



**nileGUIDE**

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Bob Jagendorf

# A Week of Family Fun

## Florida Keys, 7 Days

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** Your children can enjoy a full schedule of eco-tours, dive-snorkel charters, fishing trips and visits to area attractions, such as museums, nature centers or dolphin encounters.. You'll also find plenty of free activities to keep your kids entertained between excursions. Several waterfront restaurants thoughtfully provide docks where children can feed tropical fish or see huge tarpon. The Keys also have plenty of playgrounds, parks and beaches.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Florida Keys

**DAY NOTE:** Hawk's Cay Resort is a family mecca. Several restaurants on property will delight, especially the Beach Grill, but if you want some other affordable options, read on. Hawk's Cay has it all: watersports, beach, dolphins, fishing and more! Dinner at Whale Harbor means an endless buffet of seafood and American style great grub for the entire family, without breaking the bank.



### Theater of the Sea

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



### Hawk's Cay Resort

Family-oriented casual resort

## Day 2 - Florida Keys

**DAY NOTE:** Start the day in the Upper Keys to make your way back to the Middle. Pennekamp is the oldest marine park in the US, named after the Miami Herald editor. It's about the outdoors and nature here in the Keys, and Dolphins Plus lends an insider's view to these calming, healing creatures. One of the quirkiest places in the Keys, Robbie's Marina, allows you to get a bait bucket and for a couple bucks feed them to GIANT tarpon!



### John Pennekamp Visitor Center / Museum

The large visitor center / museum complex is a wonderful way to orient yourself to the many water-related activities at John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park.



### Squid Row Restaurant

Indoor-outdoor dining



### Dolphins Plus Inc.

Flipper swims on



### Robbie's Marina

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



### Whale Harbor Inn

Look for the lighthouse



### Hawk's Cay Resort

Family-oriented casual resort

## Day 3 - Florida Keys

**DAY NOTE:** You've headed north (well, technically, east) from your hotel for a day, now it's time to head west, to the Southernmost Point of the US! Does that make sense? Old Town Trolley tours give you a crash course in the history of Key West, but affords you the luxury to hop on and off in many locations. Eliminates having to navigate yourself! Back to nature here, too, with thousands of butterflies fluttering around you spilling color throughout the Conservatory, and a stop at the Aquarium will make the kids squeal with delight in look-and-touch fashion. Then Ahoy, mates! on to Pirate Soul Museum. Swash-bucklers love the Keys, and pirates still abound! (Just in fun, they won't steal your booty) It seems like a lot jammed in the day, but a half-hour parasail is a great aerial precursor to the beautiful sunset you'll see at Mallory Square amidst street performers, jugglers and artists.



### Old Town Trolley Tours of Key West

Ports of Call Tours



### Key West Butterfly & Nature Conservatory

Fascinating and lovely butterfly tours



### Key West Aquarium

Touch a sea anemone



### Pirate Soul

Named a Key West treasure, and one of the swashbuckling island's must-see REAL museums. Leaving Keys in August 2010.



### Tandem Parasailing

Parasailing & Paragliding



### Mallory Square

Magnificent sunsets and great shopping



### Hawk's Cay Resort

Family-oriented casual resort

## Day 4 - Florida Keys

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

**DAY NOTE:** Ah, Marathon. The Heart of the Florida Keys, the family island. Today is to be fun, relaxing and educational all at the same time. The Florida Keys celebrates over 100 years of conservation and preservation heritage, and stops at the "DRC" to learn about how smart dolphins and sea lions really are, the world's ONLY veterinarian turtle hospital and Crane Point Hammock's children's museum only make you appreciate this planet more. Save a late afternoon stroll on the Old Seven Mile Bridge - you can make bets who sees the spotted eagle rays, turtles and sharks first! You'll get a birds-eye view along with the pelicans and egrets that swoop by looking for fish to grab for dinner.



## Dolphin Research Center

Meet dolphins and sea lions during educational programs



## Turtle Hospital

Only licensed vet turtle hospital in the world; educational tours



## Florida Keys Children's Museum

Focus on children's interests



## Old Seven Mile Bridge

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



## Annette's Lobster & Steak House

Angus meats, lobster, seafood, unique Stone Grill Dining, lunch buffet and \$5 a la carte lunch.



## Hawk's Cay Resort

Family-oriented casual resort



## Bahia Honda State Park

America's Top Ten Beaches



## No Name Pub

World famous deep dish pizza, fish dip and sandwiches



## Dockside Lounge

Young, hip, live-aboards



## Hawk's Cay Resort

Family-oriented casual resort

## Day 6 - Florida Keys

**DAY NOTE:** This would be the day to try SNUBA, a combination of snorkeling and scuba, that anyone in the family can participate in! Dive Duck Key, at Hawk's Cay Resort is the utmost in professional, trained and friendly staff.



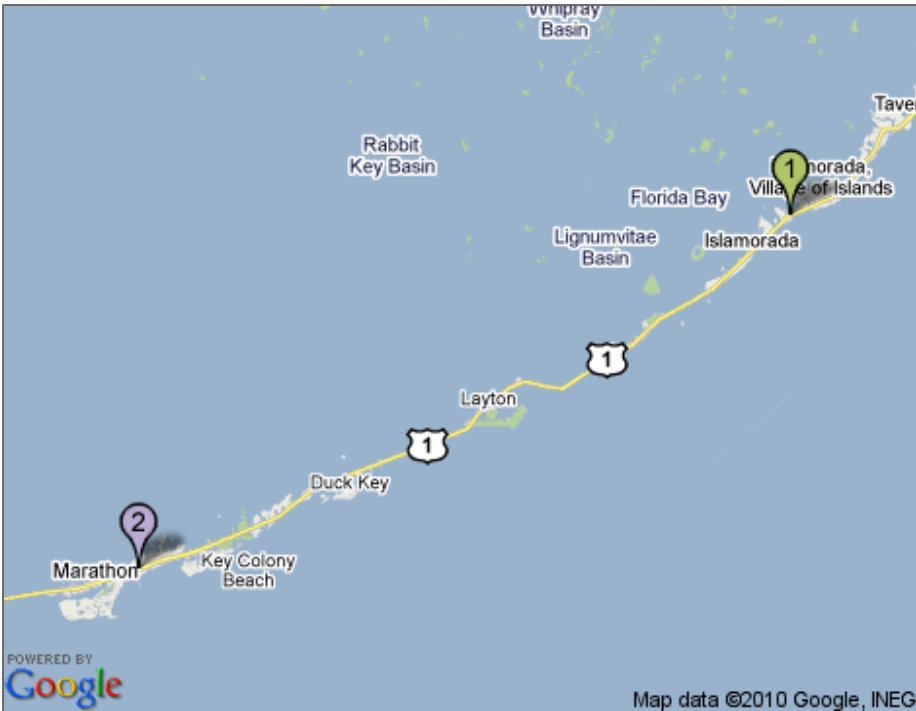
## Hawk's Cay Resort

Family-oriented casual resort

## Day 5 - Florida Keys

**DAY NOTE:** Let's chill today. It's Sunday-Funday. About twenty minutes west (seems like south again!) of Marathon, halfway to Key West, lie the Lower Keys. A famous place there, Bahia Honda State Park, is one of the most photographed parks and beach in the world. Site of Earth Day special events every year, Bahia Honda is a great way to wile away a morning-to-early afternoon before the sun gets too hot. For lunch, make your way the short distance back to Big Pine Key, and a left turn at the light will take you to No Name Key, for the namesake pub with the best pizza around. Tonight, back in Marathon, if you feel up to a little live music, head a few minutes into town from the resort and have a burger from the tiki grill at the famous Dockside Lounge and enjoy the tradition of "Sunday Jam" til sundown with the Florida Straits Band.

# Day 1 - Florida Keys



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Hawk's Cay Resort is a family mecca. Several restaurants on property will delight, especially the Beach Grill, but if you want some other affordable options, read on. Hawk's Cay has it all: watersports, beach, dolphins, fishing and more! Dinner at Whale Harbor means an endless buffet of seafood and American style great grub for the entire family, without breaking the bank.

### contact:

tel: +1 305 664 2431

fax: +1 305 664 8162

<http://www.theaterofthesea.com/>

### location:

84721 Overseas Highway  
Islamorada FL 33036

## 1 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: +1 305 743 7000  
fax: +1 305 743 5215  
<http://www.hawkscay.com/>

**location:**

61 Hawk's Cay Boulevard  
Duck Key FL 33050

**2 Hawk's Cay Resort**

**DESCRIPTION:** Located on its own 60-acre island, this casual resort includes a lagoon with dolphins, marina, and large Caribbean-styled rooms. All rooms include a refrigerator, private balcony, and walk-in closets. Suites are comfortably luxurious, and include sleep-sofas, separate seating areas, and wraparound terraces.

Facilities include diving, snorkeling, catamaran sunset sailing, a saltwater lagoon and pool, a surrounding fire pit, fitness facilities and a whirlpool spa.

Children's programs are also available at this resort, making it extremely popular with families.

© wcities.com



editor

# Day 2 - Florida Keys



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Start the day in the Upper Keys to make your way back to the Middle. Pennekamp is the oldest marine park in the US, named after the Miami Herald editor. It's about the outdoors and nature here in the Keys, and Dolphins Pus lends an insider's view to these calming, healing creatures. One of the quirkiest places in the Keys, Robbie's Marina, allows you to get a bait bucket and for a couple bucks feed them to GIANT tarpon!

**contact:**  
tel: 305-451-1202  
<http://www.floridastateparks.org/pennekamp/>

**location:**  
P.O. Box 487  
Key Largo FL 33037

## 1 John Pennekamp Visitor Center / Museum

**DESCRIPTION:** The Visitor Center is a large complex that introduces visitors to the various habitats of the park and America's first underwater park. The center is found at the northern tip to Largo Sound. The cornerstone of the center is a 30,000-gallon saltwater aquarium. Unique marine sights include sponges, fan corals, brain corals, parrot fish, conchs, sea horses and more. The coral reefs at John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park are among the most beautiful and diverse of all living communities showcased through audio-visual programs, nature talks, and variety of tours. Next to the center is a picnic grove, Cannon Beach, and a main concession that sells tour tickets, a sundry of supplies, rents paddleboats, and more. Far Beach is located just moments away offering a quieter beach experience than Cannon Beach. The Mangrove Boardwalk Trail can be accessed from this parking lot. Fishing and camping are natural additions; advance reservations are necessary at this busy park.



editor

**contact:**

tel: +1 305 664 9865  
<http://keysdining.com/squidrow/dinnermenu.htm>

**location:**

81901 Overseas Highway  
Islamorada FL 33036

**hours:**

11:30a-9:30p Su-Th,  
11:30a-10p F-Sa

**2 Squid Row Restaurant**

**DESCRIPTION:** This is a very casual spot and as the quite clever name suggests, it focuses on seafood. Try the conch steak, sautéed with key lime, or choose from stuffed shrimp, squid rings over pasta or the fried grunt platter. Chicken, beef and vegetarian dishes are also offered. Indoor and outdoor dining areas give you the option of sea breezes or air conditioning. There's a children's menu, but this may be the time to introduce the small fry to a grilled fish sandwich, which is popular and rightfully so. © wcities.com



editor

**contact:**

tel: +1 866 860 7946  
fax: +1 305 451 3710  
<http://www.dolphinsplus.com/>

**location:**

31 Corrine Place  
Key Largo FL 33037

**hours:**

8a-5p M-Su

**3 Dolphins Plus Inc.**

**DESCRIPTION:** Dolphins have long been considered man's closest ocean-dwelling friend. Here you can swim with one. First you participate in an hour-long educational session, then you swim with the dolphins for about 30 minutes. In a more structured opportunity, you spend 45 minutes with a dolphin trainer and then enter the pool where the creatures push you through the water and dance with you. Reservations are required for both activities, and you can also tour the facility where research is done. © wcities.com



Dolphins Plus Inc

**contact:**

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

**location:**

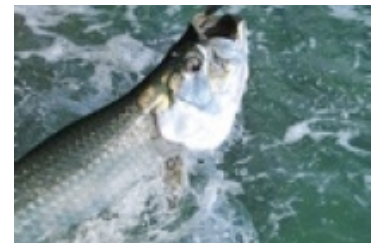
77-5 Overseas Highway  
Islamorada FL 33036

**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 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



editor



**contact:**

tel: +1 305 664 4959  
http://www.whaleharborinn.com

**location:**

Mile Marker 83.5  
Islamorada FL 33036

**hours:**

Breakfast: 6a-11:30a M-Su,  
Lunch and dinner: noon-10p  
M-Su

**5 Whale Harbor Inn**

**DESCRIPTION:** A lighthouse rises high above this restaurant at the Whale Harbor Docks in Islamorada. The lighthouse location offers diners a water view at the a la carte restaurant upstairs, or you can opt for the all-you-can-eat seafood buffet downstairs where more than 100 items crowd the groaning boards. Steamed shrimp, grilled grouper, dolphin, snapper, Oriental stir-fry, the list goes on and satisfyingly on. © wcities.com



Whale Harbor Inn Restaurant

**contact:**

tel: +1 305 743 7000  
fax: +1 305 743 5215  
http://www.hawkscay.com/

**location:**

61 Hawk's Cay Boulevard  
Duck Key FL 33050

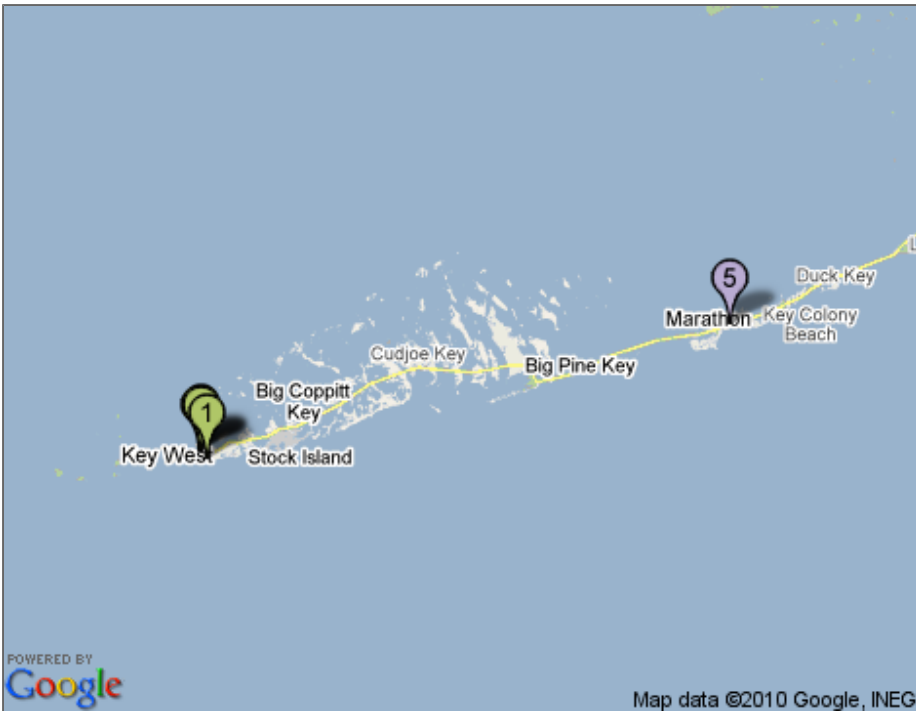
**6 Hawk's Cay Resort**

**DESCRIPTION:** Located on its own 60-acre island, this casual resort includes a lagoon with dolphins, marina, and large Caribbean-styled rooms. All rooms include a refrigerator, private balcony, and walk-in closets. Suites are comfortably luxurious, and include sleep-sofas, separate seating areas, and wraparound terraces. Facilities include diving, snorkeling, catamaran sunset sailing, a saltwater lagoon and pool, a surrounding fire pit, fitness facilities and a whirlpool spa. Children's programs are also available at this resort, making it extremely popular with families. © wcities.com



editor

# Day 3 - Florida Keys



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** You've headed north (well, technically, east) from your hotel for a day, now it's time to head west, to the Southernmost Point of the US! Does that make sense? Old Town Trolley tours give you a crash course in the history of Key West, but affords you the luxury to hop on and off in many locations. Eliminates having to navigate yourself! Back to nature here, too, with thousands of butterflies fluttering around you spilling color throughout the Conservatory, and a stop at the Aquarium will make the kids squeal with delight in look-and-touch fashion. Then Ahoy, mates! on to Pirate Soul Museum. Swash-bucklers love the Keys, and pirates still abound! (Just in fun, they won't steal your booty) It seems like a lot jammed in the day, but a half-hour parasail is a great aerial precursor to the beautiful sunset you'll see at Mallory Square amidst street performers, jugglers and artists.

### contact:

[http://www.partner.viator.com/en/6793/tours/Key-West/Old-Town-Trolley-Tours-of-Key-West/d661-5046KEY\\_OTT](http://www.partner.viator.com/en/6793/tours/Key-West/Old-Town-Trolley-Tours-of-Key-West/d661-5046KEY_OTT)

### location:

Key West Florida

## Old Town Trolley Tours of Key West

**DESCRIPTION:** Sit back while your expert tour guide turns back the pages of history to the days of Indians, pirates, wreckers and the Civil War. Old Town Trolley Tours of Key West is the best way to explore the southernmost city. Learn about Key West's lucrative (ship) wrecking industry. Hear the stories of success and disaster of Henry Flagler's railroad... the railroad that went to sea. Listen to the legends of the fierce Calusa Indians that were said to leave the remains of their enemies on the beaches of Key West, thus creating Key West's first name, Cayo Hueso... Island of Bones. Tour at your own pace! Old Town Trolley Tours allows you to get off at any of the convenient stops. When you're ready, just re-board and it's on with the tour. Spend as much time as you like as you make one complete loop. On your tour you'll also find out where to dine, shop, and just relax and have good time. This is Key West's most comprehensive tour, covering over 100 points of interest. Your guide has been extensively trained and is proud to share the history, lore and legends of Key West. **Special Offer - Price**



viator

displayed currently includes a discount of 10% off the regular retail price - **BOOK NOW!** © Viator

**contact:**  
tel: +1 305 296 2988  
<http://www.keywestbutterfly.com/>

**location:**  
1316 Duval Street  
Key West FL 33040

**hours:**  
Daily 9am-5pm; last ticket sold at 4:30pm

## 1 Key West Butterfly & Nature Conservatory

**DESCRIPTION:** There's just something awesome about butterflies – they represent rebirth, natural beauty, quiet strength. At the Butterfly & Nature Conservatory, visitors get to walk among hundreds of butterflies in their natural habitats. Stunning, is the best way to describe it. What I did not know was that these butterflies were not gathered from the wild (Key West is as far south as you can get in the US, so it seems we have to get everything shipped in!), but it turns out that the captive breeding of butterflies is best suited for tropical climates like the Keys, and "overage" gets released into the wild to help culture our native trees, plants and shrubs. It's a fascinating place. Hours 9a.m.–5p.m. daily. Admission \$12, children 4-12 \$8.50, seniors and military \$9, children four and under, free. © NileGuide



<http://www.keywestbutterfly.com/images/nav/home3.gif>

**contact:**  
tel: +1 800 868 7482 / +1 305 296 2051  
<http://www.keywestaquarium.com/>

**location:**  
1 Whitehead Street  
Key West FL 33040

**hours:**  
Daily 10am-6pm; tours at 11am and 1, 3, and 4pm

## 2 Key West Aquarium

**DESCRIPTION:** Opened in 1934, this educational and entertaining aquarium features diverse exhibits on sea life in the area and live demonstrations. Wander among the many varieties of marine life or take a guided tour. Aquarium demonstrations include shark and fish feedings daily at 11a, 1p, 3p and 4:30p. Children usually enjoy the touching area, where visitors can touch marine creatures in shallow pools. Admission fee. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Key West Aquarium

**contact:**  
tel: +1 305 292 1113  
fax: +1 305 292 1125  
<http://www.piratesoul.com/museum.aspx>

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

**hours:**  
Daily 9am-7pm

## 3 Pirate Soul

**DESCRIPTION:** Pirates of the Caribbean are closer to you now than ever before and one man is responsible for it: Pat Croce. He's been a live commentator on the NBA on the NBC show and has been a bestseller author. But this time he's done things differently. The Pirate Soul Museum opened by him in Key West pays tribute to pirates across the world. Don't be surprised if you find Captain Johnny staring at you with weird hair-dos and masks, because it's a winding journey into the alleys. You can touch Captain Kidd's loots and weapons and see history unfold. © wcities.com

**contact:**

<http://www.partner.viator.com/en/6793/tours/Key-West/Tandem-Parasailing/d661-3800T>  
AND

**location:**

Key West Florida

## Tandem Parasailing

**DESCRIPTION:** Parasail in Paradise! Experience the exhilaration of floating high above the water, looking out over exciting and historic Key West. Parasailing is safe for all ages and can be done solo or tandem. Rides can be tailored to your taste - from mild to wild. You won't believe the views - the blues and greens of the Gulf of Mexico, the palm trees, and all your favorite Key West haunts from high above. This may be the best way to find a little peace and quiet in a town that's this much fun! Actual flight time is approximately 14 minutes © Viator



viator

**contact:**

tel: +1 305 296 4557  
<http://www.mallorysquare.com/>

**location:**

300 Duval St  
Key West FL 33040

## 4 Mallory Square

**DESCRIPTION:** Located by the historic Key West waterfront, this open-air marketplace and entertainment complex is a great place to start or end your visit to Key West. Known for its magnificent sunsets, the area is also home to many shops, including Shell Warehouse, Key West Sponge Market and Caribbean Cargo. The Square also features daily entertainment, which includes guitar music, juggling, and animal performances. Local sightseeing tours also depart from the Square. Call for additional information. © wcities.com



editor

**contact:**

tel: +1 305 743 7000  
fax: +1 305 743 5215  
<http://www.hawkscay.com/>

**location:**

61 Hawk's Cay Boulevard  
Duck Key FL 33050

## 5 Hawk's Cay Resort

**DESCRIPTION:** Located on its own 60-acre island, this casual resort includes a lagoon with dolphins, marina, and large Caribbean-styled rooms. All rooms include a refrigerator, private balcony, and walk-in closets. Suites are comfortably luxurious, and include sleep-sofas, separate seating areas, and wraparound terraces.

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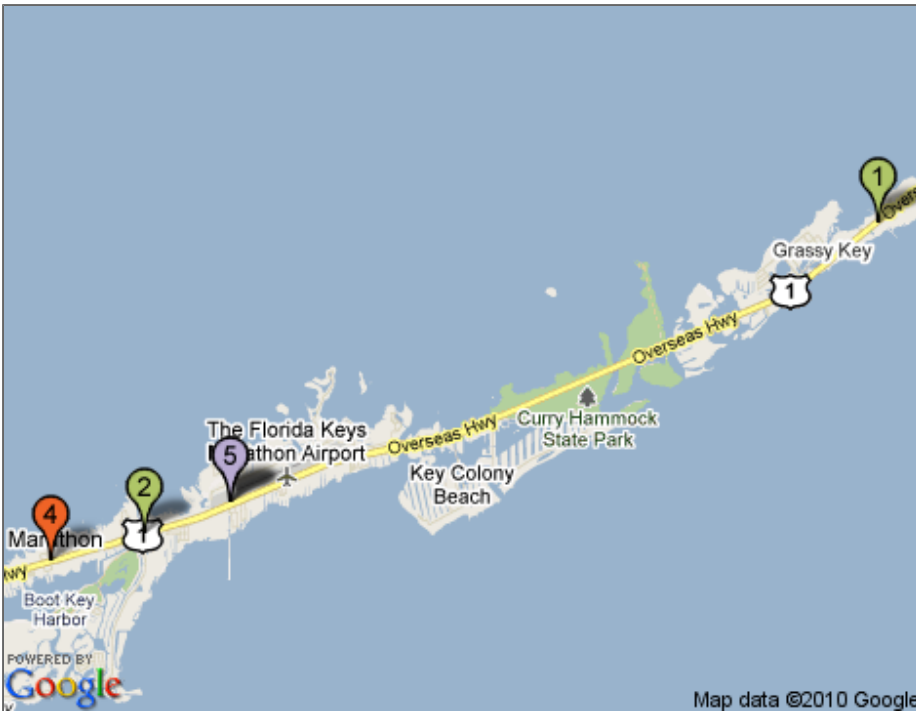
Children's programs are also available at this resort, making it extremely popular with families.

© wcities.com



editor

# Day 4 - Florida Keys



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Ah, Marathon. The Heart of the Florida Keys, the family island. Today is to be fun, relaxing and educational all at the same time. The Florida Keys celebrates over 100 years of conservation and preservation heritage, and stops at the "DRC" to learn about how smart dolphins and sea lions really are, the world's ONLY veterinarian turtle hospital and Crane Point Hammock's children's museum only make you appreciate this planet more. Save a late afternoon stroll on the Old Seven Mile Bridge - you can make bets who sees the spotted eagle rays, turtles and sharks first! You'll get a birds-eye view along with the pelicans and egrets that swoop by looking for fish to grab for dinner.

### contact:

tel: +1 305 289 1121 / +1 305 289 0002

fax: +1 305 743 7627

<http://www.dolphins.org/>

### location:

58901 Overseas Highway  
Grassy Key FL 33050

## 1 Dolphin Research Center

**DESCRIPTION:** The Dolphin Research Center, mile marker (MM) 59 bayside on Grassy Key, specializes in behavioral research and maintains liaisons with university research programs and independent scientists around the world. Founded in 1984 as a not-for-profit teaching and research facility, the center and its staff have received numerous conservation awards for the rescue and rehabilitation of sick and injured marine mammals. With human attention and kindness, the animals return to good health and provide fun-filled programs that educate visitors about dolphins, sea lions and the environment. Dolphin Encounter is the center's swim program, or visitors can try DolphinSplash, a wade-in program that offers the opportunity to get waist deep in the water with the dolphins. Hands-On Training, Meet the Dolphin and Paint With A Dolphin offer a wide range of interactions. The Dolphin Research Center is open daily, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., with continuous dolphin and sea lion sessions. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Dolphin Research Center

**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

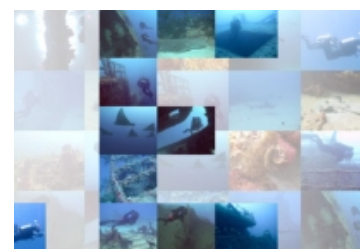
**contact:**  
tel: +1 305 743 9100  
<http://www.cranepoint.org/>

**location:**  
5550 Overseas Highway  
Marathon FL 33050

**hours:**  
9a-5p M-Sa, noon-5p Su

## 2 Florida Keys Children's Museum

**DESCRIPTION:** Kids are touchy-feely creatures, and here they get a nose-to-nose look at iguanas, fish and other creatures that call the Keys home. One part of a two-part museum complex called The Museums of Crane Point, this facility keeps kids captivated while they learn. The dress-up-like-a-pirate opportunity here is popular, too. Outside, there is a mile-long loop trail, and kids are likely to enjoy a prowl around the remains of a Bahamian village and a look at the restored George Adderly House. Walking shoes and mosquito repellent are highly recommended. Admission fee. © wcities.com



[http://www.ledivevideo.com/img/ledv\\_header-760.jpg](http://www.ledivevideo.com/img/ledv_header-760.jpg)

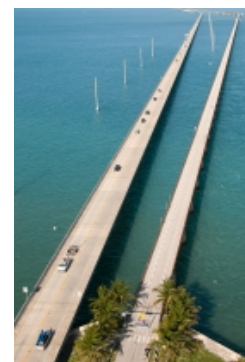
**contact:**  
tel: +1 800 352 5397

**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: 305-743-5516  
<http://www.annetteslobster.com>

**location:**  
3660 Overseas Highway  
Marathon FL 33050

**hours:**

## 4 Annette's Lobster & Steak House

**DESCRIPTION:** Annette is famous for all her homemade desserts. The staff is attentive, friendly & knowledgeable, bringing many years of food service to the table. Good food and good service at a fair price. Annette's Lobster & Steakhouse is easily one of Marathon's most generously portioned, reasonably priced eateries in town. Located alongside US1 in



editor

M-F 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
lunch, M-Sun 5-9 p.m. dinner,  
Sunday brunch buffet

Marathon, across from the Marathon Community Park. Do not miss it on your next trip to the Keys!

**contact:**

tel: +1 305 743 7000  
fax: +1 305 743 5215  
<http://www.hawkscay.com/>

**location:**

61 Hawk's Cay Boulevard  
Duck Key FL 33050

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© wcities.com



editor

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**DAY NOTE:** Let's chill today. It's Sunday-Funday. About twenty minutes west (seems like south again!) of Marathon, halfway to Key West, lie the Lower Keys. A famous place there, Bahia Honda State Park, is one of the most photographed parks and beach in the world. Site of Earth Day special events every year, Bahia Honda is a great way to wile away a morning-to-early afternoon before the sun gets too hot. For lunch, make your way the short distance back to Big Pine Key, and a left turn at the light will take you to No Name Key, for the namesake pub with the best pizza around. Tonight, back in Marathon, if you feel up to a little live music, head a few minutes into town from the resort and have a burger from the tiki grill at the famous Dockside Lounge and enjoy the tradition of "Sunday Jam" til sundown with the Florida Straits Band.

### contact:

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

### location:

Mile Marker 37.5  
Key West FL 33043

## 1 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



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



birds, kayaking and great views of the Old Bahia Honda Bridge complement the Sand and Sea Nature Center. © NileGuide

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

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

**hours:**  
11a-11p M-Su

## 2 No Name Pub

**DESCRIPTION:** Plunked down here in 1936, this rustic spot has changed little, still offering plenty of beer and pizza. No Name is rough, it's ready and it is about as close to the "original" Keys as you are likely to get these days. Appetizers include smoked fish dip and spicy conch fritters. For dinner, try a fish sandwich, blackened chicken with Swiss, or a seafood combo with grouper, shrimp and clam strips. Pizza choices include key shrimp, Caribbean chicken, vegetarian and Mexican. Or just ask for a cold pint and enjoy the ambiance of this memorable bar. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of No Name Pub

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

**location:**  
35 Sombrero Boulevard  
Marathon FL 33037

## 3 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: +1 305 743 7000  
fax: +1 305 743 5215  
<http://www.hawkscay.com/>

**location:**  
61 Hawk's Cay Boulevard  
Duck Key FL 33050

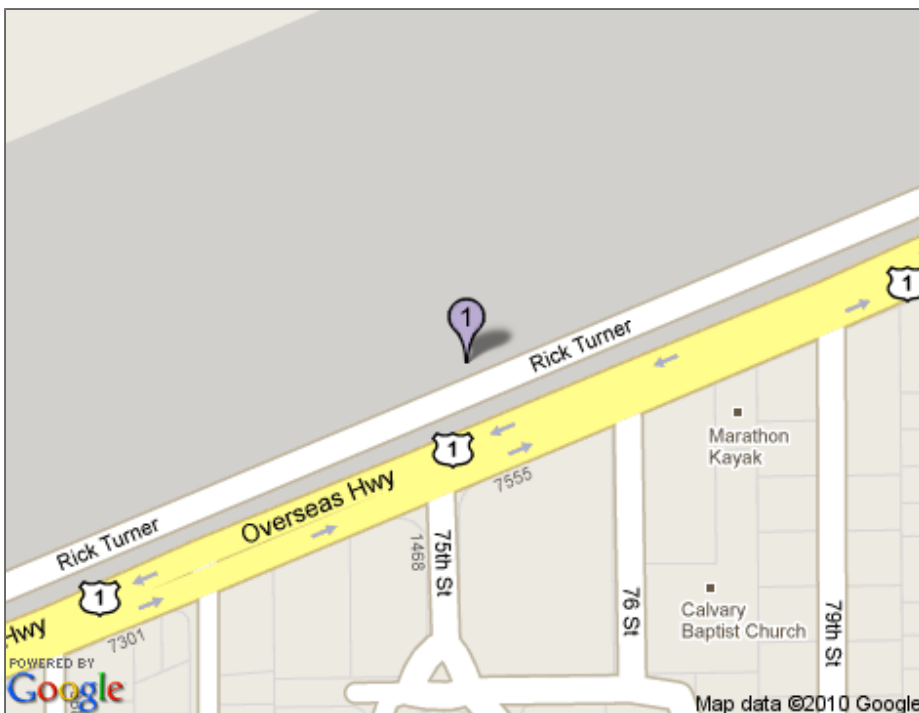
## 4 Hawk's Cay Resort

**DESCRIPTION:** Located on its own 60-acre island, this casual resort includes a lagoon with dolphins, marina, and large Caribbean-styled rooms. All rooms include a refrigerator, private balcony, and walk-in closets. Suites are comfortably luxurious, and include sleep-sofas, separate seating areas, and wraparound terraces. Facilities include diving, snorkeling, catamaran sunset sailing, a saltwater lagoon and pool, a surrounding fire pit, fitness facilities and a whirlpool spa. Children's programs are also available at this resort, making it extremely popular with families. © wcities.com



editor

# Day 6 - Florida Keys



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** This would be the day to try SNUBA, a combination of snorkeling and scuba, that anyone in the family can participate in! Dive Duck Key, at Hawk's Cay Resort is the utmost in professional, trained and friendly staff.

### contact:

tel: +1 305 743 7000  
fax: +1 305 743 5215  
<http://www.hawkscay.com/>

### location:

61 Hawk's Cay Boulevard  
Duck Key FL 33050

## 1 Hawk's Cay Resort

**DESCRIPTION:** Located on its own 60-acre island, this casual resort includes a lagoon with dolphins, marina, and large Caribbean-styled rooms. All rooms include a refrigerator, private balcony, and walk-in closets. Suites are comfortably luxurious, and include sleep-sofas, separate seating areas, and wraparound terraces.

Facilities include diving, snorkeling, catamaran sunset sailing, a saltwater lagoon and pool, a surrounding fire pit, fitness facilities and a whirlpool spa.

Children's programs are also available at this resort, making it extremely popular with families.

© 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:

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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

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