

# **Ultimate 7-Day Florida Keys Itinerary**

Key West to Big Pine Key

Local Secrets • Best Tours • Hidden Sandbars

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# Welcome to Paradise

This guide covers the best of the Lower Florida Keys — from the historic streets of Key West to the pristine backcountry of Big Pine Key. We've packed 7 days with the perfect mix of adventure, relaxation, and local secrets that most tourists never discover.

Every tour recommendation links directly to verified local operators. No middlemen, no markup — just authentic Keys experiences.

## Day 1: Arrive & Sunset Magic

**Morning/Afternoon:** Arrive in Key West. Check into your hotel and get oriented. Walk Duval Street to get the lay of the land. Grab Cuban coffee at Cuban Coffee Queen.

**Evening:** Head to Mallory Square for the famous sunset celebration. Street performers, local artists, and the best sunset views in the Keys.

- **Pro Tip:** Book a sunset sail for Day 4 now — they sell out fast.
- **Dinner:** Santiago's Bodega for tapas or The Stoned Crab for seafood.

## Day 2: Sandbar & Snorkel Adventure

**Morning:** Book a morning sandbar trip (8-9am departure). You'll beat the crowds and the afternoon heat. Most tours include snorkeling stops at patch reefs where you'll see parrotfish, sea fans, and maybe a sea turtle.

**Afternoon:** Recover at Fort Zachary Taylor Beach — the best beach on the island. Clear water, great snorkeling right off shore, and a solid beach bar.

**Evening:** Explore Duval Street. Live music at every corner.

- **Pro Tip:** The sandbars are waist-deep — perfect if you have non-swimmers in your group.
- **Book:** [KeyWestSandbarTours.com](http://KeyWestSandbarTours.com) → Filter by 'Sandbar'

## Day 3: Dolphins & Deep Water

**Morning:** Dolphin watching tour in the backcountry. Key West's resident dolphin pods are wild and free — way better than any aquarium. Most tours also hit mangrove trails and hidden beaches.

**Afternoon:** Visit the Key West Butterfly & Nature Conservatory or explore the Hemingway Home and its famous six-toed cats.

**Evening:** Fresh seafood at Hogfish Bar & Grill on Stock Island — where the locals actually eat.

- **Pro Tip:** Dolphins are most active in morning. Book early departures.
- **Book:** [KeyWestSandbarTours.com](http://KeyWestSandbarTours.com) → Filter by 'Dolphins'

## Day 4: Kayaks & Sunset Cruise

**Morning:** Kayak or paddleboard through the mangrove backcountry. Glide over crystal-clear flats, spot rays, juvenile sharks, and wading birds. Guided eco-tours teach you about the ecosystem.

**Afternoon:** Rest up. Pool time. Maybe a nap.

**Evening:** This is the big one — sunset cruise. Whether you choose a catamaran, sailboat, or private charter, watching the sun sink into the Gulf of Mexico from the water is unforgettable. Many include champagne and appetizers.

■ **Pro Tip:** Private charters are surprisingly affordable split between 4-6 people.

■ **Book:** [KeyWestSandbarTours.com](http://KeyWestSandbarTours.com) → Filter by 'Sunset'

## Day 5: Lower Keys Day Trip

**Morning:** Rent a car and drive up to Bahia Honda State Park (mile marker 37). Often rated the #1 beach in Florida. Swim, snorkel, walk the old bridge. Pack a picnic.

**Afternoon:** Continue to Big Pine Key. Visit No Name Pub — a legendary dive bar covered in dollar bills since 1931. Order their famous pizza. Look for Key Deer on the drive (they're tiny and endangered).

**Evening:** Head back to Key West. Dinner at Latitudes on Sunset Key (take the free ferry) for a splurge, or Blue Heaven for quirky local vibes.

■ **Pro Tip:** Bahia Honda fills up by 10am on weekends. Go early.

■ **Pro Tip:** Key Deer are most active at dawn and dusk.

## Day 6: Adrenaline & Adventure

**Morning:** Pick your thrill — jet ski tour, parasailing, or fishing charter. Jet ski tours take you through mangrove channels out to remote sandbars. Parasailing gives you bird's eye views of the reef. Fishing? Go for yellowtail or mahi.

**Afternoon:** Visit the Key West Aquarium (America's oldest!) or take a walking food tour through Old Town.

**Evening:** Your last night out. Start with sunset drinks at Louie's Backyard, then dinner wherever calls you. You've earned it.

■ **Pro Tip:** Half-day fishing charters (4hrs) are plenty for beginners.

■ **Book:** [KeyWestSandbarTours.com](http://KeyWestSandbarTours.com) → Filter by activity type

## Day 7: Morning Magic & Departure

**Morning:** One last swim. Fort Zach opens at 8am — perfect for an early snorkel before the crowds. Or just grab coffee and walk the harbor, watching the fishing boats head out.

**Before You Go:** Pick up some Key Lime pie from Kermit's and Cuban cigars from a local roller. Say goodbye to paradise.

■ **Pro Tip:** Airport is tiny — arrive 90 min early max. More time = more beach.

## What to Pack

■ Reef-safe sunscreen (required by law)

■ Water shoes for rocky beaches

■ Polarized sunglasses

■ Dry bag for boat trips

- Snorkel mask (or rent on tours)
- Light layers for AC blasting
- Cash for tips & small vendors
- Waterproof phone case
- Motion sickness meds (just in case)
- Underwater camera

## Local Secrets

- **Best secret sandbar:** Ask your captain about Woman Key or Boca Grande — way less crowded than the main sandbars.
- **Free sunset spots:** Fort Zach, Higgs Beach pier, or any waterfront bar — you don't need a cruise ticket for magic.
- **Avoid the crowds:** Everything is less crowded Monday-Wednesday. Peak cruise ship days are Tuesday-Thursday.
- **Best happy hour:** Geiger Key Marina — locals only, fish sandwiches, cold beer, middle of nowhere.
- **Best sunrise:** Smathers Beach. Coffee. Nobody there. Pure peace.

## Ready to Book?

Visit **KeyWestSandbarTours.com** to browse 400+ verified tours from local operators. Filter by activity type, see real availability, and book direct — no middleman markup.

See you in paradise! ■