

# featured destination

## Key West, FL

### The Conch Republic

From its earliest days, Key West—“the Conch Republic” to proud locals—has been a fun, offbeat place that’s attracted folks not afraid to indulge their funkier side. Its name originally derived not from any westward orientation but from the Spanish word for bones, “huesos” (early explorers found them littered along the shore).

In the 18th century the island was a haven for pirates and enterprising inhabitants who made their incomes wrecking ships and salvaging the parts. When a lighthouse was installed in the 1850’s, the ship-wreckage business ground to a halt, and trade in the port made the city the wealthiest in the nation.

These days the southernmost U.S. point (it’s closer to Cuba than to mainland Florida) has vibrantly recovered from its mid-twentieth century slump, and the streets are jumping with shops, galleries, cafes, and hidden garden nooks. And lovely, low-key bars galore. This is the place to not just “get away from it all” but feel as if you’ve left the real world behind—and that you might not want to ever go back to it.

### Where to Dock

**Key West Harbour** (tel: 305.292.312; [www.ycoa.com](http://www.ycoa.com))

The marina offers 400 dry slips (for vessels up to 50 feet in length and 60,000 lbs.) and 43 wet slips (for vessels up to 100 feet in length with a traveling lift and a capacity of 150,000 lbs.). The marina is part of the Yacht Clubs of the Americas network, which offers full ownership of wet and dry slips and amenities that include concierge service.

**Conch Harbor Marina**

(tel: 305.294.2933; [www.conchharbormarina.com](http://www.conchharbormarina.com))

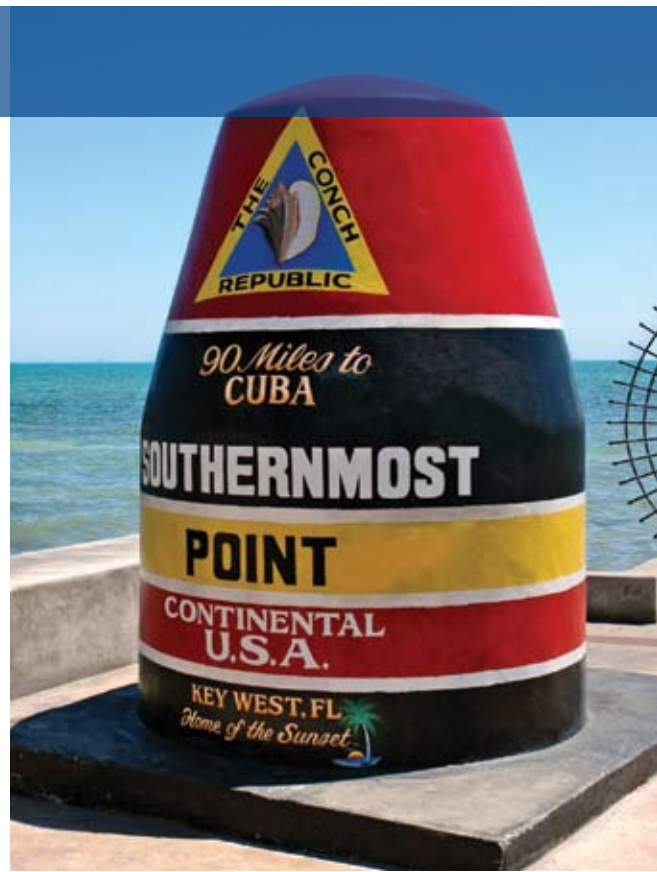
A full-service marina, located at the entrance of downtown’s historic “bight.” The marina is under new management and has been completely renovated. New facilities include a pool, Monty’s Raw Bar, cable TV and telephone hookups. Charter dives, fishing, and dockminium’s are available, and there’s a fully equipped on-site fuel station.

**Galleon Marina** (tel: 305.292.1292; [www.galleonresort.com](http://www.galleonresort.com))

The Galleon Resort, conveniently located in the Bight, offers great amenities in a resort atmosphere. The marina offers a highly protected harbor and exclusive amenities for its guests. Marina guests can take advantage of all of the resort amenities including their pool, private beach, sauna, and exercise room.

**Key West Bight** (tel: 305.296.3838; [www.keywestcity.com](http://www.keywestcity.com))

The marina has 33 deep-water transient slips for vessels up to



190 feet long. Well priced and conveniently located, it offers shower, laundry and pump-out facilities.

**A & B Marina** (tel: 305-294-2535; [www.aandbmarina.com](http://www.aandbmarina.com))

A deep-water marina that can accommodate vessels up to 140 feet long, right in the heart of downtown’s protected harbor.

### Where to Eat

**Louie’s Backyard:** One of the island’s most popular dining spots, Louie’s Backyard offers an uninterrupted view of the ocean and dishes such as rack of lamb and grouper. The ever-important Key Lime pie has a pistachio crust and is served with a raspberry coulis. Outside, dine under tropical trees. At lunch there are expansive Atlantic views and gentler prices. In the evening, the Afterdeck Bar is a favorite spot for cocktails. (700 Waddell Avenue, tel: 305.294.1061; [louiesbackyard.com](http://louiesbackyard.com))



**Schooner Wharf Bar:** In classic Margaritaville fashion, Schooner's Bar has a happy hour that runs from 8 a.m. until noon. An extensive menu is offered throughout the day, and includes local specialties such as stone crab claws, conch chowder and freshly shucked oysters. Burn away the calories by dancing long into the night. (202 William Street; tel: 305.292.3302; [www.schoonerwharf.com](http://www.schoonerwharf.com))

**Seven Fish:** At this seafood-focused spot, the menu of fish dishes depends on the daily catch—yellowtail snapper with a Thai curry sauce, penne with fresh crawfish and scallops. But there are plenty of tasty options for carnivores too, including steaks and a great housemade meatloaf. (9623 Olivia Street; tel: 305.296.2777; [www.7fish.com](http://www.7fish.com))

**Blue Heaven Restaurant:** Legend has it that this much-loved restaurant was once the site of boxing matches refereed by none other than Ernest Hemingway. Now avant-garde

artwork fills the gallery upstairs and the restaurant serves Caribbean-influenced food at reasonable prices. All the breads and desserts are made in-house daily. All three meals are served and Sunday brunch draws crowd. No reservations are taken, so be prepared to wait in line. That may, in fact, be half the fun. (729 Thomas Street; tel: 305.296.8666; [www.blueheavenkw.homestead.com/Blue\\_Heaven](http://www.blueheavenkw.homestead.com/Blue_Heaven))

## What to Do

**Duval Street:** A leisurely walk or bike ride is the best way to discover this happening thoroughfare. Be sure to explore the side streets, full of wooden gingerbread-edged houses and secluded courtyards..

**Turtle Races at Turtle Kraal Bar & Restaurant:** Catch the kooky turtle races held each Monday and Friday at 6 p.m. They're a beloved Key West tradition. The restaurant has a historic tower bar that's a popular Old Town spot. (231 Margaret Street, tel: 305.294.2640; [www.turtlekraals.com](http://www.turtlekraals.com))

**City Port:** An intriguing outdoor-indoor market where you can buy everything from handmade jewelry to hand-rolled cigars.

**Key West Tropical Forest and Botanical Garden:** A tropical forest alive with butterflies, birds, turtles, frogs, hummingbirds, native fragrant plants, tropical spices and herbs, geckos, anoles and dragonflies. This botanical garden's exhibits highlight the principles of biodiversity, and the peaceful butterfly garden is full of vibrant colors, benches to rest on, and an astounding number of butterfly species. Suggested donations range from \$2 to \$4. Children under 12 accompanied by an adult can



**Key West City Cemetery:** It may sound morbid to go strolling through a cemetery, but this one is also a historic landmark. Established in 1847 and covering nearly 20 acres, it includes the graves of sailors killed in the 1898 sinking of the USS Maine. Unique headstones include a ship's mast and a tomb inscribed, "I told you I was sick." Admission is free. For a \$10 donation, a 90-minute tour leaves at 9:30am on Tuesday and Thursday from the main gate, reservations are not necessary. (Open Hours: Sunrise-6 p.m., Monday-Sunday, 701 Passover Lane, tel: 305.292.6718)

**Sunset at Mallory Dock:** This daily sunset gathering is a joyful celebration of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—which has an amazing array of definitions here in the nation's southernmost city! Marvel at the jugglers, peruse local crafts, and snack on the homemade treats.

**Fantasy Fest:** Each October, anything goes—and usually does—at Key West's annual be-as-outrageous-as-possible festival. The wild event attracts thousands of revelers, and inhibitions are on hold for the duration. Events include a yacht race, Mardi Gras Massacre, Pet Masquerade and Royal Coronation Ball. That may sound tame, but it is a wild time. Be warned: this is not an event for kids. Some events have admission or entry fees, call for detail. (Various venues throughout the city, tel: 305.296.1817, [www.fantasyfest.net](http://www.fantasyfest.net))

**Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum:** A must for visitors to Key West. Tours are given of the historic 1851 Spanish Colonial home where Hemingway lived and wrote from 1928 until 1940. Highlights include the rope bridge-accessed writing studio and the in-ground swimming pool, the first one built in Key West. Descendants of Mr. Hemingway's many cats roam freely on the grounds. Admission: USD11 for adults, USD6 for children. Free parking. (907 Whitehead Street; tel: 305.294.1136; [www.hemingwayhome.com](http://www.hemingwayhome.com))

**Golf:** Play a round at the end of the road! Designed by Rees Jones, this 18-hole public golf course is 6,526

yards, par 70 from the back tees, 5,183 yards, par 70 from the front tees. Although caddies are not available, walking the course is permitted at certain times. The course offers reduced fees during the low season (May-December), for twilight play and for juniors. Discount packages and rental clubs are available. Call up to 14 days in advance for tee times. (6450 East College Avenue; tel: 305.294.5232) [ml](#)

