

How to Drive From Miami to Key West

Updated 1/27/2016 to remove places no longer there and to put in links to a website if one exists.

After hearing so much about the drive from Miami to Key West, we finally took it for the first time in 2002. We pulled some info off the web, tour books, etc., and made our own notes as we went along. These were eventually added to by friends that also made the trip. Print out a copy of this guide now and place it in the glove box of your rental, which will probably start with you flying into Miami like most tourists. Yeah, you can hop a puddle jumper to KW, but just cowboy up for the ride, get a rental car which you'll need anyway, (although Jan and I STRONGLY suggest taking a motorcycle, which you can rent at Eagle Rider in Miami Beach) and drive yourself to MARGARITAVILLE! besides, it's a great view and it's just the way it's done down here. Forget about the old saying, in this case, it's the journey and the destination. One of our adventures was to rate the conch chowder at every stop we made. Now of course things change but we added our ratings (1 = worst to 10 = best) and comments.

Have fun! Bill & Jan Guerrette

At some mile marker references, a "B" stands for Bay side of the road, an "O" stands for ocean side. Drive safe, be cool. Obey the speed limits!!!

MM 110ish - The Border of The Conch

Republic: This is where it all starts, this is where we leave the mainland behind and do what only Americans can do. We drive 100 miles out into the Caribbean Ocean! ... where else but the USA can you drive to paradise?

RULE # 1. MM 126.5 - Always, always enter the Keys via **CARD SOUND ROAD** and stop off at [ALABAMA JACK'S](#). (Be watching, it's very easy to miss this left turn) Right before the Card Sound Bridge in Downtown Card Sound - It's a Key's tradition, and good mojo ...trust us! It only adds 15 minutes to the drive. Sit out back right on the dock. Very often there will be a band playing. This is the real thing, you're getting a taste of the Keys now, if you decide you don't like it here, turn around and head back to South Beach! Conch chowder gets a 5, more of a beef vegetable soup.

Upon leaving Alabama Jack's continue down Card Sound Road into Key Largo, observing this last rare patch of undeveloped mangrove tropics the way it used to be.

MM104 Key Largo - [The Caribbean Club](#), this is the quintessential tropical bar. This is it! Right on the water, killer sunset spot, open-air bar with flocks of wild parrots in the palm trees, manatees, parrotfish and giant tarpon swimming right up beside your table. Heck, you can even go swimming with them while ordering a cheeseburger!

MM104 Key Largo - [Neptune's Hideaway Bungalows](#). A dive bum favorite for years, cheap & clean, cable & fridge. Great stopover spot for divers & snorklers going to Pennecamp Marine Park and so close to the Caribbean Club ya can swim over for a beer! **MM 105 Key Largo** - The Crack'd Conch, new location, 451-0732, Open Noon-10pm 100 Kinds Of Beer!, Conch, Caribe, Cajun & Native Specialties like Alligator.

MM103.5 Key Largo - [The Hideout](#), breakfast & lunch, on the water at the end of Transylvania Ave.

MM 102.5 Key Largo - [John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park](#) & Key Largo Marine Sanctuary Best snorkeling & diving site in the Upper Keys. Don't miss it! It's a Top Three Thing To Do! See

really cool exotic tropical fish & coral reefs while they still exist.

MM 100 * Key Largo - Bayside [DENNY'S LATIN DINER & LIQUOR STORE](#) 7am-10pm 451-3665 Best cafe con leche & tequila selection in the Keys! Great Cuban Breakfast Anytime and sweet plantains. Try the Herradura Gold or EL Tesoro Anejo 100% pure Blue Agave Tequila .

SURVIVAL There's also a great grocery store across the street for laying in provisions and essentials like water, limes, cocoa butter, Corona 12-pack, aloe vera gel, replacement salt shakers, mangos, cocktail sauce, Cortizone 10 Anti-Itch Creme, Advil, a flashlight & candles, Mountain Dew, beef jerky and band-aids.

MM 99.4 * Key Largo - B [Mrs. Mac's Kitchen](#), 451-3722 Home style Keys Cookin' & Key Lime Pie. 7am-9:30pm Closed Sunday.

MM 95 Key Largo - [Harriet's](#), good breakfast joint, a locals spot.

MM 91 Tavernier - Ramshackles Bar, Parrot heads welcome. Casual cool, velvet Elvis paintings, good food & tasty beverages. .
1/27/2016 - Cannot validate this still exists.

MM 93.6 Tavernier - [Florida Keys Wild Bird Sanctuary, Tavernier](#). A MUST SEE Stop! Free Admission. Great Photo/Video Spot! See tropical birds: wild eagles, herons, egrets, flamingos and pelicans up close. Great "Rainy day adventure!" Very Kid Friendly!

MM 91 Tavernier - Harry's Place, friendly & inexpensive. 6am Breakfasts, BAR open till 4am!!! **1/27/2016 - Cannot validate this still exists.**

MM 90ish Plantation Key - Tugboat's
1/27/2016 - Cannot validate this still exists....on Seagate Blvd. ocean side. Casual, cheap, CASH ONLY. Just around the corner is [The PILOT HOUSE](#). Marina Tiki Bar with great view of the

water and frequent boat accidents. MM90 - Plantation Key - Snappers

MM 87*B, Plantation Key - The LAGOON SALOON in Plantation Key Yacht Harbor. Great Sunset Beach Tiki Bar Hangout. Classic Tropical Dive! Blues on weekends, burgers, shrimp, beer & boat rentals. **1/27/2016 - Cannot validate this still exists.**

MM 86.5 Plantation Key - ERIC's FLOATING RESTAURANT. Dinner 510pm \$\$\$! Steaks, Shrimp and lots of stuffed animal heads on the walls. This is where the locals go to celebrate when they want to feel upscale. **1/27/2016 - Cannot validate this still exists.**

MM 85.5 Plantation Key - [HAWK'S CHANNEL BAR & GRILL](#), Hidden almost under the Snake Creek Bridge. Waterfront 11am-Midnight. 664-0020. Great Food, Drinks & Cold AC! The "Best Rainy Day View in the Keys". Great Manatee watching spot! See the Famous Mermaid Statue. This is a true local's joint! and a great one!

MM 85.3 - Islamorada - [HOG Heaven](#). Set back on the water. Ocean (north bound) side of RT 1. Nice indoor and outdoor bar. Locals pull up in their boats. Stroll out to the sandy point and sit in the sun. Good food, try the blackened fish fingers.

MM 84 Islamorada - The one, the only [HOLIDAY ISLE RESORT](#) where it's always Margaritaville 24-7! Everything you want, everything ya need, with room service! High on the "jet ski factor". A little pricey. This place is a full resort, Jan and I strolled the beach all the way to Rum Runners (large tiki bar on the beach). There are a few bars and usually entertainment. Manatees feed at the marina.

MM 83.5*B Islamorada - [ZIGGIE'S CONCH](#), Dinner Only 5:30pm-10pm, Reservations 664-4590 Closed Thursday. A Key's Landmark- 50's Ambience, Legendary Menu!

MM 82*B Islamorada - [LOR-E-LEI Restaurant & Cabana Bar](#) Islamorada, 6644656 A great lil' cafe, bayside right on the water, a tropical sanctuary with irie vibes, Seafood, Steaks, Tasty Libations & Great Sunsets! Desdemona's Favorite!

MM 81.6 Islamorada - MANNY & ISA'S
1/27/206 – closed permanently 2014.

MM 81.5 Islamorada -Stop here, two places in one stop. [The Islamorada Fish Company.](#) Indoor and outdoor seating. Nice bar right on the dock. The square shaped dock is perfect to watch the sharks and tarpon that come in to be fed. Good show. Beach, and marina Right next to it is the World Wide Sportsman. Similar to a Bass Pro Shop, but designed for the Keys. Big place, fun to walk through. They have everything.

MM 81.5 Islamorada - [The Cheeca Lodge](#), 664-4651, If you've got the money honey, we've got the time!

MM 80.9 Islamorada - The beloved former FISHERMAN'S KETTLE is now called Uncle's Cafe,
1/27/206 – closed permanently 2014.

MM 80 Islamorada - WILLY'S BBQ of Islamorada! The Tiki Bar out back overlooking Alligator Reef Lighthouse is one of the best kept secrets in the Keys. Some tasty 'cue. 664-0855. **1/27/2016 - Cannot validate this still exists.**

MM Islamorada - The Coral Grill, **1/27/206 – closed 2014.**

MM 79.7*B Islamorada – [Postcard Inn Papa Joe's Upstairs Outdoor Tiki Bar](#) Over-looking both the ocean & bay, it has THE BEST View in The Keys! Great photo spot. Perfect for sunrises & sunsets plus great conch fritters! The channel by the dock is often visited by manatee. Bayside by the Tea Table Channel Bridge. 664-8109

MM 79.7*B Islamorada - Papa Joe's Marina
1/27/206 – demolished in 2010 – closed permanently.

MM 78 Islamorada - [WOODY'S](#), a bar that couldn't exist anywhere else. Beer, Food, Music, AC. Open till 4am! 664-4335. Legendary Key's band Big Dick & The Extenders play weekends.

MM 77.5*B Islamorada - [THE HUNGRY TARPON CAFE](#) Lower Matacumbre Key, 305-664-0535 "Five Star gourmet on paper plates!" Open 6:30am - Great Fisherman's Breakfast! Durango Eggs, Huervos Rancheros, Blackened Shrimp Caesar, and, although Jan and I didn't try it, some say perhaps "THE" Best CONCH CHOWDER in the Key's! They use only conch imported from the Turk Islands instead of Bahama conch. Turk Island conch is bright pink and very sweet. ***Out back at the dock behind the cafe is one of the true natural wonders of the Florida Keys.

MM 77.5*B Islamorada - [ROBBIE'S BOAT RENTAL'S](#) - Come Feed The Live Pet Tarpon! Voted by the Miami Herald as one of the top three best things about South Florida! Come see & feed the schools of giant silver king tarpon that hang out under Robbie's Dock! For \$2 you can get a bucket of bait fish & can literally feed these monsters by hand. Careful though, they got teeth! Great video & photo spot! Robbie's is also a great place to rent a skiff which is really the best way to see the Key's, and is a great spot to launch a visit & nature tour of nearby Lignum Vitae Island and Indian Key. This is also a great area for fishing and snorkeling or just cruising over to the dock at pap Joe's Tiki Bar and Marina. Be careful around the shallow "flats" areas though, pole it only & don't cut across the sea grass beds! The penalties for running over sea grass beds are extremely harsh.

MM 73.4 Islamorada - [ANNE EATON BEACH PARK](#), Near Channel #2 Tire Swing. Anne's

Beach, Oceanside. Anne's beach is a lovely, sandy, free beach, so shallow you can wade out great distances. The shore is lined with mangroves, through which a boardwalk, with periodic picnic tables, weaves. Anne's Beach has limited parking and is very popular. If you can get a space, it makes a nice 20 minute stop in your road trip to wade in the shallow water. Keep an eye on the sea life underfoot. This is the only place I've ever had to be careful to avoid stepping on an octopus — a small, nonthreatening and adorable creature.

MM 58.5 Marathon - Grassy Key Dairy Bar, Best Food for miles! 305-743-3816 Breakfast, Lunch, Diner. Closed Sunday & Monday. **1/27/2016 - Cannot validate this still exists.**

MM 58 Marathon - [Rainbow Bent Resort](#) 1800-929-1805 Complimentary Motorboat with every room!

MM 57.5 Marathon - [SEASHELL BEACH RESORT](#), Grassy Key, Sunset Cafe Oceanside, free dingy with every room. Row out to the coral reef that just off the dock here. Bungalow 8 here is a great stay over spot.

MM 59 Marathon - [Dolphin Research Center](#), Grassy Key. Former home of the original Flipper. Great for kids of all ages.

MM 53 Marathon - Don Pedro's Cuban Cantina **.1/27/2016 – Restaurant is permanently closed.**

MM 50.5 Marathon - [HERBIE'S](#). Best Conch Fritters! Casual Old-Time Cool. A real Conch Joint. This is it, this is what ya came for! 11am-10pm, Closed Sundays. Inexpensive, the real deal!

MM 50.0 – Marathon - [Sombrero Beach](#). There are few "real" public beaches in the Keys, and this is one of them. Turn south at the light (Publix Shopping Center) and follow Sombrero Beach Road to the end. Plenty of parking. Also, Dockside Lounge and Tiki Grill, from Rt 1, left on

Sombrero Beach Rd, and then right on Sombrero Blvd. They don't call it the dockside for nothing! This is a true local's place where they are either living on their boat or bringing a catch in off the boat. Good entertainment, in every sense. Stay at the Sombrero Resort right next door. Nice place, big rooms, pool, restaurant, golf course, etc.

MM 50 Marathon - [THE CRACKED CONCH](#), Fresh Conch any way you want it! A Keys Landmark. Conch Burgers, Conch Fritters, Jerked Conch Steaks, Conch Salad, Conch Du Jour! 8am-Midnight, casual, inexpensive and always good!

MM 49.5 Marathon Key - [Banana Bay resort](#) on Marathon Key. Need a place to stay overnight? Stay at Banana Bay resort. Full resort. Beach, pool, lush and tropical. Walk to Annette's for dinner and try the stone grill. Chowder at Annette's gets a 7.5, slightly spicy. www.bananabay.com

MM 48.5 at [Buccaneer Resort](#). Good Sunset.

MM 48 Castillo's Cuban, Marathon, Breakfast Hangout. **1/27/2016 - Cannot validate this still exists.**

MM 48 [Castaway Shrimp](#), down 15th St. Evenings 5pm-10pm. Beer & Shrimp. Very Casual.

MM Marathon - SHUCKER'S BAR & GRILL, **1/27/2016 – Restaurant is permanently closed.**

MM 47.6 Marathon - Bacchus Tiki Bar, down 11th St. north of 7 Mile Bridge. Good food & sunsets and you can walk a portion of the original 7 Mile Bridge. One of Marathon's better views. **1/27/2016 - Cannot validate this still exists.**

MM 47.5*B Marathon - [PORKY'S BAYSIDE BBQ & TIKI BAR](#), 289-2065 Home of the FREE NIGHTLY SUNSET PARTY CRUISE! Leaves every night 1/2 hour prior to sunset! Lasts aprox. 1

Hour. Great Sunset Photos & Cold beer! Great food & live music by Rocketman back at the bar! See the Parrotfish under the dock.

MM 47.0 — Marathon - Begin/end of Seven Mile Bridge. Access to bridge is gulf side. [Pigeon Key visitor's center](#) is oceanside.

MM 47 Marathon - [Old 7 Mile Grille](#), Openair local joint, Closed Wed & Thur.

MM 40.0 — Marathon - End/begin Seven Mile Bridge

MM 31 – Big Pine Key - CEDAR INN, a great cafe & pub, locals, live music Thur-Sat. [1/27/2016 - Cannot validate this still exists.](#)

MM Big Pine Key [*The NO NAME PUB*](#) North Watson Blvd. Jan says "Best Pizza in the Keys!" This is an out-of-the-way place, but fun. Only half the people that make the drive actually make the effort to find it, to bad. DRIVE REALLY SLOW!, Turn right on Chapman @ light on Big Pine Key, take left fork for 1.5 miles, then turn left onto Watson Blvd for another 1.5 miles, it's on the left just before the bridge to No Name Key on the back side of Big Pine Key. 305-872-9115 It's also where the endangered tiny Key Deer live. Be Careful!. Really! Stupid tourista idiots hit & kill dozens of Tiny Key Deer every year and fines & penalties are severe Slow down & mellow out! **MM 31.3 – Big Pine Key** - Island Reef Cuban Grill, homemade cuban & spanish specials Closed Sunday 872-2170

MM 31 – Big Pine Key - The Island Reef, casual, 6am-9:30pm, Closed Tuesdays. [1/27/2016 - Cannot validate this still exists.](#)

MM 30.2 – Big Pine Key - Montego Bay, 305-872-3009 Island Fare & Big Boat Drinks. [1/27/2016 - Cannot validate this still exists.](#)

MM 30 – Big Pine Key - BIG PINE COFFEE SHOP, open 6am-9pm. Great breakfast place. [1/27/2016 - Cannot validate this still exists.](#)

MM 28.5– Big Pine Key - Little Palm Island, Small luxury resort on private island 872-9989. Stop for lunch, bring \$100's. **MM 27ish – Big Pine Key** - Looe Key Reef Resorts, close to DIVE shops that go out to Looe Key Reef for the most primo diving/snorkeling in the lower Keys, WAY better than ANY diving in Key West.

MM 27.5 – Big Pine Key - [Boondock's](#), Ramrod Key 305-872-0020

MM 24.5 – Big Pine Key - [MONTE'S Restaurant & Seafood Market](#), casual, great Fried Grouper Sandwich and the best Fish Dip in the Keys! Summerland Key, 7453731. (Gator Dave and Mayday Jim swear by Monte's legendary Fish Dip!)

MM 37 BAHIA HONDA PARK. The Best Beach in the Lower Keys! Boat Rentals & Snorkel Trips to Looe Key Dive Park. Great place to hang, swim, BBQ grill some goodies outdoors.

MM 21.5 – Big Pine Key - The Old Road Cafe, Cudjoe Key - 745-2528, Blue plate Specials, casual. [1/27/2016 - Cannot validate this still exists.](#)

MM 20 – Big Pine Key - [MANGROVE MAMA'S](#), oh yea, now this, this is really what ya came for! Let the rum, shrimp, & Coppertone flow baby! You are in the fabulous Florida Keys! Conch chowder gets a 7.5, nice and spicy with a tomato base.

MM 10 – Big Pine Key - [BOBALU'S SOUTHERN CAFE](#), Big Coppitt Key 305296-1664

MM 5.0 - Stock Island - [The RUSTY ANCHOR](#), , Blue-Collar Conch. A local working man's establishment. On the water across from the old Dog Track. Left on MacDonald Ave, right on 5th St, left on 5th Ave.. Your 2' above sea level here! Lot's of conch in the chowder, chili flavor, mildly spicy, 6.3. WARNING! Margaritaville DEAD AHEAD!

This is it, you're in Key West now. Time to ditch the car!!

Looking to check out the sites?

- Stop off at the [Hemingway House](#) and see the famous 6 toed cats of Key West! Nautical legend has it six-toed cats were good luck on a ship, and all of Key West's present six-toes are said to be descended from the original polydactyl furkats that Hemingway brought down from New England.
- Or stop at the [Audubon House](#). Hear Captain Geiger tell you about the history of Key West and what life was like as a Pirate.
- Want to see what an undeveloped Key West would look like? Check out [Nancy Forresters Secret Gardens](#) at 1 Free-School Lane, 305-294-0015. Great look at tropical birds and horticulture. Nancy is trying to preserve and sustain endangered species of rain forest plants and keep a corner of Key West green and accessible.

Looking for a good sit down dinner?

- Try [Blue heaven](#)
- [Pepe's](#) (steak smothered with pork chops)
- [Louie's backyard](#) (pricey but awesome, conch chowder gets a 9.6, tomatoey, pepper flavor but not overpowering, ingredients well proportioned. Good amount of conch),
- [Conch Seafood Republic](#)
- [Alonzo's](#) (get the sesame crusted tuna)
- [The A&B Lobster House](#)
- [Kelly's](#)

Looking for that casual dining place?

- [The Half Shell](#) raw bar at 4:00 for happy hour.
- [Margaritaville](#). We voted the Conch Chowder here best in the Keys!

For good Cuban;

- Try the [El Siboney](#) at the corner of Margaret and Catherine St, 296-4184.
- Or [Moe's](#) at 1116 White St, 2968955.

Be sure to do sunset @ [Mallory Square](#). Hopefully there won't be a cruise ship docked. Go up to the Hilton Sunset Lounge, listen to the band, and look down on the activity.

Just want to go out and carouse?

- [The Green Parrot](#)
- [Sloppy Joe's](#)
- [Capt'n Tony's](#)
- [Dirty Ricks](#)
- [Fat Tuesdays](#)
- [Schooner Wharf](#)

I never thought I'd have a complete catalog of Mike McCloud's CDs.

Who is this [Jimmy Buffett](#) guy anyway? And what's with this whole [Parrothead](#) TEQUILA cult? Jimmy Buffett THEN Jimmy Buffett NOW

Related Websites:

[Origin of The Conch Republic Flag](#)
[Critters of the Florida Keys](#)
[Jerry Jeff Walker Home Page](#)
[Hunter S. Thompson](#)
[Crabbing – All About Blue Crabs](#)
[Conchologists of America -- Shell Indians](#)
[FLORIDA KEYS MAP](#)
[KEY DEER The Tiny Key Deer of Big Pine Key](#)
[Key West from My Conch Cruiser](#)
[Larry Hunter's tequila tips](#)
[Looe Key - Lower Keys - Florida Keys](#)
[Maps of Southeast Florida](#)
[Master Shell List](#)
[Pirate Image Archive](#)
[The Mother of All Maritime Links](#)
[Vicki Roush Home Page - Key West](#)
[Save the Manatee Club](#)