

Road Trip: Florida Keys Mile-Marker Guide

Overseas Highway, mile by mile: Plan your Florida Keys itinerary

The Overseas Highway through the Florida Keys is the ultimate road trip: Spectacular views and things to do, places to go and places to hide, hidden harbors and funky tiki bars.

There are hundreds of places to pull over to fish or kayak or enjoy a cocktail at sunset. There are dozens of colorful coral reefs to snorkel or dive.

Fresh seafood is a Florida Keys staple, offered at roadside fish shacks and upscale eateries.

For many, the destination is Key West, at the end of the road, but you'll find the true character of the Florida Keys before you get there.

This mile-marker guide will help you discover new things to see and do in the Florida Keys. It's a great tool for planning your Florida Keys driving itinerary.



Card Sound Road

127.5 — Florida City – Junction with Fla. Turnpike and U.S. 1.

126.5 — **Card Sound Road** (CR-905) goes east to the Card Sound Bridge and northern Key Largo. If you're not in a hurry, take the toll road (\$1 toll). Card Sound Road traverses a wild area that once had a small community of Card Sound. All that's left now is Alabama Jack's, a funky outdoor restaurant and tiki bar known for its conch fritters and the line of motorcycles it attracts. (Don't be afraid; it's a family oriented place and great fun.)



If you take Card Sound Road, you'll pass a little-known park, Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park, before coming to Key Largo itself. Saved from becoming another condo, this park preserves one of the largest tracts of West Indian tropical hardwood hammock in the United States. There are picnic tables and two short hikes — a two-mile nature trail and a one-mile loop. If you fill out a back-country permit form at Pennekamp State Park, you can hike an additional four miles of trails.

The Upper Keys on U.S. 1

If you want to go kayaking, watch for the **KAYAK** mile marker notes.

112.5 — Monroe County Line

110.8 — **KAYAK** — Little Black Water Sound Boat Ramp, bayside.

108.5 — **Gilbert's**. Near the end of the “18-Mile Stretch,” just before you cross the Jewfish Creek Bridge into Key Largo, you’ll see an access ramp on your right to Gilbert’s Resort and Marina, an Old Florida gateway to the Keys. The big attraction here is the tiki bar, which really pops on weekends.

108 — Jewfish Creek. Exit/enter Key Largo. Southern end of the “18-Mile Stretch.”

107.5 — Lake Surprise.

106.5 — Buzzard’s Roost, Oceanside. Outdoors and indoor dining on the water in the Garden Cove Marina.

106.0 — Key Largo Chamber of Commerce, gulfside. Easy-to-reach rest rooms and lots of brochures and maps, which often contain discount coupons for attractions.

105.6 — Railroad depot and Key Largo town center from 1910 to 1940. The depot was in the highway median. The community was bayside.

104.5 — **KAYAK** — Florida Bay Outfitters. Small fee to launch. The friendly folks here will give you advice on kayak routes and/or rent you kayaks or paddleboards.

104.1 — **Caribbean Club**, Bayside. The exterior was used in the 1948 movie *Key Largo*. Now it’s a popular dive bar filled with *Key Largo* memorabilia.



Key Largo sunset

104.0 — Jimmy Johnson’s Big Chill, Bayside. Legendary football coach Jimmy Johnson’s anchor in the sand. Sports bar, tiki bar, restaurant.

103.5 — The 1920s Key Largo Rock Castle, End of Oceana Drive, Oceanside.

103.4 — King’s Kamp RV Park, Oceanside. Decent private campground with many waterfront sites. It’s packed in winter, but you can usually get a site the rest of the year. Shaded tent sites along north fence.

103.4 — Marvin Adams Waterway Bridge (The Cut), a canal that connects Atlantic to Florida Bay.

102.8 — KAYAK — John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park entrance, oceanside: A great place to take a snorkeling trip or kayak through mangrove tunnels. If you want to camp, you can (and should) make reservations up to 11 months in advance through Reserve America.

102 — Need a free place to stop for **picnic**? Behind the Key Largo government center (bayside) there's a pretty little waterfront park area with covered picnic tables. Folks who live on boats moored just off shore come and go from here via dinghy or kayak.

101.7 — Hobo's. Long one of Bob's favorites stops. Good food at the right price.

101.2 — Hibiscus Park, Oceanside. This was the center of the 1880s community of Newport.

100.5 — Key Largo Chocolates. Key Lime Pie on a stick!

100.0 — Divers Direct. Massive store catering to scuba divers, snorkelers and other water sports.

99.7 — The African Queen, the 100-year-old steamboat from the 1951 Humphrey Bogart-Katherine Hepburn film, is moored next to the Holiday Inn Oceanside. You can take a 90-minute cruise or a two-hour dinner trip.

99.5 — Bayside Grille and Sunset Bar. Nice little hideaway bar (downstairs) and restaurant off the highway behind Cafe Largo overlooking a busy cove on Florida Bay.

99.4 — Mrs. Mac's Kitchen. Roadside diner popular with travelers.

99.6 — Turn on Laguna Drive to reach Skippers Dockside, one of our favorite tiki bars and restaurants at 528 Caribbean Drive. If you are lucky, you will see the African Queen steam by from the large waterfront deck.

98.0 — Landings of Largo, Bayside; Moose Lodge, Oceanside; Everglades Park Ranger Station, Bayside. First Baptist Church, Oceanside; Shell World (center road); Rock Harbor Club, Bayside.

95 to 100 — This was the early community of Rock Harbor. A small railroad depot was also here. The name of the post office was Rock Harbor until the 1948 Humphrey Bogart-Lauren Bacall film *Key Largo* inspired residents to cash in on that success. In 1952, the post office was renamed Key Largo.

95.8 — Harriette's Diner. Popular eatery for locals. Home cookin'.

95.2 — Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary building.



94.8 — Seaside community, oceanside. The 1900s Thompson line packing house was in this area.

93.6 — Florida Keys Wild Bird Center, gulf side. Wander along a boardwalk through a mangrove forest at this volunteer-run wildlife-rehab facility with an informal, backyard feel. The center is free, though you may want to stuff some dollars into the donation box. It's open from sunrise to sunset. You're free to wander without anyone hassling you. It's a great place to bring kids; a stop will only take 15 or 20 minutes, unless you decide to linger.



92.6 — Burton Drive, Harry Harris Park oceanside. This small park has a man-made beach, picnic tables, a picnic shelter and a playground. It is a great stop for a picnic or swim on your roadtrip. There is a \$5 admission for those over 16 on Saturday, Sunday and federal holidays. Incidentally, the early community of Planter was here.

92.0 — KAYAK — Bottle Key Launch. Public boat launch, bayside. Turn right onto Jo-Jean Way.

91.9 — Old Tavernier Post office; Old Settlers Park, oceanside historic Tavernier Hotel, oceanside. This was the center of the early community of Tavernier.



91.6 — Mariner's Hospital. Bayside.

91.0 — Tavernier Creek Bridge; enter Islamorada; Tavernier Creek Marina, Plantation Marina, gulfside.

90.1 — Plantation Key Colony community entrance, gulfside. There's a large Indian mound in the center of the subdivision.

87.1 — Islamorada Chamber of Commerce Red Caboose

87.0 — KAYAK Founders Park and Beach. This public park has a beach, marina, boat ramps, baseball fields, skate park and kayak rentals.

86.7 — Rain Barrel Artisan's Village. It's fun to browse the arts and crafts here. And everybody has to get their picture taken with the giant lobster out front. This anatomically correct Florida lobster is 30 feet high and 40 feet long. It was created by Marathon artist Richard Blaze about three decades ago and it has a name — Betsy.



85.5 — Snake Creek Bridge; Coast Guard Station, gulfside. Enter Windley Key.

85.3 — Hog Heaven Bar & Grill. A popular sports bar and seafood restaurant before you get to Holiday Isle. You can't miss the sign. The restaurant is tucked in behind a building on the oceanside. A frequent stop for bikers and tourists.

85.3 — Windley Key State Fossil Reef Geological Site, gulfside. Windley Key is worth a stop. It's an old quarry where fossilized coral was acquired for use in building Flagler's Overseas Railroad in the early 1900s. Visitors can walk along 8-foot-high quarry walls to see cross sections of the ancient coral and learn about the quarry and its operation. There are also some short self-guided trails through the native vegetation. The park has picnic tables.



84.3 — This was the center of the community of Quarry that thrived during the construction of the railroad.

84.2 — Theater of the Sea, established in 1946, it's the second oldest marine mammal attraction in the world. Its saltwater lagoon was originally a quarry for Flagler's Overseas Railway. Offers live dolphin shows, exhibits, a private swimming area and various ways to interact with dolphin, sea lions or rays for additional charges.

84.2 — World Famous Holiday Isle Tiki Bar. Traditional stop for your first rum runner in the Keys, home of the "Original Rum Runner" and "Kokomo" beach.

84 — Whale Harbor Bridge spans a waterway connecting the ocean to Florida Bay. Oceanside, there is a long sandbar that emerges at low tide, a magnet for recreational boaters and swimmers. (Stay off the protected ocean seagrasses southwest of the inlet or face stiff fines.)

84 — **KAYAK and KITEboarding.** The bridge causeway is a popular launch for kayaks, paddleboards and kite-boarders, who can often be seen buzzing around the sandbar. (Stay off the protected seagrasses oceanside or face stiff fines.)

83.5 — Wahoo's Tiki Bar and the Whale Harbor Marina remain open while Whale Harbor's World Famous Seafood Buffet and the Braza Leña Brazilian Steakhouse are closed while undergoing major reconstruction.

83.0 — Ziggy and Mad Dog's. Do not let the exterior scare you. This is a locally popular restaurant featuring steaks, chops, and seafood.

82.1 — On the grounds of the Islander, oceanside, is the impressive new Florida Keys History & Discovery Center, a two-story museum that tells the stories of people and events in the Keys. Open Thursday to Sunday.

82 — Lorelei Restaurant and Cabana Bar. Lorelei's mermaid sign on US 1 says: Relax, you're finally in the Keys. Lorelei's is a great place to pause for refreshments, especially popular at sunset. Bayside.

81.5 — Oceanside: Islamorada Library and park; **Hurricane Memorial.** The Hurricane Monument tells the story of the devastating 1935 hurricane. In 1937, ashes of many of those who died were buried here when the monument was dedicated. Be sure to see the beautiful tile-mosaic map of the islands hit by the storm in front of the monument.



This is also a good place to park and explore on foot this historic community, which is developing into the Morada Way Arts and Cultural District. There are galleries, restaurants and regular monthly artwalks with live music. At the end of Beach Road is the Moorings, where the Netflix filmed many scenes for "Bloodlines" at the posh and picturesque Moorings Village. Beachside near the monument, on "the Old Road," is The Cheeca Lodge, an exclusive lodge where President George H.W. Bush visited and fished.

81.6 — Located in the Morada Arts District at 200 Morada Way, the [Florida Keys Brewing Company](#) opened in 2015. The taproom is decorated in a colorful Keys-worthy way — with mosaics made from thousands of bottle caps from breweries worldwide. It's the only craft brewery in the Upper Keys and it's a lively place popular with residents.

81.5 — Bayside: Worldwide Sportsman, part of the Bass Pro Shops empire, offers a wealth of saltwater fishing tackle, outdoors gear, boating accessories and clothing. On display is a classic wooden fishing vessel, the kind Ernest Hemingway once used. You can also arrange charters on modern fishing boats.

81.5 - Islamorada Fish Company, a popular seafood market, restaurant and sunset tiki bar, now part of the Worldwide Sportsman. Buy fresh fish at the market. The restaurant has its own fishing fleet, so the fish is fresh off the boat.

81.3 — Green Turtle Inn. Oceanside. Notable eatery with a history back to the 1940s. Popular port of call for "barstool sailors."

80.0 — Roadside park, Bayside

79.8 — Lazy Days Restaurant, oceanside, has excellent fresh fish and a spectacular ocean view (best appreciated during the day.)

79.8 — Bud and Mary's Marina, oceanside at the foot of Tea Table Relief Bridge. Drift fishing party boats, deep-sea and backcountry charters available.

79.1 — Tea Table Channel Bridge

78.0 — KAYAK. Indian Key Bridge. Lignumvitae Key Botanical Site, bayside in distance. Lignumvitae Key Boat Ramp gulfside; Indian Key Archaeological Site, San Pedro Underwater State Park and Alligator Lighthouse, oceanside at a distance.

Another excellent paddling destination: Lignumvitae Key Botanical Site, on the gulf side of the road.

77.9 — KAYAK — Lignumvitae Bridge

77.5 — KAYAK Robbie's Marina, bayside. No trip to the Keys is complete without a stop to feed the tarpon at Robbie's Marina. Rent kayaks or arrange tours to Lignumvitae Key or Indian Key at the marina. Fishing charters also available.

77.5 — The Hungry Tarpon is a funky wooden fish shack built in 1947, a good place for breakfast, lunch or dinner, with outdoor seating.

75.0 — KAYAK Sea Oats Beach.

73.8 — Florida National High Adventure Sea Base.

YOU MADE IT!!!! Welcome

While the physical address is 73800 Overseas Highway, Islamorada, Florida, any local you ask will refer to our location as Mile Marker 73.8, Bayside.

73.5 — Habanos Restaurant at Caloosa Cove. Cuban-influenced menu, casual dining with ocean views and low to moderate prices. Local Cuban-Americans eat here with good reason. Try it.

73.5 — Caloosa Cove Resort and Marina. TrueValue Hardware store in the main building. Waterfront tiki bar Safari Lounge at the resort, behind Habaneros.

73.6 — Calusa Cove Marina. Oceanside. Gulfside was the location of Camp 3 for WW-I veterans. Many perished in the 1935 hurricane.



KAYAK and KITEboards 73.4 — Anne's Beach, Oceanside. Anne's beach is a lovely, sandy, **free** beach, so shallow you can wade great distances. The shore is lined with mangroves, through which a boardwalk, with periodic picnic tables, weaves. Anne's Beach has limited parking and is very popular. If you can get a space, it makes a nice 20 minute stop in your roadtrip to wade in the shallow water.

Keep an eye on the sea life underfoot. This is a place you might need to be careful to avoid stepping on an octopus — a small, nonthreatening and adorable creature.



73.0 — Channel 2 Bridge. Off shore on the bayside can be seen the remains of eight concrete bridge pilings built by the WWI veterans. Bayside, there are several parking spaces and this is a good place to park and enjoy the view by walking on the old bridge, now a fishing bridge and biking/walking trail. If there's no parking at Anne's Beach, you can park here and cross and walk back to it.

The Middle Keys

71.8 — Craig Key

71.0 — Channel 5 Bridge. Considered by locals to provide the best bridge fishing in the Keys. In March 2013, bike trail construction limited access to parking on the south side.

70.0 — Fiesta Key RV Park and Marina. Decent alternative if you can't book a campsite Long Key. Boat launch and dockage, and really nice waterfront cabins. Campsite reservations available on ReserveAmerica.

67.5 — KAYAK Long Key State Park, Oceanside. It's hard to find a more scenic camping spot anywhere. All 51 campsites are on the beach, and they are hard to get, so reserve early. The park is popular for picnics, hiking, kayaking and fishing. Reserve a campsite online at ReserveAmerica.

65.8 — Henry Flagler's Long Key Fishing Camp occupied the southwest end of Long Key. In the early part of the 20th Century, this famed recreation outpost was visited by Theodore Roosevelt, Herbert Hoover and adventurer Zane Grey, who spent 14 winter seasons here fishing and writing.

66.5 — KAYAK Long Key bayside. Decent sized pullover on the bay side, outside of Long Key State Park. Drop your kayak over the low wall.

64.0 — Long Key Bridge, the second-longest bridge of Flagler's railroad. The old bridge parallels the new one and has been resurfaced so that for three miles, it provides a scenic, traffic-free bike trail, part of the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Bicycle Trail. Also popular with fishermen and walkers and joggers.

62.2 — Walker's Island (Little Conch Key)

61.2 — Tom's Harbor Cut Bridge

61.1 — Duck Key and Hawk's Cay Resort, luxury resort is oceanside.



Zane Grey with his catch (1922)

60.6 — KAYAK Tom's Harbor Channel Bridge. Oceanside launch and pullover. Good fishing!

59.9 — Enter/leave City of Marathon

59.3 — Keys Cable and Otherside Water Park — Cable wakeboarding.

59 — Dolphin Research Center, Bayside on Grassy Key The focus of this not-for-profit facility is on education. Rather than choreographed shows, trainers hold informative sessions as visitors stand on the dock around open-water tanks. Many ways to interact with dolphins are available for an extra fee.

58.0 — Grassy Key Outpost Market and Grill — Shrimp and grits. Need we say more?

56 — KAYAK Curry Hammock State Park offers swimming, a playground, picnic tables and some of the most sought-after camp sites in the Keys. Day visitors can launch kayaks from the beach and paddle coves and trails. There's a 1.5-mile nature trail for hiking, and you can bike along the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail. Reservations accepted up to 11 months in advance only through ReserveAmerica.

54 — Entrance to Village of Key Colony Beach, Oceanside. Take the Sadowski Causeway/6th Street to the end and turn right on W. Ocean Drive for the Key Colony Inn, one of the best restaurants in the Keys. Prices are moderate and the seafood selection outstanding. Truly, a hidden gem off the beaten path. The same causeway passes another good waterfront seafood bar and restaurant, Sparky's Landing, which has indoor and outdoor seating and live music.

53.5 — KAYAK Island Boat Ramp. Public boat ramp adjacent to The Island Fish Company Tiki Bar & Restaurant, which is also a great place to eat and drink. It has the longest covered tiki bar in the Keys and is ideal setting for watching sunsets.

53.1 — Vaca Cut Bridge, entering the business district of Marathon next 8 miles.

52.0 — Marathon County Airport, bayside

50.5 — Crane Point Museum and Nature Center, gulfside. Admission: Adults \$12.50, children 5-13 \$8.50 and 4 and under free.

50.0 — **KAYAK Sombrero Beach.** There are few “real” public beaches in the Keys, and this is one of them. Turn south at the light (Publix Shopping Center) and follow Sombrero Beach Road to the end. Plenty of parking.

49.0 — The Stuffed Pig. Bob’s favorite breakfast destination in Marathon. Enjoy flaky, battered fish filets with your eggs.

48.5 — The Turtle Hospital. Located in a former motel bayside on the Overseas Highway, the Turtle Hospital supports its program of rescuing and rehabilitating about 100 injured sea turtles a year through the admission price paid by visitors. A 90-minute educational tour is given several times a day. Visitors meet the injured sea turtles up close and get to throw some feed into their tanks.



Bubblebutt, first and longest permanent resident of the Turtle Hospital.

48.0 — Turn-off to Chiki Tiki Bar and Grille at Burdines Waterfront, one of the best casual restaurants and tiki bars in the Keys. To find it, you turn east on 15th Street in Marathon, wind past an old trailer park and stacks of lobster traps, and arrive in a large working marina in a protected harbor. The Chiki Tiki is upstairs with an excellent view.

47.7 — Sunset Grille and Raw Bar — On Knight’s Key with a spectacular view of the iconic 7-Mile Bridge.

47.5 — Porky’s Bayside BBQ and Captain Pip’s Marina & Hideaway, the place to be in the 1950’s when it was known at Bill Thompson’s Villas and Marina. Ernest Hemingway, Jimmy Hoffa, Elizabeth Taylor and Eddie Fisher were regulars.

47.3 — Seven Mile Grille. Outdoor eatery at the foot of the Seven Mile Bridge in Marathon. A landmark serving “Keys food.” Breakfast and lunch menus are reasonably prices and you can’t beat the sunset view during happy hour.

47.0 — Knight’s Key Campground. Oceanside. There are 192 RV sites, some waterfront with dockage, and prime location at the foot of the Seven Mile Bridge. Many amenities nearby, as well as the “old bridge” and Pigeon Key. For reservations, call (305) 743-4343.

47.0 — Old Seven Mile Bridge/Pigeon Key. Bayside. Pigeon Key visitor's center is oceanside. Here's another road-trip must-do: You *have* to get out and take a stroll or ride your bike on the Old Seven Mile Bridge.

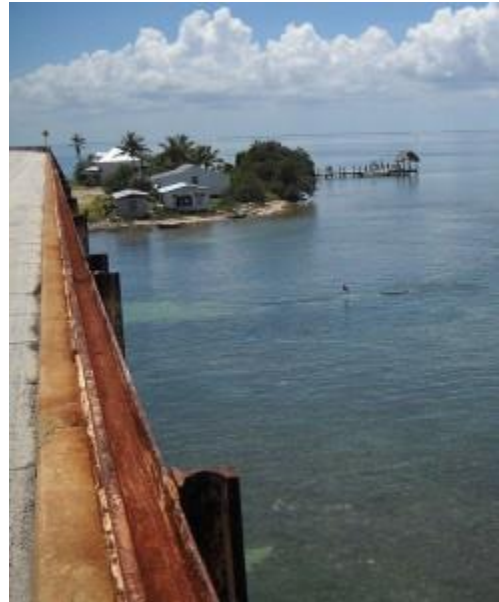
It's also worth planning your schedule to include a visit to historic Pigeon Key. The history is fascinating, the scenery terrific and, if you bring gear, it is a great place to snorkel.

44.8 — Pigeon Key. Bayside.

43.9 — Moser Channel, apogee of Seven-Mile Bridge. Sombrero Light can be seen oceanside

41.7 — End of original steel truss railroad bridge and begin concrete arch bridge

40.0 — West end of the Seven Mile Bridge



The Lower Keys

39.9 — KAYAK Veterans Memorial Park. This small, free oceanside park just south of the Seven Mile Bridge is a great place to stop for a picnic or to use the restroom. Picnic tables are under chickee huts, there's a beach where you can wade or swim and palm trees lean like they are waiting to be captured in a postcard. It's also an easy kayak launch. If it's crowded, there's also a large parking area and a small boat ramp bayside.

39.5 — Missouri-Little Duck Channel Bridge

39.0 — Ohio-Missouri Channel Bridge

38.8 — Sunshine Key RV Resort and Marina. Sunshine Key is a 75-acre full-service campground with swimming pool, marina, grocery, restaurant, laundry, and playgrounds. Reservations via ReserveAmerica.

38.7 — Ohio- Bahia Honda Channel Bridge

Calusa Beach at Bahia Honda State Park in the Florida Keys.

36.8 — KAYAK Bahia Honda State Park entrance, oceanside. In my view, Bahia Honda is the best of the state parks in the Keys. It offers a great beach and snorkeling, good kayaking and the old camelback bridge is an awesome sight up close. On top of that, there are campsites and several well-equipped, cabins. Of course, campsites and cabins book up many months in advance, so plan ahead to stay overnight. Book your campsite reservations through Reserve America.



36.0 — Bahia Honda Bridge (4-lanes); you can view the old railroad camelback bridge on the oceanside.

35.0 — KAYAK Bahia Honda Bridge launch. At the west end (towards Key West), access to both ocean and bay.

34.5 — Girl Scout Camp, oceanside.

34.1 — Camp Sawyer, Boy Scouts, oceanside.

34.0 — West Summerland Key

33.7 — KAYAK Spanish Harbor Bridge Boat Ramp. (East end of bridge, Marathon side.) Paddle to No Name Key and a cluster of other islands off Big Pine.

WARNING! — You are entering **Big Pine Key**, and **the speed limit is strictly enforced**. Big Pine is home to the endangered Florida Key Deer, and no mercy is shown for speeders. It's 45 mph in daylight, 35 mph at night, for 3.5 miles. Drive inland, and the speed limit is 30 mph.

33.8 — KAYAK — Boat ramp alongside highway.

33.0 — Big Pine Key Fishing Lodge and RV Campground — This private 10-acre campground has 94 RV sites with full hookups, some waterfront, and a primitive camp area with 58 tent sites. Also, motel rooms and a full-service marina, with a boat ramp. Lots of hiking, biking and paddling opportunities nearby. The lodge does not have a web site, but there are many positive reviews on TripAdvisor.com.

32.8 — KAYAK Long Beach. Adjacent to Big Pine Key Fishing Lodge, take Long Beach Road about a half-mile. Turn left onto dirt road to Long Beach. There are three launch points.

31.0 — Lower Keys Chamber of Commerce, Old F.E.C. railway marker, oceanside

30.2 — **Big Pine Key** traffic light is the gateway to the island and the National Key Deer Wildlife Refuge.

There's a lot to see on this very wide island, all of it accessed from this stoplight, so think about a side trip.

For starters, it's the only place in the world where you'll find the endangered Key deer.

One of the most colorful spots for a lunch, dinner or drink is No Name Pub, a short drive on Key Deer Blvd. (then Watson Blvd.) through a residential neighborhood that is teeming with the tiny deer, especially near sunset.



Key Deer approaches bicyclist on No Name Key.

KAYAK On Watson Blvd. is the Old Wooden Bridge Cabins, charming, historic cabins that make a great base for kayaking around No Name Key and viewing Key deer. Kayak rentals available. Low fee to launch your own kayak.

KAYAK No Name Key — Besides Old Wooden Bridge, there are two other launch sites, just across the bridge, or keep going to the end of the road for 1.8 miles for another public launch site.

Near the stop light, you'll find the **Big Pine Shopping Center**, wedged between Key Deer Blvd. and Wilder Blvd. and hidden by trees. There's a Winn-Dixie supermarket and several restaurants, including a Cuban restaurant, an Italian eatery and locally popular PizzaWorks, where you'll be treated to real New York pies. The shopping center is also home to the Key West Key Lime Pie Company and the Key Deer Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center.

29.3 — North Pine Channel Bridge

28.1 — Little Torch Key. Parmers Resort is highly rated on TripAdvisor and worth checking out if you want save a little money over accommodations in Key West. The resort is off U.S. 1 on Barry Avenue. (Turn right immediately after crossing the North Pine Channel Bridge.) Well-maintained cabins and motel rooms on the water.

28.0 — Torch Channel Bridge

27.8 — **KAYAK** Middle Torch Key Causeway. Go north off U.S. 1 for several miles to Big Torch Key sign. Turn left. Launch from second and third culverts along this road.

27.8 — **Bike Trail** — A natural area with a bike path that's 15.5 miles round trip from U.S. 1 on Middle Torch Road.

27.7 — Torch-Ramrod Channel Bridge

26.6 — South Pine Channel Bridge, east end of bridge, oceanside

27.5 — Boondocks Grille and Drafthouse. Hot spot with a huge covered tiki bar and restaurant featuring top-notch entertainment in season. Performers often add this venue to their Key West bookings.

27.0 — Looe Key Resort and Dive Center. Full-day dive and snorkel trips to Looe Key Reef, and the **Tiki Bar** is one of the most popular in the Keys.

27.0 — Ramrod Key, Named for a ship, the Ramrod, wrecked on a reef south of here in the early nineteenth century.

26.0 — Niles Channel Bridge, middle.

25.1 — The Wharf Bar and Grill. A funky little fish shack on the bay side, just after the bridge, with inside and outside dining on the dock. A lot of local fishermen sell their catch here, and it's always fresh. Prices are reasonable, too. The fish market is inside the restaurant.

24.9 — **KAYAK**. Summerland Key. Take Horace Street (bayside) to Northside Drive (2nd right) and turn left on Niles Road. Go to the end of Niles Road (about 1.5 miles). Launch is on the left where the road ends.

23.8 — **Summerland Key Sea Base**. Out Island Adventure, Keys Adventure and Florida Fishing programs operate on Summerland Key at the **Brinton Environmental Center**.

23.5 — Kemp Channel Bridge, east end of bridge, oceanside

22.5 — Square Grouper. You'd never know it from the warehouse outside, but this is a classy joint serving gourmet dishes, named after a floating bail of marijuana.



The Wharf



Brinton Environmental Center

22.2 — KAYAK. Spoonbill Sound Hammocks. Launch is on gulf side (Cudjoe Key). Check out the nearby salt ponds for photo ops.

21.0 — KAYAK. Cudjoe Gardens Marina, where you can rent kayaks and/or join guided kayak tours.

21.0 — KAYAK. Follow Blimp Road all the way to the end on the Gulf side (north side of U.S. 1). There is a launch ramp you can use for easy access to backcountry islands, such as Tarpon Belly Key, once home to a shrimp farm. (Blimp Road is named for “Fat Albert,” the Air Force surveillance blimp that was scheduled to be taken down on March 15, 2013.)

20.2 — Bow Channel Bridge to Sugarloaf Key.

20.0 — Sugarloaf Key RV Park. Reserve your campsite at this private campground through ReserveAmerica.

20.0 — Mangrove Mama’s. Popular roadside eatery on Bayside. Cracked conch and conch chowder, along with healthy serving of Keys atmosphere.

19.5 — Bike Trail. Paved bike path follows Crange Boulevard (Bayside) all the way to the bay.

19.0 — KAYAK. Sugarloaf Sound. Oceanside, near yellow traffic barrier, there’s a short path to the launch site.

18.6 — Upper Sugarloaf Key

18.8 — Park Channel Bridge

17.8 — North Harris Channel Bridge

17.7 — Sugarloaf Lodge and Tiki Bar— Laid back, this circular open-air bar is shaded by a palm-frond umbrella and overlooks a tranquil beach and bay.

17.6 — Harris Gap Channel Bridge

17.5 — Lower Sugarloaf Key

17.0 — KAYAK. Blinking light, Take Sugarloaf Blvd (oceanside) about two miles to stop sign, then another two miles to Sugarloaf Creek bridge. Park on west side of bridge.

There is also a launch ramp at the Sugarloaf Marina (Bayside), where you can rent kayaks and purchase accessories. Nominal fee to launch if you bring your own boats. Guided tours of Sugarloaf waterways offered.

17.0 — Bike Trail — Bike path is on Sugarloaf Road in a residential area. Round trip from Sugarloaf Lodge (parking?) is 15 miles.

17.0 — Bat Tower. Fascinating relic of the early 20th Century is a testament to early mosquito control, but it didn't work.

16.0 — KAYAK. Harris Channel Bridge. Good access off U.S. 1 to both bay and oceanside.

15.8 — Lower Sugarloaf Channel Bridge

15.0 — Baby's Coffee. If you're not drinking Baby's Coffee, then your just drinking coffee. Beans roasted fresh daily.

Bayside gate goes to an old U.S. Army transmitter site. Now Radio Marti. Bay Point Park.

14.6 — Saddlebunch #2 Bridge

14.5 — Blue Water Key RV Park.

14.2 — KAYAK. Saddlebunch #3 Bridge. Pullover on oceanside; launch under bridge.

13.1 — Saddlebunch #4 Bridge

12.8 — Saddlebunch #5 Bridge

11.4 — Shark Channel Bridge

11.0 — KAYAK. Shark Key Boat Ramp, oceanside.

10.5 — Seaside Park, Fire house; SR 941 AKA Old Boca Chica Road, Ocean, to Geiger Key.

10.4 — Porpoise Point entrance, gulfside

10.0 — Big Coppitt Key. Take Boca Chica Road south to the Geiger Key Marina, where you'll find a another popular tiki bar, fishing charters, a smokehouse and tiki bar with waterfront dining and a small RV campground with dockside sites. Daily campsite rates are a bit dear (\$100/night), but you are on the "back side" of Key West.

9.7 — Rockland Channel Bridge

9.2 — East Rockland Key

8.5 — Tourist welcome center

8.0 — NAS Boca Chica Overpass; Entrance to Key West Naval Air Station. Oceanside. Turnoff from both directions on US-1.



The Bat Tower

6.1 — KAYAK. Boca Chica Channel bridge. Launch on either end of the bridge. Ample parking.

5.3 — KAYAK. Public Boat Ramp. Oceanside ramp between Boca Chica and Stock Island. Heavily used.

Hidden Key West

5.2 — Stock Island, named for herds of livestock formerly kept here.

5.1 — Boyd's Key West Campground. Turn south onto 3rd Street (Stock Island); go one block and turn east onto Maloney. Boyd's the closest campground to Key West. There are 150 RV sites with full hookups, some oceanfront, and another 53 sites for tents. You can book your reservations online.

Hogfish Bar and Grill. A great place, if you can find it. On the docks near Boyd's Campground, at 6810 Front Street, The Hogfish is one of the best open-air restaurants in the Keys. Their specialty — the world-famous "Killer" Hogfish Sandwich, tender white hogfish meat, smothered in onions, swiss cheese and mushrooms piled high on a Cuban hoagie. Yum.

4.1 — Cow Key Channel Bridge

3.9 — Key West traffic light. Four-lane splits at the light. Left to the Key West Airport and Higgs Beach, and right to Old Town and Key West proper.

2.3 — Salt Run Bridge, N. Roosevelt, Key West

1.7 — Palm Ave; U.S.C.G. Group; Naval Air Station, Trumbo Point. There is a campground here for military families, the Sigsbee RV Park, but sites with hookups are hard to get. Still, there's an overflow area where you can drydock to wait for a site.

0.0 — Key West. Mile Marker "0" is the end of the road, but not the end of your adventure. It's just the beginning.

KAYAK and KITEboard. Smather's Beach. As you enter Key West, bear left towards Smather's Beach. Just past MM 1, on your left, is the launch area along a palm-lined shore. My nephew Nick says it's also popular for kite-boarding.

KAYAK. Simonton Street. At the west end of Simonton, between the Pier House and Hyatt, is a small city beach where you can launch. (Pay to park).

Free in Key West: Things to do without breaking your budget

The Captain George Carey Home in Key West is one of many buildings you'll admire on a free walking tour of Key West.

Free in Key West? Few destinations in Florida are as expensive as Key West. But think about the three most popular things to do in Key West:

- Walk down Duval and wander through historic neighborhoods full of tropical plants and colorful gypsy chickens.
- Get your picture taken in front of the Southernmost Point.
- Gawk at the nightly street carnival scene at Mallory Square sunsets.



And they're not the only things to do in Key West that are free. Several of "finds" in Key West are free, and you might enjoy them because they are off the standard tourist trail.

You can also splurge on the ferry to the Dry Tortugas. You can make up for it with an afternoon or day in Key West filled with free fun.

Free walking tour of historic Key West

Key West's Oldest House is a free attraction right on Duval Street.

There are wonderful group tours of Key West, but the best ones cost \$30 for adults. If you're an independent sort, here is a great alternative. Print out the Pelican Path Self-Guided Tour of Key West, created by the Old Island Restoration Foundation, and wander on your own through Key West's charming lanes. This tour provides the stories behind 51 historic buildings and you can break your explorations into smaller segments to go at your own pace.



Then, as you visit historic sites, look for the historic markers. Each has a number on it. You can use your phone to hear more detailed historic narration of each site if you desire. Dial 1-305-507-0300 and then the marker number. All the markers and narration are listed at the Key West historic-marker website : <http://keywesthistoricmarkertour.org/>

While you're enjoying the exteriors of historic houses, be sure to visit The Oldest House in Key West. Not only is the small house museum free, it also has a beautiful garden right off of Duval Street where visitors can enjoy a shady respite.

West Martello Tower & Botanical Garden

When you visit the West Martello Tower, home of the Key West Garden Club's Botanical Garden, you feel like you've stumbled on a lost ruined city in a jungle.

This may be my top freebie in Key West because it incorporates two of my favorite things: old forts and tropical gardens. Situated on the Atlantic about a mile east of the Southernmost Point, West Martello Tower feels like you've stumbled on a lost ruined city in a jungle. A huge strangler fig grows over an old brick archway and trees shade a variety of colorful plants.



West Martello Tower is a Civil War-era fort that was never finished. Begun in 1863, construction ended in 1873. The tower was used to quarter troops during the Spanish American War and housed radio stations during World Wars I and II. By 1949, the unused tumbled down ruin was considered an eyesore and many wanted it torn down. US Congressman Joe Allen fought to save it and the Key West Garden Club took over the site as their botanic garden.

In addition to the charming ruins, the garden has another major asset: It overlooks the Atlantic Ocean. Visitors are rewarded with ocean views at various points with a particularly spectacular view from a pretty white gazebo at the top of a hill — a popular as a wedding site.

Key West Garden Club at West Martello Tower
1100 Atlantic Boulevard
Key West, FL 33040
(305) 294-3210
Hours: 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week.

White Street Pier

Aerial view of White Street Pier, Key West (Photo courtesy Florida Memory Project)

Adjacent to the West Martello Tower & Botanical Garden is what has been dubbed the “unfinished road to Havana” – a very large concrete pier that stretches 1,000 feet into the Atlantic Ocean.

The pier is a popular fishing spot for locals and visitors are entertained watching fishermen reel in their catches. Looking into the very clear water, you see schools of colorful reef fish nibbling around the rocks along the pier. The view from the pier is beautiful with its range of blue hues. It’s also a stunning place for a quieter Key West sunset.



Just south of the White Street Fishing Pier and adjacent to the Waldorf Astoria’s Casa Marina Resort, is Higgs Beach. This free urban beach offers shade from a grove of palm trees and a number of picnic tables as well as a dog park and free parking.

White Street Pier

White Street and Atlantic Boulevard, Key West.

Key West Wildlife Center

The Key West Wildlife Center rescues and rehabilitates birds, and serves as a temporary home to nuisance chickens and roosters that roam the city. It’s a free, fun stop for families

While taking in the pier and Martello Towers, families and animal lovers might like to stop at the Key West Wildlife Center. The center is located inside an 8-acre park that has a freshwater pond that attracts a good number of herons, egrets and other birds.



The wildlife center has an aviary and rehab flight area where it nurtures injured hawks, pelicans, osprey, heron, egrets and other birds back to health.

A large chicken aviary is home to dozens of Key West's infamous gypsy chickens. To get rid of nuisance chickens, residents can borrow a trap from the wildlife center and bring the captured fowl here. The chickens are trucked to organic farms in Central Florida monthly, where they are prized for their eggs and for their help with pest control. (They eat bugs.)

Key West Wildlife Center
1801 White Street
Key West
305-292-1008
Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week.

The Historic Key West Cemetery

Hand-carved angels and Victorian statues are part of the history of the Key West Cemetery.

The Key West Cemetery is at the center of the island – halfway between the Historic Key West Seaport and West Martello Tower. It has several entrances, but you should make a point to start at the northwest corner at Passover Lane and Angela Street because a small office there has excellent free walking tour guides.

With a walking tour guide in hand, the cemetery reveals fascinating stories of Key West and its people.



The cemetery was founded in 1847 after a terrible hurricane in October 1846 washed away the old cemetery, scattering the dead throughout a forest. As a result, the oldest gravestones in the cemetery are actually older than the cemetery itself. They date to 1829 and 1843 and were moved here after the hurricane.

A prominent monument is to the U.S.S. Maine, which was blown up in Havana Harbor in 1898 killing 260 American soldiers. Two dozen of those dead are buried here along with other veterans of the Spanish-American war. The area is protected by an iron fence and gate brought from Washington D.C.

You may want to see the grave of the real Sloppy Joe – “Sloppy” Joe Russell (1889-1941) who was Ernest Hemingway’s fishing guide and a famous Key West bartender.

A poignant story that reminds us of Key West's Southern history is represented in the grave for Manuel Cabeza, who died in 1921. The World War I vet had a relationship with a mixed-race woman and was tarred and feathered by the Ku Klux Klan for it. In retaliation, he shot and killed one of his persecutors on Duval Street on Christmas Eve 1921. The next day, a posse removed Cabeza from jail and lynched and shot him.

Not all the interesting graves are old. Edwina Larez (1923-1986) has her gravestone forever marked "Devoted Fan of Singer Julio Iglesias." Welhelmina Harvey (1912-2005) was the first woman juror in Key West and a local elected official whose grave gives her the title "Admiral, Conch Republic Navy." Perhaps the most famous: B.P. "Pearl" Roberts (1929-1979) who had the last word with the epitaph: "I told you I was sick."

The Historic Florida Keys Foundation offers walking tours of the cemetery twice a week, Tuesday and Thursdays at 9:30 a.m. for \$15 per person. For information and reservations, call 1-305-292-6718 or email hfkf@bellsouth.net.

Historic Key West Cemetery
Passover Lane and Angela Street
Key West
1-305-292-6718

Here's the cemetery map and walking tour as a PDF:

http://historicfloridakeys.org/historicfloridakeys/Key_West_Cemetery_files/Cemetery-Map.jpg

The Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center

The Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center in Key West is located on the waterfront near Fort Zachary Taylor. Enjoy high-quality exhibits, including a 2,500-gallon tank with a living reef.

Besides being free, there are two things that are special about this attraction: its aquarium tank and its free parking.

The center, operated by the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and other environmental agencies, offers educational exhibits with the highlight being the Mote Marine Laboratory Living Reef exhibit, a 2,500-gallon reef tank with living corals and tropical fish. There's a short film that gets good reviews.

A favorite: The tank with the beautiful lion fish, a non-native fish that is plaguing coral reefs in the Keys



The center is very near the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Ingham Maritime Museum & National Historic Landmark. (\$10 for adults.)

An aquarium at the Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center lets you admire the beauty of a lionfish, which is actually a plague on the reefs in the Keys.

The Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center
35 East Quay Road, Key West

The Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center is located at the end of Southard Street in the Truman Annex in Key West, across the street from Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park.

Hours: Tuesday – Saturday

9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

(Closed on Thanksgiving and Christmas)



The Historic Key West Seaport

One of the most scenic strolls in Key West — and a top freebie — is the harborwalk along Key West Bight, also known as the Historic Key West Seaport.

From picturesque schooners to hungry tarpon to historic exhibits to the best happy hour specials in town, the Key West Seaport has plenty to offer a visitor.

Here's a Florida Rambler story on what to see and do around the Key West Seaport.

<http://www.floridarambler.com/historic-florida-getaways/key-west-seaport-scenic-walk/>



Not free, but cheap: **Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park**

Fort Zachary Taylor in Key West: a Civil War-era fort and a great beach, all for \$6 per car admission. (Photo courtesy Florida State Parks)



Admission is only \$6 per vehicle and given that you must pay for parking everywhere in Key West, this makes Fort Zachary Taylor virtually free. If you walk or bike in, it's \$2 per person.

The park is fabulous for two reasons: While a little rocky, its beach is the best in Key West and is a favorite for snorkeling, with living coral and tropical fish. Secondly, its Civil War fort is well preserved, has a fascinating history and displays the largest cache of Civil War-era seacoast cannons in the U.S.

Guided tours of the fort are given daily at noon and there's a brochure to aid in self-guided tours.

Here's another bargain-hunter tip: The fort's beachfront **Cayo Hueso Café** offers reasonably priced sandwiches, snacks and cold beverages served on a shaded patio overlooking the beach. (No sandwich costs more than \$6.50; a hot dog or slice of pizza is \$3.)

Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park
601 Howard England Way
Key West, Florida 33040
(305) 292-6713

The park is open from 8 a.m. until sundown daily. The fort closes at 5 p.m.

More budget-friendly tips:

You can visit many places in one afternoon on bikes, which will also provide you a more carefree way to tour congested Key West with its lack of parking. You can bring your own bikes or rent bikes at a number of locations in Key West (and many hotels and B&Bs provide bikes.) Bikes rent for \$10 to \$15 a day per person.

Key West accommodations are expensive, especially during the winter season. An alternative is to stay in the Upper Keys or Middle Keys. There are many nostalgic mom-and-pop 1950s-era motels in Marathon and visited Key West on a day trip. A closer, attractive alternative is to stay

at Parmer's Resort, an individually owned waterfront complex with motel rooms and cabins that are less expensive than Key West.

Locals recommend the classy La Te Da, the highly rated (but overpriced) Louie's Backyard and the rustic, reasonably priced Half Shell Raw Bar.

There are dozens of B&B's and unique lodgings through the city, including the elegant Heron House, Key Lime Inn. Key West Bed and Breakfast, and the historic Eden House. (For a bargain, book one of the four second-floor rooms that share two bathrooms.)

Required stops on the saloon tour — this is, after all, Key West — are Sloppy Joe's, Captain Tony's (the original Sloppy Joe's), the Bull and Whistle, the raucous honky tonk saloon Cowboy Bill's, and ultra-funky Blue Heaven, a historic Bahamian Village watering hole where Ernest Hemingway officiated boxing matches in the 1930s.

Mallory Square

And no visit to Key West is complete without a visit to landmark Mallory Square at sunset.



Sunset celebration at
Mallory Square

Just in case you think Key West is at the end of the world, you can keep going westward to get way away to Fort Jefferson and the Dry Tortugas. Plan ahead, and camp there!

Note: This guide was last updated on 12/15/2015.