

Families' Itinerary:

Throughout the Keys you will find children friendly hotels. For a complete list of accommodations, visit our website at www.fla-keys.com (places to stay)

Long Itinerary 6 nights, 7 days

Day 1 – Key Largo

Being in the Keys means being close to nature, exploring the outdoors and finding an appreciation for wildlife.

The Florida Keys and Key West is a destination with a relaxed atmosphere.

Start your day at the **John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park** (MM102.5 Oceanside)

www.pennekamppark.com

Discover the oldest underwater park in the world. You will be able to enjoy the Park's popular water activities including viewing the reef on a glass-bottom-boat or snorkel and scuba tours, as well as canoeing and kayaking on mangrove-lined waterways. A visitor center featuring a refurbished 30,000-gallon aquarium, as well as boat rentals, nature trails, picnic pavilions and two beaches round out the variety of offerings at Pennekamp.

Dolphin Encounters:

Here are two possibilities for an encounter with our friendly dolphins in Key Largo. Bring your camera!

Dolphin Cove (MM100 Bayside)

Meet and interact with dolphins in the hands-on Structured and Shallow Water Dolphin Swims or snorkel freely alongside the dolphins in the Natural Dolphin Swim program.

Phone: 305-451-4060

www.dolphinscove.com

Dolphins Plus (MM99.5 Oceanside)

Here is a lifetime opportunity to get up close and personal with dolphins and sea lions for an unforgettable experience.

Phone: 305-451-1993

www.dolphinsplus.com

Party Fishing:

Sailor's Choice Party Boat (MM100 Oceanside)

This 65' party boat departing daily from the Holiday Inn Marina. Perfect outing for families and children as no fishing experience is required, the crew will assist you. You will have the choice to release your catch or keep it to eat. Most resorts' restaurants will cook your catch for a nominal fee.

www.sailorschoicefishingboat.com

Phone: 305-451-1802

Lady Hawke Hover Tours (MM104 Bayside)

You can travel above the water at high speeds aboard Lady Hawke hovercraft operated by Hover Tour. This new attraction launched from a bayside beach next to the Caribbean Club takes passengers on tours of **Blackwater Sound and Lake Surprise**. Cruising at a speed of about 37 mph, hovercrafts provide an eco-friendly joyride on a cushion of air above the surface - with no real contact with the water or land and no harmful impact on marine animals. The hovercraft seats up to 20 passengers in an air-conditioned cabin and offers rides ranging from a 15-minute "curiosity tour" to two-hour tours involving beach picnics, water volleyball, snorkeling and more.

Visit www.Hover-tour.com or call 305-904-3833 for reservations and information.

On your way to Islamorada, make a stop at the **Florida Keys Wild Bird** (MM93.6 Bayside). This bird rehabilitation facility is home to more than 100 ill, injured or orphaned wild birds (herons, owls, pelicans and egrets) housed in a natural setting on more than 5 acres of land. The main attraction is the daily pelican feeding, set for 3:30 p.m. Open daily, there is no admission fee but donations are requested.

www.fkwbc.org

Day 2 – Islamorada

Spend the day at the **Theater of the Sea** (MM84.5 Oceanside)

www.theaterofthesea.com

Your general admission ticket includes dolphin, sea lion, and parrot shows, a guided tour of marine life exhibits, lagoon-side beach, and the bottomless boat ride. After enjoying the shows, guests can visit the unique gift shop, dine at Nicky's grill, and sunbathe, relax, and swim on the private lagoon beach. Interactive Swim programs with dolphins, sea lions and rays are available at extra cost.

Other options include **Anne's Beach** (MM80 Oceanside)

This small beach offers a scenic walkway and great views of the shallows surrounding Islamorada. Pack a picnic and spend hours of fun in the sun (It has bathrooms and picnic tables).

Founder's Park and Beach (MM86.5 Bayside) is also a great alternative with many activities and is free to out-of-town guests who bring their hotel room keys. The park offers an Olympic-

sized pool with diving area, a shallow water beach, water sports rentals, ball fields, fishing jetty, bocce, tennis and basketball courts, multi-purpose path, skate park and dog park.

There are so many possibilities for lunch and dinner. My suggestions:

Jimmy Johnson's Big Chill (MM104 Bayside)

Waterfront with pool access (extra fee).

Pilot House Restaurant and Marina (MM100.2 Oceanside)

Waterfront dining and kids can feed fish from the dock.

Snapper's Restaurant (MM94.5 Oceanside)

Oceanfront dining and the kids can see the giant tarpons.

Whale Harbor Inn (MM84 Oceanside)

Affordable all you can eat seafood buffet.

Take a look at all the fishing boats in the Marina.

Morada Bay Restaurant (MM81.6 Bayside)

Waterfront with a large child-friendly beach.

Islamorada Fishing Company (MM81.5 Bayside)

Dine on the water; kids will enjoy the outdoors and all the beautiful fish swimming around.

Don't miss the **World Wide Sportsman** store and now part of Bass Pro Shops. Shop for souvenirs and kids will enjoy the replica of Ernest Hemingway's boat as well as a giant salt water aquarium.

For more dining options, please go to the Restaurant and Bars section of our website

www.fl-keys.com

Day 3 – Marathon

On your way down to Marathon, stop for a breakfast and fun on the water at **Robbie's Marina** (MM77.5 Bayside).

www.robbies.com

I definitely recommend the lobster frittata or the Purple Isle (crepes stuffed with eggs and lobster, should I say more....)

Kids will enjoy feeding the giant tarpons and stroll through the open air shops and market.

Fishing, boat rentals, state parks tours and much more are also available.

Make your way to the **Dolphin Research Center**, Home of Flipper (MM59 Bayside)

www.Dolphins.org

Spend an hour or the whole day learning all about our family of Atlantic [bottlenose dolphins](#) and [California sea lions](#). Make a splash in DRC's new **Shawn Rodriguez Family Sprayground!**

Run through jets and streams of water, shot from a colorful sea horse, whale flukes and other tropical and marine life sculptures while dolphins chatter and whale songs play.

Hungry? **Hammer's Café** sells cold drinks, ice cream and a variety of lunch items and snacks.

Spend the afternoon at the **Turtle Hospital** (MM48.5 Bayside)

www.turtlehospital.org

You are invited to take a guided educational tour of the hospital facilities and the sea turtle rehabilitation area. This educational experience lasts approximately 90 minutes and provides a presentation on sea turtles as well as a behind the scenes look at the hospital facilities and rehabilitation area. At the end of each program guests are invited to feed the permanent resident sea turtles.

If you are looking for a great beach, I will recommend **Sombrero Beach (MM50 Oceanside)**; (Turn off U.S. 1 at Sombrero Beach Blvd., and drive to the end).

This 12.6-acre beach is one of the most popular stops in Marathon for good reason. It offers walkways, picnic areas and a roped off swimming area.

Another great place is **Crane Point Museum, Nature Center & Historic Site** (MM50.5 Bayside)

This 64-acre tropical oasis of hardwood trees, nature trails and educational displays is a paradise for adults and children. You will discover the Adderley's home, the Marathon Wild Bird Center, the Museum of Natural History where parents and children can learn about everything from the life cycle of sea turtles to how Native Americans forged a living from the sea. Outside is a children's activities area that includes a wooden pirate ship feature for playing, and a touch tank for getting up close and personal with some of the creatures of the Keys. Trolley tours of the botanic gardens and historic sites can also be arranged.

www.cranepoint.net

Phone: 305-743-9100

On your way out of Marathon, you will see the magnificent **7-mile Bridge**. Before driving on it, make a left and stop at the **Knight's Key**. Visit **Pigeon Key** and step back in time inside buildings built in 1909 to house more than 400 workers building the Overseas Railway. Ride the Pigeon Key ferry from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico, and you'll cross beneath the new 7-Mile Bridge and a 2.2-mile segment of the old Seven-Mile Bridge! Once on the Island,

you may spend your day in the Pigeon Key Museum, exploring the historic buildings or snorkeling.

www.pigeonkey.net

A great stop for lunch or dinner is at the **Island Fish Company** (MM54 Bayside)
Spectacular sunsets, Florida Bay views and locally inspired food are all found in one place.

Day 4 – Lower Keys

On your way to Key West, make a stop at **Bahia Honda State Park** (MM37 Oceanside)

www.bahiahondapark.com

Featuring an award winning beach and historic bridge, Bahia Honda State Park is one of the favorite destinations. The park offers the perfect and quiet getaway for the entire family with gift shop, snack bar, kayak rentals and daily snorkeling tours to the fabulous Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary.

Another great place, unique to the Florida Keys is **Key Deer Refuge** (MM30, Bayside)

This refuge is home to the tropical hardwood hammock habitat and 22 federally listed endangered and threatened species of plants and animals, five of which are found nowhere else in the world like the **Key Deers** (about 800 left)

www.fws.gov/nationalkeydeer

Phone: 305-872-2239

Day 5-6-7– Key West

Final Stop: Key West.

Have your family picture taking in front of the **Southernmost Point Buoy** at the corner of South Street and Whitehead Street. (Use it for your Christmas cards)

Children and parents will enjoy discovering the beauty of Key West via the **Conch Tour Train** (children 12 and under ride for free)

www.conchtourtrain.com

The tour lasts 90 minutes and begins at the Front Street Depot and ends right behind it in **Mallory Square**. There are three stops which allow you to purchase refreshments, shop, see the sights and catch a later train.

Stroll along Mallory Square and enjoy our nightly **Sunset Celebration** with [arts and crafts exhibitors](#), [street performers](#), [food carts](#) and [psychics](#).

The Key West Aquarium is open every day from 10 AM – 6 PM and includes a touch tank to explore the wonders of our surrounding waters. www.keywestaquarium.com

The Butterfly and Nature Conservatory is open daily 9 AM – 5 PM www.keywestbutterfly.com

There are several options for hands on family friendly activities that are free of charge and they are as follows:

Key West Toy Factory (Make a craft area \$5) open daily 8:30 AM- 9 PM
www.keywesttoyfactory.com

The Children's Playground across from Higgs Beach

Eco-Discovery Center open Tuesday – Saturday 9 AM – 4 PM
http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/eco_discovery.html

Key West Wildlife Center open daily 9 AM – 5 PM <http://www.keywestwildlifecenter.org/>

One of my favorites... spending the day on the **FURY's Ultimate Adventure**.
www.furycat.com

Check in at 9:30 am and departs at 10:00 am. Just bring sunscreen and towel. You will sail 7 miles out to the reef on a 65' sailing catamaran, while enjoying breakfast. Once there you will snorkel for one hour, the crew will provide snorkel equipment and free training. You will then take a 45-minute sail from the coral reef that is on the Atlantic side of Key West to the Gulf of Mexico and enjoy an all you can eat picnic lunch buffet on the sail over (sodas and water provided free all day). Then you will dock with our floating platform island. There you will have an afternoon of fun Jet Skiing, Parasailing, Kayaking, Climbing and jumping or you can relax and sunbathe on the spacious sun decks. When finished, Mom and Dad can cool down with complimentary beer or wine while sailing back to Key West for a 4pm return.

No trip to Key West is complete without visiting the best beach in the Florida Keys: **Ft Jefferson Dry Tortugas National Park**, located just 70 miles west of Key West in the Gulf of Mexico.

The **Yankee Freedom** departs Key West at 8 am and will return around 5 pm. During your voyage to one of America's most remote National Parks, you will enjoy the beautiful scenery of the Marquesa Islands, Boca Grande, and frequent turtle and dolphin sightings. The excursion includes continental breakfast on board; lunch on the island, which includes a sandwich buffet with meats and cheeses, fresh fruit, cookies, chips, sodas & bottled water; your complimentary snorkeling equipment and a fully narrated 40 minute tour of the Fort. The cash bar is also available. It is a trip of a lifetime!!!!!!

<http://www.drytortugasinfo.com/yankee-freedom>

After all those adventures, everyone is starving: Explore the many possibilities for lunch and dinner in Key West.

My suggestions:

Conch Republic Seafood Company
Phone: 305.294.4403
631 Greene Street
Overlooking the Historic Seaport and spectacular waterfront dining

El Meson de Pepe
Phone: (305) 295-2620
410 Wall Street
El Meson de Pepe's offers Cuban Conch Cuisine.

Hard Rock Cafe (teenagers will love it!!!)
Phone: 305-293-0230
313 Duval St.
Beautiful patio overlooking Duval St.

Blue Heaven (eat with the chickens!!!!)
Phone: (305) 296-8666
729 Thomas Street

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Eh Voila! I hope you will enjoy those few suggestions, but feel free to do whatever YOU want to do. After all it is YOUR vacation!!!!!!