishes.

**contact:**  
tel: 305 296 7691  
<http://www.santiagosbodega.com/>

**location:**  
207 Petronia Street  
Key West FL 33040

## 1 Santiago's Bodega

**DESCRIPTION:** With its chic, jazzy and very contemporary look, Santiago's Bodega lies in Bahama Village, a historic neighborhood. You will find hot and cold tapas. This tapas bar offers traditional Spanish food, Greek meza and a mélange of dishes. Choose between Chicken Skewers and Spanikopita (spinach, feta and onion baked in a pastry), or just sip your glass of sangria and watch little kids race on bikes outside the restaurant. © wcities.com



editor

**contact:**  
tel: 305 872 9115  
<http://www.nonamepub.com/>

**location:**  
North Watson Boulevard  
Big Pine Key FL 33043

## 2 No Name Pub

**DESCRIPTION:** No Name Pub dates as far back as 1931 when they were a general store and a bait and tackle shop. Early customers included people from all walks of life, world travelers that arrived from the mainland via ferry to the local fisherman. A brothel upstairs in the late 1930s -1940s, then during the 1950s



editor  
10

the general store and bait and tackle shop closed. The Pub became 100% bar and restaurant. A honky tonk atmosphere of beer drinking, pool shooting and great food eating became known from Miami To Key West. Dice, crap and card games would eventually start as patrons spilled outdoors when the inside became too crowded. It was during this era their famous pizza was born. Two great cooks from Italy brought their recipe with them when they worked there, a recipe which has lasted over 40 years. People from all walks of life enjoy great food, cold beer and good conversation. □ A juke box is still there, the walls are covered with a few more dollar bills and it is one of the last great □ places with that old Florida Keys atmosphere. □ "A nice place if you can find it."

**MY NOTE:** One of my favorite places to go on a day off when there is a free afternoon to take a sunny motorcycle ride and enjoy good conversation and YUMMY pizza.

**contact:**  
tel: 305 296 1075  
fax: 305 293 8169  
<http://www.latrattoria.us/>

**location:**  
524 Duval Street  
Key West FL 33040

**hours:**  
Dinner: 5:30p-11p M-Su

### 3 La Trattoria Italian Restaurant

**DESCRIPTION:** Have a true Italian feast in a relaxed atmosphere. Each dish here is prepared and presented according to old Italian tradition. Try the delicious bread-crumbs-stuffed mushroom caps; they're firm yet tender. The stuffed eggplant with ricotta and roasted peppers is light and flavorful. Or have the seafood salad of shrimp, calamari, and mussels, fish-market fresh and tasty. The pasta dishes are also great -- go for the penne Venezia, with mushrooms, sun-dried tomatoes, and crabmeat. For dessert, don't skip the homemade tiramisu; it's light yet full-flavored. The dining room is spacious but still intimate, and the waiters are friendly. Before you leave, visit Virgilio's, a cocktail lounge with live jazz until 2am. © Frommer's

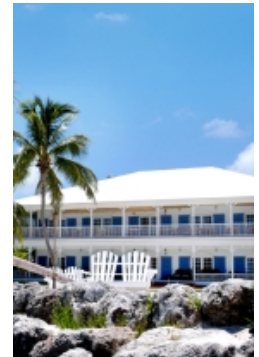
**contact:**  
tel: 305 664 3225  
<http://www.pierres-restaurant.com>

**location:**  
81600 Overseas Highway  
Islamorada FL 33037

**hours:**  
Sun-Thur 5-10pm, Fri-Sat  
5-11pm

### 4 Pierre's

**DESCRIPTION:** Dark mahogany wood décor, with creamy color schemes make you feel as if you are Morocco. Food is DYNAMITE and the line list is the envy of oenophiles everywhere. A fresh herb garden outside the restaurant ensures hand-picked, fresh variety and flavor in the dishes.



Pierre's

**contact:**

tel: 305 664 8400

<http://www.keysislandgrill.com>

**location:**

85501 Overseas Highway  
Islamorada FL 33036

**hours:**

Sun-Thur 11am-10pm, Fri-Sat  
11am-11pm

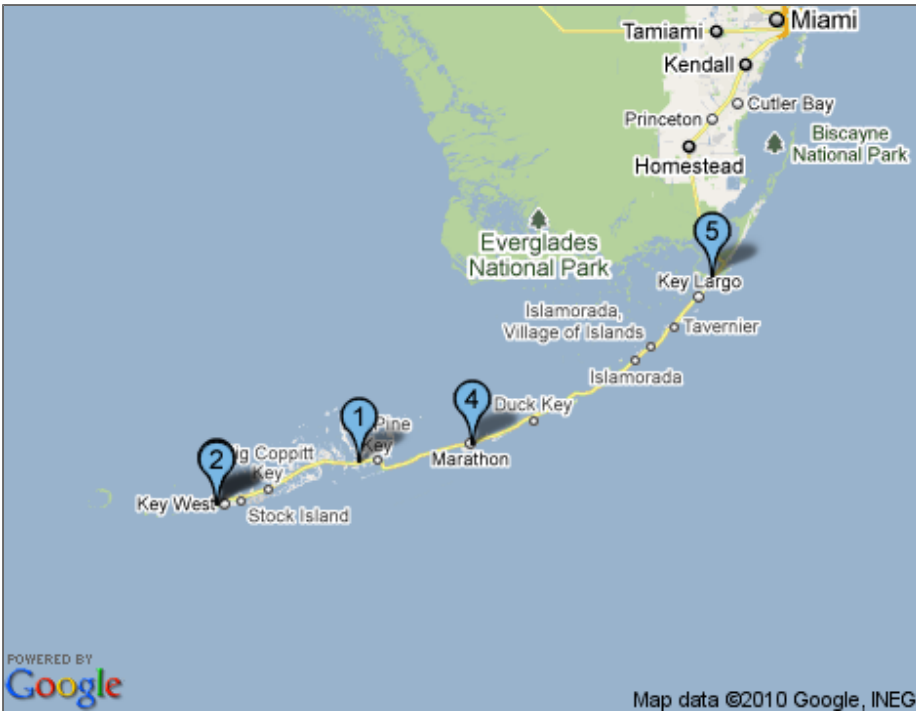
**5 Island Grill**

**DESCRIPTION:** Island Grill is a huge participant with local fishing tournaments and a tireless contributor to the Keys' lifestyle - relaxed, fun and an outdoor eatery worth telling any of your closest friends and family about.



"Photo courtesy of Island Grill beach dining"

# Day 3 - Florida Keys



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Nightlife in the Keys is a bit subdued, perhaps with Key West as the exception. Whether it's live music you are looking for, jazz, salsa or a the house band that has been together for decades, the Keys has it all. Throw in a little community theater for quirks, and you have a flavorful cultural stew.

**contact:**  
tel: 305 872-2215  
<http://www.diveflakeys.com/Pages/Tiki/tikicover.html>

**location:**  
27340 Overseas Highway ,  
Ramrod Key  
Little Torch Key FL 33042

## 1 Looe Key Tiki Bar

**DESCRIPTION:** After a great day on the water, relax in the friendly tropical atmosphere of the world famous Tiki Bar. Mingle with the locals, swap stories with fellow divers, and enjoy nightly live entertainment. The bar tenders are even known to dazzle guests with firey tricks!

**contact:**  
tel: 305 296 8118  
<http://www.latrattoria.us/virgilio.htm>

**location:**  
524 Duval Street  
Key West FL 33040

## 2 Virgilio's

**DESCRIPTION:** Cocktails and chilled martinis are not the only drinks served here. Vergilio's possesses a penchant for letting you drink lovely wines and scotches. Lounge music rules. The jazz and blues are not left behind though. But don't anticipate a quiet night out as it can get hot down here as the dark hours roll by. Vergilio's is known as trendy spot with live music and late night DJs.  
© wcities.com

**contact:**

tel: 305 296 9911  
fax: +1 305 293 3035  
<http://www.redbarntheatre.com/>

**location:**

319 Duval Street  
Key West FL 33040



### Red Barn Theater

**DESCRIPTION:** Operating here for more than 20 years, the Red Barn Theater showcases works by new playwrights. This professional small theater focuses on dramas, comedies and musicals, a wide range of options for a small local company. In recent years, offerings have included Three Little Comedies by Chekhov, Honey Drown and always...Patsy Cline. The theater seats 88 people. Individual tickets are available through the box office. The theater is located at the rear of Duval Street in Key West. © wcities.com

**contact:**

tel: 305 743 0000  
[www.keysy.com/dockside](http://www.keysy.com/dockside)

**location:**

35 Sombrero Boulevard  
Marathon FL 33037



### Dockside Lounge

**DESCRIPTION:** A popular spot for gatherings of local folks, the lounge offers live entertainment and has an outdoor dance floor that's often pulsating on weekends when this spot is very lively indeed. A popular spot for sunset-watching, one of the Keys' most popular daily activities. © wcities.com

**contact:**

tel: 305 852 5956  
[www.snapperskeylargo.com](http://www.snapperskeylargo.com)

**location:**

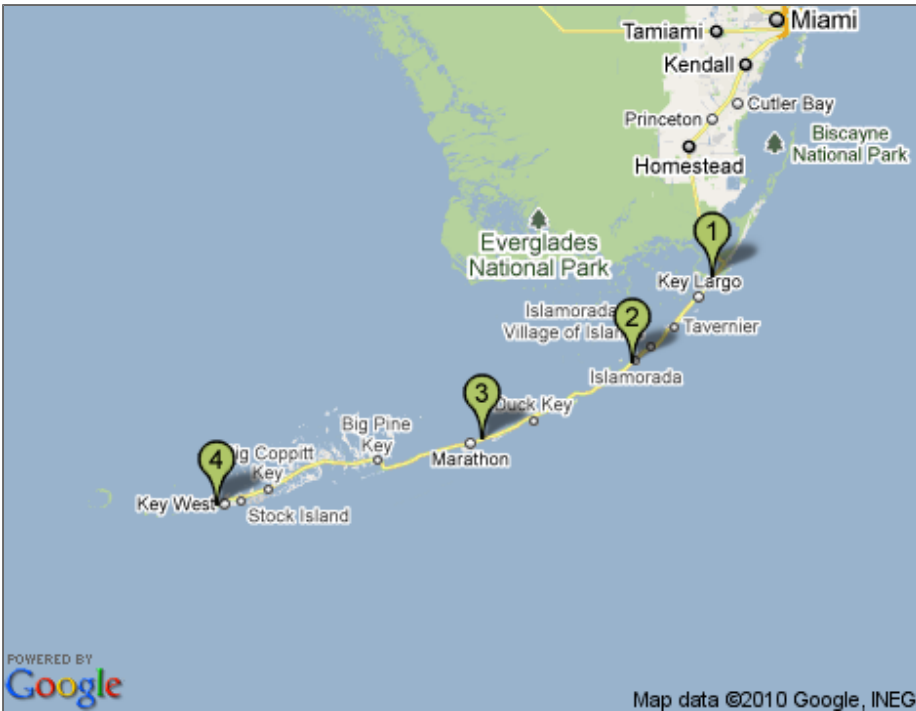
Mile Marker 94.5  
Key Largo FL 33037



### Snappers Waterfront Saloon & Raw Bar

**DESCRIPTION:** Tucked in alongside the ocean, Snappers is both bar and restaurant but the live entertainment on weekends is the primary draw for nightlife fans who crowd The Turtle Bar, one of three watering holes here. If you are hungry, try fresh seafood, which changes depending on the day's catch. The Key Largo Crab Cakes are the house specialty, or try Coconut Crusted Shrimp or a Smoked Fish Salad. The Sunday Champagne Jazz Brunch is very popular. © wcities.com

# Day 4 - Florida Keys



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Pennekamp Park, America's first undersea park, turns 50 this year! From December 1-11, 2010 there are special celebrations throughout Key Largo planned. Be a part of history!

**contact:**  
tel: +1 305 451 6300  
<http://www.pennekampark.com>

**location:**  
Mile Marker 102.5  
Key Largo FL 33037

## 1 John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park

**DESCRIPTION:** Kudos to the late "Miami Herald" editor John Pennekamp for helping to create the first undersea park in the United States. Key Largo's John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, established by the state legislature in 1961 to protect the miracle of America's only living coral reef, allows access to abundant underwater wildlife, large brain, staghorn and elkhorn coral formations and a four-foot barracuda who likes to be photographed. Only a 90-minute drive from Miami, Pennekamp is incorporated in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, a 2,800 square nautical mile span of coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangrove swamp on both sides of the Keys island chain, Florida Bay, the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. One of the park's most popular dive sites is the nine-foot bronze statue of Jesus Christ that rests in 20 feet of water. The statue is a replica of the "Christ of the Abyss" statue in the Mediterranean Sea and was donated to the Underwater Society of America in 1961 by industrialist Egidio Cressi. Underwater enthusiasts can take a reef adventure on a glass bottom boat, snorkeling or scuba diving. If you're not into the underwater scene, John Pennekamp offers two manmade beaches, canoe, kayak and boat rentals and nature trails, as well as 47 campsites, all with electrical hookups and water. © NileGuide



editor

**contact:**

tel: +1 305 664 2540  
<http://www.floridastateparks.org/indiankey/default.cfm>

**location:**

Mile Marker 78.5  
Islamorada FL 33036

**2 Indian Key State Historic Site**

**DESCRIPTION:** This key on the ocean side of the Matecumbe Islands was once home to Native Americans and shipwreckers. Today it lies slumbering in the sun, awaiting visitors with an interest in the heritage of the Keys. Recent hurricanes have taken a toll on the island's ruins so there are no longer guided tours, but you can go on your own to walk marked trails and sites. To reach the island, go by ferry or for additional adventure, rent a kayak. In October, a festival called Indian Key Festival salutes the history of the key. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Indian Key State Historic Site

**contact:**

tel: +1 800 352 5397

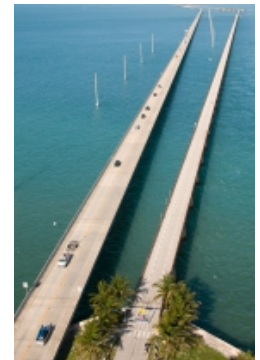
**location:**

Mile Marker 47, U.S 1  
Pigeon Key FL 33050

**3 Old Seven Mile Bridge**

**DESCRIPTION:** When the new Seven Mile Bridge was constructed, the old bridge was left in place. It's become a favorite spot for fishing, jogging, rollerblading, cycling, sunset viewing and just general absorption of atmosphere. It's even been used as a location for many action films. You can get to it at MM 47 and walk out (2 miles) to Pigeon Key, which is, in itself, a fascinating place to get a look at Keys history. There is no admission fee. © wcities.com

**MY NOTE:** Fishing is no longer allowed from the bridge.



editor

**contact:**

tel: 305-743-2552  
<http://www.turtlehospital.org>

**location:**

2396 Overseas Highway  
Marathon

**Turtle Hospital**

**DESCRIPTION:** Educational tours of the facility are offered to introduce visitors to the resident sea turtles and to the hospital's curative programs for loggerhead, green, hawksbill and Kemp's ridley turtles. Moretti credits Dr. Doug Mader, the hospital's current staff veterinarian, for bringing the facility to its present level. In addition to turtle rehabilitation and public education, the Turtle Hospital's goals include conducting and assisting with research that aids sea turtles in conjunction with state universities, and working toward environmental legislation that makes beaches and water safer and cleaner for sea turtles. © NileGuide



editor



**location:**

Corner of Whitehead & South  
Streets  
Key West FL 33040



## Southernmost Point in the Nation

**DESCRIPTION:** Before you head back home, be sure to make your way to the corner of Whitehead and South streets. Why? Because geographically it is the southernmost point of the United States. You'll know you're in the right spot by the posted sign proclaiming the site's fame, and by the street vendors selling souvenirs and conch shells. Believe it or not, standing here you are closer to Cuba than Miami; from here, it is 150 miles north to Miami and only 90 miles south to Cuba. If you are so inclined, hang out until the evening, as this is also a great place to watch the sun set. © wcities.com



editor

# Florida Keys Snapshot

## Local Info

Situated between the waters of the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, the Florida Keys occupy a unique geographical location whose ocean breezes keep temperatures moderate year-round. The islands are linked together by the Overseas Highway, the southernmost leg of U.S. Highway 1 that's sometimes called the Highway That Goes to Sea. A modern day wonder, in 2009 the Overseas Highway was named an All-American Road by the National Scenic Byways program administered by the Federal Highway Administration. It is the only roadway in Florida with that designation, and only one of 30 other roadways in the nation with the prestigious title.

A Florida Keys vacation means a great getaway to one of the most unique places on earth as well as a haven for tasty seafood cuisine. We're ready to welcome all visitors in a traditionally friendly and laid back manner.

© NileGuide

## History

### More than a Century of Conservation

Visitors from around the world are drawn to the Florida Keys to experience the island chain's priceless natural resources. Protection of these resources began a century ago, demonstrating the region's commitment to environmental stewardship and a resolve to preserve them for future generations.

For example, in 1908 the Key West National Wildlife Refuge was designated. The refuge incorporates more than 2,000 land acres, all designated wilderness, as well as more than 200,000 acres of marine waters co-managed with the state of Florida.

Accessible only by boat, the refuge is largely composed of unpopulated islands and marine waters located immediately west of Key West. A few islands have sandy beaches that provide critical nesting habitat for sea turtles. Many of the refuge's beaches, including those at the Marquesas Keys, are open during daylight hours for wildlife-oriented recreational uses such as wildlife observation, nature photography and environmental education. The waters

around the refuge's islands and flats are prime territory for fishing, wildlife viewing, diving and snorkeling.

The Key West National Wildlife Refuge, along with the Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1938, are the last of the offshore raccoon-free islands in the lower Keys that provide safe nesting and breeding areas for great white herons and other migratory birds and wildlife. White herons are North America's largest wading bird and, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, are found only in the Florida Keys and on the South Florida mainland.

Stretching from Key West to just north of the Seven Mile Bridge in the Middle Keys, the refuge features more than 375 square miles of open water and islands in the Gulf of Mexico. Visitors' primary access is by kayak, canoe or shallow-draft boat, although the refuge manages lands on Upper Sugarloaf and Lower Sugarloaf Keys that are accessible by car.

For several decades, leaders and citizens of Big Pine Key and the Lower Keys — located from the west end of the Seven Mile Bridge to just outside Key West — have advocated the responsible utilization and preservation of the abundant terrestrial and marine wildlife there. This commitment to conservation has earned the region the title of the Natural Keys.

The Lower Keys are home to the National Key Deer Refuge, established in 1957 to protect and preserve habitats for wildlife, most notably the diminutive Key deer. A subspecies of the Virginia white-tailed deer, Key deer range in size from 45 to 80 pounds fully grown.

Today the refuge encompasses more than 8,000 acres of prime Key deer territory ranging from Bahia Honda Key to the eastern shores of Sugarloaf Key, out to the edge of the Gulf of Mexico. It is also a stopping point for thousands of migratory birds each year, and a winter home for many North American bird species including the roseate tern and peregrine falcon.

Within the refuge are two interpretive nature trails. The Jack C. Watson Trail, named after the first refuge manager and a passionate protector of the Key deer, winds through pinelands into a tropical hardwood

hammock. A second wheelchair-accessible route meanders through pine rocklands to a small wetland area.

© NileGuide

## Hotel Insights

From Key Largo to Key West, and all the little islands in between, you'll find a variety of places to stay in tropical comfort, from simple to luxurious.

Options range from large resorts with several hundred rooms and a host of amenities to middle-size properties with fewer than 100 rooms to small family owned and operated motels and small resorts, with accommodations ranging from single rooms to cottages to suites and townhouses.

### Key West

Accommodations in Key West include inns where residents claim there are ghosts, picket-fenced mansions, large hotels with every amenity, cheap hostels with a few handsomely-or whimsically-appointed rooms, campgrounds, and guest houses. The lodgings are as numerous and varied as the fish in the seas that surround this enchanting island.

If you would like to stay in a large and elegant there are several options: Pier House Resort and Caribbean Spa, Wyndham's Casa Marina and La Concha, all have historic ambiance. The Hyatt Key West is a great contemporary resort with excellent amenities. Smaller but select accommodations include Curry Mansion and Victorian Island City House. The Marquesa Hotel is elegant and has a 1884 grace. Also, Key Lime Inn is known for its Bahamian ambiance.

### Key Largo

If you like big hotels with a restaurant, bar, pool, beach, and a host of water sports, the lively Key Largo Bay Resort and Holiday Inn Resort & Marina are the most popular. At the Holiday Inn, that famous film craft, the African Queen, of Humphrey Bogart/Katherine Hepburn fame, offers sailings.

If you would like a less conventional hotel, Jules' Undersea Lodge is a unique accommodation where you dine and sleep

## Florida Keys Snapshot continued

underwater while rainbow-hued fish drift past your window!

The United States' only living coral barrier reef, the third largest barrier reef in the world, parallels the 126-mile chain of the Florida Keys. The extraordinary reef ecosystem, much like a tropical rainforest, supports a unique diversity of plants and animals.

To protect a portion of this reef, John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park was established in 1963 as America's first underwater preserve.

The park hosts more than a million annual visitors, offering them numerous opportunities to observe abundant wildlife through recreational and educational experiences. These include scuba diving, snorkeling, kayaking a water trail and walking along a boardwalk through plentiful tropical hammocks of gumbo limbo, strangler fig, tamarind, wild coffee and mahogany trees.

Pennekamp is incorporated into the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, widely regarded as a national treasure, which was established in 1990 by the United States government.

The sanctuary encompasses 2,800 square nautical miles of coastal and oceanic waters and submerged lands. Not only does this area surround the entire land mass of the Florida Keys, it also includes vast stretches of Florida Bay, the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean.

The creation of the sanctuary allows for the management of the region's special ecological, historical, recreational, and esthetic resources. Within its boundaries lie mangrove islands, historic shipwrecks filled with rare artifacts, tropical fish and other marine life.

Divers and snorkelers from all over the world are drawn to the Florida Keys to view the extraordinary reef ecosystem within the sanctuary.

### Islamorada

If you want world-class accommodations, Cheeca Lodge is known for attention to detail and a great golf course. If you would like a smaller resort there are several options, including Pelican Cove Resort, Hampton Inn & Suites and Howard Johnson Lodge at Holiday Isle. If you would rather

have a party-loving hotel the El Capitan at Holiday Isle is for you.

Called the Sportfishing Capital of the World, Islamorada's presence on the water is unmatched. The Keys' commitment to conservation also extends to fishing practices. Catch-and-release fishing, followed by size and bag limits, and more recently bans on gill nets and fish traps in state waters, have enabled fish stocks to stabilize and grow.

In fact, it was in the Florida Keys that the catch-and-release ethic became a way of life for saltwater anglers. Backcountry game fish such as bonefish, tarpon and permit were the first game fish to be released on a regular basis. Soon to follow were snook and redfish, though a few are still kept for food.

On the ocean side of the island chain, local charter boat captains were the original leaders in releasing billfish — marlin, sailfish and swordfish. Today's Keys captains are leading the way in releasing extra "food" fish like dolphin (mahi mahi), grouper and snapper. They teach their anglers to "limit their kill" instead of "killing their limit."

As a result, pelagic (migratory ocean fish), flats and reef species are plentiful throughout the Keys, and world records attest to healthy and productive fisheries.

Like the creation of wildlife preserves and sanctuaries, the promotion of environmentally responsible angling is a crucial element in the Keys' longstanding commitment to conserving and protecting the region's natural resources.

### Marathon and the Middle Keys

The best resort is Hawk's Cay, where you can swim with resident dolphins. Amenities also include four pools, sauna, beach, sailing, tennis, putting green, ecology tours and children's programs. Or for a more laid-back resort go to Conch Key Cottages.

Although, there are dozens of smaller hotels and inns peppered throughout the islands of the Middle Keys, specifically Grassy Key.

Marathon is known as the Heart of the Keys but also the boating destination of the Keys, attracting families galore. One of the not-to-miss events and much-anticipated feasts in Marathon is the Original Marathon Seafood Festival, an annual giant celebration of the

sea that takes delectable aim at the tummy every March.

### Bahia Honda and the Lower Keys

At the posh Palm Island Resort, you can shower under the sky in enclosed but open-air élan. An award winner for its ability to combine rusticity and elegance, casual and formal, you won't miss telephones and televisions.

© NileGuide

## Restaurants Insights

Stretching more than 100 miles into the open ocean, the Florida Keys can boast early settlers ranging from Bahamian fishermen to Cuban cigar makers and New England merchants. In such a rich melting pot, it's natural that the indigenous cuisine incorporates diverse and delicious influences— with a reliance on an abundant array of fish and seafood harvested from surrounding waters.

Among the favorites are Key West pink shrimp, a delicacy generally considered sweeter than other crustaceans. Whether sautéed in scampi, battered and fried, nestled atop salad or pasta or simply steamed and served with savory sauces, Key West pinks rank among the most popular of the Keys' natural resources."

Stone crabs, renowned for their sweet and succulent meat, also are a popular delicacy. Because nearly all of the crab's meat is contained within its grappels, these are the only portions of the crustacean that are harvested. Once the claws are removed, the crab is returned to the sea where, over the course of up to two years, the claws regenerate. It is for this reason that stone crabs are considered a renewable resource, and the Florida Keys are responsible for nearly 60 percent of the state's overall harvest.

The mollusk conch (pronounced konk) is impossible to pass up and is served in many forms: lime-kissed salad, spicy chowder and golden deep-fried fritters among them. Conch chowder can either be tomato-based or white, but don't expect to find any consistency of recipes from one restaurant to another. Keys eateries pride themselves on creating unique interpretations of classic dishes.

## Florida Keys Snapshot continued

Unlike stone crabs, lobsters found in the Keys are clawless. Known as spiny lobster, they offer sweet and tender meat. Local restaurants often serve them steamed or boiled with drawn butter- or their meat might be made into salad or served with exotic sauces. Lobster season runs from August 6 to March 31.

### Key West

Key West is known for its amazing seafood and there are great restaurants all around the city. A & B Lobster House naturally serves some of the best lobster around. If you want oyster head to Alonzo's Oyster Bar. The trendy Nicola Seafood has a wide selection of seafood and a romantic atmosphere.

Chefs from Europe added some intriguing touches to it all and, voila, such award-winning restaurants as Pisces, Alice's and Louie's Backyard.

Cuban cigar makers who settled here generations ago and whose descendants remain brought their distinctive cuisine with them: picadillo, ground beef and raisins; thick, strong cubano coffee; and sweet, fried banana-like plantains. Bahamians, who have created a colorful Bahamian village right in the middle of Key West, brought their akee fish and rice, their rum and their pigeon peas. Try the flavors at Blue Heaven and Caribe Soul.

If you are an aficionado of Ernest Hemingway, a stop at Captain Tony's Saloon and Sloppy Joe's is required. Ernest Hemingway was said to frequent these bars.

### Key Largo

Besides well-known restaurants scattered throughout the Keys, perhaps the most fun is stopping into some rustic little find and discovering a memorable meal you'll be discussing for many a day to come. Flamingo Seafood Bar and Grill is not well known, but serves a delicious catch of the day. Gus' Grill is another laid back restaurant that serves seafood. For a casual, biker- and party-friendly atmosphere the Alabama Jack's is the place to go.

### Islamorada

You can taste the freshness of the seafood at Marker 88. If you want Cuban and Spanish food Manny & Isa's can't be beat. For a romantic dinner the Atlantic's

Edge provides views of the ocean and a candlelight meal.

### Bahia Honda and the Lower Keys

The Dining Room is an elegant restaurant where you can dine on seafood. In the Lower Keys, you can find some well-known watering holes such as the rustic ambiance of No Name Pub. Pizza pies are out of this world- if you can find the pub, that is! It's world-famous, so don't miss out.

© NileGuide

### Nightlife Insights

There's more to the Florida Keys than meets the eye, yet visitors often overlook an array of hidden treasures and colorful locales. Exploring the ones listed here can enrich and deepen virtually anyone's enjoyment of the region's colorful culture and character. Visitors from around the world are drawn to the Florida Keys to experience the island chain's priceless natural resources. Protection of these resources began a century ago, demonstrating the region's commitment to environmental stewardship and a resolve to preserve them for future generations.

### Outdoor Activities

Whether you choose to tour on a glass-bottomed boat or snorkel or scuba tank, an underwater world of amazing beauty awaits in John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, one of the best diving sites in the world and home to 78 square miles of coral reefs. Hiking trails and a visitor's center with a floor-to-ceiling aquarium are among the other diversions of this not-to-be-missed park.

At the Theater of the Seas, you can swim with dolphins, sea lions or stingrays or become a trainer for a day, putting creatures of the sea through their paces. In the Middle Keys, the Dolphin Research Center offers another opportunity for swimming with dolphins.

At the Windley Key Fossil Reef State Geologic Site on Windley Key, you can see what a coral reef looks like when it's left high and dry, and visit middens left behind by the earliest Native American residents of the keys, who clearly knew a good thing when they saw it. Looe Key Reef is home to a beautiful coral reef, and Bahia Honda State Park offers sand dunes, waters as

clear as a teardrop, and views that go on forever.

For an offshore adventure, explore Indian Key State Historic Site, ferrying over on the twice-daily ferry or paddling your own canoe—well, kayak—to the island, where you will learn of murder and mayhem on this 10.5-acre islet. Or try a visit to the 280-acre Lignumvitae Key State Botanical Site, a hardwood forest that was the home and gardens of a millionaire who put it all together in 1919 in such style that the site is now on the National Register of Historic Places.

### Museums

The Keys has a long and fascinating history and you can learn more about it at the many museums scattered amongst the islands. The Custom House Museum provides a detailed history of Key West's history. Fort East Martello Museum and Gallery is dedicated to Key West historical artifacts. The museum also has exhibits dealing with the daily life for earlier Key West inhabitants.

If you would like to know about specific portions of the island history, then Key West Shipwreck Historeum is the place to go. At the museum, you learn about how some islanders would dive for shipwrecked goods. Learn about the ill-fated Henry Flagler's railroad at Flagler Station Oversea Railway Historeum. If you want to know more about how the Bahamians influenced the Key West culture, the Lofton B. Sands African-Bahamian Museum provides fascinating artifacts, such as letters and clothing.

### Theaters

If you would like to enjoy the theater while in the Keys you have plenty of options. The historical Waterfront Playhouse has a modest theater and shows quirky and well-known productions, including *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *The Best Man*. Another small theater that produces professional productions is Red Barn Theater. If you are in Marathon, the Marathon Community Theater produces small productions featuring local talent.

### Festivals & Street Fairs

Depending on when you go to Key West, there are annual festivals and fairs that shouldn't be missed. The German Oktoberfest has reached Sumerland

## Florida Keys Snapshot continued

Key that holds a parade, live music and of course plenty to drink and eat. If you come in December enjoy the beautiful and often humorous Key West Lighted Boat Parade. Key West is transformed into a pirates heaven for a day during Pirates In Paradise. In July the Hemingway Days Festival can't be beat.

One of the best annual events is the Conch Republic Independence Celebration. The festival is a ten day celebration of when the Florida Keys briefly seceded from the United States. The United States Border Patrol was treating the Keys unfairly and in protest the Keys seceded and humorously declared "war." After a minute and without any prompting the Keys surrendered and jokingly asked for foreign aid. The festival celebrates how the Border Patrol stopped the unfair treatment and the celebration features drag races, music concerts, a parade, and a "battle" against the US Border Patrol.

© NileGuide

### Things to Do Insights

Along the 113 miles that make up Key West, you will see small signs every mile marking the distance. Called Mile Markers, many hotels and restaurants along the way bear no other address than MM 99 or MM 88.5. Businesses may also identify themselves with the letters OS for ocean side, or BS, for bay side. Florida's Keys are also often grouped into three divisions—the Upper Keys, Middle Keys and Lower Keys, and there are plenty to see in each one.

**Key Largo** Largo means long in Spanish and Key Largo lives up to that name as the longest of the keys, stretching from MM 106 to MM 91. Here you'll find the Indian Key State Historic Site, which holds many local treasures. The island is also home to the Dolphin Cove Research & Education Center's Dolphin Encounter, which offers you an opportunity to swim with dolphins and watch them play. Grab a bite at Alabama Jack's. The best attraction of Key Largo is John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, the nation's first underwater park. Also stop into the Theater of the Sea. **Smathers Beach** The Seven-Mile Bridge connects the Middle and Lower Keys. Nearby Smathers Beach is Key West's longest, while the Curry Hammock State Park is a small wonder that attracts many visitors. For some interesting exhibits,

check out the Museum of Natural History of the Florida Keys. Stop into the Barracuda Grill for dinner.

**Key West Lighthouse Museum** The views from the Key West Lighthouse Museum are stunning. Take a boat to Dry Tortugas National Park and do some diving, swimming or fishing. Dine at Louie's Backyard. The nearby Nancy Forrester's Secret Garden is worth a stroll, then discover the shops, restaurants and other attractions at Historic Seaport at Key West Bight.

**Wrecker's Museum** Take a tour of the Wrecker's Museum, a unique home built in 1829 that has some interesting features. Have lunch at Antonia's Restaurant, then stroll through Bahia Honda State Park or check out the creations at the Paradise Gallery. Tour the historical Curry Mansion, with its elegant period furniture and antiques.

**Key West Aquarium** City Zoo- The Gallery preserves some of the most important remnants of Haitian culture. The Audubon House & Tropical Gardens is named for the artist John James Audubon. The home and surrounding gardens are open to visitors. The Key West Aquarium is also a must-see. Dine at the Caribe Soul restaurant, then go to the Mel Fisher Maritime Heritage Museum to take in some nautical exhibits.

This is nature's wonderland. You'll find a national wildlife refuge devoted to tiny Key deer, an endangered species, and a national marine sanctuary, Looe Key, rated one of the best diving reefs in the world. You can see this Keys' version of Big Bird—great white herons, North America's largest wading bird—in a 375-square-mile refuge. Kayaks and shallow-draft boats are a favored way to tour, since the Keys are surrounded by water.

**Boat Tours** Dry Tortugas National Park Ferry( +1 305 294 7009/http://www.yankeefreedom.com/) Key Largo Princess( +1 305 451 4655/http://www.keylargoprincess.com/) Discovery Undersea Tours( +1 305 293 0099/+1 800 262 0099/http://www.discoveryunderseatours.com/) Snorkel and Sailing Adventure( +1 305 292 4768/http://www.keywestsebago.com/) Tortugas Party Boat( +1 305 293 1189/http://www.tortugacharters.com/)

**Trolley Tours** Old Town Trolley Tours( +1 800 213 2474/http://www.trolleytours.com/)

**Train Tours** Conch Tour Train( +1 305 294 5161/http://www.conchtourtrain.com/)

**Air Tours** Island City Flying Service Incorporated( +1 305 296 5422)

**Diving Tours** Reef Express Catamaran( +1 305 294 7755/http://www.sunnydayskeywest.com/reefx.htm) Snorkel and Sailing Adventure( +1 305 292 4768/http://www.keywestsebago.com/)

**Ghost Tours** Ghost Tours of Key West( +1 305 294 9255/http://www.hauntedtours.com) Ghosts & Legends of Key West( +1 305 294 1713/ +1 866 612 3890/http://www.keywestghosts.com/) © NileGuide

### Travel Tips

#### Highway

The major U.S. airlines continue to offer convenient flights to the Florida Keys. However, our islands are the only tropical getaway reachable by car from the U.S. mainland.

The 120-mile island chain can be reached by U.S. 1 south of Miami. Each Key is linked to the next by the scenic Overseas Highway, which was first built atop the remains of tycoon Henry Flagler's Overseas Railroad. In 2012, the Keys will celebrate 100 years since Flagler's arrival into Key West.

The US Highway 1, or Florida Keys Overseas Highway, from north of Key Largo to Key West, has been designated an All-American Road. The Keys highway is the only All-American Road in Florida. It's the highest recognition possible under the National Scenic Byways program established by the U.S. Congress in 1991. Only 30 other roadways in the nation have earned the prestigious title.

Driving Directions to the Florida Keys...

From Ft. Lauderdale-Hollywood  
From Miami International Airport, take LeJeune Road south to 836 West. Take the Florida Turnpike south toward Key West. The Turnpike ends at US 1 in Florida City. Follow U.S. 1 south about 22 miles to Key Largo and you are now in the Florida Keys.

## Florida Keys Snapshot continued

International Airport, 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 Ft. Lauderdale, where Exit 4 joins the southern portion of the Turnpike. The Turnpike ends at US 1 in Florida City. Follow U.S. 1 south into the Florida Keys.

From Florida's west coast, take 1-75 Alligator Alley east to the Miami exit, and south to the Turnpike Extension.

**A Note on Mile Markers.** Once you're in the Keys, U.S. 1 becomes the Overseas Highway, which is like Main Street. The best way to get around is to know the mile marker of your destination. Look for the little green mile-marker signs on the right side of the highway (in either direction). They begin just south of Florida City with number 127 and run all the way down to zero in Key West. Think of them like addresses. If you know the mile marker, getting there is easy.

© NileGuide

### Fun Facts

#### Top 10 Florida Keys Facts

##### INTERESTING FACT:

The Overseas Highway represents a remarkable engineering feat: 113 miles of roadway and 42 bridges leapfrogging across the water from key to key in a series of giant arches of concrete and steel. The Atlantic Ocean lies on one side of the highway, with Florida Bay and the Gulf of Mexico on the other — providing drivers breathtaking vistas of open sea and sky. In 2009, the Overseas Highway was named an All-American Road by the National Scenic Byways program administered by the Federal Highway Administration.

##### FREE APP:

Visitors are just a finger tap away from comprehensive travel information and guidance from Key Largo to Key West with the new Florida Keys App, free to download at the iTunes store or

atfloridakeysapps.com. The application currently is compatible with the OS 3.1.3 or later version of the iPhone, as well as iPod Touch and iPad. GPA and Audio Driving tours are expected in a 2.0 version.

##### WEIRD FACT:

Marathon is home to the Turtle Hospital, situated at mile marker 48.5 bayside; it is the world's only licensed veterinary hospital dedicated to the treatment of sea turtles. It was opened in 1986 with the goal of healing injured sea turtles and returning them to the wild.

##### HISTORICAL FACT:

Dry Tortugas National Park, located 68 miles west of Key West, is home to Fort Jefferson, the

largest masonry structure in the Western Hemisphere. The classic red-brick structure is part of

Key West's military history more than 130 years ago, in addition to Fort Zachary Taylor on the

south shore. Fort Taylor, named for the country's 12th president, was built between 1845 and

1866. East Martello, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is one of the best-preserved

Civil War-era batteries in the United States.

##### FUN FACT:

Key Largo is best known for John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, located at mile marker (MM)

102.5. It is the first underwater preserve in the United States, and celebrates its 50th anniversary

on Dec. 10, 2010.

##### DRIVING TIP:

Travelers along the Overseas Highway will see mile markers, often called

mileposts, on the right shoulder or median strip. These are small green signs bearing white numbers, which begin with number-mile — 126, just south of Florida City. Mile markers decrease steadily from there to Key West, ending with the zero marker at the corner of Fleming and Whitehead streets. Awareness of these markers is useful, since Keys residents refer to them regularly when giving addresses. Visitors asking for directions shouldn't be surprised to hear that the spot they're seeking is located at- or just before or just beyond- a given mile marker number.

##### RANDOM FACT:

In January, 1912, railroad tycoon Henry Flagler completed his impossible "railroad that went to sea," connecting the Keys and Key West with the mainland for the first time and providing a way for wealthy visitors to travel to the Keys for warm-weather vacations. In 2012, the 100th anniversary of his arrival into Key West via rail is to be marked with a Keys-wide celebration.

##### FOOD FACT:

Stone crab season is open Oct. 15 – May 15 every year. Considered a renewable resource, the crabs are harvested only for their claws- the crabs can re-grow claws. While both claws can be taken lawfully if each is of legal size, defined as a 2.75-inch propodus (the larger, immovable part of the claw's pincer), harvesting only one claw is preferable for the crab's protection and feeding ability. Stone crab claws are delectable served either hot or cold, with mustard sauce.

##### THAT'S RICH:

Key West is home to the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum, founded by the legendary shipwreck salvor who died in 1998. The museum holds the richest single collection of 17th-century maritime and shipwreck antiquities in the Western Hemisphere — most of them excavated from the waters around the island city.

##### FISHY FACT:

## Florida Keys Snapshot continued

According to the International Game Fish Association, the Keys are home to more sportfishing records than any other destination in the world. Pelagic, (migratory ocean fish), flats and reef species are plentiful throughout the Keys, and the

numerous world records attest to healthy and productive fisheries.

Country Dialing Code: 1

Area Code: 305

### Quick Facts:

© NileGuide

Time Zone: GMT-5

Electricity: 110 volts, 60Hz, standard two pin plugs

## Weather

Statistics	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temperature C												
Average High	25	25	27	29	30	32	32	32	32	30	28	26
Average Mean	19	19	21	23	25	27	27	27	27	25	23	21
Average Low	13	14	16	18	20	23	23	23	23	21	18	15
Temperature F												
Average High	77	78	80	83	87	89	90	90	89	87	83	79
Average Mean	66	67	70	72	78	81	83	83	83	77	73	68
Average Low	56	57	60	64	69	73	76	76	76	69	64	58
Rainy Days	6	6	5	5	8	11	12	14	16	11	7	7
Rain Fall (cm)	4.9	4.1	4.8	5.2	12.8	18.4	12.0	18.9	18.3	10.8	6.2	4.0
Rain Fall (in)	1.9	1.6	1.9	2.1	5.1	7.2	4.7	7.4	7.2	4.3	2.5	1.6

© NileGuide