

# Travel Savers

## Key West: At Sunset the Applause Begins

You've got a cool drink at an outdoor table on Sunset Pier right where the Gulf of Mexico blends with the Atlantic. As the sun dips down, the applause begins. It's another perfect night in Key West, the southernmost point in the United States and an island cherished for its history, culture, and arts scene — not to mention a vibrant nightlife and a darn good time.

### THINGS TO SEE AND DO

An inexpensive way to get into the Key West groove is to take a train or trolley tour. Hop the Conch Tour Train for a spin around the island, or try the Gay Trolley Tour for an overview of Key West's gay-friendly heritage. The Key West Pub Crawl takes in famous watering holes and includes free drinks and a T-shirt. If you like walking on the creepy side, try the "The Ghosts & Legends of Key West" tour.

Another affordable option is to rent a bike and tour the island on your own. Discover the Civil War-era Fort Zachary, plus parks, beaches and historic homes, from the Ernest Hemingway House and Museum to the Audubon House and Tropical Gardens. For discounts on admission and tour fees for these attractions, visit [www.historictours.com](http://www.historictours.com).

After you've taken in Duval Street — the main drag for shopping, dining, people-watching and gallery-hopping — pedal down Petronia Street in the heart of Bahama Village. Ethnic restaurants, unique shops and galleries reside with the historic homes of the "real" locals, descended from early settlers who migrated to the Keys from Bahama, Cuba and Haiti.

If you feel like splurging, you can arrange boat trips for fishing, snorkeling or swimming with dolphins. One of the most talked-about tours is the all-inclusive day trip to the islands of

Dry Tortugas National Park, which promises white sand beaches and coral reefs, plus a tour of historic Port Jefferson.

For more information, visit [www.fl-keys.com](http://www.fl-keys.com).

### ACCOMMODATIONS

Some of the most enchanting inns are surprisingly affordable. You'll get low-season rates until January 15 at the historic Curry Mansion Inn, where each room is elegantly appointed with wicker and antiques, and opens onto a swimming pool surrounded by lush tropical gardens. Numerous other inns can be found by visiting [www.keywestinns.com](http://www.keywestinns.com).

### FOOD & DINING

For gourmet food at good prices, reserve a spot at Camille's, where even the locals eat. Other great deals include the seafood offerings at Half Shell Raw Bar and breakfast with the roosters at Rick's Blue Heaven. Splurge a bit for the Hyatt Key West's extraordinary brunch, and don't leave town without stopping at the Blond Giraffe for sublime Key Lime Pie.

### ENTERTAINMENT

The sunsets are always free of charge, as are the outdoor performances every evening in Mallory Square, where musicians, artists, jugglers and Houdini-types draw laughs and gasps. Theater buffs will enjoy the Red Barn Theatre or the Waterfront Playhouse, both offering top-notch talent at a fraction of Broadway ticket prices. A visit to Sloppy Joe's bar is a must, if only for the Hemingway factor. So is an afternoon with the wit and wail of Yankee Jack at the Bull & Whistle.



The Conch Tour Train is an affordable way to get acquainted with Key West.

## Expert Travel Tip

Courtesy of Harold Wheeler, Tourist Development

**Council:** "One of the biggest unknown features to Key West is that there are these luxurious lodging properties secluded within botanical garden compounds that you just don't see or realize from the street." (For more information, call the Key West Innkeepers Association at 305-295-1334.)

## Did You Know?

If you're planning to drive from mainland Florida down the 100+-mile stretch through the Keys, keep in mind it's a two-lane highway with lots of slow spots, especially on weekends. Leave early, leave late, or adjust your watch to Key West time and enjoy the slow motion.

## \$25 For Your Tip

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