

Key West, Florida



Key West is four miles long and a mile wide. It is the southernmost city in the contiguous United States.

The city motto is "One Human Family".



History

The original Spanish name for the island was Cayo Hueso, which literally means "bone cay". Cay being a low island or reef, and bone as the native Calusa were using the island as a graveyard. English-speaking settlers misheard the name as Key West, and it stuck.

In 1821, when the United States took possession of Florida from Spain, there were few to no permanent inhabitants anywhere in the Keys. Cubans and Bahamians used the area to fish, turtle, harvest timber, and salvage shipwrecks. Smugglers and privateers used the Keys to hide.

Duval Street, the island's main street, is named after William Pope Duval, Florida's first governor, serving from 1822 - 1834. He was the longest serving governor in Florida's history.

"Old Town" now known as the Key West Historic District includes the major tourist attractions on the island. These include Mallory Square, Duval Street, the Hemingway House, the Truman Annex, and Fort Zachary Taylor, Key West Lighthouse (which is a museum), and Key West Cemetery. Some buildings here date back to 1829.

Food

**Credit to Taste Atlas & Tasting Table.*



Key lime pie at Kermit's Key West Key Lime Pie Shoppe, a slice or pie on a stick (dipped in chocolate).

Key Lime Colada is a must! Made at the Schooner Wharf Bar, located right at the docks, three blocks from the cruise pier.



Blackened fish sandwich at Eaton Street Seafood Market, featuring key lime mustard.

Sloppy Joe's, *the* must-stop pub, has the Papa Doble ("Popa's favorite!") is a nod to Ernest Hemingway's twist on the classic daiquiri. The recipe; Bacardi Light rum, grapefruit juice, grenadine, sour mix, club soda, and fresh-squeezed lime.

Conch fritters at The Conch Shack, on Duval, 1/2 block from the pier.

Culture



Key West celebrates the "Conch Republic", a mock secession from the States. This event features a grand parade, parties, and maritime activities. Attendees wear playful pirate attire.

Fantasy Fest is an annual 10-day party. An extravaganza that includes 60 parties, costumed marches, street fairs, glamorous balls, and a show-stopping parade. The festival draws people from all over the world dressed in wild costumes enjoying the lively atmosphere.



"One Human Family", is Key West's philosophy, symbolizing the all-inclusive attitude which makes it a welcoming destination for LGBT+ travelers. The city celebrates pride year round, with rainbow crosswalks being a permanent fixture.

Animals



Key West is the winter home to many sea and shore birds, most notably Piping Plovers, Wood Storks, Herons, White Crowned Pigeons, Frigates, Peregrine Falcons, and Brown Pelicans. The Keys are also a year round home to many species of turtles, manatees, and a wide array of fish in vibrant reefs perfect for snorkeling. The Keys have one completely unique species, the Key Deer which can be a little elusive. Feisty free roaming chickens are likely the most popular animals with tourists.

Nature

The tropical Key West climate supports lush and abundant plant life, some notable species:

- Plumeria - fragrant and colorful flowers, huge beautiful pink blossoms, the flowers are often used in leis.
- Purple Allamanda - large, purple, trumpet-shaped flowers with glossy, deep green leaves.
- Giant Sword Fern - large fern species known for its impressive size and distinctive fronds. The fronds can grow up to 6' in length, the Truman Annex is the place to view them.
- Coconut Palm - symbol of the tropics; graceful arching fronds and coconuts.



Business & Industry

Key West's largest industry is tourism.



Beaches

Key West has coral reef beaches, short stretches with shallow turquoise waters and rough crushed coral footing. Waves are stopped by the reef offshore, making the water calm and giving you excellent visibility of the tropical fish while snorkeling. White sand is shipped in for visitor comfort.

Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park Beach

This beach is made up of natural coral sand, not imported sand, and will be coarse (bring water shoes). This beach is known for its excellent snorkeling. Equipment rentals are available. The park features hiking trails, picnic tables, grills, a cafe, and historic Fort Taylor. Entrance fee is \$2.50pp.



Smathers Beach

The largest with half a mile of soft sand, with clear and calm waters. Lined with palm trees, with a gradual slope to the shoreline. Located on the south side of the island west of the airport on South Roosevelt Boulevard. Ample parking, restrooms, showers, picnic tables, volleyball net, food vendors, and concessions stand. Rental equipment for jet skiing, kayaking, and windsurfing. Free entry and parking. Open 7am - 11pm.

Higgs Beach

Adjacent to the Waldorf Astoria Casa Marina Resort, a short walk from Smathers Beach. Fine white sand, shallow water and is surrounded by tropical vegetation. Smaller and less crowded than Smathers. Offers; restrooms, showers, restaurant, playground, volleyball nets, tennis courts, and dog park. A wooden pier at the end of the beach where you often see stingrays. Admission & parking is free.



South Beach

Situated at the southernmost end of the island, steps from Duval Street, it has 200 feet of white sand beach and clear water. Low key; no restrooms, a few food stalls, and a cafe. Open 8am until the cafe closes.



Rest Beach

The best beach to experience sunrise or sunset. 300 yards long and narrow, sugary white sand, the Knight Pier is located here. There are picnic tables, open daily from dawn to 11 pm. No admission or parking fee.

Not to be missed in Key West

(in no particular order)

- Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park Beach - the beach and snorkeling, trails, and historic fort.
 - 601 Howard England Way
- Duval Street - and its mile long pub crawl, it's like no other street, take a stroll and a sense of humor.
 - One block from the cruise pier.
- Kermit's Key Lime Pie - the treat of the Keys.
 - 200 Elizabeth St, two blocks from the pier, near the docks.
- Sloppy Joes & Hogs Breath - the icons of Key West.
 - SJ - 201 Duval, a block from the pier
 - HB - 400 Front St, a block from the pier
- Hemingway House - visit the author's home and the polydactyl cat sanctuary.
 - 907 Whitehead St, 8/10 of a mile from the pier, near the Key West Lighthouse.
- The Little White House - Grant, Cleveland, Taft, Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Carter, and Truman spent time here.
 - 111 Front Street, 3 blocks from the pier on your way to Fort Zachary.
- Margaritaville Cafe - the original!
 - 500 Duval
- Southernmost Point of the US - take your picture! Get there early, lines can get long.
 - 1400 Whitehead St
- Bourbon Street Pub - this is where Sushi the Drag Queen drops in a red heel on New Year's Eve.
 - 724 Duval

