

Fishing Team 316 Guide to the Keys

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1. Overview of the Keys

The Keys consist of 43 coral islands over 113 miles connected by 43 bridges.

Everything in the Keys is described by which mile marker (mm) that it is close to on Route 1. The Overseas Highway (Route 1) in the Keys goes from Florida City, through the Everglades and then through all the islands ending at mm 0 in Key West. The part of the highway that goes through the Everglades is known locally as the 18-mile Stretch or simply the Stretch. Interestingly, it's actually 20 miles from Florida City to Key Largo, but 2 of the miles just outside of Florida City are in Miami Dade County and the rest of the 18 miles are in Monroe County, hence we call it the 18-mile Stretch. Key Largo starts at mm106.



Map of the Florida Keys

The Keys are generally divided up into three areas: Upper, Middle and Lower Keys. The Upper Keys include Key Largo (mm106) and Islamorada (starts at mm 89 and ends at mm75). By the way, Islamorada is pronounced Eye-La-Ma-Ra-Da. The Middle Keys runs from Layton to Marathon (mm 75 to mm 46), and the Lower Keys include Big Pine, Cudjoe Key, Stock Island and Key West. The Upper Keys have the feel of a laid-back fishing village and are known for fishing and diving. The Middle Keys are like the Upper Keys but a little more gritty and remote. Key West is a world unto itself – it's an artsy, countercultural, laid-back party town, with cruise ships disgorging thousands of day-tourists. People in the Keys outside of Key West don't generally like Key West or people from Key West. The feelings are usually reciprocated.

There are about 80,000 full time residents in the Keys with about 38,000 people living in the city of Key West. Islamorada has about 5000 people, Key Largo - 10,000, Marathon - 10,000, and Big Pine about 2000. We get about 1.4 million visitors a year.

We have the only living coral reef system in the United States. It starts up by Miami two miles offshore on the oceanside and runs all the way past Key West to the Dry Tortugas. Beyond the reef are the Florida Straits and the Caribbean Sea. The Keys is also where the Gulf Stream comes closest to land in North America, averaging anywhere from 4 to 14 miles off shore, which makes the fishing here especially

good since many of the target species for offshore anglers migrate along the Gulf Stream.



The path of the Gulf Stream. It is basically a river in the ocean running at about 4-6 mph faster than the regular ocean currents.

On the bayside of the islands is the Florida Bay, which is 800 square miles of shallow waters (1 to 6 ft. deep) with over 800 uninhabited mangrove islands. The Everglades are north of the bay and to the west is the Gulf of Mexico.



Mangrove Islands in the Florida Bay

The height of the tourist season is from Thanksgiving to Labor Day. The Keys have what is called a tropical savanna climate. The winter here is from October to May and is usually dry and in the upper 70s. The summer is from June to September and when it can reach in the 90s. The summer is humid and it is our rainy season. Expect brief scattered showers everyday in the summer. Wear sunblock everyday in the summer or else you will burn. You should also wear a swim shirt or t-shirt in the water in the summer to guard against burns.

The plants you see in the Keys are typical for the Caribbean, including many types of palm trees, bougainvillea, buttonwood trees, and three types of mangrove trees. There are also many types of wildlife to be seen in the Keys. Birds include doves, pigeons, bald eagles, pelicans, seagulls, egrets, ospreys, and frigates. It is estimated that the Keys have over 500 species of fish with over 800 million fish. Additionally we have sea turtles, dolphins (porpoises), manatees and iguanas. There are also

occasional alligators and crocodiles that come down from the Everglades, but that is relatively rare.



Red Mangrove trees – Federally protected and one the most important ecosystems in the Keys



Egret – You will see herds of egrets walking around the neighborhoods.



Osprey – Through out the Keys, you will see tall poles constructed as Osprey habitats with nests on the top of them.



Manatee – Also called a sea cow, they are federally protected. You should not touch or feed them, although most everybody gives them a drink of fresh water from a hose on the dock when you see them. They migrate to the Keys from northern Florida in the winter.



Iguana – Several years ago someone let pets iguanas loose and they have invaded the Keys. They are not native so have no predators and eat all of our flowers in our gardens. Once in a great while we will have a cold snap when it gets down to the lower 50s one night and the iguanas, being cold blooded, go into hibernation and start falling out of the trees.

Islamorada calls itself the Sports Fishing Capital of the World. You can find places in the world where specific types of fishing are better than in the Keys. For example, offshore dolphin (mahi mahi) fishing is better in the Bahamas and Panama, bone fishing on shallow flats is better in the Bahamas, and sail fishing is better in Guatemala. But there is nowhere in the world that has all the types of fishing we have all year round in one place. You can fish for offshore for dolphin, tuna, sailfish, wahoo, and swordfish. You can fish for snapper, mutton and grouper on the reef. You can fish the wrecks off shore. You can fish the oceanside shallow flats for bonefish and permit. You can fish the bridges for tarpon. You can fish the backcountry (bayside) mangroves for sea trout, snappers, tripletail, snook, redfish, sheepshead and drum. You can go up into the rivers and canals of the south Everglades for many more types of fish. You get the picture.



My son Kurt on the left with a huge dolphin (mahi mahi) we caught offshore.



*A 257lb swordfish that my son Kurt caught with Team 316 in 2016 in 1600ft of water
off of Islamorada*

Additionally, the diving and spearfishing is excellent all year round. We have artificial reefs around intentionally sunken ships like the Spiegel Grove, Duane, and the Eagle that are popular dive sites in the Upper Keys. From April to September the water temperature is in the 80s so you don't need a wet suit. Most of the waters around the Florida Keys are federally protected marine sanctuaries, and most of the vegetation on the islands like the mangrove trees is protected as well. If you are going to fish or spear in the Keys, you need a Florida saltwater license. You can get them online for the length of your stay at

<http://myfwc.com/license/recreational/visitors/>. If you go on a charter boat or dive boat, your license is covered by the captain's license.



Diving the reef in the Upper Keys.

The other thing to understand about the Keys is the culture. It is unique to say the least. It has the laid-back, Caribbean, Jimmy Buffet "It's 5 O'clock somewhere" attitude. It has strong Bahamian and Cuban influences that are reflected in the cuisine. It is unpretentious. You can go to a restaurant and sit next to somebody in shorts, a ripped t-shirt and flip-flops, and that guy might be a Keys-burnout or a billionaire. You can't tell by looking at him. It's all about the water, fishing, and relaxing. It's the Caribbean you can drive to without the poverty of some of the Caribbean islands.



Keys sunset from my dock.

One episode in particular highlights the quirkiness of the Keys. In 1982, the drug smuggling problem was so bad in the Keys that the Feds put up a roadblock at the top of the Stretch in Florida City and searched each car going to and from the Keys for drugs. A lot of people in the Upper Keys commute north for their jobs so the backups were miles long. Everyone in the Keys was so incensed that the mayor of Key West read a proclamation on the steps of city hall declaring that since the Federal Government was treating the people of the Keys like foreigners, the Keys were seceding from the Union and he declared the establishment of The Conch Republic. The delegation then walked across the street and attacked the US Navy installation by bombarding it with stale Cuban bread and mangos. That has been

known ever since as the Battle of Key West. After the battle, the delegation walked back to City Hall, formally surrendered to the US Government and demanded \$1 billion of war reparations. Each year, the Conch Republic Independence Day is celebrated in Key West. They have the reenactment of the Battle of Key West, as well as holding drag races. Their drag races consist of drag queens pushing beds on wheels down Duvall Street.



The official flag and motto of the Conch Republic.

We also have activities like underwater ironing contests in the Upper Keys. We set the Guinness record in 2015 for the most number of divers at one time participating in underwater ironing.

Someone born and raised in the Keys is called a Conch (pronounced Konk not Konch). If you have lived in the Keys for 10 years, you are considered a freshwater

Conch. Anyone else is a tourist. There is also a syndrome we call locally Keys Disease, meaning having a really laid-back attitude. An example of this is that it is hard to find contractors, plumbers, electricians who will actually show up and work. They usually knock off at 3pm to grab a brew and get on the water.



Underwater Ironing in the Keys



The Conch Republic Navy re-enacting the Great Sea Battle of 1982 with a Coast Guard cutter in Key West as part of Conch Republic Day.

The weirdness even extends to the immediate neighborhood here in Plantation Key Colony where I live in the Upper Keys. In 2010, my neighborhood made the national news when a guy that lives a couple of blocks away from me was trapped for hours under the head of a water buffalo. No kidding. You can't make this stuff up. Here is an article about it from the Miami Sun-Sentinel:

Stuffed buffalo head pins Keys man in chair
'Bubba' to be banished to Fort Lauderdale
June 11, 2010|By Cammy Clark, The Miami Herald
ISLAMORADA —

Jim Harris has thrown Hells Angels out of Maine's biggest biker bar and spent four years in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Vietnam War — and never suffered a scratch. But when a stuffed water buffalo head with large horns fell off the wall, it took four 911 responders to pull the trophy from his lap. The 56-year-old was in

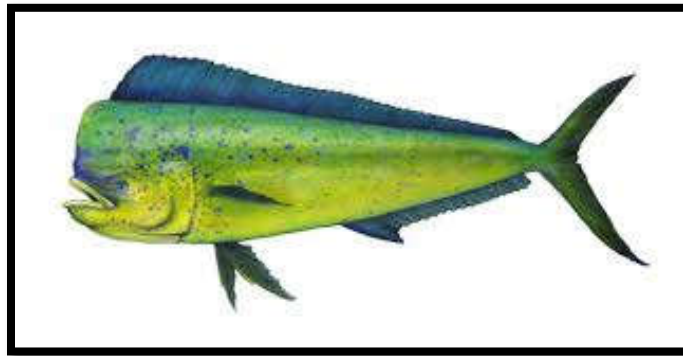
his comfy recliner sipping milk and watching the 11 o'clock news in his rented waterfront home in Tavernier when, "I leaned over to turn on the lamp and kapow," he said. "Bubba," the 200-pound head of a water buffalo shot in Africa, fell off the wall and landed on his head and right side. The impact knocked him out. When the 6-foot-2, 220-pound Harris returned to consciousness more than two hours later, he was trapped under the water buffalo's head. Fortunately, he had his cell phone next to him on the recliner and was able to reach it. Rex Andis, who owns Bubba and the house rented to Harris, said it originally took four people to mount the wildlife trophy on the wall. Harris was taken to Mariners Hospital in Tavernier. He was treated for bruises, a concussion and pinched nerves, and released. Bubba appeared to be just fine, but will have to move. "I told Rex I want it out of here," Harris said of the head that stands 3 1/2 feet high. Andis — who acquired Bubba years ago in a barter deal with a friend — said he already has a new home for the head: Hugh's Catering in Fort Lauderdale. "He has a room full of animals; it's like a museum for wild animals," Andis said.

2. Local Food in the Keys

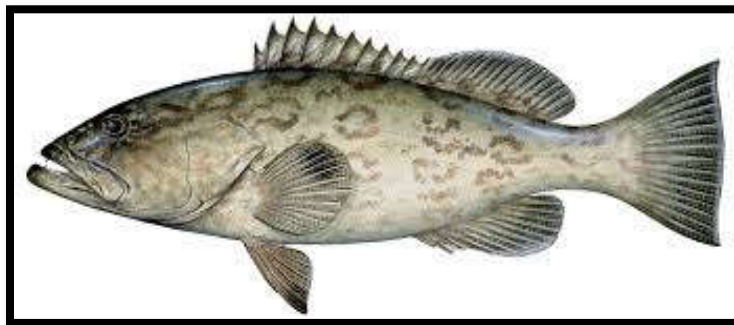
Its all about fresh seafood in the Keys. The local catches for seafood are yellowtail snapper, mahi (dolphin), grouper, blackfin tuna, and hogfish. Hogfish is the local's favorite. It is a sweet white meat. I get it blackened for sandwiches. Tripletail and Tilefish are very good if they have those too. Every restaurant has their own recipe for conch chowder. Every restaurant also has their own version of Key Lime pie. You have to have some conch chowder and Key Lime pie when you visit the Keys. Here is your Keys seafood identification guide:



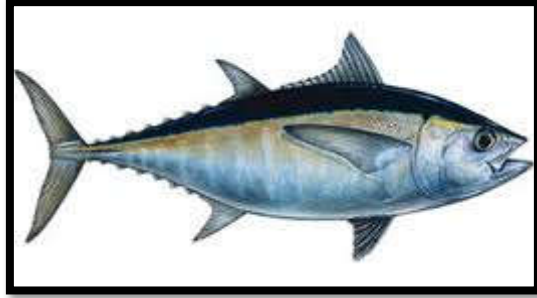
Yellowtail Snapper – Caught by the dozens on the Reef. A mild white flesh.



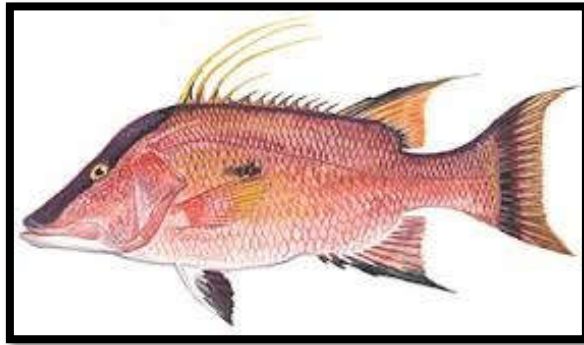
Dolphin, aka dorado or mahi mahi – Plentiful in the spring and summer offshore. Mild flavor with more texture than snappers. Mahi is hawaiin for “strong”.



Grouper – Caught on the reef and the wrecks. Mild white flesh.



Blackfin Tuna – The smallest of the Tuna family of fish but one of the best eating. Delicate red meat is done as sushi, seared, or as a steak. Fresh blackfin is like filet mignon.



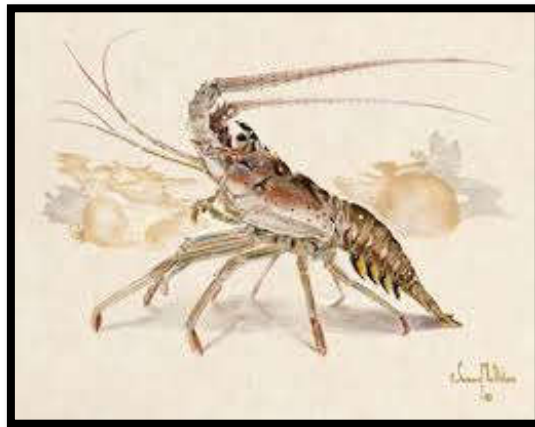
Hogfish – The local favorite for sandwiches. These are reef fish and they feed on shellfish so their flesh is very mild and delicate. Most hogfish are caught through spearfishing on the reef. They take to sauces or blackening very well, with their meat absorbing the flavor.



Tripletail – They hang around structure and buoys both inshore and offshore. A mild white filet.



Golden Tilefish – A deep-water fish with very mild, delicate white filet.



Florida Spiny Lobster – A smaller cousin of the maine lobster without the big claws.

You wring their tail off and cook them. Very tasty.



Stone Crabs – They are harvested in traps locally. The claws are taken off and the crabs are thrown back. The claws grow back. The meat is very mild and white. In my opinion they are radically overpriced.



Queen Conch - All of the conch we eat in the Keys is imported from the Bahamas. They were overharvested here in the last century so they are a protected species now. The conch is taken from the shell and pounded until tender. It can then be either diced or ground. If you bore a small hole in one end of the conch shell, you can use it as a horn. They have conch shell blowing contests in Key West every year.



Conch Chowder. Usually served with tabasco sauce on the side if you want to kick it up and sherry if you want to make it smoother. It usually has a tomato base with potatoes, bacon, ground conch, onions, etc. No two conch chowders are the same in the Keys.



Key Lime Pie – Made from the small Key limes. Traditional pies are made with raw eggs. Real Key Lime pies are not green. They are pale yellow.

3. Places to Eat in the Keys

There are a lot more places to eat than are listed here but these are the ones we eat at and are consistently good. The rest are for tourists. All of these places are Keys casual for dress: shorts, t-shirts, flipflops are ok. The places marked with a star are our favorites. Most of the places are in the Upper Keys because that is where we live. There are a ton of restaurants in Key West.

Upper Keys Restaurants

Num Thai (mm 103.2 bayside) – ☐ Best Thai food in the Upper Keys. Open for lunch and dinner during the week, only open for dinner on the weekends.

Key Largo Conch House (mm 100.2 oceanside) – Nice little Keys eatery. Featured on the Food Channel for preparing the dreaded, invasive species of Lionfish. Good coffee bar.

Mrs Mac's Kitchen (mm 99.3 bayside) – ☐ Classic old-style Keys joint. There is a new Mrs Mac's down the road a little and the food is just as good but its nice to go to the original for the atmosphere.

Chad's (mm 92.3 bayside) – ☐ Good deli fare and soups.

Café Moka (mm 91.8m oceanside) – ☐ Great pastries, coffee and sandwiches. Quiet and classy. Can hang out in comfy overstuffed chairs and use their wifi to work if you want. They have live, jazz-style music on Sundays.

Old Towne Tavernier (mm 90 oceanside) – ☐ Pretty good dinner place. Very good prime rib and good pizza.

Made to Order (mm 90 oceanside) – Good breakfast. Ok lunch. Nice view off patio in the back.

City Hall Café (mm 88.5 oceanside)– Good lunches, a local deli style place. They deliver.

Marker 88 (mm 88 bayside) – Food is ok to meh, but the bay views are awesome. Nice for sunsets.

M.E.A.T. (mm 88 oceanside) – Funky deli-type place.

Puerta Vallarta (mm 86.7 oceanside) – The best Mexican in Upper Keys, but that’s not saying much. Just in case you need your Mexican fix. If you want good Mexican food, go to **Casita Tejas** in Homestead (23 Krome Ave) or any **Taco Rico** restaurant in Miami.

Island Grill (mm 85.5 oceanside) – Food is ok, conch chowder is good. Great place to pull your boat in for a quick bite. A nice ocean view

Bayside Gourmet (mm 82.7 bayside) – Pretty good lunch, they deliver in Islamorada.

Bitton (mm 82.2 bayside) – A nice little french pastry, coffee and sandwich/quiche shop.

Overseas Kitchen (mm 82.2 oceanside) – A little Greek kitchen, good gyros and hummus. They deliver in Islamorada.

Lorelei’s (mm 82 bayside) – Food is ok but one of the best places to watch the sunset. Music every night. Go early for sunsets to grab a seat on the beach by the water.

Chef Michael's (mm 81.6 oceanside)– ☐ Great seafood and meat place for dinner. Get reservations. Expensive.

Pierre's/Morada Bay (mm 81.6 bayside) – ☐ **Pierre's** is an upscale fine cuisine place with its own beach next door to Worldwide Sportsman. Very expensive. Get reservations. **Morada Bay** is the outdoor patio dining that is more relaxed. A nice place to hang out at night. It has its own white sand beach and music, tiki torches etc.

Kaiyo's (mm 81.6 oceanside) – ☐ Good sushi and japanese/seafood dinner. Get reservations. Expensive.

Tower of Pizza (mm 81.6 bayside) - ☐ The best pizza in the Upper Keys. Not close to NY/NJ pizza, but good for Florida.

Bob's Bunz (mm 81.6 bayside) – ☐ Best bet for breakfast, try the sticky buns. Warning: the coffee there is undrinkable in my opinion.

Islamorada Fish Company (mm 81.5 bayside) – Food is ok, location is great for watching the water and sunset. Next to Worldwide Sportsman. They have tarpon feeding shows at 1 pm every day.

Midway Café (mm 80.4 oceanside)– ☐ Nice place for breakfast or lunch. Good coffee bar.

Lazy Days (mm 79.8 oceanside)– ☐ Good fish restaurant. Try the fish “lazy days style” which is breaded and topped with scallions, chopped tomatoes and cheese. My favorite is the “super lazy days style”, which is that same as “lazy days style” but they put jalapeno in the breading and it will wake you up. Get reservations for

weekend nights. For lunch or early dinner, reserve a seat outside on the porch for a great ocean view.

Lucy (mm 99 bayside) – ☐ A very eclectic little restaurant with great food and a good selection of beer from around the world. The cuisine is a combo of Keys, German, and Japanese.

oo-tray (mm 80.9 oceanside) – Funky, hip menu.

Bumby's (mm 82.7 oceanside) – ☐ Upscale seafood and rawbar. Very expensive.

Middle Keys Restaurants

Acqaupazzo (mm 68 bayside) - ☐ A very good Italian restaurant in Layton.

Brutus Seafood (mm 55 bayside) - ☐ A great place to have lunch, now open for dinner. One of the best Cuban sandwiches I have ever had. We always stop here for lunch if we are going to Marathon.

No Name Pub (mm 30 bayside, 30813 Watson Blvd) - ☐ A historic pub on No Name Key. It was a bordello in the 1930s. Everytime I go there I feel like I have gone to far on the winding roads on Name Name Key and then I pass it and have to turn around. Great wings and pizza. The entire interior is covered with dollar bills. You will see Key deer on the way.

Key West Restaurants

Michael's (532 Margeret Street) – ☐ A good upscale seafood and steak place with great patio dining.

Better Than Sex (926 Simonton Street) – Nationally famous now, it is a dessert restaurant specializing in chocolate creations. Have not been there yet so can't rate it.

Bien Caribbean-Latino Restaurant (1000 Eaton Street) - ☐ Fantastic sandwiches, awesome cuban sandwich with a caribbean flare. Outside seating only on the curb.

Blue Heaven (729 Thomas Street) - ☐ Great little restaurant in Bahama Village. The private, open-air courtyard (once home to Hemingway's boxing matches) is filled with roaming chickens and lounging cats soaking in the sun. Best banana nut bread on the island!

Pepe's Cafe (806 Caroline Street): Oldest eatery in the Keys. Rustic joint with laid-back vibes dishing up signature and traditional breakfasts since 1909.

B.O.'s Fish Wagon (801 Caroline Street) - Hard to call this a restaurant. It's basically an old food truck with several lean-to's built around it. Best Grouper Sandwich on the Island. Served on fresh Cuban bread, be sure to order it with their special sauce. Pull up a bench next to Caroline Street – great for people watching.

Half Shell Raw Bar (231 Margaret Street) - Located on the Key West Bight, HSRB is a great spot if you're looking for a fish or shrimp basket. The walls are lined with license plates from all over the country, and the open air restaurant has a great vibe.

Hogfish Bar and Grill (6810 Front Street) - ☐ Technically, this is located on Stock Island. It is definitely out of the way, but worth the drive. Very authentic working waterfront.

El Siboney (900 Catherine Street) - Cuban food. Off the beaten path, this no-frills restaurant serves up generous portions of the best Cuban food on the island at reasonable prices.

Sloppy Joe's (201 Duvall Street) - Although not its original location (Capt Tony's on Greene Street), Sloppy Joe's has been part of the Key West scenery since the early 30's. Very touristy though.

Sarabeth's Kitchen (530 Simonton Street) – Upscale, also serves brunch.

Louie's Backyard (700 Waddell Avenue) - Arguably the best sunset on the Island, this was an original hangout of Jimmy Buffett back in the 70's. This is a great spot if you're looking for a nice, romantic spot to spend the evening.

Roof Top Café (308 Front Street) - This restaurant has evolved into one of the best dinner spots in Key West. It is located near Mallory Square, so it's perfect for sunset watching.

Fogarty's (227 Duval Street) Known more for its location, Fogarty's is a perfect spot for people-watching. Right on Duval Street, it's a great place to stop off while walking around.

Benihana (3591 South Roosevelt Blvd) – ☐ Japanese steak house where they cook your meal in front of you. Good food and entertaining.

4. Places to Shop in the Upper Keys

Kmart (mm 101.4 oceanside) – Has a little of everything of course.

Publix (mm 101.4 oceanside) – In the same plaza as Kmart, best grocery store in Upper Keys.

Diver's Direct (mm 99.6 oceanside)– The largest diving, snorkeling, watersports store in the Keys. Lot sof bathing suits too.

Shellworld (mm97 in the median strip) - All the Keys merchandise, shells, thshirts, and knick-knacks you could ever ask for.

Tavernier Towne Center (mm 91.2 bayside)– Has the Winn-Dixie supermarket, the only movie theater in the upper keys, a Subway, an optician, a Macdonlad's, a CVS, and a Dollar Store.

Conch Republic Divers (mm 91 bayside) – A nice dive shop located in Tavernier Creek Marina. They do instruction and run daily trips to the reef. The owners are friends of mine.

Payfair Market(mm 90 bayside) – Local market in my neighborhood. Great butcher in the back for meats and sandwiches.

Worldwide Sportsman (mm 81.5 bayside) – An angler's candy store. Worth a visit just to see the live game fish tank and the restored Hemmingway boat. A true fisherman cannot walk out of that place without buying something. Lots of clothing too. It has a bar upstairs called the Zane Grey Lounge that has great views from the veranda and also serves food which is just so-so.



World Wide Sportman store in Islamorada.

6. Things to Do in the Upper Keys

John Pennkamp State Park (mm 102.6 oceanside)– Has beaches, snorkeling, glassbottom boat rides, and paragliding.



Florida Keys Wildlife Bird Center (mm 93.6 bayside) – They take in wild birds that are hurt and rehabilitate them.



Founder's Park (mm 86.8 bayside) – Has olympic-sized pool and a nice beach area.



Aerial view of Founder's Park showing ballfields, pool, marina, and beach.

Theater of the Sea (mm 84.7 oceanside) – Watch the dolphin shows, swim with the dolphin programs, and an open air aquarium.



Theater of the Sea Dolphin Show.

Windley Key Fossil Park (mm 84.7 bayside)– Coral limestone quarry where you can see native plants in a nature trail and also aquatic fossils in the walls of the quarry.



Windly Key Fossil State Park

Rain Barrel (mm 86.7 bayside) – Get your picture in front of the giant Florida lobster nicknamed Betsy. Interesting little shops.



“Betsy” the giant spiny lobster.

Whale Harbor (mm 83 bayside) – On either side of the Whale Harbor bridge is where the Islamorada Charter fishing charter fleet docks. You can charter a boat in advance for any type of fishing, though the boats here specialize in reef and offshore fishing charters. It is fun to go to the docks about 3 pm any day and see what fish were caught. The mates will hang the catch on hooks and clean them in front of everyone.



Whale Harbor

1935 Hurrricane Monument (mm 82 oceanside)- A monument to the victims of the 1935 Labor Day Hurrricane. This category 5 hurrricane was the strongest hurrricane to hit the US and it came right over Islamorada. A 20 ft wall of water destroyed everything in the Upper Keys and drowned 400 people, mostly WW I veterans that were camped here constructing the Overseas Highway. Their ashes are interned inside the monument.



1935 Hurrricane Monument



Picture of downtown Islamorada after the 1935 hurricane. The storm blew the train off the tracks that they brought down from Miami to rescue the residents.

Robbie's Marina (mm 77.5 bayside) – Feed the tarpons at the dock. You buy a little bucket of fish and hand feed 100-lb prehistoric-looking tarpon. A must see. Lots of crafts and knick knacks for sale too.



Feeding the tarpon at Robbie's by hand.

Anne's Beach (mm 73.5 Oceanside) – One of the only natural beaches in the Keys. The Keys don't have beaches because there is no wave action due to the coral reef. So any hotel or resort that has a sandy beach is because they ship the sand in. Can be crowded at height of season. The waters are shallow and clear.



Anne's Beach.

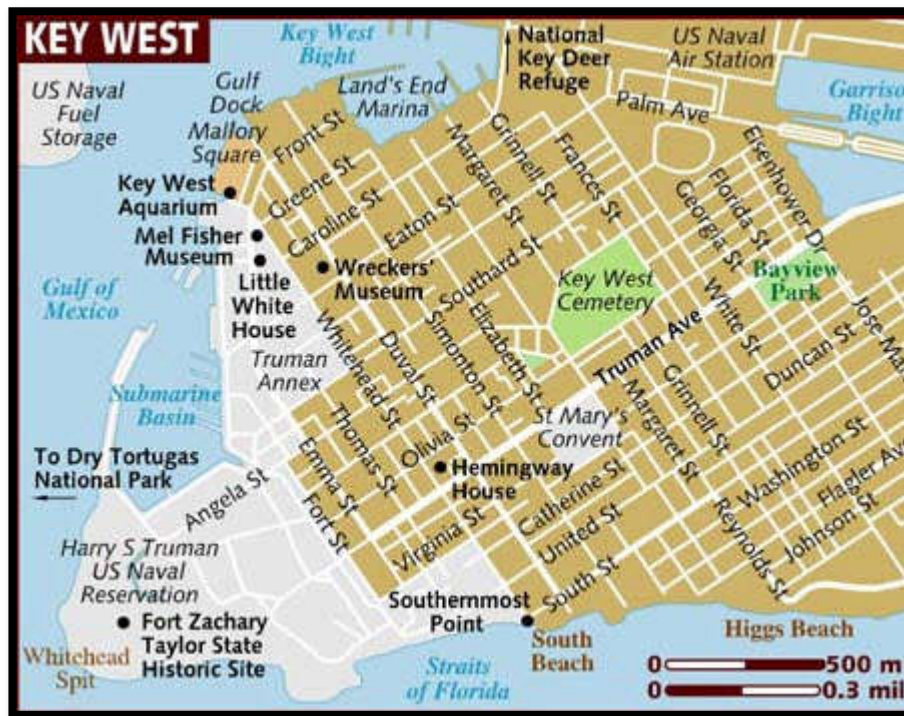
6. Things to Do in Key West

Key West is closer to Havana than to Miami. Some people hate Key West – too touristy, too counter-cultural, etc. 38,000 of the 58,000 full-time residents of the Florida Keys live in Key West, so it feels crowded compared to the rest of the Keys. Most people living in the Middle and Upper Keys don't like Key West people and the feeling is reciprocated. I enjoy going down once in a while for a day trip or overnight trip. It certainly feels different than the rest of the Keys.

The island of Key West is four miles long and one mile wide. The name comes from the first Spanish Explorers in 1521. When they landed, they saw human bones scattered throughout the island and named the island "*Cayo Hueso*" meaning "Bone Island". The native Indians that visited the island over the centuries had no place to bury their dead since the top soil was so thin, so eventually the remains were scattered across the island.

At one point in the late 19th century, Key West was the richest city in the United States due to the trade with Cuba, Central and South America. Also, wrecking was a huge money-maker for the captains in Key West at that time. When a ship would go aground anywhere in the Keys, the Wrecker ships would go out and salvage the cargo from the ships for a handsome profit. Most of the quaint architecture you see walking around the back streets date from this time of prosperity in the late 1800s.

There is an Old Town section that has most of the older buildings. The Navy continues to be a big presence in Key West. However, the biggest factor in the last couple of decades has been the influx of tourists from cruise ships. The first cruise ship stopped in Key West in 1969 and it has grown to multiple ships a day. They dock down by Mallory Square and disgorge thousands of day tourists. It has made Key West very touristy.



Hemingway House (907 Whitehead Street) – The house where Ernest Hemingway lived from 1931 to 1939. He wrote some of his best work while living here including *To Have and To Have Not*. It's now an official US historic landmark and they have guided tours all day. Worth a visit. It also is home to many three-toed cats,

decendents of Hemingway's cats. Make sure you see the little cat cemetery.

<http://www.hemingwayhome.com>



Hemingway House.

Conch Train – A little passenger train that leaves Mallory Square and gives a tour of Key West with a tour guide. A good way to get an overview of the place. It is a 90-minute tour and a train leaves every 30 minutes. Tickets are \$30 per adult.



The Conch Train tour.

Key West Lighthouse (938 Whithead Street) – It is located directly across the street from the Hemingway House so plan on taking both in on the same trip. It dates to 1825 and is about 100 feet tall. You pay a fee to go to the top but it is a great view.



Key West Lighthouse.

Dry Tortugas/Fort Jefferson – The fort is located 70 miles west of Key West in the Dry Tortugas. It is the largest masonry building in the US consisting of 16 million bricks. It was built in 1846. Four of the Lincoln assassination conspirators were imprisoned here after the Civil War. It is now a National Park and there are daily

ferries you can take from Key West to visit it.

<https://www.nps.gov/drto/learn/historyculture/fort-jefferson.htm>



Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas.

Sunset Celebration at Mallory Square – There is a nightly sunset celebration at Mallory Square overlooking the ocean. Get there early like at 5:30 pm to enjoy the street performers and get some snacks from the food stands. Ensure you get to the edge of the square before the sun goes down to get an unobstructed view. It gets crowded.



Mallory Square Sunset Celebration.

Mel Fisher Treasure Museum (200 Greene Street, close to Mallory Square) – A museum that houses a lot of the artifacts and treasure salvaged by Mel Fisher from the spanish galleon wrecks of the Florida Keys. In 1985, Fisher discovered the wreck of the spanish treasure galleon Atocha and found over \$450 million worth of silver, gold and precious stones. <http://www.melfisher.org>

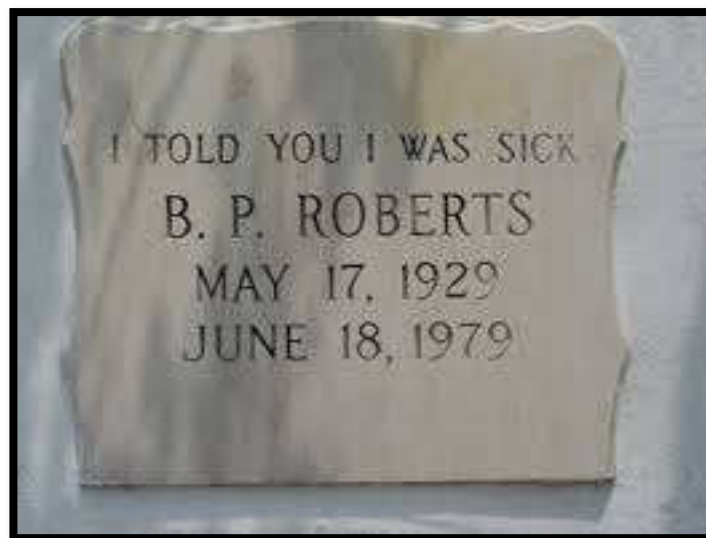


Mel Fisher Treasure Museum.

Key West Cemetary (701 Pauline Street)- This is 19-acre cemetary was first established in 1847 and has over 100,000 people buried in it. Just like the cemeteries in New Orleans, many of the tombs are above ground due to the difficulty in digging in the coral. It has lots of interesting memorials and graves.



Key West Cemetary.



Memorial in Key West Cemetary.

Back Street Walks – One of my favorite things to do to take strolls off the main streets in Old Town and look at the beautiful architecture and landscaping of the

houses. The Key West architecture is a blending of Greek Revival style New England seafaring houses and Caribbean cottages. So you get the beautiful ornate Greek Revival with the “shotgun” style layout prevalent in the Caribbean islands.



Key West Architecture.

Fort Zachary Taylor State Park (601 Howard England Way) – A Civil War era fort built in 1845. It houses a local art museum now. <http://www.fortzacharytaylor.com>



Fort Zachary Taylor State Park

Southern-Most Point (Corner of South and Whitehead Streets)– It is tradition for people visiting Key West for the first time to get a selfie picture in front of Southern-Most Point in the US marker buoy.



Marker Buoy of the Southern-Most Point in the US.

Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum (108 Duval Street) – Your typical cheesy Ripley's Believe It or Not museum.

Duval Street – The main drag that cuts across the island and ends at Mallory Square. It is 1.1 mile long, so you can walk the length of it pretty easily. Think of Jimmy Buffet crossed with Bourbon Street in New Orleans. Worth a stroll down to people watch and look at funky shops during the day. Sloppy Joe's and Captain

Tony's are two famous bars there that Hemingway hanged out in. I would not go there at night - it is not my cup of tea. It becomes a street party with really weird people and drunk tourists.



Sloppy Joe's on Duval Street.

7. Day Trips from the Upper Keys – *under construction*

Trip #1 – No Name Key (Seven Mile Bridge, Bahia Honda, Palm Island, No Name Pub, and the tiny Key deer)

Trip #2 – Key West (Conch Train, Hemingway House, Fort Zachary Taylor, Duvall Street, Mallory Square)

Trip #3 – The Everglades

Trip #4 – Miami sights (South Beach, Lincoln Road Mall, Brickell, Viscaya Mansion, Arscht Center)

