



CASA MARINA  
RESORT & BEACH CLUB



THE REACH

---

## Key West History

First settled in the 1880's, at the very end of the island chain stretching from Miami, Key West is the southernmost city in the continental United States.

Separated from the Florida mainland by 42 bridges, the island is closer to Havana, Cuba than it is to Miami - and its Caribbean flavored culture reflects that proximity. Its natives, commonly called Conchs, take their name from the Conch Shells found in the nearby waters.

Key West is part colorful seaport, part haven for artists and writers, part cosmopolitan getaway. Early in its history, the old island's maritime environment attracted a lively blend of New England ship captains, cigar makers, Bahamian salvagers, southern aristocrats and West Indian Pirates.

In the early and mid 1800's, the island drew its primary income from wrecking - salvaging cargoes from ships that floundered on the reef seven miles out. The wrecking industry ultimately became so profitable that it made Key West the richest city per capita in the country.

Following the Civil War, the island's wrecking based economy diversified. Drawn by the favorable climate, Cuban cigar makers set up shop. Fishermen and spongers harvested the bounty of the waters, and the island's natural salt ponds attracted a brisk salt making industry.

Just after 1900, millionaire Henry Flagler began construction of a grand project: an Overseas Railroad stretching from the Florida mainland to Key West. Completed in 1912, it subsequently carried half a million visitors down to the island with trains chugging down 157 miles of track from Miami.

Unfortunately, the railroad only lasted 23 years before it was destroyed by the hurricane of 1935. What remained of the track and bridge was sold to the government and used to build the Overseas Highway, which was finished in 1938.

The death of the railroad, combined with the effects of the Great Depression, was almost a death for Key West. Once the richest city in the country, it declared bankruptcy.

Slowly, the island's economy recovered. World War II revitalized Key West's Naval Base. President Truman's fondness for Key West was a boon as well; he spent 175 days of his six year presidency in the "Little White House", his residency away from Washington.

Several years later came the discovery of rich shrimp beds just offshore and shrimping became a primary island industry.

Today a world renowned tourist destination, Key West is home to artists and writers, treasure hunters, and characters fleeing the real world. The Conch Republic (named when a border dispute with the mainland prompted the island to secede from the Union and declare independence) is proud to share its colorful heritage, casual atmosphere, and unsurpassed climate with visitors.