

MOTION ON THE OCEAN

*A PUBLIC HEALTH
GUIDE TO
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN
PARKS ACROSS
THE FLORIDA KEYS*



#healthiestweightfl

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Dr. Joseph Yates Porter

(1847-1927)

Key West Native and
Director of Florida's First State Board of Health

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FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Welcome to *Motion on the Ocean*, a guide to parks across the Florida Keys that has been written, photographed, and designed with fitness in mind.

In 2013, Dr. John H. Armstrong, State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health, initiated the Healthiest Weight Florida campaign. With an obesity epidemic nationwide, Dr. Armstrong has instructed the Florida Department of Health and its subsidiaries in each of Florida's 67 counties to take the lead on promoting routine exercise and proper diet as the keys for Floridians to establish and maintain the healthiest weights in the nation.

Monroe County boasts some of the most pristine parks in the state, offering locals and visitors endless opportunities to engage in calorie-burning activities on both land and sea.

Our partners at the state, county, and municipal levels do their best to ensure that these parks are easy to access, clean, and safe. In many cases, playing surfaces — basketball and tennis courts, skateboard ramps, soccer fields, etc. — have been paved and manicured to ensure the best playing surfaces possible.

As you leaf through this unique public health directory, I encourage you to shape a fitness routine that takes you to one or more of the more than 65 state, county, and municipal parks profiled here. Start by getting a rough idea of your body mass index, the measurement that many public health professionals use to plot a

person's progress when it comes to weight loss (page 7). Once you've calculated your BMI, check the chart to see your weight status in comparison with others. Consult your doctor on the best course of action, especially if you are obese, overweight, or underweight. Plan your fitness regimen: Peruse the physical activity table to see how much you can burn doing even the most basic activities for just an hour (page 8). Whether you're a fitness enthusiast or just a beginner, you'll find an activity and pace that works for you.

Locate the park(s) listed in this directory that are nearest to you, where you can engage in your chosen activity (parks listing starts on page 15). Log your activities and approximate calories burned using Your Fitness Counter (page 9).

If you stick with your fitness program and eat healthy — ideally, you want to burn more calories than you consume — you should notice a change in your BMI after a few weeks.

Consider finding a partner, or group of partners, to join you in this effort. Make it a family affair. Employers might host a day out at a park, where employees can have fun while getting fit.

For anyone who'd like to learn more about all of the parks in the Florida Keys, challenge yourself to engage in a fitness activity every day, every other day, or every week, at a different park.

Best of luck!



Bob Eadie, administrator at the Florida Department of Health in Monroe County, right, joins teammates Deb Chesnet and Andrew Bulla at the finish line of Triathlon Key West in 2010.

Bob Eadie

FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Parks and preserves are essential not only to maintaining living systems and biodiversity, but also to promoting good health and well-being among the public. Parks are used for organized sports and fitness, public meetings and entertainment, water activities, education, and environmental activities. They also provide a place for people (and their pets) to simply wander around and enjoy the natural scene. As you will see in this directory, the Florida Keys have a multi-tiered system of parks and wildlife refuges administered through city, county, state, and federal authorities.

Physical Activity and Exercise. “Physical activity” is defined as anything that gets you moving (e.g., walking the dog); “exercise” is a more planned and structured form of physical activity. Regular physical activity and exercise is, quite simply, the most important thing we can do for our health.

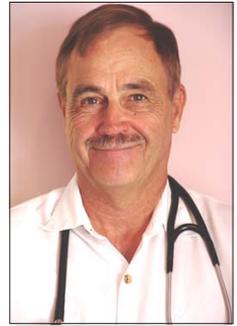
Case in point: Children reportedly spend more than 6 hours a day in front of computer and television screens, compared to 30 minutes a day in outdoor physical activity. This very well could be a major contributing factor to the nationwide childhood obesity epidemic that we’ve been hearing so much about in the news. Both children and adults need to get outside and get moving, and our parks and green spaces are a good place to begin.

Also, see your doctor before you start an exercise program, especially if you have a chronic illness and/or have not exercised in a while.

Natural Connection. Connecting to the natural world not only helps reduce the stress that high-tech, fast-paced societies can bring, but also has a restorative effect and brings balance to our lives. Mobile EEGs (brain wave tracings) reveal that when we enter a natural setting, our minds enter a state resembling meditation. Potential health benefits of direct contact with nature include: reduced stress, lower blood pressure, increased mental clarity, and a more positive outlook on life.

People can tune into the “natural rhythms of the earth” in our green areas, as well. The earth’s cavity produces a specific pulsation (the Schumann resonance) that acts as a master “tuning fork” and closely matches our alpha brain waves. These electromagnetic forces work in tandem with geomagnetic waves coming from below the earth’s surface. The earth’s low-frequency pulses are often drowned out by the stronger manmade EMFs (electromagnetic fields) in cities. Man was not designed to live among these all-pervasive EMF signals. Electro-pollution is arguably the most neglected public health problem and probably contributes to certain cancers like leukemia and also early dementia (Alzheimer’s). Parks help us recharge our batteries and provide temporary refuge from the EMF noise of the city.

Parks and preserves with the best “restorative qualities” have safe natural areas that give the flavor of “being away” (from your usual environment), encourage fascination with nature, foster the sense of being a part of a larger whole, and offer a variety of activities that satisfy the needs of the user population. Bird- and butterfly-watching are two activities that can help us reconnect with nature.



Benefits of Physical Activity and Exercise

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Lower blood pressure
- Increase HDL (“good” cholesterol)
- Improve mood
- Boost energy
- Easier sleep and rest
- Lower chances of certain cancers
- Improve stamina
- Strengthen/tone muscles
- Enhance flexibility
- Reduce stress
- Help prevent falls

Exercising 30-60 minutes per day can reduce the chances of premature disability or death by 40 percent!

Dr. Mark Whiteside

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HealthiestWeight

www.healthiestweightflorida.com / #healthiestweightfl

As of 2014, only 36 percent of Floridians were at a healthy weight. On our current trend, by 2030, almost 60 percent will be obese. Additionally, six out of ten children born today will be obese by the time they graduate high school.



Dr. John H. Armstrong, state surgeon general and secretary of health, initiated Healthiest Weight Florida in 2013.

Over the next 20 years in Florida, obesity is expected to contribute to millions of cases of preventable chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, costing an estimated \$34 billion. To address this important public health issue, the Department of Health launched the Healthiest Weight Florida initiative in January 2013.

Healthiest Weight Florida offers five strategies to maintaining a healthy weight. This guide was developed with the first strategy in mind: increasing opportunities for physical activity. The other four strategies include: making healthy food available everywhere, promoting health in the worksite, strengthening schools as the heart of health, and marketing what matters for a healthy life.

Being physically active can help:

- Control weight
- Reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease
- Reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes
- Reduce the risk of some cancers
- Strengthen bones and muscles
- Improve mental health and mood
- Improve ability to do daily activities and prevent falls in older adults
- Increase the chances of living longer

How Do I Calculate My BMI?

Body mass index (BMI) is an estimation of body fat based on height and weight. BMI is a way to see if you are in a healthy range.

The correlation between the BMI number and body fatness is fairly strong; however, the correlation varies by sex, race and age.

It's always best to see your doctor to determine your BMI and get advice on the best fitness plan for you.

To get a rough idea of your BMI, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that you divide your weight in pounds by your height in inches squared and multiply by 703.

For example, if you weigh 150 pounds and stand 65 inches tall (5'5"), your BMI is 24.96. You would be considered borderline normal/overweight, in terms of the standard weight status categories associated with BMI ranges for adults.

Weight: 150 pounds

Height in inches squared:

$$65 \times 65 = 4,225$$

$$150 / 4,225 = .035$$

.035

X 703

24.96

BMI	Weight Status
Below 18.5	Underweight
18.5-24.9	Normal
25.0-29.9	Overweight
30.0 and Above	Obese

Physical Activity Table

Exercise and physical activity fall into four basic categories: endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility. Most people tend to focus on one activity or type of exercise and think they're doing enough. Each type is different. Doing them all will give you more benefits. Mixing it up also helps to reduce boredom and cut your risk of injury.

Endurance

Endurance, or aerobic, activities increase your breathing and heart rate. Some examples:

- Brisk walking or jogging
- Swimming
- Biking
- Playing tennis or basketball

Strength

Strength exercises make your muscles stronger. Some examples:

- Isometrics
- Weight lifting
- Pilates.

Balance

Balance exercises help prevent falls, a common problem in older adults. Many lower-body strength exercises also will improve your balance. Some examples:

- Standing on one foot
- Heel-to-toe walk
- Tai Chi
- Yoga

Flexibility

Flexibility exercises stretch your muscles and can help your body stay limber. Some examples:

- Shoulder and upper arm stretch
- Calf stretch
- Yoga

The table to the right lists simple activities that you can engage in at any of the parks profiled in this guide. Figures on calories burned per hour for four different weights are provided for each activity.

Establish a fitness routine that includes exercises for endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility.

Make sure that the number of calories you are burning through fitness is greater than the number of calories you're consuming as part of a balanced diet.

	130 lbs	155 lbs	180 lbs	205 lbs
Basketball (shooting baskets)	266	317	368	419
Calisthenics (light, pushups, sit-ups, etc.)	207	246	286	326
Cycling (leisure, <10 mph)	236	281	327	372
Football or Baseball (playing catch)	148	176	204	233
Frisbee	177	211	245	279
Golf (walking, carrying clubs)	266	317	368	419
Kayaking	295	352	409	465
Kickball	413	493	572	651
Mild Stretching	148	176	204	233
Roller Blading	708	844	981	1,117
Running (5 mph, 12 -minute mile)	472	563	654	745
Scuba Diving	708	844	981	1,117
Skateboarding	295	352	409	465
Snorkeling	295	352	409	465
Soccer (game)	413	493	572	651
Softball or Baseball (game)	295	352	409	465
Stretching (hatha yoga)	236	281	327	372
Swimming (treading water, moderate)	236	281	327	372
Tai chi	236	281	327	372
Tennis (singles)	472	563	654	745
Walking (2 mph, slow)	148	176	204	233
Walking (3.5 mph, brisk)	224	267	311	354
Walking (4 mph, very brisk)	295	352	409	465
Walking (5 mph)	472	563	654	745
Water Aerobics	236	281	327	372

Sources: National Institutes of Health and NutriStrategy. For figures on additional fitness activities, visit www.nutristrategy.com/activitylist4.htm.

Special Section: Birding in the Florida Keys

Birding (aka, “bird watching”) is an exciting, healthy hobby guaranteed to get you off the couch and outdoors into the fresh air. Birding is a great way to get exercise and tune in to nature. It can be done anytime and anywhere; Birding is associated with travel, photography, gardening, hiking, and conservation. Parks, preserves, and shorelines across the Florida Keys are special places for birds.

John James Audubon, the world-renowned naturalist and nature artist who discovered more than 50 newly described species of birds in Florida, arrived in the Keys in 1832. He wrote his wife that birdlife was so abundant in the Keys that “the air was darkened with whistling wings.” This famous artist would excite much of the world with his life-like portraits of birds. The National Audubon Society was founded in later years in response to plume hunters slaughtering beautiful wading birds for their feathers. The founding put the nation on a new course of wildlife conservation.

Today, more than 50 million people in the United States consider themselves birders. Serious birding started in the northeastern United States and was popularized with the field guides of Roger Tory Peterson. The sport took off after World War II with the development of good quality binoculars, increased leisure time, and a growing appreciation of the natural environment. It remains one of the fastest growing outdoor hobbies today (after gardening).

The chain of islands we call the Florida Keys is really an extension of the West Indies (some describe them as “the Caribbean Islands that you can drive to.”) Many of the breeding birds of the Keys are representative of Caribbean species, found here and nowhere else outside of South Florida. Despite human development, the Keys preserve three predominate upland habitats: West Indian hardwood hammock, pine rocklands, and mangrove forest.

Specialty breeding birds of the Florida Keys include: the white morph of the great blue heron (“great white heron”), reddish egret, white-crowned pigeon, mangrove cuckoo, Antillean nighthawk, gray kingbird, black-whiskered vireo, and Cuban yellow warbler. The possibility of Caribbean strays or “vagrants” sighted in the Florida Keys adds to the excitement, with about 20 species recorded over the years, including the North American first loggerhead kingbird in 2007, and a recent Key West quail dove.

The Dry Tortugas, a small group of islands located 70 miles west of Key West, is one of the top birding destinations in North America. It is well known for its breeding colonies of masked boobies, sooty and noddy terns. These federally protected islands are a “migrant trap” in the spring and fall when (depending on weather conditions)

Antillean nighthawk



Black-whiskered vireo



Great white heron



Reddish egret



White-crowned pigeon

birds may literally be hopping around at your feet. Many ocean-going (or “pelagic”) birds can be seen during the 3-hour boat trip from Key West.

Birding is good in the Keys year-round: Breeding birds are found in the spring and summer, with the peak of migrating songbirds in April and September. Hawks filter through the Keys in October. There is an annual fall raptor count at Curry Hammock State Park in the Middle Keys, known as one of the best sites for viewing migrating hawks in North America. Often, more than 1,000 individuals of a dozen species of raptor are counted. Many eastern birds winter in the Keys, and the Audubon Christmas bird count may tally 100 species.

There are dozens of good birding spots in the Florida Keys, from Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park in north Key Largo to McCoy Indigenous Park and Fort Zachary Taylor State Park in Key West. Many of these spots are featured on the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail. The Florida Keys Birding and Wildlife Festival is held every year (fall season) in the Middle Keys and includes a wide variety of events, field trips, and even a hawk watch.

To get started in birding, all you need is a good pair of binoculars, a field guide to the birds in your area, and a notebook. Begin to look up! If you list the birds you already recognize in your neighborhood, you’ll be on your way. It always helps to learn from others, and you’ll get plenty of help if you just ask for it. You can always join your local bird club or Audubon Society (e.g., Florida Keys Audubon Society at www.keysaudubon.org) and sign up for a field trip. Birding can open up a whole new world for you.

References: The best field guides to birds include: *The Peterson Field Guide to Eastern Birds* (Roger Tory Peterson, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston/New York, 1980), *The Sibley Guide to Birds* (David Allen Sibley, National Audubon Society, Alfred Knopf, 2000) and the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (John Dunn and Jonathon Alderfer, 6th Edition). The best reference for bird finding in Florida, with a special section on the Florida Keys, is *The ABA/Lane Birdfinding Guide, A Birder’s Guide to Florida* (Bill Pranty, American Birding Association, 2005). Finally, Miami’s Tropical Audubon Birdboard posts sightings of noteworthy birds throughout South Florida.

Special Section: Butterflying in the Florida Keys

Butterflies are among the most beautiful and mysterious creatures in nature. They are around us all the time (year-round in South Florida), but go mostly unnoticed. As the novelist and lepidopterist Vladimir Nabokov said: “It is astonishing how many people don’t notice butterflies.” Like birding, butterflying will get you outside and moving. Butterflies have been associated with freedom, spiritual growth, and the human soul. Observing and studying them can definitely improve your physical and mental health.

Butterflying is a fairly recent phenomenon in the United States, having taken off in the 1980s with the development of close-up binoculars and digital photography. Increasingly viewed as a resource to be conserved, most butterfly watchers today pack binoculars and cameras rather than nets. To get started with butterflies, you just need to start looking for them and become familiar with the ones in your neighborhood. Butterflies are easier to photograph than birds, and you can get started in that endeavor with just a little knowledge of butterflies and a 35mm camera. Butterflying is also associated with travel, hiking, and camping.





Large orange sulphur



Giant swallowtail



Mallow scrub hairstreak



Gulf fritillary

Butterfly gardening is one of the most rapidly growing pastimes in the country. To create a successful butterfly garden, plant native flowering plants for nectar and other species of plants that caterpillars eat. Allowing for a few weeds will attract butterflies, as well.

The greatest diversity of butterfly species is found in the tropics: Of the 750 or so species of butterfly in North America, about 160 have been found in Florida.

South Florida has about 18 species of butterfly that are declining or imperiled. Some of the well-known endangered species of butterfly in the Florida Keys include: the Schaus' Swallowtail, the Miami Blue, and the Bartram's Hairstreak. There are several reasons for the decline and/or disappearance of butterfly species: habitat loss, climate change, parasites, and pesticides. Nationwide, single-crop agricultural practices and suburban preferences for clean lawns and non-native grasses and plants have affected butterfly numbers and distribution. Salt water intrusion from storms (most notably, Hurricane Wilma in 2005) had a dramatic effect on certain butterflies in the Keys. Like birds, butterflies with specialized habitat requirements are more vulnerable.

Some of the most common and conspicuous butterflies you will see in the Florida Keys include the whites (Great Southern White), sulphurs (Orange-Barred and Large Orange), Giant Swallowtail, the Monarch, the Peacock, the Mangrove Buckeye, and the Mangrove Skipper, as well as the tropical long-winged butterflies like the Gulf Fritillary, the Zebra (the state butterfly) and the Julia (more common in the Upper Keys). You have to begin to look down for the tiny butterflies the size of your thumbnail, like the blues (Cassius and Ceranus Blue), hairstreaks (like Gray and Mallow Scrub Hairstreak) and some of the skippers (Fiery Skipper).

In the Florida Keys, you are guaranteed to see butterflies just by walking down your street, peeking into a vacant lot or strolling the beach. The same parks and preserves that are good for seeing birds will be good for seeing butterflies. State parks from Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park to Bahia Honda State Park to Fort Zachary Taylor State Park in Key West (each with a butterfly garden) will all have a variety of butterflies. Native butterflies in Key West can be found at The

Tropical Forest and Botanical Gardens (Stock Island), the Fran Ford White-Crowned Pigeon Preserve on Government Road, and the butterfly garden at West Martello Tower.

References: A good introduction to Florida's butterflies is *Florida's Fabulous Butterflies* by Thomas C. Emmel (World Publications CA, 1997). The best guide to finding butterflies in parks and preserves in the Florida Keys is *Butterflies Through Binoculars: A Field, Finding, and Gardening Guide to Butterflies in Florida* by Jeffrey Glassberg, Marc Minno and John Calhoun (Oxford Press, 2000). *Butterflies of the Florida Keys: A Guide to Common and Notable Species* (Quick Reference Publishing, Inc., Boynton Beach, FL) is both inexpensive and very handy. A good field guide to butterflies throughout North America is *Field Guide to the Butterflies of North America* by Jim Brock and Kenn Kaufman (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003).

General Park Notes & Health Tips

Hours. Parks are typically open from dawn to dusk. Visit the park’s online site or call for park hours. Be sure to check ahead of time over the holidays, as some parks may be closed.

Pets. Most parks are pet-friendly. Owners are asked to keep pets on leashes and clean up after their pets (some of these parks even offer bags for cleaning up).

ADA Compliance. State, county, and municipal authorities are often required to adhere to guidelines under the Americans With Disabilities Act when it comes to parking, ramps, and other assistance for those with disabilities who want to access parks.

See Your Doctor. Before you make dramatic changes to your lifestyle, especially when it comes to eating and exercise habits, check with your doctor. Make sure that your plan is reasonable. You want to see results without injury.

Comfortable Clothing. Be sure clothing is appropriate for your chosen activity, weather conditions, etc., and offers freedom of movement. For activities involving a lot of running, select shoes that are the proper size and offer foot and ankle support. If possible, leave at home, or locked in your car, anything that you carry that might interfere with your activity (backpacks, purses, etc.).

Safety Gear. It’s always a good idea to bring a portable phone with you so that you can call someone in case of emergency. If you’re exercising alone, consider wearing a whistle or alarm that you can use to signal anyone nearby should you be in trouble. Anyone going out on the water must have a life vest or personal flotation device.

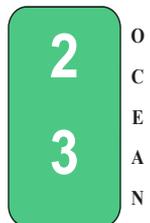
Hydration. Temperatures in the Florida Keys can be punishing, especially during the summer months. Bring bottled water and take drink breaks every so often, especially if you’re engaging in vigorous physical activity.

Sun Protection. Wear sunblock with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. The fairer the skin, the higher the SPF. If it’s comfortable to do so, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts. A hat can protect the scalp, ears, face, and neck. Sunglasses are particularly important in the outdoors.

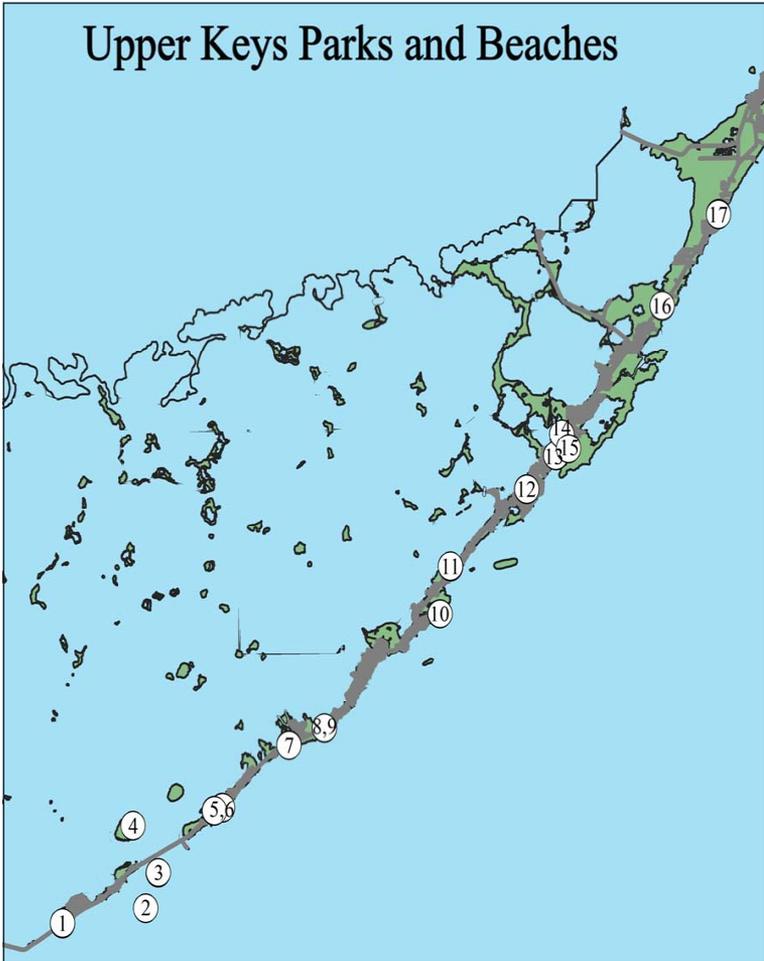
Mosquito Prevention. Although all mosquitoes are pesky, some species of mosquito can actually carry disease and pose a risk to individual and public health. The best way to avoid mosquitoes while you’re in the outdoors is to wear mosquito repellent with DEET as a main ingredient. If it’s comfortable

Mile Markers are posted along the Overseas Highway. They are used to locate where along the string of islands a park is located. Mile Markers are posted every mile from the Monroe-Dade County line (MM113) down to Key West (MM0). They appear on the road, and in this directory, as white numbers on green background. A notation next to the Mile Marker in this directory indicates whether the park is on the Atlantic side of the Overseas Highway (ocean) or the Florida Bay side (bay).

Note: Photos are included to promote physical activity of all types and are not necessarily representative of the facilities available at the parks profiled on the page.



Upper Keys Parks and Beaches



- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1 Anne's Beach
Mile Marker 73.5, Islamorada | 7 Windley Key Fossil Reef Geological State Park
Mile Marker 84.9, Islamorada | 13 Friendship Park
35 Hibiscus Ln, Key Largo |
| 2 San Pedro Underwater Archeological Preserve State Park
Mile Marker 85.5 | 8 Founders Park
87000 Overseas Hwy, Islamorada | 14 Murray Nelson Gov Ctr Park
102050 Overseas Hwy, Key Largo |
| 3 Indian Key Historic State Park
Mile Marker 85.5, Islamorada | 9 Old Settler's Park
Mile Marker 92.5, Tavernier | 15 John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, Mile Marker 102.5 |
| 4 Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park, Mile Marker 78.5 | 10 Harry Harris Beach/Park
East Beach Rd, Tavernier | 16 Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail, 3 La Croix Court, Key Largo |
| 5 Burr Beach/Park
299 Beach Rd (End of Beach Rd), Islamorada | 11 Sunset Point Park
Sunset Dr, Key Largo | 17 Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park
County Road 905 (MM 106) |
| 6 Islamorada Library Beach Park
94 Johnson Rd, Islamorada | 12 Key Largo Community Park/Pool
500 St Croix Pl, Key Largo | |

DAGNY JOHNSON KEY LARGO HAMMOCK BOTANICAL STATE PARK

Dagny Johnson covers nearly 2,400 acres on the northern third of the island of Key Largo. The park contains the largest remaining fragments of rockland hammock in the continental United States. It is also home to 84 protected species of plants and animals. This is a particularly good park for anyone who'd like to incorporate walking into his/her fitness regimen. It has a full loop trail (2.1 miles) and a half loop trail (1 mile), most of which are unpaved. Pamphlets on display at the park entrance help visitors identify the plants, birds, butterflies, and other wildlife that they might come across during their walks. The park is open daily from sunrise to sunset. Supportive shoes and mosquito repellent, in particular, are recommended. Dagny Johnson is located on County Road 905 (oceanside), approximately one mile north of the MM106 curve onto the 18-Mile Stretch. www.floridastateparks.org/keylargohammock, (305) 451-1202

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FLORIDA KEYS OVERSEAS HERITAGE TRAIL

The Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail runs between Key West and Key Largo in segments. The longest, continuous section of paved trail exists along MM 72 through MM 106. The trail is a multi-use facility that parallels Overseas Highway and can be used for bicycling, skating, hiking, running, fishing, and kayaking. www.floridastateparks.org/floridakeys, (305) 853-3571

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MURRAY E. NELSON GOVERNMENT CENTER PARK

This park is situated behind the Murray Nelson Government Center, which is home to the Upper Keys' Community Health Services department of the Florida Department of Health in Monroe County. This park features five pavilions, restrooms, picnic tables, benches, and beautiful scenic views of the bay. The water is also accessible for smaller boats. Address is 102050 Overseas Hwy, Key Largo. www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 852-7161

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Photo by Janelle Pino

JOHN PENNEKAMP CORAL REEF STATE PARK

John Pennekamp State Park is approximately 21 miles long and extends about three miles into the Atlantic Ocean. Walkers can take advantage of several nature trails. Paddlers can enjoy the 2.5-mile canoe trail winding through the mangrove swamp. Many visitors to the park opt

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to snorkel or scuba dive near the park's coral reefs, where they see marine life and historic artifacts. The park is open 8 a.m. to sunset daily. There is an entrance fee and additional concession fees for certain activities. www.pennekampspark.com, (305) 451-1202

FRIENDSHIP PARK

This small county-run park features a baseball diamond, basketball courts, and a playground. www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 852-7161

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KEY LARGO COMMUNITY PARK

Key Largo Community Park is sprawling, with wide-open playing fields, courts and surfaces for tennis, soccer, baseball, volleyball, basketball, handball, and skateboarding.



This park also has a fitness course. The Jacobs Aquatic Center is located on the edge of the park (admission fees apply). The county runs the park in partnership with the YMCA. It is located in a neighborhood near Mile Marker 99 of the Overseas Highway (oceanside). Address is 500 St. Croix Place, Key Largo. www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 453-3422

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SUNSET POINT PARK

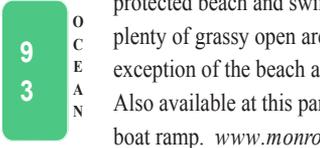
This small county-run park features a boat ramp, offering kayakers and canoers access to surrounding waters. The park is located in a neighborhood near Mile Marker 95 of the Overseas Highway (bay). Address is 20 Sunset Road, Key Largo. www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 852-7161

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HARRY HARRIS PARK

Harry Harris Park, located at MM 92.6 and East Beach Road, features a multitude of amenities, including pavilions, barbecue grills, picnic tables, a playground, a basketball court, and baseball fields. It also has a



(305) 852-7161

protected beach and swimming area. There are plenty of grassy open areas as well. With the exception of the beach area, the park is pet friendly. Also available at this park is an easily accessible boat ramp. www.monroecounty-fl.gov,

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OLD SETTLERS PARK

One of the historic locations in Tavernier is Old Settler's Park, a small park located at MM 92. It features a pavilion, picnic table, walking trail, and playground. Benches scatter the park allowing visitors to enjoy a scenic view of the ocean. Pets are allowed.

www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 852-7161

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Photo by Janelle Pino

FOUNDERS PARK

One of the largest parks in Monroe County, encompassing over 40 acres, is Founders Park located at MM 87. This park features a splash pad play area, playground, baseball field, volleyball court, basketball court, skate park, a beach, boat ramp, and a dog park. One of the more grand features of Founders Park is their heated Olympic swimming pool equipped with a diving well and four spring boards. Visitors can also enjoy a leisurely stroll or jog on the walking and fitness trails. Fields are also well-maintained for multiple forms of recreational activities. www.islamorada.fl.us, (305) 664-6400

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BURR BEACH/PARK

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Burr Beach is a vacant sandy beach located at the end of Beach Road in Tavernier at approximately MM 91. Visitors can relax on the beach and access the water. www.monroecounty-fl.gov. (305) 852-7161

SAN PEDRO UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRESERVE STATE PARK

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One of Florida's many "Museums of the Sea" includes San Pedro Underwater Archeological Preserve Park, located at MM 85.5 (1.25 nautical miles south from Indian Key at coordinates 24 degrees 51.802'N, 80 degrees 40.795'W). It features a submerged shipwreck that visitors can enjoy when diving and snorkeling. The name of the sunken ship is San Pedro, which descended into the ocean in 1733. www.floridastateparks.org/sanpedro. (305) 664-2540

WINDLEY KEY FOSSIL REEF GEOLOGICAL STATE PARK

A historic quarry with fossilized coral, Windley Key

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Fossil Reef Geological State Park allows visitors to explore the ancient coral and learn of its history. There are guided trails and picnic tables.

www.floridastateparks.org/windleykey,
(305) 664-2540



ISLAMORADA LIBRARY BEACH PARK

Library Beach Park, located behind the Islamorada

Library, features a small playground, a Tiki pavilion, picnic tables, barbeque grills, and restrooms. Access is free. Address is 94 Johnson Rd, Islamorada. www.islamorada.fl.us, (305) 664-6400

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INDIAN KEY HISTORIC STATE PARK

Indian Key Historic State Park, located on a little island on the Oceanside, MM 79, can only be accessed by boat. Local businesses provide boat and kayak rentals to this park. Visitors can enjoy swimming, snorkeling, fishing, and hiking. www.floridastateparks.org/indiankey, (305) 664-2540

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LIGNUMVITAE KEY BOTANICAL STATE PARK

Located one mile west of US 1 at MM 78.5, this state park is an offshore small island and features guided tours. Fees apply. www.floridastateparks.org/lignumvitaey, (305) 664-2540

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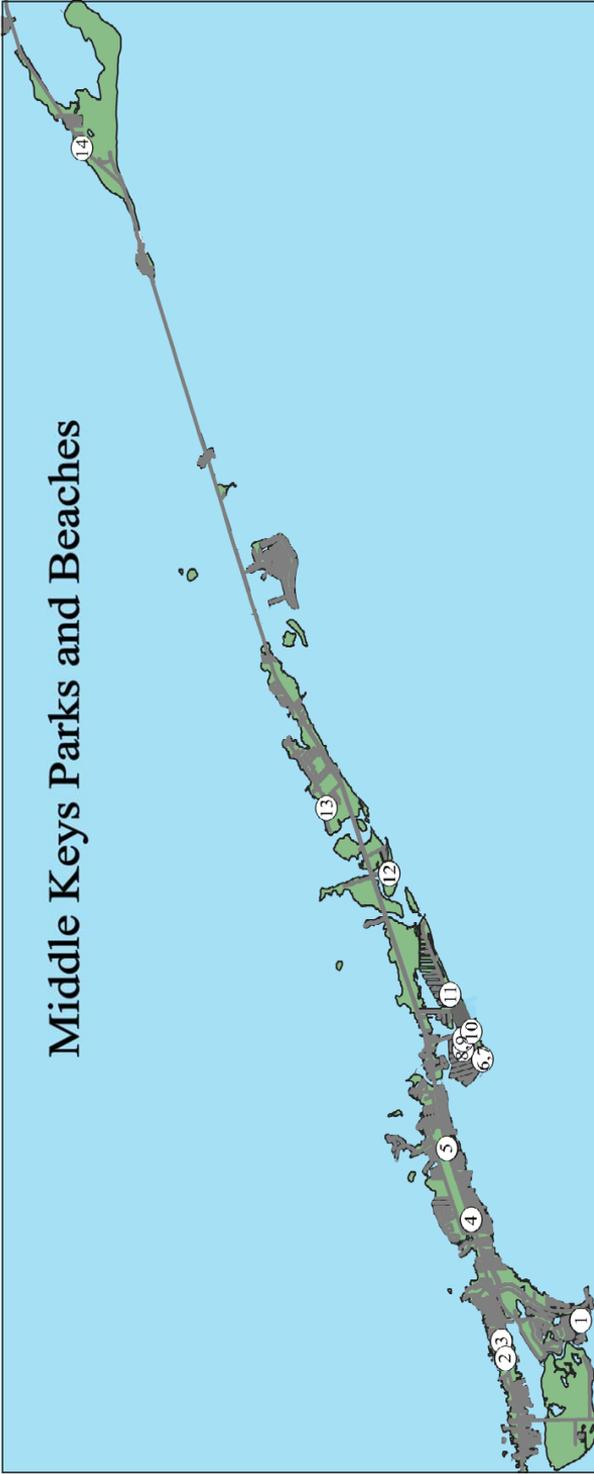
ANNE'S BEACH

Dedicated to Anne Eaton, local environmentalist for which this beach is named, is located on MM 73.5. The beach features picnic tables, swimming area, and bathrooms. There is also a boardwalk that intersects the mangroves. www.islamorada.fl.us, 305.664.6400,
(305) 664-6400

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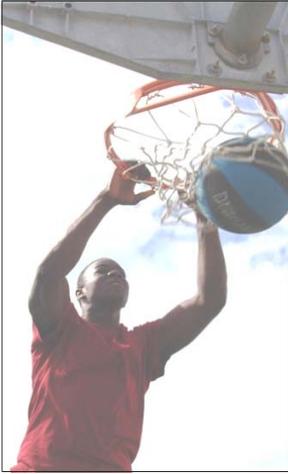
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Middle Keys Parks and Beaches



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|---|---|---|---|----|--|
| 1 | Sombrero Beach
2150 Sombrero Beach Road, Marathon | 5 | Oceanfront Park
98th St & 99th St, Marathon | 10 | East Side Park
1st & 2nd Street, Key Colony Beach |
| 2 | Marathon Community Park and Skate Park
200 36th St, Marathon | 6 | Key Colony Beach Walking & Jogging Paths
Ocean St & Ocean Dr, Key Colony Beach | 11 | Coco Plum Beach
1690 Coco Plum Blvd, Marathon |
| 3 | Jesse Hobbs Park
US 1 & 41st St, Marathon | 7 | Sunset Park Beach
Ocean West Dr. and 12th St., Key Colony Beach | 12 | Curry Hammock State Park
56200 Overseas Hwy, Marathon |
| 4 | Rotary Children's Park
US 1 & 75th St, Marathon | 8 | Key Colony Beach Golf & Tennis
460 8th St, Key Colony Beach | 13 | Sunset Bay Park
Morton St. and Kyle Ave MM 58 |
| | | 9 | Key Colony Beach Children's Playground
Shelter Bay Drive, Key Colony Beach | 14 | Long Key State Park
67400 Overseas Highway, Long Key |

LONG KEY STATE PARK



Long Key State Park is also known as “Cayo Vivora,” — Rattlesnake Key— as the island bears a resemblance to a snake opening its mouth. The park offers visitors kayaking opportunities, walking trails, as well as an observation tower. This park also offers a full facility for camping. Fees apply. Address is 67400 Overseas Highway, Long Key. www.floridastateparks.org/longkey, (305) 664-4815

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SUNSET BAY PARK

Located on Grassy Key at MM 58 on Morton Street and Kyle Avenue, Sunset Bay Park features a multitude of native plants and provides a habitat for numerous species of crabs and birds. Visitors can relax at the picnic tables. Also at this park, is an Osprey nesting platform that was erected with the help of Florida Keys Electric Cooperative and the City of Marathon.

www.ci.marathon.fl.us/sunset-bay-park, (305) 289-4123

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CURRY HAMMOCK STATE PARK

This state park features a beach, playground, showers, and picnic areas. Visitors can enjoy the beach, bicycling, camping, kayaking, swimming, and fishing. Popular for kayaking, the park is within paddling distance of several mangrove islands and a white sandbar. Address is 56200 Overseas Highway, Marathon. www.floridastateparks.org/CurryHammock, (305) 289-2690

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COCO PLUM BEACH

Coco Plum Beach is a long sandy beach on MM 55 in Marathon and can be accessed via Coco Plum Blvd. Available at this beach, is a covered pavilion and restrooms. It is a popular locale for turtle nesting. Address is 1690 Coco Plum Dr. www.ci.marathon.fl.us, (305) 743-0033

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EAST SIDE PARK

On the east end of Key Colony Beach, East Side Park features a picnic area, grassy fields, and tennis courts. The park is located at 1st and 2nd Street. www.keycolonybeach.net, (305) 289-1212

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SUNSET PARK BEACH

Sunset Park Beach is on the west end of Key Colony Beach at West Ocean Drive and 12th Street. Visitors can picnic here under the tiki pavilion, walk on the dock, and watch the sunset. Dogs are also permitted at this venue. Fishing and swimming, however, are not permitted. www.keycolonybeach.net, (305) 289-1212

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KEY COLONY BEACH CHILDREN’S PLAYGROUND

The children’s playground at Key Colony Beach is on Shelter Bay Drive and 7th Street. There are slides, swing sets, tetherball, a gym climber, see saws, a swing bridge, and spring horses. www.keycolonybeach.net, (305) 289-1212

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KEY COLONY BEACH GOLF & TENNIS

The Key Colony Beach golf course is located at 460 8th Street. Fees apply for utilizing the golf course. Also at this site are tennis courts, a basketball court, bocci ball court, and a horseshoe pit; all available to visitors free of charge. www.keycolonybeach.net, (305) 289-1212

KEY COLONY BEACH WALKING AND JOGGING PATHS

Starting on Ocean Street and Ocean Drive in Key Colony Beach, there are three pedestrian courses. The first one is 0.4 miles along Ocean Drive East, the second one is 0.5 miles on Ocean Drive West, and the last one is

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0.8 miles along the Sadowski Causeway. The City of Key Colony Beach reminds bicyclists who choose to use these paths, to warn pedestrians that they are passing them, via an audible alert to prevent an injury from happening. www.keycolonybeach.net, (305) 289-1212



OCEANFRONT PARK

This eight acre park, located between 98th and 99th Streets, is Marathon’s newest park— Oceanfront Park. It features many amenities including several tiki pavilions, a fishing pavilion, boardwalk, mangrove nature trail, and kayak launch. Pavilions can be used for reading, meditating, and picnicking. Visitors can also read information panels about the native habitat and marine life are displayed. It is also handicap accessible. The park is open from 7:30 a.m. to dusk. www.ci.marathon.fl.us, (305) 743-0033

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ROTARY CHILDREN’S PARK AND MARATHON’S DOG PARK

Across from the Marathon Airport at Overseas Highway and 75th Street, the Rotary Children’s Park features unique playgrounds, including Thomas the Train, ship, shark, tunnels, and other multi-level climbing, sliding, and swinging equipment. The park also features picnic areas, a lookout tower, and restrooms. Neighboring the children’s park is the Marathon Dog park at 75th Street. Address is 7575 Overseas Highway, Marathon. The park is open from 7:30 a.m. to dusk.

www.ci.marathon.fl.us, (305) 743-0033

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SOMBRERO BEACH

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Tucked away at the end of Sombrero Beach Road, south of the Overseas Highway at MM 50, is Sombrero Beach. This well-maintained site has a sizeable and sandy white beach. It is also a popular turtle nesting spot. Visitors can swim, snorkel, and kayak. The grounds of the park have numerous picnic areas, barbeque pits, grassy areas, a playground, fishing pier, volleyball court, restrooms, and showers. It includes total handicap accessibility and ample parking. The park is open from 7:30 a.m. to dusk. www.ci.marathon.fl.us, (305) 743-0033

JESSIE HOBBS PARK

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On the intersection of Overseas Highway and 41st Street in Marathon, is Jessie Hobbs Park. The park is equipped with a playground, picnic tables, benches, basketball courts with bleachers, and restrooms. The park has lighting at night and is open from 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. www.ci.marathon.fl.us, (305) 743-0033

MARATHON COMMUNITY PARK AND SKATE PARK

Marathon Community Park provides facilities for numerous activities, including four tennis courts, a tennis wall, three basketball courts, and a roller hockey court. There are also two little league fields, two soccer fields, and a shuffle and bocce ball court. Unique to this park, is a large amphitheater with plentiful space for audience members to enjoy a show or event, including the Original Marathon Seafood Festival. There is also a skate park that can be used for rollerblading or skateboarding. Smaller children can play on the large playground. The park has lighting at night and is open from 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Address is 200 36th St., Marathon. www.ci.marathon.fl.us, (305) 743-0033

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Lower Keys Parks and Beaches



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|---|---|---|--|----|---|
| 1 | Boca Chica Beach
354 Boca China Rd, Key West | 5 | Sugarloaf School
255 Crane Blvd, Summerland | 9 | Blue Heron Leisure Club
Wilder Rd and Lyftons Wy, Big Pine Key |
| 2 | Big Coppitt Volunteer Fire Department Park
280 Avenue F, Big Coppitt Key | 6 | Ramrod Park
Bay Shore Dr and Pruitt Dr, Ramrod Key | 10 | Big Pine Key Community Park
31009 Atlantis Rd, Big Pine Key |
| 3 | Wilhelmina Harvey Park
373 Avenue F, Big Coppitt Key | 7 | Palm Villa Park
30478 Palm Dr, Big Pine Key | 11 | Bahia Honda State Park
36850 Overseas Hwy, Big Pine Key |
| 4 | Bay Point Park
6 West Circle Dr, Saddlebunch Keys | 8 | Watson Field and Big Pine Dog Park
30150 South St, Big Pine Key | 12 | Veterans Memorial Park
West end of Seven Mile Bridge, Big Pine Key |

VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK

Little Duck Key is home to the Veteran’s Memorial park located on the west end of the Seven Mile Bridge. It has a sandy beach, picnic areas, and restrooms. There is also easy access to the mangrove habitat from this park. Pets are allowed. www.floridastateparks.org, (305) 872-2353

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BAHIA HONDA STATE PARK

One of the largest state parks in the Florida Keys is Bahia Honda. Bahia Honda’s not-in-use Henry Flagler railroad makes it a unique backdrop for its beaches, sunsets, and snorkeling. Other park activities include bicycling, boating, camping, fishing, hiking, picnicking, and swimming. Snorkel gear and kayaks are available for rent. Additionally, beach wheelchairs are available upon request at the entrance of the park; first-come, first-served. Address is 36850 Overseas Highway, Big Pine Key. www.floridastateparks.org/bahiahonda, (305) 872-2353

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BIG PINE KEY COMMUNITY PARK

This large park is equipped with many amenities, including a roller hockey rink, basketball court, handball courts, baseball field, tennis courts, bocce courts, and shuffleboard courts. Visitors can also use the existing fitness trail while they enjoy the view of the bay in this gulf front park. There is also a playground, skate park, and community center that can be used for various engagements, including meetings and parties. It is located at the end of Sands Road, 31009 Atlantis Rd., Big Pine Key. www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 295-4385



Photo by Lisa Tinnes

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PALM VILLA PARK

This small park is located at the end of Palm Avenue and Wilder at 30478 Palm Drive in Big Pine Key. Palm Villa Park has one picnic table and a playground. www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 295-4385

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WATSON FIELD PARK AND BIG PINE DOG PARK

This park serves as a dog park equipped with a grassy playing field. There is also one baseball field, one sandy volleyball court, and two well-maintained tennis courts. The property is maintained by Monroe County. Address is 30150 South Street, Big Pine Key. www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 872-0292

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BLUE HERON PARK

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The Blue Heron Park is open, free of charge for the public, and is located on the intersection of Wilder Road and Lytton Way, off Key Deer Boulevard, in Big Pine Key. The park is equipped with a foosball table, ping pong tables, and tetherballs. There is also a basketball court and volleyball court. Visitors can have a barbeque on one of the six available grills. There are also three tiki pavilions and a

community building with restrooms.

www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 872-0292

RAMROD PARK

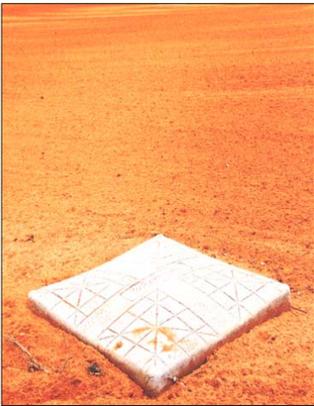
On the corner of Bay Shore Drive and Pruitt

Drive on Ramrod Key, is Ramrod Park, also known as Sunset Park; not to be confused with Sunset Park Beach in Key Colony Beach or Sunset Point Park in Key Largo!

The park is vacant and sandy. Visitors can enjoy walking or relaxing on the sand while watching the sunset. www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 295-4385



Photo by Jennifer Duyser, at Sammy Creek Landing, Old State Road 4A, Sugarloaf. Features boat ramp and small park.



SUGARLOAF SCHOOL

At Mile Marker 19, the Sugarloaf School Track and Field is accessible to the public during after school hours. In addition to the track, visitors can enjoy various recreational sports in the open grassy areas. Address is 255 Crane Boulevard in Summerland Key. www.keysschools.com, (305) 745-3282

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BAY POINT PARK

Bay Point Park is a relatively large park located at 6 West Circle Drive behind Baby's Coffee in the Saddlebunch Keys. It can be accessed by turning on to West Circle Drive from the Overseas Highway. Visitors can use the sand volleyball court, basketball court, tennis court, and bocce court. Children can also play on the sandy playground that includes swing sets and a jungle gym. The park also has a large grassy field and a soccer net. Benches, picnic tables, and barbeque pits are also available.

www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 295-4385

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WILHELMINA HARVEY PARK



The gated Wilhelmina Harvey Park, located at 373 Avenue F, Big Coppitt Key has a jungle gym, swing set, and a picnic area. This family friendly park features an open grassy area with a small walking trail. Residents and visitors commonly bring their dogs to this park. www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 295-4385

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BIG COPPITT VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT PARK

The well-equipped and well-maintained Big Coppitt Volunteer Fire Department Park has several opportunities for physical activity. These include a basketball court, roller hockey rink, bocce courts, horseshoe pits, and a handball court. After a period of activity, visitors can rest at one of six tables and benches. The park is located on 280 Avenue F, Big Coppitt Key. www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 295-4385

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Photos courtesy of Monroe County

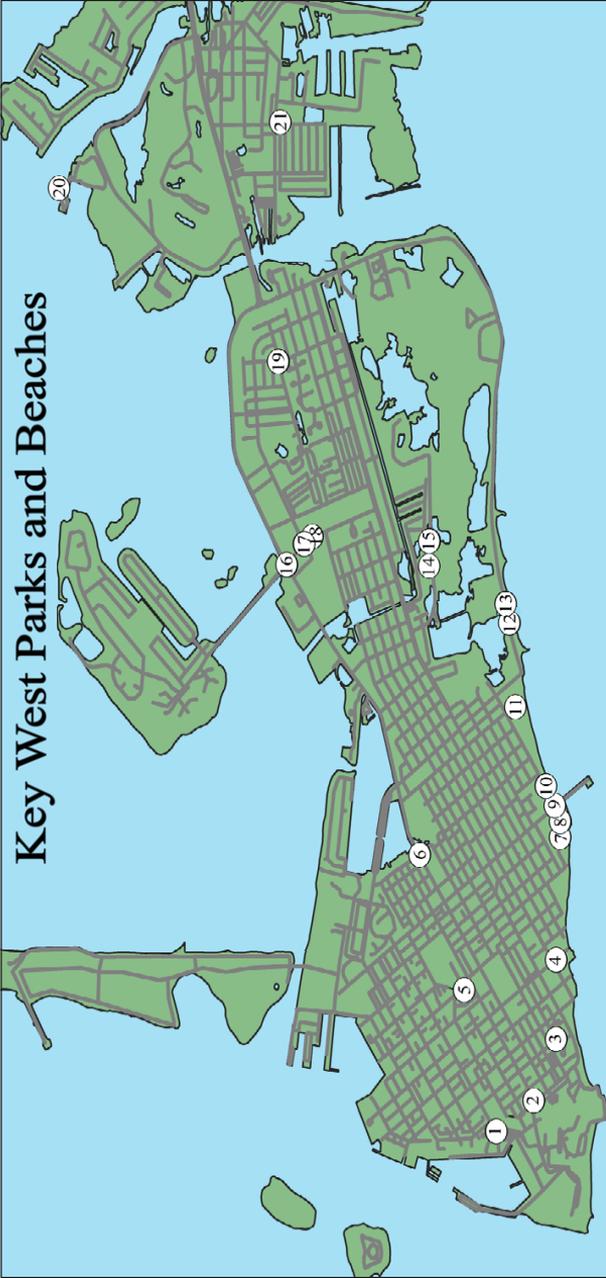
BOCA CHICA BEACH

Boca Chica Beach at 354 Boca Chica Road is adjacent to the Naval Air Station in East Rockland Key. It is an unmaintained, relatively secluded beach, with a multitude of sea life. The beach is licensed by US Navy. cnic.navy.mil, (305) 293-2430

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Key West Parks and Beaches



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| 1 Fort Zachary Taylor Beach/Park
601 Howard England Way | 7 Astro Park Playground
1000 Atlantic Blvd | 12 Smathers Beach
3471 S Roosevelt Blvd | 17 Rosa Hernandez Softball Field
Northside Dr & Kennedy Dr |
| 2 Fredrick Douglass Gym
111 Olivia St | 8 Higgs Beach/Dog Park
1050 Atlantic Blvd | 13 Key West Pines Park (KW Airport)
3501 S Roosevelt Blvd | 18 Wickers Sports Complex
1445 Kennedy Dr |
| 3 Martin Luther King Rec Ctr
300 Catherine St | 9 Sonny McCoy Indigenous Park
1801 White St | 14 Fran Ford White-Crowned Pigeon Preserve
Beginning of Government Rd | 19 Cozumel Park
19th Street & Donald Ave |
| 4 Simonton Beach
1420 Simonton Street | 10 Rest Beach/C. B. Harvey Park
1300 Atlantic Blvd | 15 Little Hamaca Park
Government Road | 20 FKCC Swimming Pool
5901 College Rd |
| 5 Bill Butler Park
721 Poorhouse Lane | 11 City of KW Nature Preserves
1700 & 1800 Atlantic Blvd | 16 Clayton Sterling Complex
900 Kennedy Dr | 21 Bernstein Park
5th St and 5th Ave |
| 6 Bayview Park
Truman Ave & Jose Marti Dr | | | |

STOCK ISLAND—KEY WEST

BERNSTEIN PARK

Stock Island has a nice open park, known as Bernstein Park. It features public recreation, such as sports—including baseball, basketball and soccer—a playground, and a nice walking and jogging track. Shaded pavilions and barbeques pits can also be used by visitors. It is also home to the Key West Rugby Club. The park can be found on the intersection of 5th Street and 5th Avenue in Stock Island. In late 2015, the park will close for renovation for up to one year. www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 295-4385

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FLORIDA KEYS COMMUNITY COLLEGE SWIMMING POOL

A public junior Olympic sized swimming pool can be accessed at Florida Keys Community College for a fee. The pool is heated and has an eight lane, 25 yard facility set for lap swimming. It is open Monday through Saturday. Swim lessons are offered for adults and children. Aqua fitness classes are also offered at the pool. It is located at 5901 College Road in Key West at the back left hand corner of campus. www.fkcc.edu, (305) 296-9081

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SOUTH KEY WEST

KEY WEST PINES PARK

Key West Pines Park is an open picnic area under Australian pines next to Key West International Airport and East Martello Towers. Pets are allowed if pet owners pick up after them. There is a good view of the water and sunrise and plenty of shade. The address is 3501 South Roosevelt Blvd. www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 295-4385

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Photo by Gayle Glover

SMATHERS BEACH

Smathers Beach has the longest stretch of white sand in Key West. The sand was imported from the Bahamas. The beach is a popular place for tanning, sitting on beach, picnicking, watersports (e.g. windsurfing) and beach sports (e.g. volleyball). There are concessions, showers, and restrooms. Spits and seaweed areas are good for shorebirds. The mile-long sidewalk is much used by bicycles, joggers, and walkers of all ages. The walking trail is well-known to locals. It is located on 3471 South Roosevelt Blvd. www.cityofkeywest-fl.gov, (305) 809-3700

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NEW TOWN — KEY WEST

CLAYTON STERLING COMPLEX

On the intersection of Northside Drive and Kennedy Drive is Clayton Sterling Complex. The complex features four state-of-the-art baseball fields, most active in the spring and summer. There is some associated green space. Wildlife include active osprey nests that are frequently seen on the light poles. The address is 900 Kennedy Drive. www.cityofkeywest-fl.gov, (305) 293-8367

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ROSA HERNANDEZ SOFTBALL FIELD

Neighboring Clayton Sterling Complex, is Rosa Hernandez Softball Field. This complex is busy during the softball season. There is a concession stand, restroom, and bleachers. It is on Northside Drive and Kennedy Drive. www.cityofkeywest-fl.gov, (305)293-8367

WICKERS SPORTS COMPLEX

This sports complex comprises a football ball stadium, and soccer field. It is located across the street from Poinciana Elementary School. The stadium and field were previously known as Tommy Roberts Stadium (the football stadium), the George Mira football field (the actual football playing field), and the DeWitt Roberts softball field. It is located on the intersection of Kennedy Drive and Flagler Avenue at 1445 Kennedy Drive. There is also a small skate park, known as Blake Fernandez Skate Park, adjacent to George Mira football field on 14th Street and Flagler Avenue. www.cityofkeywest-fl.gov, (305) 293-8367

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Photo by Rosita Maqueira Bernhard

COZUMEL PARK



A small park exists at the cul-de-sac of 19th Terrace and Donald Avenue. The address is 1220 19th Terrace. The gated park has two jungle gyms, a swing set, basketball court, handball court, and exercise bars. There is also a shaded picnic area and walking trail.

www.cityofkeywest-fl.gov,
(305) 293-8367

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LITTLE HAMACA PARK



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Little Hamaca Park, off of Government Road about a half mile down near the curve, has a newly constructed nature trail and boardwalk that cut through low hammock and mangrove habitats. It is an out-of-the-way green space that has been replanted with native trees, where exotics are controlled. It is a good habitat for breeding Keys birds and migrants, such as warblers. Visitors can enjoy a bike ride through Little Hamaca, and watch the airplanes take off. www.cityofkeywest-fl.gov, (305) 293-8367

FRAN FORD WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON PRESERVE

Located near the beginning of Government Road, within Little Hamaca Park, and across from the Cuban airplane, is the Fran Ford White-Crowned Pigeon Preserve. It is an open brushy area with a pavilion displaying photographs of birds, butterflies, and other wildlife. It was replanted with native plants and trees, such as poisonwood, which the white-crowned pigeons like. It is a good place for wintering birds and native butterflies that come here on sunny afternoons.

www.keywestgardenclub.com, (305) 294-3210

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OLD TOWN—KEY WEST

BAYVIEW PARK

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N** At the intersection of Truman Avenue and Jose Marti Drive, is Bayview Park. It is a refreshing green space at the entrance to Old Key West. The park is complete with a gazebo, picnic areas, six tennis courts, softball/soccer fields, and basketball court. There are also playground equipment and restrooms. The park often hosts community and social events. www.cityofkeywest-fl.gov, (305) 809-3700

REST BEACH/C.B. HARVEY PARK

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N** Rest Beach, also known as C.B. Harvey Park, is located at 1300 Atlantic Blvd. adjacent to White Street Pier and the AIDS Memorial. Visitors can use the available picnic tables and benches. There is coastal scrub, a variety of plantings, a narrow beach, and great views of the ocean. The park is named after the late C.B. (Cornelius Bradford) Harvey, former Key West mayor and commissioner. www.cityofkeywest-fl.gov, (305) 809-3700

HIGGS BEACH

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N** Adjacent to the Casa Marina Resort, Higgs Beach offers a variety of activities that visitors can enjoy, including swimming, snorkeling, beach volleyball, and tennis. West Martello, which neighbors the beach is a historic civil war era fort, and offers a free self-guided tour. It is also the home of the Key West Garden Club. The Key West Garden Club contains an acre and a half of tropical plants. The serene gardens are a place for contemplation, yoga, meditation, reading and exploring the kaleidoscope of flora in the Lower Keys. There is also a separate area for dogs. The address is 1050 Atlantic Blvd. www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 295-4385; www.keywestgardenclub.com

ASTRO CITY

Located at 1000 Atlantic Blvd across from Higgs Beach is Astro Park Playground. It features a large sandy playground, barbecue pits, a volleyball court, picnic tables, tennis courts, handball courts, and restrooms.

It is a well-known setting to all Key West parents of small children. www.monroecounty-fl.gov, (305) 295-4385

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SONNY MCCOY INDIGENOUS PARK

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At the end White Street and Atlantic Blvd is Indigenous Park. The park was replanted some time ago with native vegetation, hence the name. There is a fresh water pond cared for by the Florida Keys Audubon Society. This is the home of Wildlife Rehabilitation Center . The park is a good breeding ground for various wildlife, including wintering birds. Occasional vagrant West Indies birds have included Western Spindalis and Bahama Mockingbird. There are also usually plenty of Jungle Fowl (better known as the Key West Chicken) in the vicinity. There is a pavilion that can be reserved for various special events, including weddings, graduation parties, or birthdays.
www.keywestwildlifecenter.org, (305) 292-1008

CITY OF KEY WEST NATURE PRESERVES

There are two units of preserved areas off of Atlantic Blvd between White Street and Bertha Street. One is near 1800 Atlantic Blvd; The other one is located near 1700 Atlantic Blvd. The nature preserves have nice paths and boardwalks that wind through mangrove ponds to the beach. They are good for wintering birds and some breeding birds as well. They are less disturbed beaches with native vegetation. www.cityofkeywest-fl.gov, (305) 809-3700

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Photo by Lisa Tinnes

SIMONTON STREET BEACH

Simonton Street Beach is a small beach equipped with a boat ramp for small boats. There is also a small dock that visitors can use for sightseeing. Restrooms and changing rooms are also available. The beach is located at 1420 Simonton Street at the end of the street. www.cityofkeywest-fl.gov, (305) 809-3700

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Photo by City of Key West

BILL BUTLER PARK

The tucked away Bill Butler Park, features an open park area with playground equipment, and a picnic area for community gatherings. Many years ago, it was the site of the Monroe County's home for indigent senior citizens and was known as Monroe County Colored Folks Home. The park was opened in 1986 and named for William "Bill" Butler, Sr., who was a musician and member of the Welter's Coronet Band and founding father of the Key West Junkanoos (A celebration with African roots that had its beginning in the Bahamas in the 17th century to preserve African cultural traditions in danger of being lost in the displacement process of the slave trade.) The park is located at 721 Poorhouse Lane, at the end of the street adjacent to Windsor Lane. www.cityofkeywest-fl.gov, (305) 809-3700

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Photo by Gayle Glover



Photo by Donna Stayton

FORT ZACHARY TAYLOR STATE PARK

Named after former President Zachary Taylor in 1845, this large 87 acre state park is steeped in history. The park is part of Florida’s 1845-1866 coastal defense system. There are armaments and other historical artifacts. A fee or an annual pass is required to enter the park. The park is a popular place for sunbathing, swimming, snorkeling, fishing, picnics, special events, etc. Less well known is that it is an excellent spot for migrating birds, as it is the first land they see. It is also good for stray Caribbean birds like the first recorded Loggerhead Kingbird. The park includes tropical hammock, beaches, an Australian pine forest being gradually thinned out, a butterfly garden, and a large open area that can attract birds and butterflies. Walking throughout the entire park will make a good work-out. Address is 601 Howard England Way. www.floridastateparks.org, (305) 292-6713

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BAHAMA VILLAGE—KEY WEST

FREDERICK DOUGLASS GYM

The Frederick Douglass Community Center &

Gym houses a large basketball court, bleachers, a stage, and rope climb.

Various activities for children and youth take place on this site, including a citywide annual basketball clinic and tournament. It is used, too, for community social events with a small user’s fee charged. It was the site of the Frederick Douglass School, named after the famous African American historian and orator, that served the children of Black families in Key West from 1871 – 1965. Adjacent to the gym is the Frederick Douglass Learning & Memorial Garden. The Community Center & Gym is located at 111 Olivia Street. www.cityofkeywest-fl.gov, (305) 809-3700

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Photo by John Wilson Smith

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. COMMUNITY POOL



Located at 300 Catherine Street, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center & Pool houses a pool and community meeting rooms. There are two (2) pools, one adult, where lap swimming, water exercise classes, and other water activities can be enjoyed by visitors, and there is a pool for young children. The pool is open to the public for free. Water exercises are offered at the pool several times a week during the spring and summer months. There is a monthly fee of \$20 for unlimited water exercise classes, with the first one free of charge, or a \$5 charge per class.

www.cityofkeywest-fl.gov,

(305) 809-3700



NELSON ENGLISH PARK

Also, located at 300 Catherine Street, named for one of the island's great civic leaders of the past and the first African American postmaster in Key West (1882-86), is the newly renovated Nelson English Park. It is a popular site for family gatherings and other community social outdoor events. It is well-equipped with adult exercise equipment, basketball courts, and several types of playground equipment for children that include climbing apparatus, swings, and a merry-go-round. This is a typical resident park located in the heart of Bahama Village. www.cityofkeywest-fl.gov, (305) 809-3700



WILLIE WARD PARK

Known as the “twin park” to Nelson English, the Willie Ward Park is adjacent to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center & Pool. It is, relatively, a hidden, greener and subdued space compared to Nelson English Park. It contains a great amount of trees and shrubbery and is considered a great location for reflection and communing with nature. There are benches, picnic tables, and a pavilion for private or public group activities. The park is named after another important community activist, Willie Ward, who, along with his wife Theodora, played a significant role in creating a wholesome environment for children to gather during the years before his death in 1994 while he served as community center supervisor. www.cityofkeywest-fl.gov, (305) 809-3700

THE DRY TORTUGAS NATIONAL PARK

The Dry Tortugas are a small group of islands located about 67 miles west of Key West in the Florida Keys. They were discovered in 1513 by Ponce de Leon. He gave the islands the name “Tortugas” because it means turtles in Spanish, and he caught over 100 of them during his time on the islands. The “dry” part of the Dry Tortugas came later on to indicate that the land mass lacked fresh water.

During the civil war, a fort, Fort Jefferson was built on the Dry Tortugas to protect one of the most strategic deep water anchorages in North America. It helped control the Gulf of Mexico as well as the Straits of Florida. Today, it is a protected national park and popular tourist destination for tens of thousands every year.

Getting to the islands is made simple by modern day transportation and the popularity of the park. A ferry called the Yankee Freedom Ferry offers transportation to the park once a day and provides full amenities such as lunches, restrooms (on the boat), guided tours, and much more. Another way out to the islands is to take a boat plane which is a 45 minute ride, but is a bit more expensive. The park allows boating, so tourists can bring private boats and enjoy the amenities of the park. Overnight boat parking is allowed only on certain parts of the island for campers.

Fort Jefferson is a great place to tour and daily guided tours are offered year round. It is a great way to exercise as it takes about 45 minutes to walk around the fort on a guided tour, or less for those who wish to take a self-guided tour. Many tourists also enjoy walking the moat wall. It is an easy six tenths of a mile hike around the fort and provides a great view of the coral and fish in the water.

The Dry Tortugas also offer great snorkeling as the islands are surrounded by coral. The coral serves as a home to many types of fish and other aquatic wildlife. Snorkeling along the outside of the moat wall or around the pilings of the south coaling dock is recommended. There are no life guards on duty, so swimmers are cautioned to swim at their own risk. Fishing is also permitted in the park in certain areas, but lobstering and spear fishing are prohibited.



Photo by Lynda Erd



Photo by Erasmo Castaneda



Photo by Dana Portillo



Photo by Danielle Carson

The Dry Tortugas are also a great place to camp. Those who wish, can also bring tents and camp in the Dry Tortugas on an island called Garden Key (the same island as the fort). A 10-site, primitive campground is located on Garden Key. Eight individual sites can each accommodate up to ten two-person tent and are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Campsites have picnic tables and grills. Campers must bring all supplies, including a tent, fresh water, fuel, ice, and food. The island offers spectacular views of the stars and are a great place to stay overnight for lovers of the outdoors.



Photo by Kathleen Irizarry

The islands are also home to lots of wildlife including over 300 species of birds! Bird watching is becoming much more popular and the Dry Tortugas are a spectacular place to do it. The Tortugas offer a vital layover for migrating birds traveling between South and North America making a staple in the Great Florida Birding Trail. Spring is the optimal time to view birds, but any season offers the chance to see something unique at this exquisite Florida Keys Birding spot.



Photo by Bill Brookman

Rounding out the list of great ways to get active in the Dry Tortugas are the beaches. Whether looking to lie out and tan, throw the Frisbee or to swim, the Dry Tortugas are home to some of the most beautiful beaches and water in the Keys. They are a great place to kick back and enjoy the sun. Regardless of taste, everyone has fun on the islands, there is something for everyone to do. www.nps.gov, (800) 634-0939,

Article by R. Porterfield

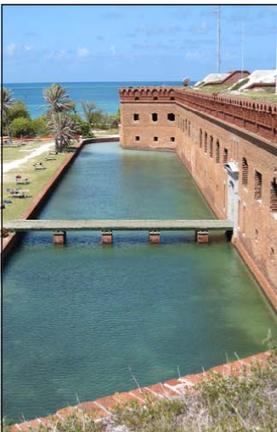


Photo by Danielle Carson



Photo by Lori Rittel

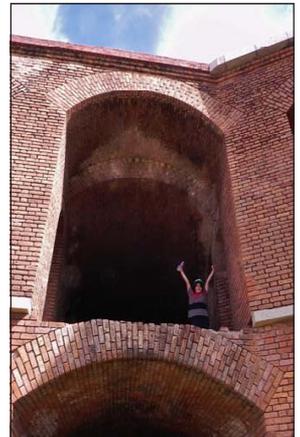


Photo by Laurie Kipp



HealthiestWeight

