



## A Florida Keys Arts & Culture Itinerary

*The Florida Keys & Key West has been a draw for artists, poets, political pundits and pirates for hundreds of years. For the visual artist, it might be how the light reflects off the Caribbean waters or the explosion of colors that appear daily as the sun sets. For the poet, the birds singing and the year round flowers in bloom provide inspiration. For the cast of characters that inhabits these islands; those who think differently- speak openly and who live by their own rhythms, local songwriters are thankful. This creative community is vibrant and varied, overflowing with an energy and enthusiasm that has drawn visitors for decades.*

*Today this community is attracting a growing mix of people interested in heritage and cultural tourism. Both domestic and international visitors can immerse themselves in a variety of cultural offerings with events ranging from an annual literary seminar, local galleries, to museums, concerts, film festivals, and theatre productions. Seasonal and year round events flourish in the keys. Below is a sample itinerary on how to experience these offerings anytime of the year. For updated seasonal information on festivals and cultural events check out our calendar of events <http://www.flakeys.com/calendarofevents/> and The Florida Keys Council of the Arts <http://www.keysarts.com/>*

### Day 1: Key Largo

#### Outdoor Art & Art in Public Places

Visual artistry can be seen all over the Florida Keys: in palm-fringed shorescapes that edge the Atlantic Ocean, orange and purple abstracts unrolling across the sky at sunset, and the clean-lined sculptural arches of the old Overseas Highway bridges.

#### **It's the gateway to the Florida Keys** (MM 99.2 center median)

In Key Largo, you'll find a 7,500-square-foot mural portraying other undersea denizens — inhabitants of the living coral reef that parallels the Keys. Painted in 2007 by the renowned marine life artist Wyland, an Upper Keys resident, the mural wraps around all four sides of a four-story building in the highway median at mile marker 99.2.

**"It's the gateway to the Florida Keys,"** said Wyland, who credits his frequent Keys reef dives with being an ongoing inspiration for his work. "The idea was to welcome people as they drove in from South

Florida with a depiction of the sun warming the tropical waters here — taking people above and below the surface to see the tremendous abundance of marine life and color.”

The mural features manatees, manta rays, corals and indigenous fish and bottlenose dolphins. Like Wyland’s other large-scale creations around the world, it’s designed to encourage environmental awareness and stewardship.

### **Henry Flagler's Florida Keys Over-Sea Railroad** (MM 95, Bayside)

The hand-painted mural, measuring 60 feet long and 11.5 feet high depicts a train similar to a Florida Keys Overseas Railroad passenger train steaming across an arched bridge much like the Long Key Viaduct. Above the bridge is a full moon adorned with the face of the railroad's creator, Henry Flagler. Commemorating the historical significance of Flagler's Florida Keys Over-Sea Railroad, the mural was a collaborative effort between the Art Guild of the Purple Isles and high school art club students at Islamorada's Island Christian School. It covers the southwest exterior wall of the Atlantic Title building. Cris Sandifer, the lead artist for the mural project, redesigned an original 3-by-5-inch railroad postcard image to fit the wall's surface area. Other local artists and more than a dozen art students contributed their time to paint the commemorative wall.

### **The Gallery at Kona Kai Key Largo** (MM 97.8, Bayside) <http://g-k-k.com/>

Established on the lush grounds of the Kona Kai resort in 1997, the gallery is the creation of Kona Kai owners and art collectors Joe and Veronica "Ronnie" Harris. The gallery opened with the work of some of South Florida’s most significant artists including Clyde Butcher, whose stark, spectacular black-and-white photographs of Florida’s wetlands can be compared to legendary nature photographer Ansel Adams. Today, the Gallery at Kona Kai represents more than a dozen artists from France, Italy, Israel, the Netherlands, Venezuela and the United States. The Harris’ choose only those who do original work, rather than prints or giclees, and are personally responsible for all aspects of their work. They have visited the studios of all but one of the creative spirits they represent. The gallery is always updating and receiving new works from their multi-faceted artisans. Open daily 9am to 7pm or by appointment.

### **John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park** (MM102.5 Oceanside) [www.pennekamppark.com](http://www.pennekamppark.com)

The highlight of the park's Visitor Center is its 30,000-gallon saltwater aquarium. There are also six additional 100 to 200-gallon aquariums which offer visitors different interpretations of the park's marine inhabitants. The Visitor Center also features natural history exhibit which highlights the park's different biological communities. There is also a theater located in the building where visitors may view nature videos relating to the park and its surrounding area. The hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., daily. Free with park admission.

### **Live Performances** -run seasonally

The Keys Players [www.thekeyplayers.org](http://www.thekeyplayers.org)

## **Day 2: Islamorada**

### **Outdoor Art & Art in Public Places-Museum**

At mile marker (MM) 83 bayside in Islamorada, two exterior walls of the **Florida Keys History of Diving Museum** <http://www.divingmuseum.org/> serve as a canvas for a large-scale undersea mural painted by internationally acclaimed artists David Dunleavy and Guy Harvey. Dedicated in February 2005, the

360-foot mural features manatees, a whale shark, finfish and endangered marine life found on the living coral reef that parallels the Keys. The Museum was established as a not-for-profit educational institution in 2000. After a long search a suitable building was found at mile marker 83, and opened September 2005. The museum contains artifacts and ephemera covering 4,000 years of diving history. Highlights include an exhibit of dive helmets from around the world. Take a look for yourself. <http://www.fla-keys.com/video-of-the-week/vidpopup.cfm?video=148>

### **Rain Barrel Sculpture Gallery**

(MM 86.7) [www.rainbarrelsculpture.com](http://www.rainbarrelsculpture.com)

You'll first notice Betsy, the larger-than-life replica of a crustacean, greeting visitors to the quaint open-air colony of artists at Rain Barrel. The Rain Barrel artist colony is the first of many great galleries in the Village of Islamorada.

### **Morada Way Arts and Cultural District**

(MM 83.5-80) <http://moradaway.org/>

The Third Thursday Art/Walks showcase the vibrant creative community of Islamorada. This event takes place on the old highway, which runs parallel to the current overseas highway on the ocean side. Several galleries stay open through the evening hours during the "third Thursday" event which highlights include live music, performance art, photography and culinary classes.

## **Day 3: Marathon**

### **Outdoor Art & Art in Public Places**

(MM 50 oceanside- in the shopping center)

Visitors can discover an undersea mural painted by internationally acclaimed marine life artist **Wyland** assisted by **Guy Harvey**. One of Wyland's renowned "Whaling Wall" murals, the Marathon wall depicts the area's indigenous dolphin, sharks, barracuda and sea turtles as well as a mother humpback whale and her calf. Wyland, a part-time Florida Keys resident and a recognized pioneer of the environmental art movement, credits diving the Keys' coral reef as a significant inspiration for his work.

### **Crane Point Museum**

(MM50 Gulfside) [www.cranepoint.net](http://www.cranepoint.net)

Crane Point, a slightly elevated patch of land we refer to as a 'hammock,' is tucked away amid the heart of Marathon. On this 64-acre tropical oasis you can experience the natural beauty of our native hardwood trees, nature trails and educational displays for adults and children. Crane Point was originally set up as a homestead by George Adderly, a Bahamian man and his family. It was here that Adderley and his family lived a simple life among exotic tropical trees, such as the lignumvitae, whose incredibly hard wood was once used to make bowling balls! The Adderley's survived by making charcoal and gathering and selling sponges from the crystal clear waters of the Keys. The Adderley's no longer live here, but their home and its beautiful surroundings remain. The Adderley home has been restored and is a popular stop along the 2.5 miles of trails and wooden walkways crisscrossing the hammock.

### **Florida Keys Aquarium Encounters**

(MM 52 Gulfside) [www.floridakeysaquariumencounters.com](http://www.floridakeysaquariumencounters.com)

Visitors to the Marathon area can enjoy an immersive experience with reef fish, invertebrates, stingrays and even sharks — without entering the ocean — at Florida Keys Aquarium Encounters. The signature feature of the multimillion-dollar facility, located at the foot of the Vaca Cut Bridge at 11710 Overseas Highway, is a coral reef exhibit and shark habitat housed in a massive 200,000-gallon interconnected saltwater aquarium for viewing. As a hands-on interactive learning center, the unique attraction strives to inform visitors about the importance of marine conservation while they discover the complex underwater habitats of the Florida Keys. Following an instructional presentation, participants in the flagship 90-minute encounter immerse themselves in the tank to hover over a mock coral reef structure and interact with tropical reef fish, rays and other reef-dwelling marine species that are part of the in-tank ecosystem.

**Live Performances** -run seasonally

Marathon Community Theater [www.marathontheater.org](http://www.marathontheater.org)

## Days 4-6: Lower Keys and Key West

Take your time and explore. There is a wealth of choices on the island. With over 600 buildings on the National Historic Registry, stroll the old town neighborhood and marvel in the different architectural influences from house to house.

### Museums

Historical museums and attractions such as the [Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum](#), [Harry S Truman Little White House](#), The Key West Lighthouse and Keepers' Quarters, **East Martello** Civil War Fort and the Key West Art & History Museum at the [Custom House](#) draw visitors who are interested in Key West's colorful past and its position in our nation's political history.

### Nature Walks and Gardens

The Florida Keys are located in the subtropics between 24 and 25 degrees latitude north. The climate and environment are closer to that of the Caribbean than the rest of Florida making Key West the only frost free city in the continental United States. There are several nature walks and gardens open for visitation such as the Audubon House and Gardens, the Key West Botanical and Tropical Forest Garden and East Martello Tower, a civil war era fortress which is home to the Key West Garden Club.

### Galleries

[Galleries](#) abound — featuring oils and watercolors, sculpture of all sorts, Haitian primitives, collage, pottery, handcrafted jewelry, woodcarving, stained glass and blown glass, acrylics and a variety of fine crafts.

A portion of Key West's famed Duval Street known for its [eclectic galleries](#) comes alive with art exhibitions, receptions and culinary offerings during the monthly Upper Duval Street Stroll. Participants can explore galleries, boutiques and food and wine emporiums during the event that usually takes place the first Friday of each month. Key West's Caroline and Greene streets and Historic Seaport neighborhood form a lively art and design district, site of the Art and Ambiance Walks spotlighting galleries and merchants the first Thursday of each month.

**Live Performances** -run seasonally

From live theatre to symphony concerts, to comedians and national Broadway touring shows, the keys offer an wide variety of programing for all tastes.

The Waterfront Playhouse [www.waterfrontplayhouse.org](http://www.waterfrontplayhouse.org) ,

The Red Barn Theater [www.redbarntheatre.com](http://www.redbarntheatre.com),

The Tennessee Williams Theatre [www.tennesseewilliamstheatre.com](http://www.tennesseewilliamstheatre.com).

Many of the venues, events and festivals ticket through Keys Tix.com.It's a great way to guarantee your ticket to the fun. <http://keystix.ticketforce.com/>